Present: First Selectman Brian Ohler, Craig Whiting, Jesse Bunce

Selectman Ohler called the meeting to order at 7:01 pm

Selectman Whiting moved to approve the agenda as presented. Selectman Bunce seconded the motion. Motion carried.

Selectman Whiting moved to approve the minutes from the previous meeting as presented. Selectman Bunce seconded the motion. Motion carried.

Positive/uplifting news:

- The town crew was complimented for their good job on the roads this winter.
- Introduction of Paul Mattingly the new Executive Assistant for the town.
- The bears are out, be careful.
- There were original handpainted murals (by Tony Ghi) found in the rafters of the shed behind the firehouse. They will be preserved as best they can be and put on display in the town hall.
- A walkthrough with Eversource on Railroad Street happened as part of an effort to put the power lines and transformers behind the buildings if possible. They cannot be buried. Their engineers will come out and see if it is feasible. George Johannesen of Allied Engineering stated that there was a plan done a while ago and he will get the plans to Selectman Ohler.

Opening Public Comment Session:

- Resident looking for update on plans to help with the parking downtown. The resident trooper has done some enforcement and a letter has been submitted to DOT to remove the crosswalk which will free up some parking. It is felt that the trooper is not much help. There was talk of finding out about having a parking enforcement officer. Selectman Ohler will follow up with the resident trooper.
- The cover for the bulky waste is still being worked on. Selectman Ohler is waiting to hear from COG on what will occur with MIRA. They want to ensure it is done correctly. The sign at the transfer station was warranted and the attendants there are employees and deserve to be protected and respected.
- A discussion needs to be had with PK who recently purchased Station Place regarding the driveway. Hopefully by the end of the month something permanent can be done in the way of patching.
Community Health and Wellness Update: Joanne Borduas present. They have been waiting for the elevator which is anticipated to be there this week. Hoping to open around the first week of May. They will have medical, behavioral health, and chiropractic services. It is open to everyone regardless of insurance status. About 95% fully staffed but still looking for an MD. They are also planning school based health services in NCES, Housatonic, and Sharon. Sharon will only have mental health services. A discussion ensued regarding minor consent. There is a State law that any minor has to have parental consent on file unless they are seeking reproductive services. They can open without an MD. Most of the hired staff live in the Canaan area. There was a discussion regarding having a crosswalk put in there but due to heavy traffic it may not be possible. Selectman Ohler mentioned they are trying to get a green arrow for turning left onto Route 7. They would prefer to schedule by appointment for the most part but can accommodate some walk-ins. No pcp referral is needed. They hope at some point to bring dental services to the area, but cannot do so in the same building due to expansion issues with Inland Wetland regulations.

Vacancies/Appointments –

- Selectman Ohler read into record the letter from Inland Wetlands seeking reappointments for Matt Freund, Barry Brown, Robert Jacquier, and Mike O’Connor. **Selectman Whiting moved to approve all of the appointments as requested. Selectman Bunce seconded the motion. Motion carried.**
- Selectman Ohler explained that Chris Tripler resigned as chair of the Economic Development Committee. He read into record a letter seeking a seat on the committee by Kyle Considine with a possibility of being chairman. There was a discussion of the EDC. **Selectman Whiting moved to endorse Kyle Considine as a member of the EDC. Selectman Bunce seconded the motion. Motion carried.** There was a question of conflict of interest for people who own a lot of properties and then chairing or sitting on a board. Selectman Ohler explained because they don’t create policy there should be no conflict.
- Selectman Ohler read into record a letter from Justin Ellison requesting a seat on the Recreation Commission. **Selectman Whiting moved to accept the request for Justin to be on the recreation commission. Selectman Bunce seconded the motion. Motion carried.**

Constant Contact: Selectman Ohler explained that after speaking with residents and figuring out the need for communication and how to distribute it, they have decided to proceed with constant contact. There will be several ways to access the site to sign up and they are hoping to have it up and running within a couple weeks. Selectman Bunce spoke about the newsletter that he and a group of residents have created and were going to use constant contact to distribute. A discussion ensued and decided that the newsletter will be put thru the town constant contact. There will be an email for submissions and Maribeth Marchi will be the editor. They will work with the events committee for information too.

Transfer Station Solar Project: Selectman Ohler had a conversation with C-Tech Solar regarding the status of the project. They have been trying to secure state funding unsuccessfully. We gave them 1
more chance if they do not get the funding we will void the contract and move on to another solar company that has the capital to get it done.

Local beautification concept: Selectman Ohler had a conversation with Bunny McGuire regarding the roughly 6 areas that the beautification committee takes care of in town. Because money and volunteers are tight Selectman Ohler would like to propose making it live advertisements for local landscape companies. The garden beds would be identified and landscapers would be offered the chance to adopt a bed. A sign could be put acknowledging that the bed has been adopted by. company name. There was a suggestion to ensure it is licensed landscapers. The town benefits and the landscapers would benefit from the advertisement. A discussion regarding the blight ordinance ensued. Once it has been posted in paper the ordinance will go to a town meeting. The building official has expressed interest in doing the enforcement. Questions were asked on how it would be enforced if people get fined but cannot pay the fines. Christian Allyn spoke that the ordinance allows discretion to the Board of Selectmen.

