

Town of Seymour ~ Board of Selectmen  
MINUTES  
Regular Meeting  
Tuesday, January 19, 2021 at 7:00pm  
Zoom Teleconference - Call #646-558-8656 – ID# 816 8416 7506

**Members Present:** Trisha Danka, Robert Findley, Annmarie Drugonis, Al Bruno (7:11pm), Patrick Lombardi, Robert VanEgghen

**Members Absent:** Chris Bowen

**Others Present:** Bryan LeClerc, Rory Burke, Monica Dimon

**Item #1 – Call Meeting to order**

First Selectwoman Annmarie Drugonis called the meeting to order at 7:02pm.

**Item #2 – Pledge of Allegiance**

Everyone saluted the Flag and recited the Pledge of Allegiance.

**Item #3 – Public Comment**

None

**Item #4 – Approve Minutes from December 16, 2020 Regular Meeting**

Motion to approve Minutes from December 16, 2020 Regular Meeting

Motion: Robert Findley

Second: Trisha Danka

Vote: 6 – Yes

0 – No

0 – Abstain

Trisha Danka – Yes

Robert Findley – Yes

Annmarie Drugonis – Yes

Patrick Lombardi - Yes

Al Bruno – Yes

Robert VanEgghen – Yes

Chris Bowen – N/A

**Item #5 – First Selectwoman's Report**

- Regarding the fish by-pass/Tingue Dam – we have received a request for an easement from the DEEP so that they can start storing equipment for work to repair the area and put up fencing as needed. They will restore the area after work is complete. Bob Findley asked what the expected timeline is on that? Annmarie said that they will work in the wintertime. The easement is for 180 days.
- Route 67/Holbrook Road Easements have come in. This work will take place in the Spring.
- We are very proud of our Board of Finance and Doug Thomas – we have received our 6<sup>th</sup> CAFR award for Excellence in Financial Report. Great job! Budget meetings will be starting on February 1<sup>st</sup>.
- There have been a lot of break-ins and car thefts in the area. The Police Department is ramping up their patrols – if you see anything or feel your area needs more patrolling, please call the Police Department. Many of the thefts have occurred because people are not locking their cars or leave them running. Please everyone LOCK YOUR DOORS and put your ALARM ON!

**Item #6 - Discussion & Take Possible Action Regarding Tingue Dam Easements**

In your packets there is a Temporary Construction Easement from the State of Connecticut:

- Bryan LeClerc from the Town Counsel said that the version in the packet contains an error. An Easement is giving Temporary right of way over a property for a certain purpose for a certain amount of time. This will allow the State of Connecticut to pass over Town land to cut down trees and other actions necessary to repair the dam; this includes putting up temporary fencing, bring in and store equipment. They also agreed to restore the area after repair is complete. The language in this Easement says they will terminate 180 days after repair. I believe it should be 180 days after the date of the Easement. We will make that correction and send back to the Attorney General's Office and have it signed with that correction.
- Robert Findley asked when the start date is; and he clarified that the work will be complete 180 days after the start date.

Motion to approve this Easement after review by Town Counsel and with specific Start and Finish Dates

Motion: Patrick Lombardi

Second: Robert Findley

- Bryan LeClerc said that the Start Date will be the date of the Easement document and the End date will be 180 days after the Start Date. If they need longer than that, we will come back in two weeks with this.

Vote: 6 – Yes

0 – No

0 – Abstain

Trisha Danka – Yes

Robert Findley – Yes

Annmarie Drugonis – Yes

Patrick Lombardi – Yes

Al Bruno – Yes

Robert VanEgghen – Yes

Chris Bowen – N/A

**Item #7 - Discussion & Take Possible Action Regarding Grand Light Tax Abatement Application**

Motion to discuss & take possible action regarding Grand Light tax abatement application

