



Town of Colchester, Connecticut

127 Norwich Avenue, Colchester, Connecticut 06415

Andreas Bisbikos, First Selectman

Board of Selectmen

Regular Meeting Minutes

Thursday, April 7, 2022, at 7 PM

Via Zoom

Members Present: First Selectman – Andreas Bisbikos; Selectmen – Deborah Bates, Jason LaChapelle, and Denise Turner. Absent: Rosemary Coyle

Attendees: Stacy Farber, UHY Consultant; Dave Koji, ARPA Committee

1. Call to Order: First Selectman, A. Bisbikos called the meeting to order at 7:01 p.m.
2. Pledge of Allegiance
3. Correspondence: Attached
4. Citizens Comments: D. Koji, Chair of ARPA Committee discussed ARPA Committee's charge and processes and gave kudos to all its members. Also mentioned that first batch of ARPA applications will be discussed and reviewed for a final funding board decision during this meeting with more future applications expected from businesses, non-profits, and town department application recommendations. G. Barden, Vice Chair of ARPA Committee expressed pleasure that \$1M commitment asked on behalf of small businesses was agreed to and eager to move forward with the process. D. Bouchard expressed concerns regarding ARPA's lack of a planned communication strategy for community involvement, i.e., hearings and surveys as other surrounding towns have done. She also spoke to some missing components she felt should be reflected on the ARPA applications that are not. B. Dennler looking to get clarity on the reporting process and liability for the town. Should the town receive erroneous advice for fund use from the consultant company, who will the Treasury find at fault for that and can the town hold the consultant firm liable.
5. Approve Minutes of the 3/17/22 Board of Selectman Meeting: D. Turner motioned to remove minutes from Consent Agenda and make it #5 and make Consent Agenda 5A. Seconded by J. LaChapelle. **Motion carried 4 – 0.** D. Turner mentioned that in the Liaison Report, word change from Conversation Commission to Conservation Commission. A. Bisbikos made motion to move minutes forward with that spelling correction. Seconded by D. Turner. **Motion carried 4 – 0.**
 - A. Consent Agenda
 - B. Approve Amended Minutes of 2/3/22 and 2/17/22 with Attendees
 - C. Tax Collector's Refunds
 - D. Resignation of Matt Pulse from the Parks and Recreation Commission.

D. Turner moved remainder of Consent Agenda. Seconded by D. Bates. **Motion carried 4 – 0.**

6. Boards & Commission Interview: D. Bates motioned to approve William Otfinoski for the Commission of Aging for an alternate position with the term set to expire 12/31/22. **Motion carried 4 – 0.**
 - A. William Otfinoski for alternate membership on the Commission of Aging
 - B. Possible action on the appointment of William Otfinoski as an alternate member to the Commission of Aging with a term set to expire 12/31/22.
7. MOU Between the Town of Colchester and the American Nation Red Cross: D. Turner made a motion to accept the MOU between the Red Cross CT Chapter and the Town of Colchester which documents the relationship between the two and give the First Selectman the authority to sign all documents. Seconded by J. LaChapelle. **Motion carried 4 – 0.**
8. MOU Between the Town of Colchester and the Municipal Employees Union – Pam Minella: J. LaChapelle motioned to accept the MOU between the Town of Colchester and MEUI Local 506, to provide Ms. Minella \$400/week retroactive back to January 1, 2022, to June 30, 2022, or at the hire of a Public Works Director. Seconded by D. Turner. **Motion carried 4 – 0.**
9. MOU Between the Town of Colchester and the Municipal Employees Union – Mike Previti: D. Turner motioned to accept the MOU between the Town of Colchester and the MEUI Local 506 regarding Mike Previti to pay a stipend of \$400/week retroactive back to January 1, 2022, until June 30, 2022, or as such time as we hire a Public Works Director. Seconded by D. Bates. **Motion carried 4 – 0.**
10. MOU Between the Town of Colchester and the Municipal Employees Union – Tyler Molcan: D. Turner motioned to accept the MOU between the Town of Colchester and the MEUI Local 506 regarding Tyler Molcan to pay a stipend of \$380/week retroactive back to January 1, 2022, until June 30, 2022, or as such time we hire a Director of Public Works. Seconded by D. Bates. **Motion carried 4 – 0.**
11. ARPA:
 - A. Review Business Applications
 - B. Possible Action on Business Applications

Stacy Farber spoke on the UHY's role in the ARPA funding process for Colchester and the fact that Colchester is allowed to take their fund allocation as "revenue loss" based on the latest and final Treasury rules. Based on that guidance the town can use the funds as they see fit. UHY reviewed all applications to see if they fell within the guidelines even though they are not required to. This was done to mitigate any legal repercussions for misuse or misspending of funds. Spoke to the process that she is undertaking with continued reviewing of the application. EIN has not been addressed but could be reviewed for discussion at next committee meeting. Stacy added that funds will be monitored to make sure that money was spent as was requested and the attestation agreement does cover this. Conversations involving board members ensued regarding questions around liability, spending of funds, tax standing of businesses who have applied, 10M revenue loss and reporting, reasons for which businesses submitted applications. These funds will be taxed to business owners and A. Bisbikos will be disseminating that information as he calls

