

**Town of Chester  
Budget Committee  
Monday, November 9, 2020  
Virtual Meeting  
Approved Minutes**

**I. Call to Order/Pledge of Allegiance**

Chair Weider called the meeting to order at 7:00 PM.

**II. Attendance**

By Roll Call the following Board members were present: Chair Mike Weider, Vice-Chair, Ephraim Dobbins, Rhonda Lamphere, Kathy Guilmette, Jack Cannon (@7:02 PM), Chester School Board Liaison Dana Theokas, Paul Murphy, Michael D'Angelo (@7:50 PM) and Selectman Liaison Stephen Landau (@7:20PM).

**a. Member Comments**

Mr. Cannon noted he has 15 pages of detail for the Town budget but only 1-2 pages for the School budget. He would like to see detailed budget and expenditures. He does not have a budget book. Mr. Weider will get one for him. Mr. Cannon asked if the School and Town budgets can be exported to Excel. Mr. Richardson did not think the School budget could be converted. Chair Weider indicated Ms. Smith in Finance could extract to Excel.

Mr. Weider will share with Ms. Rich what is on the Town side and see if he can get similar details for the School.

**III. Welcome and Announcements by the Chair**

Chair Weider welcomed the members and Royal Richardson the School Board Chair to the meeting and thanked everyone for attending and putting forth great effort with the process.

**IV. Public Comment**

Royal Richardson the School Board Chair reported the School's 2020 tax rate was broken down as follows: 7.02 city .89, local 10.72, state 1.90 with state and local education down .17 cents and .03 cents respectively.

**V. BOS Update – Selectman Landau**

Selectman Landau reported the Town budget will be to the Committee within a week or two with their binders. The budget was presented up 2.6%-2.8%. The tax rate was set at \$20.57 per

thousand which is .23 cents lower than last year. The Departments that Selectman Landau is liaison or have been working hard to keep their budgets level funded or reduced.

## **VI. School Board Update – Dana Theokas or Brennan Holmes**

Ms. Theokas updated the Committee on the last School Board meeting last Wednesday. The Board is eager to move forward with the budget schedule. The Governor released additional adequacy of \$157,000. Chester Academy is in hybrid remote. Preschool, Kindergarten and 1<sup>st</sup> Grade are on campus. Teachers and staff are on campus. Grades 1-8 are at home. With the recent addition of 1<sup>st</sup> Grade there are less than 120 students on campus including SPED.

Ms. Lamphere asked about the comments made at the BOS meeting concerning use of the gym; what is the school gym being used for. Ms. Theokas explained that as part of isolation, the gym is used half for six short-term holding areas for isolation and half as storage so that items could be removed from classrooms to allow for greater social distancing and easy access to items frequently used by teachers. Two storage pods were purchased for storing less frequently used items. There are no fall or winter athletics at Chester Academy. A group was hoping to use the MPR for interschool basketball, but the Recreation Director informed them it was not available being used by other groups. Chester Academy's Physical Education Dept., teachers and staff are doing their best to keep students physically active with outdoor walks.

Ms. Guilmette asked how the overall morale was and Mr. Richardson noted the feedback has been okay so far. The reopening plan was created with staff input and the plan has worked. The HVAC system and other safety protocols have helped. The staff was really excited when they came back and knows the plan supports their being there.

## **VII. Other Committee Updates**

None

## **VIII. Minutes**

### **a. October 12, 2020**

***Mr. Dobbins motioned to accept the October 12, 2020 minutes as written. Ms. Guilmette seconded the motion. A roll call vote was taken Weider – aye, Dobbins – aye, Lamphere – aye, Guilmette – aye, Cannon – aye, Landau – aye, Theokas – aye, Murphy – abstain and D'Angelo - abstain. The motion passed 7-0-0.***

## **IX. Old Business**

## **X. New Business**

### **a. Town and School Financial reports**

Mr. Dobbins noted he would like to see the school financials indicate one time or recurring revenues and expenses. Mr. Dobbins questioned what the second expenditure column was on the school report. Chair Weider noted it was likely the running total. Mr. Richardson indicated the projected total.

