



Town of Colchester, Connecticut

127 Norwich Avenue, Colchester, Connecticut 06415

Andreas Bisbikos, First Selectman

Board of Selectmen Minutes
Thursday, July 7th, 2022, at 7 PM

Members Present: A. Bisbikos (First Selectman), D. Bates, R. Coyle, J. LaChapelle, D. Turner

Others Present: S. Hoffmann (Fire Chief)

1. Call to Order – A. Bisbikos calls meeting to order at 7 PM
2. Pledge of Allegiance
3. Correspondence
4. First Selectman's Statement

A. Bisbikos reads the following statement into the record:

Good Evening Colchester Citizens,

Misleading headlines from sensationalist media outlets and abrasive rhetoric from local political extremists have tarnished a parent's concern regarding the placement of a book.

Recently, a parent brought forward a complaint over a sexually provocative graphic in a book about RuPaul. The parent felt the book was not properly located in an age-appropriate section of the children's library and came to me expressing those concerns. These concerns were brought to our library director for review of placement. The book was temporarily removed from circulation but only until an age-appropriate location could be identified. The book is still available for anyone in the public to review, it is just not located in the children's section. Clearly, there may need to be a review of existing policy to ensure that books are properly placed in the age-appropriate sections of the library.

No book is being censored or banned. The question is whether we can find a more age-appropriate section of the library for the book with the consideration of the sexually provocative image that is being displayed. The concerns are with the placement of a book containing a sexually provocative image, not the book itself. The decision to review the book has nothing to do with anyone's sexual orientation or any social issues. None of the other Pride Books were pulled. If this image was found in a book about George Washington in the children's section, there would have been an identical response.

RECEIVED
COLCHESTER, CT
2022 JUL 11 PM 3:58
Gayle Furman
TOWN CLERK

I have also instructed our Library Director to conduct an inventory of the children's section. Protecting our children is important. It is imperative that we review to see if there are any other books that may contain sexually suggestive imagery and whether to consider placing them in a more age-appropriate location. Our kids matter.

Sincerely,

Andreas Bisbikos

- R. Coyle spoke about the importance of procedure, working with the Board of Selectmen, and spoke about the negative publicity regarding the book concern. A. Bisbikos read from the Charter that the First Selectman shall be responsible for the direction and supervision of all activities within each department. R. Coyle read from the Charter that the Board of Selectmen shall oversee all internal operations of all town departments. D. Turner spoke about the timeline of the book situation and the dangers of social media. J. LaChapelle spoke about the timeline of the book situation & the First Selectman's statements to the Rivereast about the age-appropriate section of the library. D. Bates responded to emails that there will be no censorship or banning, the importance of following proper protocols, and the importance of parents monitoring their children. R. Coyle spoke out against an inventory because of the length and energy needed to complete it.
- R. Coyle made a motion that the Board of Selectmen rescind the First Selectman's directive to the director of the library to review the 25,909 items in the Children's Library collection. 2nd by J. LaChapelle. ***Motion carried unanimously 5-0***
- R. Coyle emphasized the importance of following procedure and that parents redirect their children if there is concerning material. A. Bisbikos stated that we will review books on a case-by-case basis, we will go through the process, and if need be, will go to the Board of Selectmen. A. Bisbikos stated that he takes the welfare of our children very seriously and that the book in question was next to second grade reading material and would testify in court to that.

5. Citizens Comments

- E. Howes spoke in support of the FS and voiced concern over the placement of the book. S. Gillespie discussed the importance of optics and process. J. Thomas spoke in support of the FS and protecting the children of the town. J. Barnowski mildly agreed that the image was not age appropriate, but it should come down to the parents to make the decision. P. Hanrahan spoke in support of the FS, that children

should be shielded from hypersexual material that is increasingly on display at the children's section of the library. J. Cox spoke about overreach, communication, and censorship. T. Crowell spoke in support of the FS and emphasized that the town should focus on the budget instead of a book. R. Silberman thanked the BOS for collectively correcting the inventory review and to focus on the future. C. Barthel spoke against preferential treatment, against the inventory review, and support of the library staff. K. Kardys spoke against government overreach and asked the FS to resign. A. Bisbikos responded that he will not resign and will always stand for our kids. A. DePaola spoke against the misinformation that has been put out there, that age-appropriate content is in the proper section of the library, and her & her family support the FS for protecting the children. S. Banning spoke about the importance of libraries, support of the libraries, and the importance of following protocols. MJ. Lawton spoke against the actions of the FS and showed support to the library staff. S. Croucher discussed her family's experience in following procedure over a concerning book and the contents of the library. S. Esteves spoke in support of the FS, family member's traumatic experiences due to sexual images at a young age, and the importance of protecting children. S. Armstrong spoke about the importance of collaborating with the BOS and disagreed with the FS actions. M. Gilman discussed the importance of children having access to a diverse type of books. A. Bisbikos stated that he prays to God that there are no further books that are questionable in the children's library. M. Egan discussed the importance of following the process and the politicizing of the situation. E. Soboleski discussed ethics. S. Chapman discussed Robert's Rules of Order and the importance of listening to the citizens. S. Milner spoke in support of the library staff and the need for speed enforcement on route 16. D. Bouchard spoke against the FS actions. R. Cosa spoke about children having access to all books. N. Niemann talked about the importance of representation in books and the support of the library staff. M. Pappalardo spoke against the actions of the FS and the support of the library staff. B. Dennler talked about his personal experience as a gay man and his concerns about right wing national trends. K. Bisbikos spoke about how some of the citizens complaining about behaviors need to look in the mirror and be responsible for the content they are putting out. J. LaChapelle didn't believe that the image was not provocative enough and that the "think of the children" argument didn't work for video games. A. Bisbikos reminded J. LaChapelle of a recent social media action in which that he issued a public statement asking the movie "Cuties" to be removed from Netflix and how he must have been thinking about the children then. T. Gilman spoke against the FS actions and discussed the FS potential motives.

