



Board of Selectmen Meeting – February 10, 2021

Town of Orange, Connecticut

TOWN HALL
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ORANGE, CONNECTICUT 06477-2499

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REGULAR MEETING OF THE BOARD OF SELECTMEN WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 10, 2021 AT 7:00 P.M. ZOOM MEETING

NOTICE: In accordance with Governor Lamont’s Executive Order 7B Regarding the COVID-19 Pandemic, this meeting will be held remotely with no In-person attendance. The meeting will still be broadcast live on OGAT Optimum channel 79 and Frontier channel 6063 and streamed on YouTube and OGAT on the following links:

YouTube - <https://youtu.be/drOQghUucPE>

OGAT 24/7 Stream

<https://videoplayer.telvue.com/player/BUJHRRxhCf0u3AtXMrx7Sx7CjdW8zUFT/stream/851?autostart=true&showtabssearch=true>

Any comments for public participation or an agenda item must be submitted by 4:00 p.m. on Wednesday February 10, 2021 to: jzeoli@orange-ct.gov

UNAPPROVED MINUTES

Present on-line:

First Selectman James Zeoli
Selectman John Carangelo
Selectman Mitchell Goldblatt
Selectman Margaret Novicki
Selectman Ralph Okenquist
Selectman Judy Williams
Ann Denny, Secretary

John Cifarelli, Finance Director
Mike Visnic, Orange Little League
Chris Kelly, OGAT

The meeting was called to order at 7:01 P.M. by First Selectman Zeoli, followed by introductions.

ORANGE, CT
TOWN CLERK'S OFFICE
RECEIVED
2021 FEB 11 PM 4:05

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

(2 minutes per person)

- An email was received from Anna Mahon, resident and Principal of Amity High School, expressing concern of how the Board of Selectmen and the Board of Finance interface with the Amity Regional School District and the Amity Board of Education when it comes to budget discussions and proposals.
- An email was received from resident Mary Shaw regarding support for the purchase of the Race Brook Country Club property.
- Selectman Goldblatt reminded everyone the next shredding day is Saturday April 10th at HPCC from 9:00 to noon. The Orange Lions Club will also be collecting mattresses.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

First Selectman Zeoli made the following announcements:

- Monday February 15, 2021 Town offices will be closed for Presidents Day, but the Transfer Station will be open.
- The OVNA clinics for vaccinations are up and running they had their third one today and are looking for clinicians to volunteer to give shots. Please register on the VAMS sight or call the Orange Visiting Nurses.
- Referendum for the Race Brook Country Club property purchase is Tuesday February 16, 2021 at High Plains Community Center from 6 a.m. to 8 p.m. First Selectman Zeoli addressed some concerns that have come in since the Special Town Meeting last week. Selectman Goldblatt added that the Orange Conservation Commission and Orange Land Trust are in favor of the purchase. It was also noted that the Town of Orange has a AAA Bond rating, which is the highest rating given. Orange has about 4% to budget bonded and you are allowed 15% which shows how conservative Orange is.

MINUTES

On a motion made by Selectman Williams, seconded by Selectman Novicki, ***the Board unanimously approved the minutes of the Regular Meeting of the Board of Selectmen on January 13, 2021 with the following correction on page 2 under Public Participation - Selectman Novicki supported the statement made by Selectman Goldblatt, and Selectman Novicki also made her own statement condemning the actions that happened in Washington D.C.***

On a motion made by Selectman Goldblatt, seconded by Selectman Carangelo, ***the Board unanimously approved the minutes of the Special Meeting of the Board of Selectmen on January 26, 2021.***