Motion: Pat Lombardi

Second: Al Bruno

Vote: 6 – Yes

0 – No

0 – Abstain

Trisha Danka – Yes

Robert Findley – Yes

Annmarie Drugonis – Yes

Patrick Lombardi – Yes

Al Bruno – Yes

Robert VanEgghen – Yes

Chris Bowen – N/A

- Rory Burke said that we have already approved the Application. Now that the project is completed, this is just the final accounting. Now, we will take a look at the total amounts and **grant a tax abatement % and specify an amount of time.**
- For this project, the total amount eligible per the Tax Abatement Policy is \$264,672. Per the policy for a project of between \$50,000 and \$500,000 the abatement can be between 30% and 50% for a period of three years. Some other things we should take into consideration are they used several local contractors; this was an expansion of their facility and they added two part-time and one full-time position; potential for increased Economic Development; we can choose to waive the permit fees.
- Rory Burke will request documentation for all these expenses to ensure that they match up.
- Robert Findley said that this should be less arbitrary. Can we develop a fixed analysis procedure?

- Trisha Danka said that she understands why we have to do this – to keep businesses in Town – residents may not understand this. We need to make sure that we are fair. Also, we should not always use the highest percent abatement. We should look at all the factors. I would suggest 40% in this case.
- Annmarie Drugonis said that it has been proven that this Tax Abatement Policy does keep big businesses in our Town.
- Rob VanEgghen said that, moving forward we should have a more concrete formula for determining the % of abatement. We do want to send the message that we want to keep businesses interested in expanding in Seymour. This would be an incentive for them to do so. On the downside, some of the homeowners may have an issue with this, especially due to the recent revaluation causing an increase in their taxes. They may not understand the importance of keeping and growing businesses in our Town. I would recommend the full 50%.
- Trisha Danka said that she does still recommend the 40%.
- Rory Burke said that the Tax Abatement Policy was passed in 2012.
- Al Bruno said that he was on this Committee. John Conroy was the chairman and drove the process for the original Policy. He had a lot of insight. It is always good practice to revisit and make sure that the Policy is still working for us.
- Trisha Danka said that she trusts John’s ideas. What was the original plan as far as percentages?
- Al Bruno said he does not remember, but he knows that they did not want to usurp the power of the Board of Selectmen. The final decision is to rest with the Board. We need to develop some type of balancing test. Should not be arbitrary; we do not want to give the maximum all the time. Annmarie should form a committee so that we can revisit the Plan. We do not have a lot of real estate in Town to develop businesses. We need to be very smart and be able to explain to the residents and taxpayers why this Plan is in place. It is a very logical thing to have. Without tax incentives, businesses will go elsewhere.
- Trisha Danka said that we should stay with the 40% in this case. We should definitely form a committee to go over the Policy. This would help us provide some more consistency with this. Whomever is on the committee should provide us with some guidance as to what to look at and how we want to make our decisions. We should also leave it loose enough so that we are not tied to a specific formula if we are having a bad year, we have some flexibility. We do want to have the Board of Selectmen as a final word.

Motion to grant a 40% tax abatement for three years for the Grand Light, LLC

Motion: Pat Lombardi

Second: Trisha Danka

Vote: 6 – Yes

0 – No

0 – Abstain

Trisha Danka – Yes

Robert Findley – Yes

Annmarie Drugonis – Yes

Patrick Lombardi - Yes

Al Bruno – Yes

Robert VanEgghen – Yes

Chris Bowen – N/A

**Item #8** – Discussion & Take Possible Action Regarding Religious Freedom Day Proclamation

Al Bruno read the *Religious Freedom Day Proclamation* into the record:

**Proclamation**

**Religious Freedom Day**

**January 16, 2021**

**WHEREAS,** Religious freedom was first among rights guaranteed by the United States Constitution to protect all people to think, express and act upon what they deeply believe as long as they do not harm others; it is a fundamental human right; and

**WHEREAS,** Religious freedom guards the people’s rights to be able to express their beliefs or lack thereof openly without the fear of being denied equal rights; it protects individuals from religious discrimination in employment, housing, and other services; it prevents people from being denied the right to have a business, occupation, or professional license based on their identification or beliefs regarding religion; and

**WHEREAS,** Freedom of religion principles should guide judicial decisions, legislation, and public policy at all levels of government, such that the government may not favor one religion over another or atheism or agnosticism and

**WHEREAS,** In 1992, Congress designated January 16<sup>th</sup> as Religious Freedom Day to commemorate the January 16, 1786 enactment of the Virginia Statute for Religious Freedom, authored by Thomas Jefferson.