6. Consent Agenda

- A. Approve the 6/16/22 Board of Selectmen Special Meeting minutes and the 6/21/22 Board of Selectmen Special Meeting minutes
- B. Accept David Kane's request to replace the gravestone of his ancestor, Frederick Bulkeley at the Old Burying Ground in Colchester

- C. Accept the resignation of Rick Peruta from the Public Safety Subcommittee
- D. Reappointment of Denise Salmoiraghi as a member of the Colchester Housing Authority with a term set to expire on 5/1/24
- E. Accept the renewal of the contract with Tyler Technologies to conduct application services to the Town of Colchester in the amount of \$84,996.63 and allow the First Selectman to sign all necessary documents.
- D. Turner motioned to approve of the Consent Agenda. 2nd by D. Bates. ***Motioned carried unanimously 5-0***

7. Boards and Commissions – Possible Appointments

- A. Possible action to appoint Amy Domeika as a member the Park & Recreation Commission with a term to expire 11/01/23

- D. Turner made a motion to appoint Amy Domeika as a member the Park & Recreation Commission with a term to expire 11/01/23. 2nd by R. Coyle. ***Motion carried unanimously 5-0***

- B. Possible action to appoint the following to the ARPA Ad-Hoc Committee

- Brien Brown, Jennifer Cox, Stephanie Mattera, and Denise Mizla

- R. Coyle made a motion to appoint Jennifer Cox and Denise Mizla to the ARPA Ad-Hoc Committee. 2nd by D. Bates. ***Motion carried unanimously 5-0***

8. Contract Discussion

- A. Possible action to approve a contract to allow Consulting Engineering Services (CES) to conduct a Colchester Town Hall HVAC Study in the amount of \$5,850 and allow the First Selectman to sign all necessary documents.

- R. Coyle wanted to make sure that the 3rd floor would be part of the study cost. A. Bisbikos will reach out to CES for the study cost to ensure the 3rd floor is covered in the study cost. No action taken.

- B. Possible action to approve a contract to allow Lenard Engineering to provide professional services, provide design plans, contract documents, and permitting for an upgrade of the Cabin Road Filter Plant for an amount of \$78,500 and allow the First Selectman to sign all necessary documents.

- A. Bisbikos made a motion to approve a contract to allow Lenard Engineering to provide professional services, provide design plans, contract documents, and permitting for an upgrade of the Cabin Road Filter Plant for an amount of \$78,500 and allow the First Selectman to sign all necessary documents. 2nd by D. Bates. ***Motioned carried unanimously 5-0***

- C. Possible action to approve a contract to allow Lenard Engineering to provide professional services, provide design plans, technical specifications, and contract documents for coatings and upgrades to the 40ft. tall, 375,000-gallon steel water tank on Elmwood Heights for an amount of \$15,000 and allow the First Selectman to sign all necessary documents.

- A. Bisbikos made a motion to approve a contract to allow Lenard Engineering to provide professional services, provide design plans, technical specifications, and contract documents for coatings and

upgrades to the 40ft. tall, 375,000-gallon steel water tank on Elmwood Heights for an amount of \$15,000 and allow the First Selectman to sign all necessary documents. 2nd by D. Turner. **Motioned carried unanimously 5-0**

