

**MINUTES OF THE SALISBURY BOARD OF SELECTMEN MEETING  
MONDAY, APRIL 13, 2020 – 7:00 PM  
SALISBURY TOWN HALL, 5 BEACH ROAD  
COLCHESTER ROOM**

**PRESENT:** Selectmen Freeman J. Condon, Chairman; Wilma McDonald, Ronalee Ray-Parrott, Chuck Takesian, and Donna Abdulla  
**ALSO PRESENT:** Neil J. Harrington, Town Manager

**I. Call to Order/Salute to the Flag**

Chairman Condon called the meeting to order at 7:00 PM in the Colchester Room, Salisbury Town Hall. He then announced that Selectmen McDonald, Abdulla and Takesian were participating in the meeting remotely. The Chairman also read a statement indicating that, pursuant to the Governor's orders suspending provisions of the Open Meeting Law and placing limitations on the number of people who may in one place, this meeting will be conducted via remote participation to the greatest extent possible, that the public could watch the meeting on SCTV Channel 12, and that no in-person attendance by members of the public would be permitted.

**II. Acceptance of Minutes - None**

**III. Old Business - none**

**IV. New Business**

**a. License Renewals: None**

**b. New Licenses - None**

**c. License Amendments - None**

**d. Liquor License Renewals - None**

**e. New Liquor Licenses - None**

**f. Committee Appointments - None**

**g. Update/Presentations: None**

**h. Vote to Establish New Date for Town Election Day**

The Town Manager reported that, due to the Coronavirus pandemic, many communities have been taking advantage of Chapter 45 of the acts of 2020, a new law recently passed by the Legislature and signed by the governor, allowing for the re-scheduling of spring elections. He recommended that the Selectmen postpone Salisbury's election date until Tuesday, June 16. He noted that this is that date that has been chosen by Rowley and Newbury for their spring elections as well, and Chairman Condon reminded the Board that because the election for Triton School Committee members is conducted in all three communities at the same time, it would make sense for Salisbury to change its election date to coincide with the other two Triton communities.

Selectmen Ray-Parrott moved that, pursuant to Section 1 of Chapter 45 of the Acts of 2020 and due to the state of emergency declared by the Governor pursuant to Executive Order 591, Declaration of a State of Emergency to Respond to COVID-19, the Town of Salisbury's annual town election

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scheduled for May 12 be hereby postponed to Tuesday, June 16, 2020. Selectman Takesian seconded the motion, and it was approved unanimously.

**i. Vote to Establish New Date for Annual Town Meeting**

The Town Manager informed the Board that under existing law (Ch. 39, §9), the Board may postpone the date of a previously-scheduled Town Meeting, and he recommended that the Board re-schedule the Town's special and annual town meetings for Monday, June 22.

Selectman Ray-Parrott moved that, due to the state of emergency declared by the Governor pursuant to Executive Order 591, Declaration of a State of Emergency to Respond to COVID-19, the Town of Salisbury's annual and special town meetings be postponed from Monday, May 18 to Monday, June 22, 2020. Selectman Takesian seconded the motion, and it was approved unanimously.

**j. Vote to Extend Deadline for Payment of Real Estate and Personal Property Taxes; to Waive Interest and Penalties on Certain Taxes, Betterments, and Water and Sewer Charges; and to Extend the Deadline for Applications for Certain Property Tax Exemptions**

The Town Manager informed the Board that a new law, Chapter 53 of the Acts of 2020, gives local communities the authority to extend the due date for the payment of real estate and personal property taxes, excise taxes, water and sewer bills, and other charges, and also allows cities and towns to waive interest and penalty payments on such bills as long as the original bill amount is paid in full by June 30. Due to the extraordinary circumstances that have arisen with the Coronavirus pandemic and the financial hardship it has placed on many people, he suggested that the Board vote to adopt several votes to accomplish this objective.

Selectman Ray-Parrott then moved, in accordance with the provisions of Section 10 of Chapter 53 of the Acts of 2020, that the Salisbury Board of Selectmen vote to extend the due date for real estate and personal property taxes owed to the Town for Fiscal Year 2020, after credit is given for the preliminary tax payments previously made, from May 1, 2020 to June 1, 2020. Selectman Takesian seconded the motion, and it was approved unanimously.

Selectman Ray-Parrott moved, in accordance with the provisions of Section 10 of Chapter 53 of the Acts of 2020, that the Salisbury Board of Selectmen vote to extend the date an application for exemption of taxes is due from April 1, 2020 to June 1, 2020. Selectman Takesian seconded the motion, and it was approved unanimously.

