



# Town of Colchester, Connecticut

127 Norwich Avenue, Colchester, Connecticut 06415

Andreas Bisbikos, First Selectman

Board of Selectmen Meeting Minutes

Thursday, April 21<sup>st</sup>, 2022, at 7 PM

Via Zoom

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

Attendees: Steven Coyle (Sewer & Water Commission Chair), Pam Minella (Interim Water Department Supervisor), Tom Dessureault, Andrew Norton; Jack Reagan (Managing Director of UHY); J. Gigliotti, (Wetlands Enforcement Officer) UCONN students: Megan Graham, William Carter, Megha Dhillon, Danielle Katz, Britni Strickland, and Jamie Merola

1. Call to Order: A. Bisbikos called the meeting to order at 7:02 p.m.

2. Pledge of Allegiance

3. Correspondence: J. LaChapelle spoke to a letter that R. Coyle wrote to the Board of Selectmen regarding the past Long Term Recovery Committee (which became the ARPA Ad-hoc Committee) in which R. Coyle stated that applications had all been submitted, interviews were held, and that the BOS had appointed them per the Town Charter. J. LaChapelle stated that through investigation he has not been able to locate any BOS Meeting Minutes that align with R. Coyle's statement. He is asking for the supporting documentation from R. Coyle. D. Turner concurred that she believed everyone had been interviewed. R. Coyle stated that she believes that this supporting documentation can be found in the 2020's. A. Bisbikos stated that R. Coyle can get the information to J. LaChapelle. All three agreed.

4. Citizens Comments: Jean Smith spoke to 1. When will plastic fence around the tree on Town Green come down? 2. Curious about Town Green grant and project. Who will take over and how soon will it start? 3. Vehicles for Town Green entry, low spot has now created runoff, ruts and a dangerous situation. A. Bisbikos addressed all three questions – He will investigate the plastic fence situation and the Town Green vehicle entry. He said regarding the grant, focus is sometime early summer. John Malsbenden would like clarification on the point of having a Public Hearing next week, when BOF approved BOE budget and it's already been set. A. Bisbikos stated that the Public Hearing is to present a new budget for both Town and BOE based on suggested reductions from the BOF. R. Coyle stated by Charter the BOF must have two public hearings. Deanna Bouchard addressed the same correspondence from R. Coyle regarding the Long Term Recovery Committee. She acknowledged the hard work from the committee but disputed the claims R. Coyle made about the proper formation of that committee, member size and that the process did not follow the Town Charter as we've always done in the past with all other committees/boards. She noted a

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conversation she had with M. Bordeaux that supported the fact this committee was not formed properly by the Town Charter. A. Bisbikos stated once again that R. Coyle will need to provide this information to J. LaChapelle. B. Denbler expressed frustration with ARPA haphazard process and feels that questions that are now surfacing should have been addressed earlier in the process. Spoke to the current administration's role in managing the inherited ARPA process, the grant program and Facebook post regarding the CBA and ARPA Committee. A. Bisbikos spoke to the collaboration with the ARPA Committee on the applications and wants to review the legal process around this process and the grant program.

5. Consent Agenda: R. Coyle motioned to move the 4/7/22 minutes because she was absent and must abstain from voting and move it to #6A. Seconded by D. Turner. **Motion carried 5-0.** D. Turner motioned to move the Consent Agenda. Seconded by R. Coyle. **Motion carried 5-0.**

- A. Approve Minutes of the 4/14/22 Special Meeting
- B. MOU Between the Town of Colchester and the Municipal Employees Union – Tiffany Quinn
- C. Tax Collector's Refunds
- D. Resignation of Chuck Maynard from the Public Safety Subcommittee
- E. Possible appointment of Sean Shoemaker to represent the Fire Marshal position, Rick Peruta to represent Emergency Management, Tim Joseph to represent the Fire Department, and Judy O'Meara to represent the Colchester Public Schools on the Public Safety Subcommittee.

6. UCONN presentation of Wildlife Management Plan: J. Gigliotti provided background on creating a plan for a recently acquired Open Space property. Location is 525 Middletown Road, almost directly across from the Abundant Life Church on Rt 16. A group of UCONN students presented an abbreviated version of the plan to the Board of Selectmen. They shared ownership background, previous management and uses, the acquisition process, goals, and objectives of this project. Covered were, pros and cons of the objectives as well as long-term management. Costs were covered for various items ranging from parking lot construction, clean up, to park accessories, such as picnic tables and benches. This will be a passive recreational charge with trails which provide multiple activities. The presentation was well received, and the Town will receive the full plan for review.

- A. Approve Minutes of the 4/7/22 Regular Meeting. D. Turner motioned to move the minutes from 4/7/22. Seconded by D. Bates. **Motion carried 4-0** with R. Coyle abstaining.



