

**Town of Chester
Board of Selectmen Meeting
Thursday, April 1st, 2010
Municipal Complex
Approved Minutes**

I Preliminaries

1.1 Call to Order

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

1.2 Roll Call

Selectmen present:

Jack Cannon
Joe Castricone
James Hassam
Stephen Landau

Selectmen absent:

Robert Brown (unable to remain for meeting, only public comment)

Members of the Public present, at various times:

Rich Antoine, Fire Chief
Geoff Barnett, Cemetery Trustee
Robert Brown
Bill Burke, Police Chief
Steve Child, Cemetery Trustee
Ephraim Dobbins, Budget Committee
Jerome Gesel
Chris Hadik, Budget Committee Vice-Chair
Chuck Heuer, Budget Committee
Rhonda Lamphere, Budget Committee Chair
Aaron Mansur
Kim Misco
Michael Oleson, Road Agent
Matt Rittenhouse, Tri-Town Times
Carolyn Scott
Leroy Scott
Angela Sherwood, Finance Director
Mike Weider
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 *Additions and Deletions*

There was one appointment added to the agenda. This will be a non-public session with the Building Inspector Search Committee.

1.5 *Public Comment*

Rob Brown stood and was recognized; he stated that he was speaking as a resident of Chester, not as a Selectman. He had three issues to raise. (1) The Board of Selectmen had not received the Budget Committee's proposed budget until about 10am today, although it had been requested earlier; he wished to know why this was, and stated that the Budget Committee should work better with the governing body of the Town. (2) The Highway budget was 80% higher than it had been three years ago, and he did not see any savings or value. He also stated that Rhonda Lamphere, Chairman of the Budget Committee, works on this portion of the Budget during the planning stages, and then recuses herself at Town Meeting. As her company performs work for the Road Agent, this is a conflict of interest. (3) He believes that having Road Agent Oleson on the Building Inspector Search Committee is also a conflict of interest, as he is a builder in Town. He would like Mr. Oleson to step down from the committee.

Road Agent Michael Oleson stood and was recognized. He stated that he is both the Road Agent and a builder, and had two issues to raise. (1) He received a Request for Action form today that should have been directed to the Board and the Budget Committee; it was to do with a culvert replacement on Halls Village Road. (2) He had asked the Building Inspector Search Committee if they would like him to step down, and they stated that they did not.

As no other members of the Public wished to speak, Public Comment was closed at 7:06pm.

II Appointments

2.1 *Angela Sherwood, Finance Director*

Budget

Warrant Article A (Town Reevaluation) has been revised; the Article should request the entire \$75k needed, not \$50k; it will be reduced by \$25k from the Capital Reserve Fund.

Warrant Article G (PACT Fund) has been revised, per a request from Hilary Hall. It now raises \$17,845, increased from the original \$13,845. They have added \$4k for education (more TV upgrades). There is no tax involved in this.

She needed to know how long the bond would be for *Warrant Article M* (East Derry Road) so that she could calculate the tax impact. Road Agent Oleson estimates the Town will get 5 years out of this work. The Board decided on a 5 year bond.

The wording of *Warrant Article N* (Wason Pond Dam) has been revised per Gordon Graham. Vice-Chairman Cannon moved to recommend this article; Chairman Hassam seconded the motion. The vote was four in favour with Selectman Brown absent; so moved.

She needed to know how long the bond would be for *Warrant Article P* (Road Bond – 4 projects). This is a grind and pave. Road Agent Oleson estimates the Town will get 15-20 years out of this work. The Board decided on a 10 year bond.

Warrant Article Q (Municipal Complex Boiler) has been revised for clarity by Gordon Graham. It asks for \$52k for the boiler and boiler room, \$23.5k to be raised by general taxation and to use \$28.5k additional from last year's *Warrant Article 23*. These funds will be encumbered. The tax impact will be calculated on the \$23k only.

New *Warrant Article U* establishes and amends fees. A proposed schedule will be included with the Town Report, but not part of the Article. Vice-Chairman Cannon moved to recommend this article; Selectman Landau seconded the motion. The vote was four in favour with Selectman Brown absent; so moved.

Wording for new *Warrant Article V* has been received from DRA. It asks for \$711,200 to purchase one new Fire Truck to replace Ladder and Engine 1, if a grant of \$676,200 is received. \$35k will be raised by taxation. The tax impact will be \$0.06 per thousand.