#### **b. Chester School District – Fiscal Year End 6/30/20 Audit Report**

Chair Weider sent the School District end of year report as of June 30, 2020 and noted a significant NH Retirement System increase. Ms. Theokas noted it was 3.5%. Chair Weider asked since the Town takes a bigger share of the cost, if a cost share could be worked out with the CBA as the teachers would also benefit from the savings.

Mr. Cannon noted the union negotiators are professionals and recommended the School hire a professional to negotiate with them.

Mr. Richardson noted the auditor will attend the December meeting. There will be a health insurance holiday with 20% return to the employees and a rebate on dental services. Chair Weider requested a breakdown for the next meeting.

#### **c. Budget Process – 2021/2022**

Chair Weider noted the Committee has discussed individually where it would like to see budgets at but has not made a recommendation as a group. In the past the budget was reviewed, and questions were sent out and answered. Chair Weider recommended the School find \$80-\$110,000 and bring their budget in line expecting a tough year. Mr. Richardson noted he hasn't seen the budget yet but know there are likely staff insurance changes, the impact of the Superintendent staying or going, and the Board is seeing what it can do to mitigate any upward pressures.

Mr. Cannon asked Mr. Richardson if any guidance was provided. Mr. Richardson noted as of August or September the guidance was to bring in as low a budget as possible and some infrastructure items were pushed off until this year.

Mr. Dobbins asked the expectation for next year with COVID or whether the expectation was to return to normal. Mr. Richardson noted he could not speak for the Board but he himself expects a return to normal in person if COVID is under control next fall and if not, the Board will react. The HVAC system has already been purchased, and operationally the budget is not significantly affected by in-person or remote. There are controllable and uncontrollable expenses. Pinkerton will set their tuition rate in December, but a 4% increase is anticipated. However with less students anticipated a net reduction would be expected there. There are state requirements to meet and those expenses the District is obligated to do and then those projects the School would like to do.

#### **d. CIP**

Mr. Richardson noted several CIP projects were moved this year to next.

Chair Weider noted the Planning Board met with Departments concerning the CIP and the liaison has kept the Board of Selectmen updated. The Planning Board is working on getting real associated costs and funding mechanisms as well as funding capital reserve funds. Items such as purchase of fire apparatus can be expensive and with funds put aside can avoid long term financing. The Planning Board will be working to finalize Table 10 of the CIP.

#### **e. Budget Calendar**

Chair Weider sent out the proposed budget calendars to the Committee and Selectman Landau and asked them to review and submit any changes. Mr. Weider will forward the calendar to Town Administrator Doda and Ms. Smith in the Finance Department.

Mr. Cannon asked about plans for the public hearings if COVID is bad in February. Chair Weider noted a Zoom hybrid could be done in the Multipurpose Room. Ms. Lamphere asked with the public hearings two days apart if they could be combined to the same night. Chair Weider will keep that on the agenda to discuss.

#### **XI. Member Comments**

Chair Weider recapped that he will reach out to the School concerning financials and will get Mr. Cannon a book. He will try to get books for Mr. Murphy and Mr. D'Angelo. Ms. Lamphere noted there are still extra School District Reports at Town Hall and while they are not as detailed, they could provide a lot of information.

#### **XII. Public Comments**

#### **XIII. Next Meeting Date: December 14, 2020 at 7:00 PM**

#### **XIV. Adjourn**

***Selectman Landau motioned to adjourn the meeting. Ms. Theokas seconded the motion. A roll call vote was taken Weider – aye, Dobbins – aye, Lamphere – aye, Guilmette – aye, Cannon – aye, Landau – aye, Theokas – aye, Murphy – aye and D'Angelo - aye. With all in favor, the motion passed unanimously.***

The meeting adjourned at 8:28 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Daniel Hoijer  
Recording Secretary  
via PACT