

**Town of Chester
Board of Selectmen Meeting
Thursday, January 14th, 2010
Municipal Complex
Approved Minutes**

I. PRELIMINARIES:

1.1 Call to Order – Room 20

Chairman Hassam called this meeting of the Town of Chester Board of Selectmen to order at 7:00pm.

1.2 Roll Call

Selectmen present:

Robert Brown
Jack Cannon, Vice Chairman
Joe Castricone
James Hassam, Chairman
Stephen Landau

Members of the Public Present, at various times:

Aaron Berube, Police Sergeant
Bill Burke, Police Chief
Mary Beth Ditoro, Library Chair
Barbara Dolloff
Midge Gould
Andrew Hadik
Bonnie Healey
Kandace Knowlton, library secretary
Michael Oleson, Road Agent
Bryan Remillard
Matt Rittenhouse, Tri-Town Times Reporter
Carolyn Scott
Leroy Scott
Tim Sheehan
Angela Sherwood, Finance Director
Patricia Martin, Administrative Assistant
And other persons unknown to the recording secretary

1.3 Pledge of Allegiance

Chairman Hassam led the attendees in the Pledge of Allegiance.

1.4 Chairman's Additions or Deletions

Addition – Nonpublic meeting under RSA 91-A: 3 II(e)-litigation, and RSA 91-A:3, II(c) – reputation.

1.5 Public Comments (10 minutes)

As no members of the Public wished to speak, Public Comment was closed.

II. APPOINTMENTS:

2.1 Finance Director

2.1.1 Health Insurance Comparison

Mrs. Sherwood stated there would be a 27.3% Health insurance increase for current employees. She procured two bids and based on January 1st, none were as good as what we currently have. There was discussion about changing the employee contribution amounts.

Short term and long-term disability was another subject of discussion to help lower town costs/budget.

2.1.2 Auditor's Management Letter Discussion

Hire dates on all I-9's are needed. One individual who had been hired many years ago had an old I-9 without his date of hire noted.

Liability and accident insurance for employees were discussed.

From now on there will be an accountant to reconcile the Spring Hill Farm checking account.

The auditors suggested more detailed description of charges.

Auditors stated that they would like to see a receipt given for every transaction the town makes. Referring to the Transfer Station, Selectmen Landau replied that due to employee time restraints and added cost for paper, receipts for every transaction would not be feasible. A log has always been kept. Following further discussion, the Board agreed that a copy of the log would be given to auditors in lieu of individual receipts.

A lack of initials on payroll was noted. Mrs. Sherwood stated that two fire and two police time sheets did not have initials.

Mrs. Sherwood disagrees with the notes on page seven. She stated that getting signatures on manifests are not feasible.

Bank deposits were discussed but not limited to the following: Deposits are going to the bank by the end of the day but sometimes they do not show up on that day's transactions. Mrs. Sherwood suggested that if we purchase a scanner for the checks, they would automatically be in the bank but that the scanner is \$1,100. The Board did not approve this purchase but suggested that they will think about it.

The Accounting Department is noted to be in violation. Mrs. Sherwood stated that there is not sufficient staffing to correct the problem at this time. Mrs. Sherwood is working toward correcting issue within the budgetary constraints.

Finance Director finished with her appointment at 7:30 PM.

The Board moved toward review of signature requests. The School P.T.A. has asked for permission to have alcohol at their silent auction in the Multipurpose Room. Chairman Hassam moved to approve their request. No further discussion, Vote was taken with all in favor, so moved. Chairman Hassam signed the request on behalf of the Board.

At 7:36 PM, the Board moved out of Room 20 to join the School Public Hearing on the Budget and to regroup in the Meeting Room to continue their Meeting at 8:00 PM.

2.2 Budgets – 8:00 PM – Meeting Room

Chairman Hassam announced that if there were no objections, the Transfer Station Budget would be heard before the Highway Department. As there were no objections, Andrew Hadik and Bonnie Healey stepped forward to present the Transfer Station Budget.

2.2.1 Transfer Station & Landfill

The first line for full-time salaries included a 5% increase and it incorporated both full- and part-time employees. Vice Chairman Cannon stated that he wanted to keep full- and part-time figures separate and that no salary increases were to be included for this discussion.

In discussing the telephone line, Selectman Castricone stated that he would not approve a \$28.00 purchase for a cell phone. He said that if Bonnie wanted to make a call to Lloyd at the Transfer Station, she should purchase a phone from her own money. Bonnie explained that the phone was useful to communicate during the handling of recyclables when the Transfer Station is busy helping residents. Selectman Castricone did not agree.

Mr. Hadik noted that the Town of Chester has mandatory recycling and he would like to enforce a clear bag policy to make sure that recyclables are not being mixed in with trash. He believes that some customers may not be as careful about recyclables as they might be and that a clear bag policy in place would increase compliance.

It was noted that the transport & tipping line was budgeted for \$62,000 and they only used \$54,000.

In regard to revenues, the scrap metal and paper market is down due to price fluctuations. However, this may change on the upside as well.