NEW BUSINESS

1. **Consider and act on Bond Resolutions-** Finance Director John Cifarelli explained he was contacted by our bond advisor that we have an opportunity to refund (or refinance) up to \$5,000,000 in bonds that we have outstanding. We could save up to \$400,000 in interest depending on the rate. First Selectman Zeoli wanted to make it clear these are not new bonds, they are ones we already have and are looking to refund for a better interest rate. *On a motion* made by Selectman Okenquist, seconded by Selectman Carangelo, and unanimously carried, *the Board approved the Resolution with respect to the authorization, issuance and sale of Town of Orange General Obligation Refunding Bonds not exceeding \$5,000,000.*
2. **Consider and act on request from Orange Little League to update Baseball field lighting-** Mike Visnic the facilities director from Orange Little League presented a proposal he received from JK Energy Solutions LLC regarding the lighting for the baseball fields. The project cost is \$254,800 less incentives of \$203,840 from the UI leaving a net total cost of \$50,960. Mr. Visnic has contacted organizations who use the facilities for donations, and he feels he will get a minimum of \$15,000 in donations so the cost should be well under the balance of \$50,960. *On a motion* made by Selectman Carangelo, seconded by Selectman Okenquist, and unanimously carried, *the Board approved funding the cost of updating the baseball field lighting not to exceed \$50,960 pending any donations received toward the project.*
3. **Tax Refunds for the month of February-** *On a motion* made by Selectman Carangelo, seconded by Selectman Novicki, and unanimously carried, *the Board approved the tax refunds in the amount of \$1,924.52 for the month of February.*

COMMITTEES

1. **Pension Board** – Selectman Goldblatt reported they meet next Thursday February 18th at 7:00 p.m.
2. **Emergency Management** - Selectman Novicki reported that the last meeting of the Emergency Management Subcommittee on COVID was 01.29.21. There were 110 cases reported in January, 75 of which were in the first ten to fifteen days. Most cases were in the thirty to sixty age group, the seventy-five and over age group was low, and 16 cases were reported in children ten and under. Cases are going down slowly. The Orange vaccine clinic has run the last three weeks to reach out to seniors and emergency responders. The clinics on Wednesdays are for Orange residents only and the Thursday clinics are open to anyone in Connecticut. On February 11th residents age sixty-five and over may register for

the vaccine, it is estimated that there are 350,000 residents and it will take about three weeks to vaccinate them all. You can register on the Town website, and vaccination appointments are available through the VAMS website or by calling Yale, Griffin, or by calling the vaccination hotline 1-877-918-2224. Walgreens and CVS may do vaccines at some point and the Walmart in New Haven is doing them. The Orange Department of Health will need help and funding, COVID is a long-term project which will need yearly vaccines like the flu.

3. **Capital Planning** – Selectman Okenquist reported that the committee has completed the prioritized list and it will be forwarded to the Chairman of the Board of Finance.
4. **Bond Construction Oversight Committee** – Selectman Goldblatt had no report.
5. **Personnel** – First Selectman Zeoli had no report.

At 7:56 P.M., Selectman Okenquist made *a motion to adjourn the meeting*. Selectman Carangelo seconded the motion. All voted in favor.

Respectfully submitted,

Ann Denny
Secretary to the Board of Selectmen

February 5th, 2021

Dear Members of the Orange Board of Select and Orange Board of Finance Committees,

My name is Anna Mahon. I have owned my home in Orange with my husband, Sean, since August of 1999. We have two children who have grown up in this town and are currently students in the award-winning Amity Regional School District. As many of you know, Sean and I have both been educators at Amity Regional High School for more than 20 years and I currently serve as the principal of the high school. I have also been a faithful and loyal citizen of this town and have deep connections to the community.

It has pained me year after year to silently witness the way in which the Orange Board of Finance and Board of Select have interfaced with the Amity Regional School District and Amity Board of Education when it comes to budget discussions and proposals. I lived through the turmoil of 2002, 17 failed referendums due to issue and threats of young teachers, like myself at the time, of losing jobs due to reductions in force. That was a traumatizing time. The District learned a great deal—as did the Amity Board of Education members—from that experience and, as any intentional life-long learners should, have grown from that experience to be fiscally sound while maintaining exceptional services. However, we are retraumatized every year when members of the Orange Board of Finance make anti-Amity budget presentations, insisting and insinuating that Amity is somehow operating fiscally irresponsible. This could not be further from the truth.

