

Minutes
Board of Selectmen
Regular Meeting
Wednesday, November 15, 2023

Attendance

First Selectman George Temple, Selectman Arnold Jensen, Selectman David McKane, Administrative Assistant Kristyn Rosa

First Selectman George Temple opened the meeting at 7:33 PM and the Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

Acceptance of Minutes

1) 10/18/23 Special Joint Meeting

Motion:

First Selectman George Temple moved to approve the 10/18/23 Special Joint Meeting minutes as presented. This was seconded by Selectman David McKane. 2 Ayes. Selectman Arnold Jensen abstained. Motion carried.

2) 10/18/23 Regular Meeting

Motion:

Selectman Arnold Jensen moved to approve the 10/18/23 Regular Meeting minutes as presented. This was seconded by Selectman David McKane. All 3 Ayes. Motion carried.

3) 10/23/23 Special Meeting

Motion:

Selectman Arnold Jensen moved to approve the 10/23/23 Special Meeting minutes with the following correction:

Remove/Strikeout - "and to authorize the First Selectman to sign Air Temp Mechanical Services, Inc. contract."

Motion should read:

Selectman David McKane moved to place item #1, the Great Oak Elementary School HVAC project and bonding financing to a Town Meeting which will take place on November 15, 2023, at 6:30 p.m.

This was seconded by Selectman David McKane. 2 Ayes. Selectman Arnold Jensen abstained. Motion carried.

4) 11/8/23 Special Meeting

Motion:

Selectman Arnold Jensen moved to approve the 11/8/23 Special Meeting minutes as presented. This was seconded by Selectman David McKane. All 3 Ayes. Motion carried.

3) 11/8/23 Special Joint Meeting

Motion:

Selectman Arnold Jensen moved to approve the 11/8/23 Special Joint Meeting minutes as presented. This was seconded by Selectman David McKane. All 3 Ayes. Motion carried.

Amendments to Agenda

1) Oxford Center Fire House Roof Replacement Project- New Funding Source

Motion:

Selectman Arnold Jensen moved to amend the agenda to add Oxford Center Fire House Roof Replacement Project - New Funding Source as Item # 11. This was seconded by Selectman David McKane. All 3 Ayes. Motion carried.

2) Award Electricity Bid to Constellation Energy for 1 year, at a rate of 10.93 per KWH as recommended by the Finance Director

Motion:

Selectman Arnold Jensen moved to amend the agenda to add Award Electricity Bid to Constellation Energy for 1 year, at a rate of 10.93 per KWH as Item #12 and move Report of First Selectman to Item #12. This was seconded by Selectman David McKane. All 3 Ayes. Motion carried.

Appointments

1) Great Oak Middle School Evaluation & Improvement Committee Appointment

Motion:

First Selectman George Temple moved to **table** the Great Oak Middle School Evaluation & Improvement Committee Appointment. This was seconded by Selectman Arnold Jensen. 2 Ayes. Selectman David McKane abstained. Motion carried.

Discussion:

First Selectman George Temple stated he would like to see security measures put in place before the approval of more Capital Projects for the Board of Education. The safety and welfare of the students is an item that should be considered first.

New Business

1) Air Temp Mechanical Services, Inc. Fixed Price Contract with the Town of Oxford for Great Oak Elementary School HVAC Project- Approve and Authorize First Selectman to Sign

Motion:

Selectman Arnold Jensen moved to approve the Air Temp Mechanical Services, Inc. Fixed Price Contract with the Town of Oxford for Great Oak Elementary School HVAC Project and to authorize the First Selectman to sign. This was seconded by Selectman David.

Discussion:

First Selectman George Temple supports this motion. The town also voted and has approved.

2) Great Oak Middle School Evaluation & Improvement Committee HVAC Systems at Great Oak Elementary School- Approve and Authorize First Selectman to Sign

Motion:

Selectman Arnold Jensen moved to approve the Great Oak Middle School Evaluation & Improvement Committee's request to hire Karen DePresia to write the HVAC Air Quality Grant to complete the Cafeteria and Gymnasium HVAC Systems at Great Oak Elementary School, in the amount of \$8,750.00 to be funded through previously approved Phase 1 funding, and to authorize the First Selectman to sign Karen DePresia Contract for said project. This was seconded by First Selectman George Temple. All 3 Ayes. Motion carried.

Discussion:

First Selectman George Temple stated Ms. DePresia has been working with the construction project at the Middle School. She has done a great job and pays attention to detail. The First Selectman fully supports this hire.