The mileage rate is staying the same as last year to pay for aluminum and battery transport.

Andrew stated that the figures that he used to prepare the budget were based on figures from a 4-month budget from which he prorated costs to come up with his best estimate.

The 2009-2010 NRRA dues line has a typographical error; it reads \$2,500 but should read \$250.

Selectmen Castricone proposed that the full-time employee go down to 30 hrs a week to part-time to save on costs. Currently, the Town has three part time employees at 16 hours.

Mr. Hadik expressed surprise that this subject was being brought up and suggested that he was not prepared to discuss this. He also said that he thought he would like the employee involved with this proposed change to be present for any discussion on this issue.

Selectmen Castricone asked if a full-time employee is necessary at the Transfer Station. He asked if there would be a guarantee that the revenues as projected would be there to offset the budget expense and if not, his proposal is to lower town costs by changing a full-time position to part-time.

Selectman Landau explained that the tax rate takes into account the revenues at the time of tax-rate setting and is not part of the budgeting expense process. Mr. Hadik reiterated the budget is just an estimate of costs but the metal and paper revenue stays the same from year to year. Tax bill is the total minus the revenue. Mr. Hadik stated that over the years he has been doing this, he has made the budget as tight as possible.

Chairman Hassam motioned to accept the Transfer Station budget, Selectmen Landau seconded. No further discussion. Selectman Landau and Chairman Hassam voted in the affirmative, Vice Chairman Cannon, Selectman Castricone and Selectman Brown voted nay. Two ayes and three nays, Transfer Station Budget was not accepted. A new budget

request must be submitted for approval at next week's meeting. Mr. Hadik and Mrs. Healey departed at 8:37pm.

Mrs. Sherwood is to investigate the landfill budget.

2.2.2 Highway

Mike Oleson, Road Agent, went over various lines and explained why they are higher than last year.

He stated, even if a new truck is purchased the old truck will be kept and utilized.

There was a lengthy discussion regarding the large plowing increase shown on this year's budget request. Selectmen Castricone said that he looked up Fremont's plowing costs, and they have the same amount of roads as we do, and their budget is at \$125,000. This is considerably different from the \$245,000 Mr. Oleson has requested.

The explanation for the higher number included the emergency fund allowance in case the voters did not approve the \$85,000 replenishment at Town Meeting. After much discussion, the Board suggested that the line be lowered somewhere in between. Chairman Hassam stated that he would be agreeable to \$200,000 for the snow plow line.

Selectmen Brown noted the budget is up 60%. Mr. Oleson noted that the salt and gas prices have been going up. He included in this budget to asphalt Cole Road. Cole Road was to be worked on in a prior budget but an emergency came up and it was not done as planned. Road Agent Mike Oleson had to pay for a bill that was five year's old. The work left for this year is for Ledge, Lane, and Webster Lane is for a wear coating.

Chairman Hassam suggested backing crack fill to \$15,000 from \$20,000. Mr. Oleson stated \$15,000 would not be adequate for the minimum amount of roadwork required to maintain our current number of roads.

A line for the grant writer was added in the amount of \$5,000. Chairman Hassam discussed the pros and cons of the grant writer being under just one department. As Liaison Selectmen Landau passed on his knowledge as to how the grant writer was to be budgeted. She is keeping track of her hours for each grant she works on but is being paid out of the Fire Department salary line. The Board and Road Agent agreed to eliminate the \$5,000 for a grant writer in the Highway budget because it has been already figured in under her salary in the Fire Department.

The truck and East Derry Road projects total 2.263 million. A bond will need to be presented for the voters to decide upon.

Selectman Brown observed that the salary line is up from three years ago.

Selectmen Landau commented that the plow line amount is going up on average \$13,000 a year, so maybe it could be under a warrant article. Selectmen Castricone commented that if the warrant article is not approved, then the money that is needed would not be there. Selectmen Landau stated that the plow line should be between \$175,000 and \$200,000 due to the uncertainty of an approved warrant article.

Chairman Hassam recognized Bryan Remillard from the audience. Mr. Remillard commented on the proposed large increases in the Highway Department's budget and compared the ease to which the Board was accepting these increases as unlike the stringent process the Board took when reviewing the Transfer Station's budget. He asked for clarification on the amounts.

Following the above discussion, Chairman Hassam motioned to accept the \$564,451 Highway Department budget, Selectmen Castricone seconded the motion. There being no further discussion, a vote was taken. Vote was unanimous, so moved.

Mr. Oleson departed at 9:10pm

(Chairman Hassam excused himself for a brief break at 9:10pm and returned at 9:11pm.)

2.2.3 Police

Chief Bill Burke and Sergeant Aaron Berube presented came forward with the Police Department Budget. They were asked if the total on the Salary-New FT Officer line should be rolled into the Salary – FT Officers line because the new full time officer is under the old warrant article.

