

**Town of Chester
Selectboard’s Meeting
Wednesday, April 17, 2024
Municipal Complex
Approved Minutes**

I. Preliminaries

Call the Meeting to Order
Roll Call
Pledge of Allegiance
Chairman’s Additions or Deletions
Public Comment (10 minutes)
Finalize Budget and Warrant
Chairman’s Announcements
Potential Non-Public Sessions
Adjournment

1.1 Call to Order

Chairman Myette called the special meeting of the Chester Selectboard to order at 6:00pm.

1.2 Roll Call

Selectboard Present:

Chuck Myette
Stephen Landau
Dana Theokas
Dick Trask

Selectboard Absent:
Steve Couture

Town Administrator Debra Doda

Members of the Public Present at various times:

Aaron Berube, Police Chief
Justine Celentano, Tax Collector/ Town Clerk
Victor Chouinard
Marianne Duffy, Finance Officer
Phil Gladu, Fire Chief / EMD
Corinna Reishus, Recreation Director

and other persons unknown to the Recording Secretary.

1.3 Pledge of Allegiance

Chairman Myette led the attendees in the Pledge of Allegiance.

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52 *1.4 Chairman’s Additions or Deletions*

53 *None*

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55 *1.5 Public Comment*

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57 Chairman Myette mentioned a letter was sent to the Board to be a part of the record for the public
58 hearings.

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60 As no Members of the Public wished to be heard, Public Comment was closed at 6:03pm.

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62 **II. Appointments**

63 *None*

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65 **III. New Business**

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67 *3.1 Budget Review*

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69 Chairman Myette stated the reason for calling this meeting is to decide where the Selectboard’s
70 budget will be on the warrant. The Selectboard sent an increase of roughly 6% over last year to the
71 Budget Committee. The Budget Committee focused on a 5% increase and on Monday slashed it even
72 further to a 4.05% increase.

73
74 Town Administrator Doda mentioned the Board can legally utilize the unassigned fund balance as
75 offsetting revenue. Selectman Landau suggested lowering the hired equipment and legal lines to one
76 dollar and offset it with the unassigned fund balance. Selectman Trask suggested letting the voters
77 cut the budget and see what services will be cut with those cuts. Chairman Myette would like to keep
78 the 6% before the warrant article that if passed would decrease it to 5%.

79
80 Selectman Trask suggested a decrease in the maintenance budget, with the Maintenance Director
81 leaving during fiscal year 24-25. Selectwoman Theokas feels the Budget Committees 4.8% increase
82 over LY is unreasonable. Selectman Landau feels it is not smart to go to Town Meeting with two
83 budgets, but the Budget Committees budget will cut services in town. Chairman Myette suggested the
84 Board determine what they need for a budget and if the target is 5%, we can make the cuts.

85
86 The Board decided to take out \$60K from the budget. \$30K each from legal and maintenance full time.

87
88 ***Selectwoman Theokas motioned to move forward with the budget. Selectman Landau seconded***
89 ***the motion.***

90
91 Ms. Duffy inquired if the Board would be hiring a full-time person to replace the full-time employee
92 that will be leaving. The Board decided to take the funds from the part-time line.

93
94 Chief Gladu asked if the Board had discussed the additions he had requested in the Fire Department
95 budget. Chairman Myette feels the annual testing should be increased back to the \$9K. The Board
96 discussed the full-time line and increased it to the original request in hopes of finding someone. It
97 was decided to leave the on-call line as is. Chief Gladu pointed out they are only 4 months into the
98 new system and that might not be enough funding. Selectman Landau stated services may need to be
99 cut if the budget is too tight.

Selectman Landau suggested the snowplow line for the Transfer Station be cut to one dollar. Someone was hired that can run the equipment and the highway department can help if needed. Selectwoman Theokas recognizes the transfer station is over staffed. Residents get their trash into their vehicles; they can also get it out. Chairman Myette has heard great things about the Transfer Station from residents in town.