**NOW THEREFORE,** Be it resolved that I, Annmarie Drugonis, First Selectwoman of the Town of Seymour, Connecticut do hereby proclaim January 16, 2021 as Religious Freedom Day.

**IN WITNESS WHEREOF,** I have set my hand and caused the Seal of the Town of Seymour, Connecticut to be affixed on this 16<sup>th</sup> day of January 2021.

Annmarie Drugonis said that this will be a yearly proclamation.

Motion to approve the above Proclamation as presented

Motion: Al Bruno Second: Trisha Danka

Vote: 6 – Yes	0 – No	0 – Abstain	
Trisha Danka – Yes	Robert Findley – Yes	Annmarie Drugonis – Yes	Patrick Lombardi – Yes
Al Bruno – Yes	Robert VanEgghen – Yes	Chris Bowen – N/A	

**Item #9 – Discussion & Take Possible Action Regarding Economic Development Director**

Annmarie Drugonis said that we are not hiring yet. This was the final Job Description created by Chris Pelosi.

Motion to discuss & take possible action regarding Grand Light tax abatement application

Motion: Robert Findley Second: Robert VanEgghen

Vote: 6 – Yes	0 – No	0 – Abstain	
Trisha Danka – Yes	Robert Findley – Yes	Annmarie Drugonis – Yes	Patrick Lombardi – Yes
Al Bruno – Yes	Robert VanEgghen – Yes	Chris Bowen – N/A	

- Rob VanEgghen suggested that in the “Supervision – Received” section – “works in conjunction with the EDC but does not report to them” – this section should be taken out.
- Bob Findley said that “Works under the general supervision and reports to the First Selectman” should be first.

- Rob VanEgghen said that the Director is the go-between the public and the EDC. Trisha Danka said that we should also add “and works with others as needed.” We should amend this document as discussed.

Motion to approve the Document (Economic Development Director Job Description) amended as discussed

Motion: Robert VanEgghen

Second: Robert Findley

Vote: 6 – Yes                      0 – No                      0 – Abstain  
 Trisha Danka – Yes              Robert Findley – Yes              Annmarie Drugonis – Yes              Patrick Lombardi – Yes  
 Al Bruno – Yes                      Robert VanEgghen – Yes              Chris Bowen – N/A

**Item #10 – Appointments**

None – Annmarie Drugonis said that we are in the process of putting together a WPCA Board

**Item #11 – Tax Refunds & Abatements**

Motion to approve the Tax Refunds & Abatements Reports dated 12/30/20 and 1/15/21 as presented by Tax Collector Dana Flach

Motion: Pat Lombardi

Second: Robert Findley

Vote: 6 – Yes                      0 – No                      0 – Abstain  
 Trisha Danka – Yes              Robert Findley – Yes              Annmarie Drugonis – Yes              Patrick Lombardi – Yes  
 Al Bruno – Yes                      Robert VanEgghen – Yes              Chris Bowen – N/A

**Item #12 - Transfers**

None

**Item #13 – Correspondence**

- Check Registers
- Letter from Berchem & Moses regarding the Executive Order 9R – update on modified Tax deadlines.
- Letter from GFOA regarding our Certificate of Excellence in Financial Reporting.
- Letter from resident Jamie Brennan regarding the de-classification of 124 Bungay Road as a farm classification. There has been some discussion on Facebook about this. There is nothing that the First Selectman or Board of Selectmen can do about this situation. It is between Mr. Brennan and the Board of Assessment Appeals. Also, he quoted a State Statute in his letter. But if you read a little further in the Statute, it states that the farm must have income of \$15,000 or greater – or spend \$15,000 in investments in your farm. This is something that the Tax Assessor reviews – he reviews his records. This may have been one of the findings – that Mr. Brennan’s farm did not meet. Mr. Brennan has written letters to the State. The only thing that he can do is appeal to the Board of Assessment Appeals. The Tax Assessor is the only one who can change his classification. There is nothing that we can do.
  - Robert Findley said that in the letter he references the “predatory practices of the Assessor”. Is there anything legally that we should be doing? He is actually causing issues. Annmarie Drugonis said that no one is taking his farm away. It is only the change of classification of the .

property. The Tax Assessor does not report to the First Selectman. He reports directly to the State.