each business that has been approved. Lengthy discussion continued on with various topics: UHY's assistance on reporting requirements, payroll request eligibility, monitoring, supplied proof of negative impact on businesses, revenue loss classification and if taking the funds that way will there be a future impact on our town, auditing, Treasury ARPA guiding principles for reviewing applications and the decision process for approval. A. Bisbikos stated that private information of businesses will not go public, but negative impact information provided by businesses will be made public. A universal reduction was discussed, and a concern was raised on what that would cause for the businesses that have already applied, even though the narrative was that businesses can apply for funds "up to" 25K in trying to help as many as businesses as possible. There was a suggestion to table the approval of all applications until they have been received so that the dissemination of funds can be equally distributed. The board agreed upon the following five items: deadline will be April 30, 2022, for all applications; confirm that businesses have a Colchester address; ask businesses for EIN documentation; confirm businesses are in good standing with the Secretary of State; businesses need to identify the negative impact, per the dates identified, that they may have suffered during Covid, and this will be confirmed through UHY. Questions were addressed in the Chat messages section in real-time. This agenda item will be revisited when every ARPA application has been received. **No action taken.**

- C. Possible Action on Non-Profit Funding Cap: D. Koji stated the ARPA Committee determined that based on the allocation of funds, this was agreed upon. Discussion on the cap and the deadline for application submission. J. LaChapelle motioned to institute an April 30th deadline for non-profit applications for ARPA funds and cap the pool for non-profit funds at \$250K. Seconded by D. Bates. **Motion carried 4 – 0.**

12. Staffing Updates

- A. Current Status: Chris Bellantone is the new Health and Safety Officer for the Fire Department who started on April 4th. Alexis Salvagna will be Payroll & Accounts Payable Assistant with a start date of April 18th. Ariel Lago is the new Assistant Town Planner and Zoning/Enforcement Officer who started on April 5th.
Matt Bordeaux, the Town Planner, will be leaving with his final day, April 29th. Jay Gigliotti, our Wetlands Officer, we be leaving with a final day of April 22nd. A. Bisbikos expressed his pleasure of working with both and wished them the best with their future endeavors. A. Bisbikos commented that he would like to have a Special Meeting next week to discuss the Director of Public Works position and would like to go into Executive Session to discuss the status of that. Would like to have S. Ramsby, HR Director explain the status of applicants and suggest how to move forward. Special Meeting was approved by all to be Thursday, April 14, @ 11:30 a.m. via Zoom.

13. Senior Center Grant Application for the Making Memories Program: D. Turner motioned to approve the submission of Title III Grant Renewal application to secure grant funding for the Making Memories Program, fiscal year 2022-23 and authorize the First Selectman to sign all necessary documents. Seconded D. Bates. **Motion carried 4 – 0.**

14. Public Safety Subcommittee

- A. Possible action to formally recommend that the Public Safety Subcommittee develop a charge and structure for the Public Safety Committee: D. Turner motioned to move the Public Safety Subcommittee forward. Seconded by D. Bates. **Motion carried 4 – 0.**
- B. Possible action to expand the Public Safety Subcommittee to two citizens in the community, a member of Colchester Public Schools, a member of Emergency Management, and the Fire Marshal: J. LaChapelle motioned to add: two citizens, member of the Colchester Public Schools, member of the Emergency Management and the Fire Marshal to the Public Safety Subcommittee. Seconded by D. Bates. **Motion carried 4 – 0.**

15. Removal of Dog Litter Ordinance Update: A. Bisbikos read some information from a document received by CCM (Connecticut Conference of Municipalities). The letter addressed various questions posed by the First Selectman and shared information on various towns and how they address this type of ordinance. One citizen had offered that A. Bisbikos meet with the Glastonbury Chief of Police. A. Bisbikos would like to sit down with him to discuss how they made this effective in their town. A. Bisbikos would also like to bring the Chief to a Board of Selectmen meeting to address any concerns or questions. The board expressed their interest in meeting him to hear what he has to say.

16. Possible Action on Budget Transfers: D. Turner motioned to move the budget transfers. Seconded by J. LaChapelle. **Motion carried 4 -0.** Various questions were addressed during the Q&A section.

- A. Contract Settlements
- B. Tree Warden

17. Citizens Comments: G. Barden stated that the minutes for the ARPA Committee are located on their page on the Town Website and expressed the frustration on behalf of the ARPA Committee on another delay with the application process. C. Ozmun reiterated that he is extremely frustrated with this board and their lack of action with the approval of ARPA funding and applications that have been waiting for six months and yet the Hybrid Room had been approved by the board and not the ARPA Committee as of that date. J. Rose wanted clarification on Playground Update for ARPA funds. A. Bisbikos responded that the playgrounds are out for bid and will close on April 14th. D. Bouchard thanked everyone for a thorough discussion and is asking for clarification for the \$10M exemption and thinks that a guarantee should be in writing. She expressed some businesses previously received federal funds and should prove they were negatively impacted. Also, she discussed the five other categories that do qualify for these funds.