Selectmen Castricone inquired if the new full-time officer could replace some of the part-time officers' costs. Chief Burke stated that due to the increasing number of calls and still being undermanned, the Department would just have 5-full time officers when 6 would be optimal for a town of our size. Therefore, it will just cover the costs as it stands.

Chairman Hassam inquired about the salary-witness fee line. Chief Burke explained witness fee line parameters and current usage.

Selectman Castricone inquired if the salaries-clerical line is really needed. Chief Burke explained that this line is used to fill in for the clerk's vacation time.

Chief Burke explained the office supplies line reads zero because he merged it with Office Equip/Maint./Supplies line but it is the same amount as requested last year.

Selectmen Brown observed and stated that the biggest increase was due to the new officer hire but there is a grant in a pending status. Chief Burke stated one more officer would bring the town to 24/7 coverage, where it needs to be. Vice Chairman Cannon stated that he thought the 6th full-time officer should be in this budget request and suggested taking the part-timers' line down to 30 which would bring the over time down to 9 or 10 after all the officers have completed training.

Chief Burke agreed to re-submit budget numbers at another meeting.

With three new people, there was only the \$80,000 increase.

Chief Burke and Sergeant Berube departed at 9:38pm.

2.2.4 Animal Control

No changes to the budget, motion was made to accept the budget, vote was unanimous; so moved.

2.2.5 Library

Tim Sheehan, Library Director, Kandace Knowlton Library secretary, Mary Beth Ditoro, Library Chair, and two other persons (unknown to recording secretary) presented their budget request to the Board. Vice Chairman Cannon asked about the Library Trust Fund. The reply was that each year this question is brought up and the answer is the same. The Library Trustees have no control over the Library Trust Fund. The Trustees of the Trust Fund are in charge of the Fund and they write them a check.

Selectmen Cannon requested that Mrs. Sherwood, finance director, investigate how the funds are allocated and if they are being properly disbursed. Mrs. Sherwood requested that the Trustees of the Trust Fund be put on the meeting schedule to answer the board's questions. Selectmen Castricone has spoken to one trustee, he was informed that each account gets a portion according to what they have in their trust. The library just receives a check from the trustees with no explanation.

Selectmen Castricone informed the library members that some citizens informed him they were being directed to the Derry library for various reasons. Mr. Sheehan did disclose, periodically citizens were referred to the Derry library for any Microsoft word needs but he has recently purchased the program and it will be installed as soon as possible.

The board acknowledged that the book budget in the past has been \$20,000 but is now only \$15,000.

The library staff informed the board that they do most of their own maintenance which helps keep costs down to only \$4,000 a year. However, the carpets do need to be professionally cleaned and they plan to get this done this year.

The members are requesting to have another person on Saturdays for customer service reasons. They have been rotating various people through Saturdays, since they lost a person this year, but feel customers would be better serviced by having a regular on the Saturday schedule.

The board is pleased with the changes made to the budget request since last meeting with library staff.

Selectman Brown motioned to accept the \$124,853 library budget, Selectmen Cannon seconded, all in favor; so moved.

All five-library representatives departed at 9:56pm.

2.2.5 Building Inspector

An inquiry was made whether the part-time position reflected a full-time employee salary. The line is at \$45,000. No decision was made as to whether this would be filled with a part-time or full-time Building Inspector.

Vice Chair Cannon motioned to accept budget, Chairman Hassam seconded, three in favor with Selectmen Castricone and Landau abstaining; so moved.

2.2.6 Insurance

A 6% liability and a 5% worker's compensation increase as noted.

Chairman Hassam motioned to accept the \$69,354 amount, Selectmen Brown seconded, all in favor; so moved.

2.2.8 Executive

Mrs. Sherwood explained the 3% salary pool increase.

Mrs. Sherwood feels that the salary pool line should be taken out of the executive budget and put in benefits budget.

Chairman Hassam motioned to accept 3% salary pool increase, Selectmen Brown seconded, all in favor, so moved.

Vice Chairman Cannon motioned to accept \$26,104 net expenses, Selectman Brown seconded, all in favor, so moved.

Selectmen Hassam motioned to accept \$6,482 total Ad and regional assoc budget line, Selectmen Castricone seconded, all in favor; so moved.

Mrs. Sherwood departed at 10:09 pm.

ROUND TABLE DISCUSSION

Selectman Landau attended a Brownsfield Meeting today and stated that Chester was not part of the discussion. He said that if anyone knew of a Chester site that should be included in the Brownsfield grant application process to please let him know.

Chairman Hassam wants to implement a set holiday schedule for town employees; he will bring in a schedule proposal for approval.

Selectmen Cannon motioned to go into non-public meeting under RSA 91-A: 3 II(e) – litigation, and RSA 91-A:3, II(c) – reputation at this time, Selectman Castricone seconded, all in favor; so moved.

III. MEETING BUSINESS:

3.1 Approval of Minutes

No minutes approved at this meeting.

IV. ADJOURNMENT:

The meeting adjourned at 10:38 pm.

Respectfully Submitted,

Brenda Hoskyns,
Recording Secretary from Staffhunters