9. Unassigned Fund Balance

- A. Possible action to recommend to the Board of Finance that \$25,000 of unassigned fund balance be utilized for exterior repaint and window repair for Cragin Memorial Library.
- D. Turner made a motion to recommend to the Board of Finance that \$25,000 of unassigned fund balance be utilized for exterior repaint and window repair for Cragin Memorial Library. 2nd by R. Coyle. **Motion carried unanimously 5-0**
- B. Possible action to recommend to the Board of Finance that \$35,000 of unassigned fund balance be utilized for window repair for the Colchester Hayward Fire Department building on 52 Old Hartford Road.
- R. Coyle made a motion to recommend to the Board of Finance that \$35,000 of unassigned fund balance be utilized for window repair for the Colchester Hayward Fire Department building on 52 Old Hartford Road. 2nd by D. Bates. **Motion carried unanimously 5-0**
- C. Possible action to recommend to the Board of Finance that \$36,000 of unassigned fund balance be utilized to purchase an off-road utility vehicle with a trailer for the Colchester Hayward Fire Department.
- A. Bisbikos made a motion to recommend to the Board of Finance that \$44,891.92 of unassigned fund balance be utilized to purchase an off-road utility vehicle with a trailer for the Colchester Hayward Fire Department. 2nd by R. Coyle. **Motion carried with J. LaChapelle abstaining.**
 - J. LaChapelle questioned the usage and time effectiveness of the vehicle. S. Hoffmann explained the usage and the importance of having an updated vehicle.

10. ARPA Discussion

- A. Discussion on Herman's Diner's application
- D. Bates cited S. Farber's (UHY) highlighted concerns not to support the application. All other board members concurred.
- B. Possible action to approve of Herman's Diner application for ARPA funding under the Colchester Comeback Grant Program
- C. ARPA Playbook Review & Next Steps
- A. Bisbikos provided a review of various ARPA projects. R. Coyle stated that the Town Hall Roof and the Town Hall HVAC were her top two priorities. J. LaChapelle stated that the Town Hall Roof and the Field irrigation were his top two priorities. D. Turner stated that Town Hall HVAC and the Elmwood Heights Water Tower were her top priorities. D. Bates stated that the

UHF Portable Radios and the Town Hall HVAC. A. Bisbikos stated that Field Irrigation and Police Expansion were his top two priorities.

- R. Coyle suggested all the priorities are outlined in an excel spreadsheet with the encumbered items. BOS reached consensus that the UHF Portal Radios should go to the ARPA Ad-Hoc Committee. A. Bisbikos stated that he will provide the BOS an excel spreadsheet encompassing the priorities and the encumbered dollars. A. Bisbikos spoke about potentially having a special meeting to flesh out the ARPA plan but identified how slow government works and would like to address the needs of the town efficiently. R. Coyle would like more details on the Police Expansion, on the costs of moving things around. J. LaChapelle suggested drafting an acceptance letter on the Colchester Comeback Grant Program and agreed to work on it. A. Bisbikos provided an update on the Youth Center and suggested bringing in SLR to review the project. A. Bisbikos provided an update on the Social Services Grant Program. A. Bisbikos stated that he would put the Town Hall Roof out to bid after hearing feedback from the BOS.

11. Citizen's Comments

- D. Koji spoke about support for the Social Services Grant Program. R. Silberman spoke about the importance of taking care of our facilities. G. Transue discussed establishing criteria a for the ARPA related projects. J. Cox stated that she looks forward to working with the ARPA Ad-Hoc Committee. S. Horvitz spoke against the actions of the FS. A. Bisbikos mentioned that he has received an overwhelming amount of support for his actions. S. Hawkins spoke for the need for library updates. T. Dimitri objected to the views of the FS and the importance of planning of ARPA funds. K. Paquette spoke against the actions of the FS. S. Milner spoke about the location of the book. MJ. Lawton spoke about the importance of representation. S. Armstrong asked for clarity on the inventory motion. D. Bouchard provided her perspective on the behavior of the FS. K. Bisbikos stated the importance of age-appropriate material & her experience addressing that as an educator and questioned the behavior of many of the individuals who spoke against the FS.

12. First Selectman's Report

1. The Bisbikos Administration would like to send its deepest condolences and sympathies to the families and friends of those involved in this week's fire. May we all stand united in prayer.
2. An update on what is being done about Bulkeley Hill Road and Rt 16 intersection (the location of the recent car accident). The town has already contacted DOT about 1) Moving the stop sign so it is in a more prominent location, 2) Making the stop sign bigger, and 3) Adding lights at the intersection where the accident occurred. We are waiting to hear back from the state to discuss next steps.
3. Last week, a wonderful ceremony was held dedicating Troop K to Linda Orange. Representative Orange spent 23 years in the Connecticut General Assembly serving the 48th state district. State lawmakers say first responders, especially state police, held a special place in her heart.

4. The Splash Pad is officially open!! Time for kids to be kids!!
5. On June 23rd, I issued a Proclamation recognizing Sergeant Tim Edwards' 23 distinguished years of service to our community. His career achievements in Colchester include a significant drug bust that secured over 100 bundles of heroin & a large amount of other major drugs and the surveillance of a terrorist, affiliated with Al-Qaeda, that resulted in government apprehension. Let's all wish him a wonderful retirement and thank him for his dedication to our great town.

13. Liaison Reports

- J. LaChapelle stated the BOE cut ties with Principal Peel.
- A. Bisbikos talked about the tax bills.

14. Adjourn – R. Coyle made a motion to adjourn. 2nd by D. Turner. Meeting adjourns at 9:58 PM.