

**Town of Chester Budget Committee Public Hearing
February 13, 2023
Approved Minutes
7:00 PM**

Budget Committee members present:

Michael Weider, Chairman (joined at 7:50 p.m.)
Ephraim Dobbins, Vice Chair
Kathy Guilmette
Jack Cannon
Charlotte Lister
Ron McKinnon

Members absent:

Steve D'Angelo, Board of Selectmen Liaison
Sabrina Harris, Chester School Board Liaison

Guests present:

Royal Richardson, Budget Committee alternate
Stephen O. Landau, Board of Selectmen
Steve Couture, Board of Selectmen
Chester PACT

I. Meeting to Order

Vice Chair Dobbins called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.

II. Attendance

III. Announcements by the Chair – Welcome

IV. Public Comment

There were no members of the public wishing to comment.

V. BOS Update

There was no Board of Selectmen update.

VI. School Board Update

There was no School Board update.

VII. Minutes

a. January 30, 2023

Mr. Cannon moved to approve the minutes from January 30, 2023 as written. Ms. Lister seconded the motion. A vote was taken, all were in favor. The motion passed unanimously.

b. February 6, 2023

Mr. Cannon moved to approve the minutes from February 6, 2023 as written. Ms. Guilmette seconded the motion. A vote was taken, all were in favor. The motion passed unanimously.

52 **VIII. New Business**

54 **a. Town Budget Review Town with Board of Selectmen**

56 Vice Chair Dobbins reported that Chairman Weider sent out changes that reflected input
58 from the Board of Selectmen on questions regarding the budget. Selectman Myette re-
60 viewed the changes and reductions that were made. Mr. Cannon asked for areas of high risk.
62 Selectman Myette explained that potential growth has not been factored in, and the High-
way Department budget could be impacted by adverse weather conditions. The Winter Fund
could be utilized to cover any shortfalls in this line. Selectman Couture said the biggest risk
is in the Highway Department, due to the change in operations this year.

64 Mr. McKinnon asked how accepting new roads benefits the Town and a discussion fol-
lowed regarding why roads are accepted and the need for general road maintenance.

66 The current proposed budget reflects a 5% increase over the prior year and the Board of Se-
68 lectmen is comfortable with this.

70 The Board questioned the Board of Selectmen on the rationale behind changes in specific
lines in the budget, including the Fire Department, the library, and the Recreation Depart-
ment Revolving Fund.

72 Police Chief Berube responded to questions regarding personnel and fuel cost.

74 Chairman Weider questioned the increase in salaries. Selectman Myette explained the need
76 for the increase was to hire qualified individuals and provide bonuses.

78 Chairman Weider also suggested reducing the Police Department overtime, the stipend for
the Highway Department, and the budget for roadside cleanup.

80 **b. Warrant Articles**

82 The Selectmen answered questions from the Committee about specific Articles. The topics
84 and resulting decisions included:

- **Article 6:** explaining the cost and benefits of the solar array
- **Article 9:** discussing the need for specific CIP projects
- **Article 10:** determining this Article should be rewritten to identify \$245,000 received in
federal infrastructure funds for transparency
- **Article 11:** deciding this Article will need to be rewritten in conjunction with Article 10
- **Article 12:** discussing the amount being added to the Fire Department Apparatus Capi-
tal Reserve Fund
- **Article 15:** the possibility that the Winter Maintenance Fund will be tabled at Town
Meeting
- **Article 16:** clarifying the need for the Legal Costs Expendable Trust Fund, deleting lim-
iting verbiage, and reducing the cap and amount funded
- **Article 20:** reasoning behind establishing a Town Forest on this property to control de-
velopment
- **Article 21:** determining this Article will not be needed, if Article 20 is passed

- **Article 23:** clarifying the need for the Transportation Improvement Capital Reserve Fund

c. Final discussion

The Committee agreed to meet before the Public Hearing on February 16 to discuss the responses from the Board of Selectmen on issues raised during this meeting.

IX. Next Meeting Date – February 16, 2023 Public Hearing

X. Adjourn

Ms. Guilmette moved to adjourn the meeting at 9:30 p.m. Vice Chair Dobbins seconded the motion. A vote was taken, all were in favor. The motion passed unanimously.

Respectfully submitted,

Beth Hanggeli, Recording Secretary