Selectman Ray-Parrott moved, in accordance with the provisions of Section 10 of Chapter 53 of the Acts of 2020, that the Salisbury Board of Selectmen vote to waive the payment of interest and other penalty in the event of late payment of any tax, betterment, assessment or apportionment, water rate, annual sewer use, or other charge added to a tax for any payments with a due date on or after March 10, 2020, provided that payment of the original bill is made in full before June 30, 2020. Selectman Takesian seconded the motion, and it was adopted unanimously.

Selectman Ray-Parrott moved that the Board of Selectmen vote to extend the due date for the sewer billing dated April 13, 2020, from May 13, 2020, to June 1, 2020. Selectman Takesian seconded the motion, and it was adopted unanimously.

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He noted that he had received a communication from National Grid indicating that they are serving their customer as usual; however, if a person has a problem and calls National Grid for service, that person will be asked a number of questions, such as “Has anyone in the household traveled lately?”; “Has anybody been exposed to the virus?”; “Is anybody quarantined or sick?”

Selectman Takesian stated that the Town was not in a lock-down situation and he did not see how a summer resident coming to his/her cottage would endanger anyone. He noted that the seasonal water meters are usually in pits or under the house, so there does not need to be any contact between the person installing the meter and the homeowner. Additionally, people often contract with plumbers, painters, carpenters and other workers to do work on their summer homes at the beginning of the season and they need time to schedule appointments with these workers, so having water services restored now is important. He also stated that he is not talking about summer rental properties, as short-term rentals normally do not occur before Memorial Day.

Finally, he stated that if the Town makes Pennichuck wait until after May 4 to re-install seasonal water meters, they are going to be inundated with calls and will not be able to service everyone in a timely manner. He also stated again that he did not believe that allowing summer residents to come to their homes on the beach now to work on them would present any danger to public health. If he did, he said that he would be 100% in support of the Health Director and the Town Manager’s position. Chairman asked Mr. Takesian if he would like to make a motion, so that discussion could continue.

Selectman Takesian then moved that water meters be made available upon request, starting immediately, via an appointment with the water company, and that all protocols by the Governor be followed, and that there be no personal contact between the homeowner and an employee of Pennichuck. Selectman Ray-Parrott seconded the motion, and further discussion followed.

Selectman Ray-Parrott started by saying that she wondered what other towns were doing, because she feels that Salisbury cannot be the only town not allowing seasonal water meters to be re-installed. Not having heard back from any communities that she contacted, she asked the Town Manager if he had spoken to officials in other towns about this issue. Mr. Harrington responded that he had not spoken personally with any other towns, but that he has read that several communities, from Cape Cod up to Maine, are discouraging summer residents from coming their summer homes before May 1. Ms. Ray-Parrott said she understood this is a difficult situation, as she recognizes the position taken by the Health Director, but she is also sympathetic to people wanting to move into their summer homes. She said she was “torn” and would like to hear from other members of the Board.

Selectman McDonald stated that she lives in the same neighborhood at the beach as Mr. Takesian. She acknowledged that this is the time of year when seasonal residents normally return to the beach, but that the Town should give preference to those who live in Florida or Arizona during the winter and whose domicile is here and who vote here and they regularly come back to the beach in the summer. However, she also believes that we should allow seasonal residents to have their water turned on in May and be able to come here and work on their homes, as she does not think they will present a danger to the public health, as it would be good for them to come to Salisbury and be able to walk on the beach and then return to their cottages.

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Ms. Ray-Parrott said that she agreed with Ms. McDonald that people who live, for example, in Florida or Arizona for eight months of the year and live at Salisbury Beach for the other four months should be allowed to have their water meters turned on.

Selectman Abdulla stated that she believes the Board's responsibility first and foremost is to those whose primary residence is in Salisbury. She also said that she agrees with Ms. McDonald in terms of allowing people returning from being away for several months to have their water turned on before May 4, as their property in Salisbury is their home, not just their second beach cottage.

Chairman Condon stated that this was not a difficult decision for him, as his number one priority is for the health and well-being of the residents of Salisbury – and not to the residents of Metro-North or the Merrimack Valley who vacation here. He said that we hire police chiefs, fire chiefs, health agents and town managers because of education and experience, and we should have faith in their judgment. He stated that he completely supports Salisbury residents returning to their homes and having their water meters turned on, and he said he did not think it was unreasonable to ask seasonal residents or their renters to wait another three weeks. He then said that was walking along North End Boulevard last weekend and saw a sign on a property that advertised three units capable of holding up to eleven residents. We have no idea where those eleven potential residents would be coming from – perhaps New York City or Florida. It would be irresponsible for the Board, he stated, to overturn the decision of the Town Manager and the Director of Public Health just to be expedient. He knows it will be inconvenient for some seasonal residents to wait three weeks for water service, but the entire Coronavirus situation has been inconvenient for everyone. Chairman Condon said he could not support the motion at this time.