Selectman Landau asked Fire Chief Antoine if any of the \$35k can be offset by selling Ladder and Engine 1. Per the terms of the grant, the vehicles cannot be sold to another Fire Department. Perhaps a collector might buy one or both. One belongs to the Association, who purchased it originally; the other to the Town. Selectman Castricone moved to recommend this article; Vice-Chairman Cannon seconded the motion. The vote was four in favour with Selectman Brown absent; so moved.

New *Warrant Article W* is to establish the Chester Cemetery Property Maintenance Fund as discussed at the meeting of March 25th. Gordon Graham had been contacted; he was of the opinion that a *Warrant Article* passed at Town Meeting 2006 allowed the Board to create such Funds at a regular meeting. There was some discussion, and the Town Report for that meeting and the RSA books were reviewed; it was determined that that *Warrant Article* only referred to accepting property, not money, so the *Warrant Article* is necessary.

There was an error in the dental insurance figures in the *Benefits* line; this has been adjusted. Selectman Castricone moved to accept the revised figures; Vice-Chairman Cannon seconded the motion. The vote was four in favour with Selectman Brown absent; so moved.

Health Insurance

She performed an analysis of the Health Insurance figures received, comparing what was available through LGC and the savings, and comparing them to local towns in LGC's Wage and Benefit Comparisons for 2008. Many other towns also include Disability and Life Insurance, which Chester does not. Vice-Chairman Cannon stated that as one cannot tell who each insurance provider is, not much of a conclusion can be drawn. All things being equal, Chester is in the middle. The Board

should review this in their own time.

Salary Increases

She has corrected the figures from those originally submitted last week; the Board should review in their own time.

Finance Director Sherwood was finished at 7:48pm, but remained at the meeting table in order to continue with the Budget discussion.

2.2 *Budget Committee*

Chair Rhonda Lamphere, Vice-Chair Chris Hadik, Ephraim Dobbins, and Chuck Heuer appeared before the Board to discuss the Budget and Warrant Articles.

Mr. Hadik wished to address the comments made by Rob Brown during the Public Comment section of the meeting. He stated that the Budget Committee had been trying to meet to meet with the Board for over a month; apparently the problem was that the Budget Committee wished to meet before the Budget was finalized, and the Board wanted to meet after.

Budget

Some changes made by the Budget Committee:

4130-1 Grant Materials, 4220 Administrative Asst and Grant Administrator have been reduced by a total of \$11k and those monies moved to *4130-2 Grant Administration*.

4130-2 Town Report has been reduced by \$1k based on history; the Board agreed that this should be fine, as the bids received were within this figure.

4140-1 Salaries – Deputy has been reduced from \$8953 to \$6500 based on history; the Committee spoke with Town Clerk Barbara Gagnon, who agreed.

4150-1 Salaries – Accounting was reduced from \$22,464 to \$21,300; Finance Director Sherwood stated that the \$22,464 figure was based on 1248 hours @ the proper wage of \$18, not \$17, which is what the \$21,300 figure represents. The Committee will look at this line again.

The Budget Committee has \$1200 in the *4150-3 Postage* line; the Board raised the question of the School paying its fair share of this expense, as Budget Committee mailings are done for the School.

The Budget Committee added \$1000 to its *4150-3 Legal* line; there was some discussion about access to legal counsel. Mrs. Lamphere stated that Town Counsel told her last year not to call LGC with legal questions; the Board stated that they wished to control legal costs by limiting access to Town Counsel.

4150-4 Salaries – Deputy has also been reduced from \$8953 to \$6500 based on history; the Committee spoke with Town Clerk Barbara Gagnon, who agreed.

The *4155 Benefits* line has been reduced by \$31,603.79; this has been done to reflect the full-time police officer being removed from the Budget. The Committee stated that they wished to see the Town use a less expensive health insurance plan. Mrs. Lamphere called four local towns; serviced by LGC and Primex; Chester had the highest percentage of increase. Mr. Hadik suggested a plan with perhaps a higher deductible, and use the savings to create a deductible reimbursement pool from which employees could be reimbursed. Vice-Chairman Cannon asked Mr. Hadik if he would be willing to chair a committee to find a comparable, cheaper plan, with no reduction in quality or benefits; Mr. Hadik agreed. Vice-Chairman Cannon moved that a Benefits Committee be formed, with Chris Hadik as Chairman, and 3 other townspeople and elected/appointed officials, for a total of 5, to study benefits for the Town of Chester. Selectman Landau seconded the motion. The vote was four in favour with Selectman Brown absent; so moved.