## 7. ARPA

A. Conversation with ARPA Representative Jack Reagan: ARPA Program was discussed.

B. Possible Action on the *Colchester Come Back Grant Program*: A. Bisbikos prefaced that the UHY document is a draft and a collaboration between ARPA, UHY and ARPA will create a final product to present on the Town website for the community. J. Reagan spoke about ensuring that a process of equity to the broad base of businesses in Colchester is considered as it pertains to application overflow which is not the process that was instituted by the ARPA Committee. He stated that there is a very strong equity lens that is focused on how these funds are to be used. The filing deadline is April 30<sup>th</sup> and looking to work with ARPA staff to make sure that is met. J. LaChapelle voiced his stance that these are supposed to be recovery funds and would like to see them used by taxpayers/business owners who need it the most to help them recover from a loss due to the Covid-19 pandemic. Jack Reagan stated that the way the funds are currently structured doesn't prevent people from using them in doing a refill of a basement in response to J. LaChapelle's comment about doing a home/business project of his basement for his necessary home office. Jack spoke to different established federal programs that were offered to businesses for Covid loss and asked the question if that was part of the ARPA funding. Board of Selectmen members offered their opinions on what should be done going forward.

C. ARPA Projects Update – Phase A- Project List: First Selectman: The following are headed to the BOS May 5<sup>th</sup> for an expected vote: Playgrounds, Strategic Planner and Pickleball Courts. Tennis courts will be negotiated because the price was initially too high and is part of the capital plan. Irrigation, also part of the capital plan, is out to bid, bid should close in early May. Giverrang (ARPA gift cards) will be presenting to ARPA Committee first meeting in May would like to have it in front of the BOS by June. The Police expansion floorplans are in. Estimated expansion cost is at \$228K and the project is being prepared to go out to bid. Public Works is looking to secure a new Youth Center contract and hopefully that will go out to bid afterwards to refurbish or reconstruct. Youth and Social Services counselor was sent to the ARPA Committee for its first meeting in May. It's a \$60K temporary position to address mental health issues. Phase B - Project List: Youth Center roof is being prepared to go out to bid by Matt Bordeaux. \$30K from ARPA secured from last year for this project and would be applied to the total. Total estimates of roof - \$70K – 100K. Town Hall projects earmarked but are on hold now. Fire Department parking lot (capital improvement plan) will go out to bid - \$100K - \$180K.

8. Sewer & Water/Bacon Academy Board of Trustees Subcommittee: S. Coyle stated the commission examined readings and there is no evidence that the reading from 6/10/2020 to 7/3/2020 were accurate. It was concluded that the water meter was malfunctioning. Best course of action was to determine what each party wanted. It was agreed to reduce the invoice during that time period to \$1,040.57. Also decided to add an additional separate service for Day Hall. Cost of second meter to be paid for by the Old Bacon Academy Board of Trustees. Bacon Academy Board of Trustees will continue to monitor the water consumption for both buildings using their latest cell phone software. T. Dessureault validated S. Coyle's narrative with what transpired. A. Norton offered his thanks for everyone working to arrive at a conclusion. P. Minella thanked the collaborative effort between all parties that has taken two years to resolve.

A. Possible action on the recommendations presented by the Sewer & Water/Bacon Academy Board of Trustees Subcommittee. Several board members offered their opinion on the process. J. LaChapelle asked about the total bill and the reporting of the bill. D. Bates motioned to accept the recommendations of the Sewer & Water/Bacon Academy Board of Trustees Subcommittee. Seconded by D. Turner. **Motion carried 5 -0.**

9. Ukrainian Flag

A. Possible action to raise the Ukrainian flag (in place of the POW flag) from April 23<sup>rd</sup> to April 30<sup>th</sup> on behalf of the humanitarian effort in Ukrainian per recommendation by the Parks and Recreation Commission at their April 4<sup>th</sup> Meeting. D. Turner motioned to move this forward. Seconded by R Coyle. **Motion carried 5 -0.**

10. Cragin Memorial Library – Acceptance of Grant with the Connecticut State Library. R. Coyle moved that Resolved, Andreas Bisbikos the duly elected First Selectman is empowered to execute and deliver in the name and on behalf of this organization a certain contract with the Connecticut State Library, State of Connecticut, for a Fiber to the Library-Internet Connection grant to pay for an assessment of the Library's Internet connection and networks. Seconded by D. Bates. **Motion carried 5-0.**

11. Possible Action to set a town meeting date for the Town and Board of Education budgets: R. Coyle stated can't act on this. Must have the second Public Hearing by Charter and the exact numbers of each of the budgets have to be in the motion. No action taken.