Selectman Takesian said he disagreed with the Chairman. He noted that people are coming to Salisbury Beach now "in droves" and the Town is not stopping them, but the Town is telling people who own summer homes and who pay taxes that we are not going to allow them to come until May, and he disagrees with that idea. The Chairman responded that the Town was doing everything it can to discourage people from coming here – we have closed the businesses at the beach center, we have closed down the parking on Broadway. and we are doing everything in our power to discourage people from coming to the beach.

The Manager asked to make a comment, which was allowed by the Chairman. Mr. Harrington reiterated that there is a public health crisis that is not likely going to peak for two or three weeks, and to pit the seriousness of this situation against the convenience of people who want to come to Salisbury in April because they always come here in April doesn't make any sense. He cited several examples of things that people are not able to do because of the Coronavirus situation. For example, people are dying and their families cannot have funeral or wake, leaving their loved to grieve from a distance. This is an unprecedented situation, he noted, and, as far as he was concerned, this issue is a matter of public health vs. the convenience of people for whom Salisbury is not their permanent residence. He said the correct choice to make was not a simple one, but it was evident to him that the Board should do what is in the best interest of the residents of the Town.

Selectman Takesian said that he understands that there is a public health crisis, but he does not agree that not allowing people to access their summer cottages would make Salisbury residents any less safe than they are now with lots of other people coming to town and walking around. Mr. Harrington

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responded that he was aware that there are people coming to beach communities like Salisbury, Seabrook, Hampton and Plum Island and trying to gather on the beaches, but these people are acting irresponsibly and gathering in places that they should not gather, but, unfortunately, no community has the resources to completely prevent this activity. He said he did not want to exacerbate the problem by welcoming in people to turn on their seasonal water meters.

The Chairman acknowledged that this was not a “black and white” type of issue, but he noted that if the Town were going to make a mistake, we should do so on the side of caution. This is the time to respond to a public health epidemic and anything the Town can do to encourage social distancing and following the Governor’s emergency orders, we should do. Asking people to wait three more weeks, in his opinion, is not an outrageous request.

Selectman Abdulla said that she also called a few other towns, and she noted that Newburyport is taking appointments for turning on seasonal water services after May 4.

Selectman Takesian reiterated that he was not convinced that allowing people access to their summer cottages presented any greater health risk than that posed by the large numbers of people who are already coming to Salisbury Beach. He said he knew that many people were being irresponsible, but that the only way to prevent those people from coming might be to close the borders to the town.

A vote was then taken on the motion, as follow: 2 in favor (Selectmen Takesian and McDonald; 3 opposed (Selectmen Condon, Abdulla and Ray-Parrott). The Chairman declared that the motion failed.

**VI. Sewer/Water - None**

**VII. Correspondence – None**

**VIII. Hearings – none scheduled**

**IX. Town Manager’s Report**

Mr. Harrington stated that the latest quarterly report from the Town’s community electric aggregation program had been sent to him recently, and we will leave a copy in the Board members’ mailboxes in the Selectmen’s office.

**X. Selectmen’s Report**

**a. Ratification of Signing of Weekly Warrants:**

Motion by Selectman Ray-Parrott, Second by Selectman Takesian; unanimously voted to ratify the signing of the following weekly warrants: W20-102 through W20-106.

Selectman Abdulla thanked all the essential employees in town, including health care workers, members of the Police, Fire and DPW Departments, the food store workers, those sewing masks in their homes, and others. Their commitment to our community is what makes Salisbury a great place to live. Selectman Takesian expressed his thanks to those same workers as well.

Selectman Ray-Parrott thanked the law enforcement personnel who have been reading books to the Salisbury Elementary School children, which is helping them to feel connected to their community.

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Chairman Condo thanks everyone who is cooperating during this very difficult time because it makes a difference. He also thanked the first responders, the teachers, and those at the Council on Aging for all they are doing to reach out to members of the community and help them cope in this difficult time.

**XI. Executive Session - none**

**XII. Adjournment**

Motion by Selectman Ray-Parrott, Second by Selectman Takesian; unanimously voted to adjourn at 7:55 PM.

Documents provided at the meeting and on file in the Selectmen's Office:

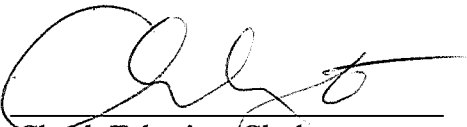
Copy of memos presented to the Board by the Town Manager

Quarterly electricity aggregation report

Respectfully submitted:

Neil J. Harrington, Town Manager

Approved: \_\_\_\_\_

  
Chuck Takesian, Clerk