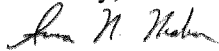
One of the unique and wonderful aspects of the Amity system is the loyalty of the educators. Custodians, administrative assistants, paraeducators, teachers and administrators stay in the Amity District, despite lower wages than other comparable Connecticut public-school districts, BECAUSE the community values education. We have collaborative relationships with parents. We are privileged to work with talented, respectful, dedicated students. It is because of them that we stay. One of the adages I like to use with my faculty, staff and students is that we are “FAmity;” we stick together through thick and thin. We do not always agree with one another, but we support each other and we unfailingly support our students because we believe in our mission. Ours is the most important and impactful career in the world. By continuing to demoralize and undermine the Amity faculty and staff with irresponsible and offensive budgetary suggestions, you are dismantling the school district that you rely on for the future of our community.

As I listened/watched the Orange Board of Finance meeting from January 25th, I could not believe what I was hearing. Board members who do not have any formal training in educational programming, let alone regional school district administration or finance, made arbitrary suggestions of a .47% increase for the Amity 2021-2022 budget. I respectfully request to know

the pedagogical and educational basis for that number. In addition, members of the board bemoaned an Amity budget increase because of the undue burden it would put on taxpayers. Shockingly, during the same meeting, this very board voted to support the proposal of the \$10,000,000 purchase of Race Brook Country Club by the Town of Orange. This letter is not a commentary regarding the February 16th referendum for the proposed Race Brook CC purchase. However, I am shocked at the discontinuity of the Board of Finance discussions and proposals. It was stated at the January 25th meeting that the citizens of the Town of Orange should not be asked to support an increased Amity budget, yet you have no qualms about asking us to spend \$10,000,000 on a country club that will remain private and out of reach financially for many of the citizens of Orange in terms of access or use. I have dedicated my professional life to ensuring our children's—your children's--educational experience is the most fulfilling, relevant and meaningful it can be. The only way for this to remain so is to fund the programing, people and system.

Amity Regional School District is not private; we offer a stellar public education to all students in our community. I can no longer sit silently by and watch as you denigrate the work of my colleagues and take for granted the success of my students with arbitrary and undermining proposals for an Amity Budget increase. If you are looking to invest in the future, you need to reflect on where your priorities lie. Perhaps you will agree that investing in people will pay dividends.

Sincerely,



Anna Mahon

February 10, 2021

BOS Meeting – Public Participation

Mary Shaw

19 Muirfield Road

Orange, CT

On Tuesday, February 16, 2021, Orange Residents will have the opportunity to support the proposed acquisition of Racebrook Country Club. Unlike open space land purchases in the past, this is considered a forward-thinking business investment which would return revenue to the Town via a lease agreement with RBCC over the next 40 years. Above all and most importantly, it will give our Town 100% control of almost 300 meticulously kept acres of land purchased at a bargain price. Our elected officials continue to make open space a priority for our Town which is commendable. In doing so, it supports one of the many reasons why residents choose to live in Orange. They desire a lifestyle in a small picturesque New England town that is blessed with an outstanding school system. They also recognize the value of all the wonderful amenities that makes 06477 a fabulous place to call home. The Board of Selectmen unanimously supports this purchase which speaks volumes on the magnitude of possible implications and negative consequences on the future of our Town if we don't act accordingly. I would like to share a thought I believe residents can relate to and find relevant to the matter at hand. Over the past year, every one of us has learned to live our lives with a tremendous amount of uncertainty and the impact has been both difficult and challenging. It would be fair to say we all yearn for the day we gain back our sense of control and are able to optimistically look forward to the future. Voting YES for the purchase of Racebrook Country Club will allow just that. Our Town would secure full control of all future decisions regarding this property and proactively circumvent the feeling of uncertainty that would inevitably be brought upon us and generations to follow for many years to come. In closing, I would like to thank our Board of Selectmen and the owners of Racebrook Country Club for working together to formulate a proposal our residents won't regret supporting on February 16, 2021.