12. Citizens Comments: G. Barden shared his opinion on a FB post that he says challenges the ARPA Committee's integrity. A. Bisbikos stated the committee has worked diligently and he can't speak to comments made on social media. He also stated that BOS and ARPA Committee need to collaborate and put any animus aside. D. Bouchard spoke regarding the aforementioned FB post and reminded everyone that there is a First Amendment right granted to everyone. Clarified her earlier comments and shared the previous administration's stance from an audio regarding the formation of the ARPA Committee and the actual number of members. She stated that this town needs to take a close look at how this committee was formed and it must be equitable and fair and thinks Andreas has a lot of work to do yet on this. R. Silberman stated that Bernie wasn't allowed to speak a second time in a previous meeting and that he doesn't think it's appropriate to allow someone to speak a second time in a meeting and ramble on. Doesn't think it's acceptable to have an excessive consumption of water be swept under the rug for consumers to pay the difference. He thinks more focus should have been given to the water meter. A. Bisbikos addressed the comment about Bernie not being allowed to speak a second time and he stated that the only time one is denied is if they have already spoken during that particular segment of the Citizen's Comments and wanted to speak again.

### 13. First Selectman's Report

1. The ARPA committee is still accepting small business applications. There is \$1M in ARPA funds specifically earmarked for our local businesses. A business may receive up to \$25K in federal funds. The ARPA committee is also accepting non-profit applications. There is \$250K specifically earmarked for non-profits. Deadlines for local businesses and non-profits are April 30th. The Board of Selectmen unanimously decided that they will review all applications after the April 30th deadline to ensure funding fairness for all applicants.
2. Colchester continues to move into the 21st Century as our Online Permitting Portal is now active!! If you are interested in applying for a permit, you can easily access the documentation and submit the forms online.
3. On April 19<sup>th</sup> Eversource began installing approximately six miles of gas pipeline to improve system resiliency between Middletown and Montville and increase the availability of gas supply options from one to three transmission companies. This connection allows natural gas to flow between the communities, making sure that gas is always there when customers need it. The project provides a link to potential access to natural gas in areas where clean efficient natural gas has not been an option. The pipeline is to be constructed in the state or town rights-of-way. Most will occur in the road – resulting in minimal impacts to private property. Eversource and its contractors will coordinate work with town officials and individual customers, where needed. Eversource is expected to invest \$20M into the project. The project could generate up to \$650K in additional revenue for next year's grand list. Natural gas will become available in the coming years as a result. This is a big win for our community.



4. The Colchester “Annual Spring Clean Up” is Saturday, April 30 from 8am-12 noon. People (groups, families, organizations) can register online to clean up a specific area in town. Colchester Parks and Recreation will provide garbage bags which can be left onsite for the public works crew to pick up. If you are interested in cleaning a neighborhood, we can help arrange this as well. Clean up areas in town include the schools, the RecPlex, the Town Green, the Town Hall, and Ruby Cohen Woodlands.

All registered participants will meet at 12 noon at the Town Green baseball field for a group picture- then we will all head over to Mel’s Downtown Creamery for a free ice cream cone on us as a “thank you”! Please register online or contact the Park & Recreation office.

5. The “Colchester Memorial Day Parade” has chosen the theme for this year’s parade. This year it is "Colchester Remembers Their Citizens Who Gave Their Tomorrows For Our Today's". All marching units and floats should try and use the theme in preparing for the parade, which will be on Sunday May 29th, 2022. Applications are now available at the Town Hall and through the Town's web site. Applications are required for those who are interested in participating in the parade. Please contact the Town Hall and file your application before May 1st, 2022. The rain date of the event will be Monday, May 30<sup>th</sup> at 12:30 pm. It is also expected that there will be a flyover on Monday as well.
6. The Town Budget was unanimously approved by the Board of Finance with 2.12% increase from last year’s budget. This increase is 1.5% less than the budget increase that passed at referendum at the third try last year. All budget maintains all current services, begins the investment in various long-term capital projects, reorganizes two departments for greater efficiency, integrates 21<sup>st</sup> Century Transparency Software, doubles the investment in overdue tree removal services, and answers the call for the demand of additional senior services with a new part-time bus driver.
7. The BOS budget was approved last night. It is approximately a .47% increase from last year. If both budgets pass, the mill rate will stand at 27.07 mills, a decrease of 5.78 mills from last year.

14. Liaison Reports: A. Bisbikos reiterated that he already went over the BOF budgets and great stuff happening on the Memorial Day Committee. D. Turner: CORE met, and they are finalizing their mission statement and bylaws and also looking to be on the Town Green for the Farmer’s Market on 6/19 in celebration of Juneteenth. D. Bates: nothing to report on the Ethics Commission. Economic Development Commission has a proposed C-TIP for a very high-end apartment complex with various amenities and a 10% allocation for low-income housing. Friends of Cragin Library had a great turnout for the Used Book Fair. They were just awarded \$7,007 for three different programs such as Children’s Summer Reading, Adult/Teen Craft, and Gaming. Just applied for \$2K grant for summer enrichment programs. J. LaChapelle: BOE has had executive session meetings and a special meeting with the parents of the Special Ed Program.

15. Adjourn: D. Turner motioned to adjourn at 9:09 p.m. Seconded by J. LaChapelle.