3) Great Oak Middle School Evaluation & Improvement Committee HVAC Air Quality Grant to Complete Renovations of HVAC At Quaker Farms School- Approve Contract and Authorize First Selectman to sign

Motion:

Selectman Arnold Jensen moved to **table** the Great Oak Middle School Evaluation & Improvement Committee's request to hire Karen DePresia to write the HVAC Air Quality Grant to complete the renovations of the HVAC systems at Quaker Farms School. This was seconded by Selectman David McKane. All 3 Ayes. Motion carried.

Discussion:

Mr. Herman Schuler, Great Oak Middle School Evaluation & Improvement Committee Chairman stated there are two grants that are being applied for. One is for the gym/cafeteria and the other is for the school. Both are due by December 31, 2023.

First Selectman George Temple said he would like security measures put in place before the HVAC System at Quaker Farms School is considered. He pointed out that he has been requesting security improvements for ten years. He went on to say that he, Administrative Assistant Kristyn Rosa and representatives from the Police Department have toured the school and noted where improvements to security should be put into place. Funds have been increased for the Board of Education and no updates to security have been implemented. Security measures must be implemented before we move forward with the Quaker Farms School HVAC System Project.

4) Designate Great Oak Middle School Evaluation & Improvement Committee as the Building Committee for Quaker Farms School HVAC Renovations Project

Motion:

First Selectman George Temple moved to **table** the Great Oak Middle School Evaluation & Improvement Committee's request to designate them as the Building Committee for Quaker Farms School HVAC Renovations Project. This was seconded by Selectman Arnold Jensen. All 3 Ayes. Motion carried.

5) Hawley Road Construction Project Bond Release Request - Approve

Motion:

Selectman Arnold Jensen moved to approve the Final Payment/Release of the Remaining Retainage to Gurrera Construction, in the amount of \$41,100.23, for the Hawley Road Construction Project; as approved by the Town Engineer and Town Counsel. This was seconded by Selectman David McKane. All 3 Ayes. Motion carried.

Discussion:

First Selectman George Temple stated that the project is complete and to everyone's satisfaction. This has already been approved by the Town Engineer and the Town Counsel.

6) Hire Adult Services Librarian

Motion:

Selectman Arnold Jensen moved to hire Jessica Zaccagnini as Adult Services Librarian, with an annual pay rate of \$47,745.82 (Step 1) and a start date of Tuesday, January 2, 2023. This was seconded by Selectman David McKane. All 3 Ayes. Motion carried.

Discussion:

First Selectman George Temple stated he has had the opportunity to meet with Ms. Zaccagnini. She has been very helpful to the staff and has been a welcome addition. The First Selectman fully supports this hire.

Selectman Arnold Jensen questioned if this position was in the Library Budget. Director of Media/Library Operations Robbie Costigan stated it is in the budget.

7) Oxford Greens Request to Release Soil & Erosion Bond for Pulte Homes, Phase 4- Approve

Motion:

Selectman Arnold Jensen moved to approve to release the Soil & Erosion bond for Oxford Greens, Pulte Homes, Phase 4, in the amount of \$71,250.00, as approved by the Inlands/Wetlands Commission at their meeting held on 10/10/23. This was seconded by Selectman David McKane. All 3 Ayes. Motion carried.

8) Tax Refunds

Motion:

Selectman Arnold Jensen moved to approve the tax refunds, totaling \$6,071.44, as presented and recommended by the Tax Collector in her letter dated 10/24/23 and to authorize two signatures. This was seconded by Selectman David McKane. All 3 Ayes. Motion carried.

9) Tax Overpayment

Motion:

Selectman Arnold Jensen moved to transfer the tax overpayment to an outstanding tax bill, in the amount of \$982.93, for David Sheehan of 9 Silano Drive. This was seconded by Selectman David McKane. All 3 Ayes. Motion carried.

Discussion:

Tax Collector Helen Leung stated that due to the length of time this could not be refunded.

First Selectman George Temple said the overpayment was discovered by the Tax Collector. A letter was sent to Mr. Sheehan. Over payments are only refundable for one year. Although the town would be correct to keep the funds, it is not equitable. The First Selectman went on to say he feels this particular case deserves an exception. These funds will be applied to a current bill.

10) Heating and Cooling Contract - Award Bid

Motion:

Selectman Arnold Jensen moved to award the Heating and Cooling Contract to B.P. Heating and Cooling, LLC of Oxford, in the amount of \$26,100.00, which now includes Municipal Annex Building, as presented by the Facilities Manager in his letter dated 10/30/23. This was seconded by Selectman David McKane. All 3 Ayes. Motion carried.

Discussion:

Facilities Manager George Renzoni stated this now covers all of the buildings including the Annex Building.

Finance Director Jim Hliva explained that this is in the current budget.