- Bryan LeClerc said that he could appeal to the State Superior Court. Robert Findley asked if we have communicated to him what his options are. Does he know what he needs to do if he disagrees with the Assessor's findings? Rob VanEgghen asked if he has gone through the appeals process. Bryan LeClerc said we cannot provide any legal advice to him. Al Bruno said that there are lots of free tax clinics @ local law schools and there should be something online on the procedure to appeal. Annmarie Drugonis said that he has put in an appeal for the taxes, but he has not appealed to the Attorney General for a change in classification. The Tax Assessor should have given him a reason why he is not a farm.
- Rob VanEgghen asked if we can have a response for him so that if a comment is made, we can say that we responded with something. Bob Findley said that at least we can give him a direction to go in. Trisha Danka said that we should give him direction – steps he should take - and that's it. We are not involved. We cannot do anything else. We don't want to be the ones creating a roadblock because he's not handling things the right way to get a response. We will just give him direction, no promises, and just keep reiterating that.

**Item #14 – Public Comment**

None

**Item #15 – Selectmen's Public Comment**

- Trisha Danka
  - Quick question – is there any conflict of interest with Mr. Brennan and his involvement with the Planning & Zoning or any other Boards/Commissions he is on? No.
  - Martin Luther King Day – acknowledge diversity we have in Seymour and encourage more.
  - There were some decorations put up in Town on Stop signs and other signs (they were granted permission as long as the signs were not blocked). They looked great and it was a wonderful idea. But now we need to make sure that these people take the decorations down.
- Patrick Lombardi – Nothing
- Robert Findley – With the string of car thefts in Town, please lock your doors. With the changing of the guard in Washington – I am glad to see that we have a neutral stance in Seymour. We all work together.
- Robert VanEgghen – Echo Trisha and Bob's comments; we do usually have calm and neutral status.
- Al Bruno –
  - I am glad to see that the CIAC is considering allowing winter sports.
  - Want to echo what has been said about the break-ins – please lock your doors!
  - Thank you to everyone for picking up the garbage, the Town looks cleaner. People are taking more pride in our Community.
  - Thank you for the decorations on the signs and downtown. I appreciate the gesture.
- Annmarie Drugonis –
  - I think the Holiday Lights Celebration went well. Hope we can do again next year. It went with the sign decorating! Next year maybe we can do more downtown.
  - I know that people are upset about the revaluation. Everybody's assessment went up. My assessment went up. The revaluation has to be done every five years; we asked the governor to postpone due to COVID, but he said no. We had to go through it. We will not need to pay on

the new assessment until 2022. Normally it evens out with the taxes – if you pay more on your house, usually less on the cars. You can always appeal your reassessment.

- Seymour is growing, our industrial park is filling; we are keeping businesses here. I wish people could see something other than Tri-Town Plaza. We cannot do anything about that if the owner does not want to.

**Item #16 – Adjournment**

Motion to adjourn at 8:12pm

Motion: Trisha Danka

Second: Robert Findley

Vote: 6 – Yes

0 – No

0 – Abstain

Trisha Danka – Yes

Robert Findley – Yes

Annmarie Drugonis – Yes

Patrick Lombardi - Yes

Al Bruno – Yes

Robert VanEgghen – Yes

Chris Bowen – N/A

Submitted by:

*Monica Dimon*

**Monica Dimon**

**Recording Secretary**

Reviewed by:

*Annmarie Drugonis*

**Annmarie Drugonis**

**First Selectwoman**