Cannabis Regulations: The Planning and Zoning Commission have put regulations into draft form and will hold a public hearing regarding on March 11, 2024 at 7:00pm. The regulations are posted on the website.

Budget process: The process is on-going. All departments have submitted their budgets. The Selectmen will be presenting the budget to the Board of Finance on March 20. The Board of Selectmen will hold a special meeting this Thursday March 7 at 6:00pm to go through the budget.

Department/Town optimization: Things are going well. There are new front office hours. Selectman Ohler stated he has made an effort to observe and listen to everyone within the town hall staff, the transfer station, the town crew, and residents and has got a lot of information. A lot of things need attention. He expressed that he would like to see grudges and bad feelings be done and the pettiness on social media ignored. Town needs to come together.

Fire marshal report: Selectman Ohler read the report into record. Congratulations to the 2 winners of the Fire Prevention contest: Myles Shippa and Kane Ackerman.

Resident State Trooper Report: Selectman Ohler read the report into record. Troop B had 308 calls. The resident trooper contract is up for renewal this year. It is $161,000. This will be voted on during the town meeting with the budget.

Building Office Report: Selectman Ohler read the report into record.

Zoning Enforcement Officer Report: Selectman Ohler read the report into record.

Social Services Report: Selectman Ohler read the report into record.

Selectman Whiting report: Met with Maria Horn to discuss the regional budget. She mentioned the Governor is trying to cut the ECS funding this year which would hurt North Canaan. There is a preliminary plan for property tax which would put a cap on town taxes regardless of what the rate is for lower salaried families. The last EDC meeting was not official due to lack of a quorum. Selectman Whiting had submitted a tax incentive plan to the EDC to get their blessing before having the town vote on it. The
beautification committee could still use more volunteers even with the proposed plan by Selectman Ohler. He has spoken to the attorney regarding the regional budget work. Costs would be determined based on what the town ends up having him do. There was a discussion regarding the confusion of what will occur if the town drafts their own and the state approves and it going to referendum. He reminded that there is AARPA money left that needs to be spent by July 1. The Recreation committee let them know about things that are in need of repair: The tennis court back support and fence are in need of extensive repair. Doors needing work, dugouts at Sam Eddy Field, Potential new tables/chairs, new pool vacuum, sealant for around pool. Selectman Whiting read into record the bidding process he has been working on.

Selectman Bunce Report: Regarding the riverbank, he followed up with George Johannesen. Mr. Johannesen spoke that they have already done the same type of work on the river just east of this spot. He reached out to the Army Corps of Engineers and explained what they had done and they stated that if he can give them the plans it could streamline the process. Selectman Ohler said it makes sense to go through with the process to see what needs to be done. The cost of the design with Allied would be about $8000. It can be done as soon as the Selectmen tell them it is ok. Mr. Johannesen will get a little more information and return it to the selectmen. The scale was tabled, but he looked at other towns and what they are doing at the transfer station. He shared the Salisbury cost list with the selectmen. Kate at the transfer station had done a draft with changes. He still believes that the scale would be beneficial and would eliminate any arguing about weight. He attended the 2 events committee meetings - they will be doing a drone show and a fireworks show for RR days. They will continue to do fundraising. He attended Inland Wetlands and the Honey Hill project will be going forward. The Fundraiser for NCES was well attended. He is hopeful that the newsletter can out this month with the new constant contact. People have asked him what Brian's hours are – Selectman Ohler suggested that he just give out his cell number because he is in the office sporadically. Selectman Bunce would like to understand why he cannot have access to the selectman's office to do things such as sign payroll/bills after hours. Selectman Ohler explained that he just has to either come in when someone is there or call to have someone meet him here, because it is Paul's private office. Selectman Whiting doesn’t have an issue with coming in when someone is here. There was a discussion regarding offices. Selectman Ohler explained that as the Chief Executive Officer of the town hall he has the right to make changes.

Closing Public Comment Session: Discussion of using remaining AARPA funds for the river project. Request from residents for dog baggy stations due to an increase in dog feces in town. The town land across from the fire house was gifted to the town and cannot have any hard permanent structures put on it. Temporary signs can be put there – for such things as Railroad days events etc. Currently the Rec Dept has the big bunny on it advertising the Easter Egg hunt. The Events Committee will hold Springfest on May 18 with lots of things to do in town. July 20 will be the drones/fireworks displays. There was a request to make spraying for mosquitos near the pool a priority. It was stated that it is horrible and really needs to be re-evaluated.
Selectman Whiting moved to adjourn the meeting. Selectman Bunce seconded the motion. Motion carried.

Meeting adjourned at 8:52pm

Respectfully submitted,

Ayrsla A Odell

Recording Secretary