Selectman David McKane stated that he is familiar with B.P and they do a great job.

11) Oxford Center Fire House Roof Replacement Project- New Funding Source

Motion:

Selectman Arnold Jensen moved to approve the funding source for the Oxford Fire House Roof Replacement Project which will now be funded through ARPA funds. This was seconded by Selectman David McKane. All 3 Ayes. Motion carried. (Note: the previously allocated LoCIP funding for this project will now be used toward the Community Center).

First Selectman's Report

- Last Thursday the First Selectman attended the Senior Center's Veterans Luncheon
- That Friday night he also attended the Veterans Dinner at the High School
- And last Saturday he joined the American Legion on Route 67 at the Great Hill Road intersection for their annual Helmet Drive
- And that same night he attended the Annual Veterans Day Candlelight Vigil in Seymour
- Tomorrow, the First Selectman will be at the Ribbon-Cutting Ceremony for Tide Cleaners which is located across Quarry Walk
- Also tomorrow at 6:00 PM, here at Town Hall, is the Swearing-In Ceremony for all newly elected officials.

- Mark your calendars, Friday, December 1st will be Park's & Recreation's Annual Tree Lighting Event at Town Hall. The program begins at 6:00 PM. Non-perishable food donations will be accepted to help Stuff an Ambulance and toy donations will be accepted for the Connecticut State Police Toy Drive
- Next week is Thanksgiving. And for those of you that are unaware, there is a butterball turkey hotline for all turkey questions and concerns. The number is easy to remember too: 1-800-BUTTERBALL

Audience of Citizens

Mr. Michael Koosa, of 63 Old Church Road, on behalf of the Board of Education, addressed the Board in regards to the HVAC system at Quaker Farms School. He stated he learned of the security concerns at the last Facilities Subcommittees meeting. He noted there was a surplus last year and he understood the First Selectman has had concerns in regards to safety over the last 10 years. However, Mr. Koosa was never made aware until recently of said concerns. These concerns have never been brought up in any of the Board of Education meetings in which he attended in the last 4 years. Mr. Koosa does apologize for this miscommunication. He explained that moving forward, the Board of Education will do their best to get this moving. But, as of now it is not in the budget and there has been no funding request. Mr. Koosa went on to say that the HVAC system is about more than just comfort; the main concern is about heating. There are children that have to wear their jackets all day because the room is so cold. Then, there are other rooms that are the exact opposite and the windows have to be opened because it's too hot. He said it's about a different kind of safety issue. Mr. Koosa reiterated that he understands the Board's concern for safety, however he was unaware of this concern until now. In the future he would like to have more communication between the Board of Selectmen and the Board of Education.

First Selectman George Temple stated he has a lot of respect for the Board of Education and Mr. Koosa. However, it's been ten years. First Selectman Temple stated that thousands to millions of dollars have been spent for the schools, and yet the basic necessities have been neglected. He stated that he appreciated Mr. Koosa's enthusiasm for the project to move forward. The First Selectman pointed out that he has spoken to the last three Superintendents and yet nothing has been accomplished in regards to the safety of the children.

Mr. Koosa stated the Board of Education would like to have more communication with the Board of Selectmen. He also stated that the Board of Education has updated security measures through the years.

First Selectman George Temple explained that he has yet to see any estimate for an update on security. Mr. Koosa stated it was done at the last meeting. First Selectman Temple stated nothing has been presented to him. He is going to insure the safety of the children in our schools. He pointed out that he had a walk-through of the schools with the State Police Department in which safety concerns were noted. This must get done and it must get done right away. First Selectman Temple stated that he is in favor of the HVAC system. He pointed out that only a month ago was the first Board of Education meeting about school safety. This is an important project. He went on to say that he never wants to see what happened in Newtown happen in Oxford.

Mr. Koosa said we need to make sure we are all on the same page.

First Selectman Temple said he has had conversations about safety in our schools with many people. They all agree. We have a responsibility to our children.

Debbie Sherman, of 7 Perkins Road, spoke with Dr. Miller to discuss the project. There is a meeting planned for Tuesday, November 21, 2023. She went on to say that the meeting does involve security, however she cannot go into detail.

Mrs. Sherman said that it was only at the last Facilities Meeting that the topic of security was brought up. She stated that if it was known it was such a concern, then the last year's surplus would have been used. Mrs. Sherman explained that the Board of Education would have worked on it if they were made aware of it being such a concern. First Selectman pointed out that the Central Office knew it was a concern. Mrs. Sherman reiterated that Tuesday a meeting will be held.

