



Town of Colchester, Connecticut

127 Norwich Avenue, Colchester, Connecticut 06415

Andreas Bisbikos, First Selectman

Board of Selectmen Regular Meeting Minutes
Thursday, June 15th, 2023, at 7 PM

Hybrid: Town Hall - Meeting Room 1 & Via Zoom

Members Present: A. Bisbikos, D. Bates, J. LaChapelle, D. Turner, and R. Coyle

Also Present: S. Hoffmann (Fire Chief), S. Shoemaker (Fire Marshal)

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Gayle Furman
TOWN CLERK

1. Call to Order – Meeting called to order at 7:12 PM by A. Bisbikos
2. Pledge of Allegiance
3. Correspondence
 - J. LaChapelle issued a statement on correspondence and on a Citizens Comments List
4. Citizens Comments
 - S. Schuster spoke about voting. C. Rivers stated that the list was used for canvassing. D. Lambert stated that the list is used to exclude. T. Moroch spoke about the budget process. T. Rudko spoke raised concerns against the list and allegations. E. Shuman spoke about the list and its purpose. R. Silberman spoke about lists and the Sewer & Water concerns. M. Egan condemned the idea of an investigation on the list in question. C. O'Donal praised the First Selectman for his business tour and the positive direction of the town. D. Bouchard condemned the intent of the list and identified concerns related to the Town Meeting. B. Dennler spoke about the list, the possible investigation, and politics. J. Coakley spoke raised his concerns related to the list. K. Kardys spoke about list making and the integrity of the DTC. V. Rose spoke about the budget process and the list. S. Chapman stated the list was used for canvassing and to not waste time on an investigation. M. Dubreuil raised concerns about the list. J. Ford spoke about the intent of the list, town legal costs, and the budget process. J. Shuman raised concerns about J. LaChapelle's behavior. R. Coyle spoke about the list as a canvassing tool, raised concerns on how J. LaChapelle obtained the email in question, and how BOS meetings shouldn't be political theater. G. Transue that people should be careful on how they use words and make allegations. S. Croucher spoke about the budget process and politics. M. Rudko raised concerns about the DTC's allegations. J. Seigny spoke about the referendum vote. S. Armstrong spoke about the budget process. M. Gilman about the list and the budget process.
5. Possible action to open an investigation on Selectman Rosemary Coyle, Selectman Denise Turner, Public Safety Committee Member Bernie Dennler, and Town Clerk Gayle Furman in relation to correspondence from Selectman Jason LaChapelle.
 - J. LaChapelle responded to concerns raised during citizens' comments and called off asking for an investigation.
 - A. Bisbikos issued a statement on the Citizens' Comments List. (Statement attached)
6. Presentation and Review of Sewer & Water Commission Chairman Stephen Coyle

- A. Bisbikos provided a timeline of D. Gesiak's 2017 removal from Planning & Zoning to establish a bar for removal. D. Bates and J. LaChapelle weighed in on D. Gesiak's removal.
- A. Bisbikos reviewed the Board of Selectmen Correspondence on Stephen Coyle and discussed conflicts of interests/bias.
- R. Coyle recused herself from the evidence review and subsequent vote at 8:50 PM
- A. Bisbikos presented the removal letter and evidence to the Board of Selectmen. The Board of Selectmen discussed the evidence.
- A. Bisbikos made a motion to remove Stephen Coyle from the Sewer & Water Commission. 2nd by J. LaChapelle.
Motion carried 2-1-1 with D. Bates abstaining and D. Turner voting no.

7. Consent Agenda

- R. Coyle made a motion to remove the minutes from the consent agenda and make it 7.1. 2nd by J. LaChapelle.
Motion carried unanimously 5-0
- R. Coyle made a motion to move the consent agenda. 2nd by D. Turner. ***Motion carried unanimously 5-0***
- 7.1: R. Coyle made a motion to approve the 6/1/23 Board of Selectmen meeting minutes as amended. 2nd by J. LaChapelle. ***Motion carried unanimously 5-0***