Mrs. Lamphere asked if insurance brokers could be invited to consult; Mr. Hadik agreed, stating that he planned to invite his. Vice-Chairman Cannon volunteered to be the representative from the Board of Selectmen; Finance Director Sherwood will be the process facilitator. An employee and two citizens are still needed.

Mr. Hadik asked if the Board would agree to lower the benefits line to represent a potential savings; Vice-Chairman Cannon demurred.

4194-1 Repairs & Maint – Police line was zeroed out from \$4500; the Budget Committee stated that they had received no backup for the request. They were informed that it was for a security partition; Finance Director Sherwood gave them the three bids received.

4194-1 Roof – Community Center and Roof – Highway Garage were both zeroed out from a total of \$20k; the Budget Committee stated that they had received no backup for the request, and in fact had received a “run-around”. Selectman Brown, whose responsibility this is, was not present; Selectman Landau stated that he would obtain a Statement of Work by Monday.

4195 Repair Stone Wall Cemetery was zeroed out from \$21k; the Budget Committee wants this expense to be a Warrant Article. They also stated that they had only received one document on the expense, and the dollar figure had been redacted. Mr. Hadik objected to the \$8k Police Detail expense, asking if it was a Town Ordinance that two officers be on hand during this work. Police Chief Burke stated that it was a Department Policy due to the location of the work – on a curve on a state road. He had already planned to reduce it to \$6800, though, by deleting the administrative fee. The Board is concerned that if this is made into a Warrant Article and it fails, “no means no” and this urgent work cannot be done.

4210 Salary – FT Officers was reduced by \$35,360; this represents the FT Police Officer that the Budget Committee wants to be on a Warrant Article. The Board will have to write this Article.

4210 Salaries – PT Officers was reduced by \$10,350. Mr. Hadik stated that Police Chief Burke had requested two full-time officers last year, stating that the part-time line could then be reduced in half; one full-time officer had been hired, so the Committee reduced the part-time budget.

Police Chief Burke interjected that he had not guaranteed last year that he could reduce the

budget by half, but that he had stated that he could live with it. He stated that he does not have the time or personnel to investigate crimes, and that the Budget Committee makes arbitrary decision without backup or justification. Vice-Chairman Cannon stated that the crime rate in Chester is much higher than what is reported on the news. There are burglaries and untimely deaths that must be investigated, which takes time and personnel.

Vice-Chairman Cannon stated that the Committee had raised the budget for the Seniors by their own volition by \$2500 over what they had requested, and yet they cut the Police budget. The \$2500 given to the Seniors could fund ~166 part-time hours. He stressed that in no way did he wish to deny the seniors funding, as they asked for very little and deserved more – he was just using this particular situation as an example.

Mr. Heuer stated that perhaps the Board should have created a Warrant Article asking the Town if they wanted 24/7 coverage at a recurring cost; if this had passed, then there would be no problem.

4210 Salaries – Overtime/Court was reduced from \$13k to \$6500. The Board wanted to know why this was reduced, as the line was already overspent; the Committee stated that the overspending was to cover the Chief's illness.

Other Police lines (*Computer Support, Miscellaneous, Radio Equipment/Repair, Uniforms and Equipment, Training Supplies & Equipment, Office Equip/Maint/Supplies*) were all reduced, but not discussed, as the Budget Committee wished to move on.

4312 Telephone was reduced from \$1k to \$500 based on history.

4324 RECY Glass and Transport & Tipping were each reduced by \$1k based on departmental requests.

4414 Animal Control Expense was reduced from \$1k to \$1 based on history. The Board stated that Police Chief Burke has managed this line carefully in order to save the Town money; now he is being penalized.

4520 Athletic Fields was reduced by \$719. The Committee took a 3-year average of the expenditures under this line, and then added \$500 that had been requested for special cleanup to come up with the new figure.

4550 Chester Public Library was reduced by \$14,600 due to an accounting error – benefits had been counted twice.

The Budget Committee increased *4586 Chester Senior Citizens* from \$7500 to \$10k, after speaking with Hilary Hall, who informed them that trips had been cut back due to rising transportation costs.

4619 Admin Salaries was reduced by \$734 based on history.

Revenues are still being discussed with Town Clerk Gagnon. There is a possibility that Inventory

Fees are being bundled in with Property Taxes; this needs to be resolved.