18. First Selectman's Report

- I. Connecticut Comeback: For well over a century, S&S Worldwide has made its home in Colchester. S&S serves teachers, coaches, counselors, and activity professionals across the country. S&S helps people play and learn with time tested products and services. For four generations, the Schwartz family have made this company Colchester's largest private employer. When Covid struck in the winter of 2020, the company was immediately negatively affected, as schools and youth groups were either closed or forced to meet online. Business fell off dramatically and has yet to return to its former high levels. In addition, the current supply chain issues have prevented the company from having a solid and continued supply of inventory. The survival of S&S Worldwide had been in doubt and losing this company would result in the loss of over 250 jobs. This would have been devastating to the town of Colchester.

- a. Adam and Hy Schwartz reached out to me in early February for assistance in their endeavor to secure funding so that their business could survive. As the First Selectman of Colchester, I felt it was my obligation to reach out to both the state of Connecticut and corporate lenders to not only support a company that has invested in Colchester for over a century and has kept jobs in our community; but to also save my hometown from economic devastation. Today, one of the corporate lenders that I engaged with, Connecticut Innovations – has agreed to lend them the amount needed to keep S&S Worldwide operational here in Colchester.
 - b. The Schwartz family, like my family, came from Europe for a better a life and to establish their own American Dream. That American Dream has flourished in Colchester and has provided countless of opportunities for the people of this great town. Their heart belongs to Colchester and our heart belongs to them.
- II. On April 5th, I had the honor of presenting my first town budget proposal to both the residents of this great community and the Colchester Board of Finance. Both the Colchester Proposed Town Budget PowerPoint Presentation and the complete Colchester Proposed Town Budget book are now available online!! If both the town and BOE proposals remain the same, mill rate will drop from 33.05 to 27.46 mills.
- III. The Let the Fish Swim Free Painting fundraiser will benefit the development of the new Norton Park on Westchester Road/Rte. 149. This fundraiser celebrates the dam removal on the Jeremy River at the former C.H. Norton Paper Mill and future site of Norton Park. Local fine artist and Norton family member, Julianna W. Cameron, will lead the design and painting events where participants will be encouraged to creatively their paint fish cut from authentic C.H. Norton paper mill board. The participants may choose to have their painted fish be part of an art exhibit to be held at the Cragin Memorial Library May 21 – June 30, 2022. Multiple sessions of this painting fundraiser will be held at the Colchester RecPlex Pavilion, 215 Old Hebron Road Colchester on two dates – Saturday, April 30, 2022, at 1:00 p.m. and 2:00 p.m. and Saturday May 7, 2022, at 10:00 a.m. and 11:00 a.m.
- IV. Join members of The Colchester Hayward Fire Department at Fire Headquarters located at 52 Old Hartford Rd as they instruct the American Heart Association’s Family and Friends CPR Course. This video-based course teaches CPR and relief of choking in adults, children, and infants. Use of an AED (Automated External Defibrillator) is also included in the training, and participants receive a student manual for ongoing reference. There is no cost to sign up. If you would like to sign up for one of these upcoming classes, please contact the Fire Department
 - a. Available Dates: May 18, 2022 – 7PM to 9PM; August 10, 2022 – 10AM to 12PM; November 9, 2022 – 7PM – 9PM
- V. The Senior Center Logo Contest: As we design and build a brand-new senior center, we are looking to establish a new logo. We are conducting a community-wide contest to design this logo, which we envision using in the new building, as well as in promotional materials such as our monthly newsletter, on business cards and letterhead. The competition can be found on the town website and on social media.

- VI. A special shout out to Fornarelli's Ristorante & Bar for hosting a Meet & Greet last weekend. It was a pleasure to meet owner Vito Fornarelli while enjoying the atmosphere with friends. I wish them success in Colchester.
- VII. The Colchester Hayward Fire Department is conducting a survey of its external stakeholders. Our external stakeholders are our community members which provide valuable feedback to see how we are doing and where we can improve. As an all-hazards emergency response organization, we want to ensure we are providing quality essential services and your responses will assist in providing feedback to assist with that evaluation. The survey can be found on the town website and on social media.
19. Liaison Reports: D. Bates – Ethics Committee held an Executive Meeting which she wasn't allowed to attend. Attended Economic Development Commission where InCord signed the tax agreement, and they are submitting their design application for the new building. They are starting to interview applicants for when they arrive in Colchester. For grants, they are looking to get projects in capital and material costs have changed because of the fuel prices and they are engaged with a consultant to see how they can move forward. Regarding the grants they are looking at sidewalks for various locations around town. D. Turner met with Youth First Coalition had a presentation from the Search Institute. J. LaChapelle – Board of Ed had a budget discussion – ended up at 0.95% and then prior to that had an Executive Session. They parted ways with the Special Education Director. A. Bisbikos – Public Safety Subcommittee met for the first time and the motions of tonight's meetings were the outcome of that meeting. Also, we will be getting a Fire Chief to come to the next meeting to discuss how a Public Safety Committee has worked in his community. Regarding the budget, presented at a public hearing.
20. Adjourn: D. Turner motioned to adjourn at 9:35 pm. Seconded by D. Bates

Respectfully Submitted by Marli Rudko