Tonya Curtiss, of 619 Chestnut Tree Hill Road, addressed the Board in regards to the temperature of her child's classroom. She stated that her son must wear his jacket in class. She understands security is an issue, but doesn't understand why projects can't be done in tandem. She also discussed funding and is aware that the ARPA funds could be used for the HVAC system.

Amy Sarris, of 120 Freeman Road, addressed the Board and reviewed repairs and upgrades to the schools through the years. She went on to say that \$5 million was spent at Quaker Farms School, \$10 million at Great Oak School, \$8 million for Center School, and over \$1 million for the High School. She discussed the years and what was done for improvements. Ms. Sarris went on to say it's been 7½ years of requesting to have the HVAC system put in. She stated children have nose bleeds and chapped lips, stating the room temperature is the cause. In some classrooms the windows have to be open

because the temperature is so hot. This increases the energy costs. Children are wearing coats, children should be concentrating on learning. There is an opportunity to go to the state for funds to have the cost solely not on the taxpayer. She asked the Board why the town is not going after those funds.

First Selectman Temple stated the town has spent close to \$70 million on the schools. The Town is not ignoring facilities or education. There have been complaints from parents that their children's backpacks were smelling, the town took care of that issue and continues to. The town put in a new school. First Selectman Temple agreed with the quality of air; this will be addressed. However, first the town is going to make sure the children are safe; that is the number one priority.

Amy Sarris said there are health concerns. The facility study report stated that the HVAC system is an urgent matter to be replaced; to be corrected as soon as possible. First Selectman Temple said as far as urgency, the town has many items that are urgent. However, school security will be addressed first, the safety of students comes first.

Jessica Garnat, of 145 Coppermine Road, addressed the Board in regards to the HVAC system. She stated they have been collecting comments from staff and teachers from Great Oak and Quaker Farms Schools. She appreciated that the town is moving forward with the Great Oak School project. However, she pointed out that one staff member had a lung infection last year and her doctor informed her it was her work environment. The First Selectman asked if anyone at the Board of Education had been notified of this. Ms. Garnett replied she did not know. First Selectman Temple asked if there was a doctor's note stating that indeed it was the work environment that caused the lung infection. Ms. Garnett replied no, there was no doctor's note provided.

The First Selectman stated there is nothing more important than someone's child; that is understood. The town has limited resources but has managed to make a lot of progress, and the mill rate has been kept down. First Selectman Temple went on to say he doesn't want everyone to get discouraged, the Board understands air quality is important. However, he feels the need to send a message to the Board of Education that the Board of Selectmen are serious about the safety of the schools. Our town has an officer at every school, where we never did before and many towns don't.

Jessica Garnett asked why can't they both be a priority. The First Selectman stated they can, they should. He pointed out that the security of the schools shouldn't even be a priority as it should've been addressed years ago.

Jessica Garnett said the staff and teachers feel they don't have a voice, which is why she had collected these comments.

The First Selectman said he has limited control. He went on to say he agrees with what everyone has said tonight. However, the most important thing is safety. A few weeks would make a difference with moving ahead with this project.

Amy Sarris stated the Grant needs to be submitted by December 31, 2023. The First Selectman stated there is still time and there are always grants to apply for. The decision has already been made.

Jessica Garnett continued with comments from staff. She went on to list some health conditions, diabetes, heart conditions, asthma and sensory disorders, and pointed out freezing bathrooms, thermostats that don't work, heat blasting in some rooms. These issues are just at Great Oak Elementary School.

The First Selectman said the real need is Quaker Farms School. Jessica Garnett stated issues at Quaker Farms School are that the teachers have complained with the difficulty of regulating the room temperature; heat is blasting in some rooms. The First Selectman asked Mr. Koosa if the concerns were valid.

Mr. Michael Koosa stated they were valid; they are unable to get the parts to fix the furnace. The urgency is that the grant must be applied for by December 31, 2023.

First Selectman Temple stated he understood, however there are other grants. He went on to say that both Boards can work together. He stated if the project is over 10% of the budget, it will have to go to referendum which may or may not pass.

Jessica Garnett continued with comments from teachers and staff. She went on to say it's not only the winter months but also the summer months. The ADA states air quality should be 38%, it was 64%. She thanked the Board of Selectmen for their time.

The First Selectman thanked everyone for their comments and assured them that it will get done, the town will get funds from the state. We have many projects to be completed and that need to be completed.

Selectman Arnold Jensen moved to adjourn the meeting at 9:04 PM this was seconded by Selectman David McKane. Motion carried.

Respectfully Submitted By

Kathleen Sundstrom

Kathleen Sundstrom

Clerk

TOWN OF ORONO, CT
Kathleen Sundstrom
TOWN CLERK

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