To recap, Revenues are still open; Benefits are still being worked on. Unsupported items and new labour were removed. Mr. Hadik stated that he did not wish to appropriate funds that were not needed.

Warrant Articles

Warrant Article B (Highway Block Grant): The Committee wanted to know why this Article was included, as it would raise the Budget by \$112k. They plan to amend it on the floor.

Warrant Article E (Withdraw from FD CRF): The Committee would prefer to see language in the Article, specifying that the Trust Funds be closed.

Warrant Article H (Establish CRF North Pond/102): This is a state project, and information on it was just received tonight, according to the Budget Committee.

Warrant Article J (Add to Winter Maintenance Fund): The Committee would prefer that this article read "up to \$85k". These monies can be used for Flood Damage also, as this occurred in the Winter.

Warrant Article K (1500 Work Truck): Information on this was just received tonight, according to the Budget Committee.

Warrant Article M (East Derry Road): Schedules and costs were just received tonight.

Warrant Article P (Road Bond – 4 projects): Information on this was just received tonight.

Warrant Article Q (Municipal Complex Boiler): The Committee needs supporting documentation. Finance Director Sherwood will speak with Maintenance Supervisor Steve Moltenbrey about it.

It still needs to be decided if the Full-Time Police Officer, the Branch Cemetery Wall, and the Roofs will be Warrant Articles.

Cemetery Trustee Aaron Mansur stood and was recognized. He asked that if someone had hit the rock that had rolled down the hill from the Branch Cemetery Wall into the westbound lane, how fast would the wall have been fixed?

The Budget Committee departed the meeting at 9:18pm.

III Old Business

3.1 Finance Director Sherwood – Other Finance Items

The dates for the audit have been set; the preliminary audit will be September 23rd and 24th; the Final Audit Work will be done October 4th through 8th.

Finance Director Sherwood departed the meeting at 9:19pm.

IV Meeting Business

4.1 Approval of Minutes

This subject was not addressed tonight.

4.2 Roundtable

Selectman Landau

- The Dam Bureau has sent out a new inspector, who did some review of the former inspector's work. He has issued a letter of deficiency for the Wason Pond and Edwards Mill dams. Selectman Landau disagrees with the letter for the Wason Pond Dam, and would like to meet with the new inspector. He has asked Chuck Myette, Shawn Patenaude, and Fire Chief Antoine to be involved. The Town has done everything that the Dam Bureau asked of them. One of the arguments was on breaching the earthen wall; this had not been requested before, only the possibility of breaching the sandbags. If he is unable to attend the meeting, another Selectman will be asked to attend in his place.
- He has one issue for non-public session.

Chairman Hassam

- He has one issue for non-public session.

Selectman Castricone

- Nothing to report.

Vice-Chairman Cannon

- Nothing to report.

4.3 Public Comment

Kim Misco stood and was recognized. She volunteered to be one of the at-large members of the Benefits Committee.

Rhonda Lamphere stood and was recognized. She was speaking as a representative of Lamphere Construction, about the new fee schedule. She stated that a Public Meeting needed to be held before fees could be changed, which had not been done, and asked why the Building Inspector was charging updated fees.

As no other members of the Public wished to speak, Public Comment was closed at 9:24pm.

4.4 Non-Public Session

Selectman Castricone moved that the Board go into non-public session under RSA 91 A:3 II (b), Salary, and (c), Reputation; Selectman Landau seconded the motion. The vote was four in favour

with Selectman Brown absent; so moved.

The meeting room was closed at 9:26pm. Road Agent Oleson, Police Chief Burke, Fire Chief Antoine, and Michael Weider (the Building Inspector Search Committee) remained for the first subject.

The Building Inspector Search Committee departed the meeting room at 9:49pm.

The meeting room was re-opened at 10:02pm.

Selectman Castricone moved that the Board come out of non-public session; Selectman Landau seconded the motion. The vote was four in favour with Selectman Brown absent; so moved.

Selectman Landau moved to seal the minutes to the first non-public session (salary) for six months; Selectman Castricone seconded the motion. The vote was four in favour with Selectman Brown absent; so moved.

Selectman Landau moved to seal the minutes to the second non-public session (reputation) for six months; Selectman Castricone seconded the motion. The vote was four in favour with Selectman Brown absent; so moved.

4.5 *Adjournment*

The meeting was adjourned at 10:04pm.

Respectfully Submitted,

Debra H. Doda