8. Fire Department

- S. Hoffmann provided a Fire Department Rebranding Presentation. S. Hoffmann answered questions from the Board of Selectmen and the public.
- S. Shoemaker provided recommendations to Town Ordinances, Chapter 6 – Alarm Systems and Town Ordinances, Chapter 103 – Rapid Access Systems
- J. LaChapelle made a motion to set a Public Hearing to be held on Thursday, July 13th for 5:30 PM at Town Hall, 127 Norwich Avenue in Colchester, CT to modify Town Ordinances, Chapter 6 – Alarm Systems and Town Ordinances, Chapter 103 – Rapid Access Systems as recommended by the Fire Marshal and the Town Ordinances, Chapter 59 as recommended by the Fire Chief. 2nd by R. Coyle. ***Motion carried unanimously 5-0***

9. Silver Brook Solar

- R. Coyle made a motion to approve the amended Memorandum of Intent to Lease with Silver Brook Solar, LLC and the Town of Colchester and have the First Selectman sign all the necessary documents. 2nd by J. LaChapelle.
Motion carried unanimously 5-0

10. ARPA

- R. Coyle made a motion that the Board of Selectmen approve the contract award for the Construction of Trail Head Parking Lot, Middletown/Rte. 16 (Sablitz Open Space Property) to the apparent low bidder, Roma Construction Inc. in the revised amount of \$52,852 and allow the First Selectman to sign any necessary documents associated with said contract as recommended by the Town Engineer. 2nd by D. Bates. ***Motion carried unanimously 5-0***

11. Commission/Committee Appointments

- D. Bates made a motion to appoint Andrew Norton to the Norton Park Committee as an alternate vacancy with a term set to expire until the committee is dissolved. 2nd by R. Coyle. ***Motion carried unanimously 5-0***

12. Motion to approve of the Naming Facilities/Areas and Recognition updates as found in the 3.1 in the Town Policy
 - R. Coyle made a motion to approve of the Naming Facilities/Areas and Recognition updates as found in the 3.1 in the Town Policy. 2nd by J. LaChapelle. ***Motion carried unanimously 5-0***
13. Motion to approve that the Nip Surcharge Disbursements be utilized by the Public Works Department for the following uses to 1) Repair/Upgrade Streetsweeper as needed and 2) Recycling Efforts per the discretion of the Public Works Director
 - Tabled
14. Citizens Comments
 - D. Lambert discussed membership on the Board of Selectmen. K. Kardys discussed the BOS agenda's order. M. Egan discussed Stephen Coyle's removal and transparency. D. Bouchard stated concerns related to those who spoke during citizens comments and to the declassified Citizens' Comments List. J. McKenzie shared a perspective on the First Selectman and on the budget referendum results. T. Moroch spoke about citizens' comments and rearranging the agenda items. T. Rudko spoke about the DTC's behaviors, budget referendum, and the budget process. S. Breitmaier spoke about the education budget.
15. First Selectman's Report - Tabled
16. Liaison Reports - Tabled
17. Adjourn
 - D. Bates made a motion to adjourn. 2nd by R. Coyle. Meeting adjourned at 11:23 PM

Minutes submitted by F. Brown

First Selectman's Statement on Citizens' Comments List

A 2020 Cato Institute/YouGov national survey of 2,000 Americans finds that 62% of Americans say the political climate these days prevents them from saying things they believe in. Majorities of Democrats (52%), independents (59%) and Republicans (77%) all agree they have political opinions they are afraid to share.

At the July 7th, 2022, Board of Selectmen meeting, Citizens Comments was used as a tool to create a list of those who support me as First Selectman. I have spoken to quite a few citizens (Republican, Democrat, Unaffiliated) and here was the common consensus: the list that was made public is a clear violation of public trust and at minimum quite creepy. One person on the list issued correspondence, the individual whose husband spoke at Memorial Day, and she stated "I, as a citizen, should be able to speak freely and without fear of recourse." Yet on the declassified list it was made clear that we need to watch out for these people "in case we ever cross paths".

In a society in which people partake in "cancel culture", we have seen numerous people get fired or seen their livelihoods shattered for the beliefs they hold. It begs the question; how many people will be denied a chance to sit on a Board or Commission if their names are on this list? Will those listed be denied a job if the First Selectman candidate that appears endorsing this list gets into office?

Former Socialist leader Hugo Chavez created a list to deny people government jobs, benefits, and documents for the opposition's rank and file in Venezuela. In 2004, Luis Tascon went public on this list which included 2.4 million Venezuelans.

History demonstrates that creating lists and marginalizing people we disagree with could lead to very dark places. Lists like this won't bring Colchester together.