Ms. Celentano mentioned this is her first budget and the Budget Committee cut \$10K from the Town Clerk/Tax Collector assistant salary line without a conversation with her. If the \$10K is cut from her budget there will be service implications. Ms. Celentano explained the assistant is not her personal assistant, she is a certified municipal agent. She covers the counter while Ms. Celentano does the work required of her by RSA. Selectman Landau reminded Ms. Celentano this is a bottom-line budget. Chairman Myette stated the Department Heads should have had discussions with the Budget Committee.

Town Administrator Doda wanted to confirm the 6.15% budget was without utilizing the unassigned fund balance. They discussed the use of the unassigned fund balance. If the Board decides to utilize the unassigned fund balance, they will need to make an amendment on the floor.

The Board discussed the warrant articles and whether to move forward with them.

Selectwoman Theokas motioned to move forward with the budget as revised and take \$80K from the unassigned fund balance. Selectman Landau seconded the motion. A roll call vote was taken Myette – aye, Trask– nay, Theokas –aye, Couture –absent, Landau – aye. With three in favor, the motion passed with Couture absent.

Town Administrator Doda worked with Chairman Myette on the order for the warrant articles. The Land Use Change Tax warrant article will need to have a public hearing, and it has been noticed for the May 2nd Selectboard meeting.

The Board will vote to move the warrant articles forward.

Article #9 – Repurposing of Mosquito Abatement Expendable Trust Fund was moved forward unanimously.

Article #10 – Legal Costs ETF was moved forward unanimously. If the article fails, the interest will need to be transferred out.

Article #11 – Repurposing of 300th Anniversary Celebration CRF was moved forward unanimously.

Article #12 – Repurposing of Commemorative Monument CRF was moved forward unanimously.

Article #13 - Petition – SB2 must stay on the ballot as it was petitioned. Chairman Myette, Selectwoman Theokas, and Selectman Landau are opposed, and Selectman Trask abstained.

Article #14 – Municipal CIP CRF Funding was moved forward unanimously.

Article #15 – Municipal CIP CRF Spending was moved forward with Chairman Myette, Selectwoman Theokas, and Selectman Landau in the affirmative, and Selectman Trask opposed. Selectman Trask suggested taking \$50K from the hired equipment line in the budget if this warrant article passes.

Town Administrator Doda reminded the Board there are other pieces of equipment rented for the Highway Department.

Article #16 – Operating Budget was moved forward.

Article #17 – Town Revaluation CRF Funding was moved forward with Chairman Myette, Selectwoman Theokas, and Selectman Trask in the affirmative with Selectman Landau opposed.

Article #18 – Town Master Plan CRF Funding was moved forward unanimously.

Article #19 - Winter Road Maintenance ETF Funding was moved forward unanimously.

Article #20 – Emergency Contingency Fund was moved forward unanimously. If this is not needed during the fiscal year it will go back into the general fund.

Article #21 – Establishment and Funding of Vested Vacation Benefit ETF was moved forward unanimously.

Article #22 – Municipal Complex Roof Replacement was moved forward unanimously with the understanding this number is only a section of the roof not the entire roof.

Article #23 – Highway CIP CRF Funding was moved forward unanimously.

Article #24 – Highway CIP CRF Spending was moved forward unanimously.

Article #25 – Fire Department Apparatus CRF Funding was moved forward unanimously.

Article #26 – Fire Department Apparatus CRF Spending was moved forward unanimously.

Article #27 – Municipal Improvement CRF Funding was moved forward unanimously.

Article #28 – PACT Fund SRF Spending was moved forward unanimously.

Article #29 – Wason Pond Causeway Bridge is being sponsored by a matching grant and funds from the Conservation Commission. The Board decided not to go forward with this warrant article. Town Administrator Doda mentioned there will need to be a public hearing to accept the donation.

Article #30 – Conservation Easements was moved forward unanimously.

Article #31 – Complete Road Discontinuance was moved forward with Chairman Myette, Selectwoman Theokas, and Selectman Landau in the affirmative with Selectman Trask opposed.

Article #32 – Solar Array was moved forward with Chairman Myette and Selectwoman Theokas in the affirmative, Selectman Landau abstained, and Selectman Trask opposed.

Article #33 – Post Office Lease was moved forward with Chairman Myette, Selectwoman Theokas, and Selectman Landau in the affirmative, and Selectman Trask opposed.

Article #34 – Establishment and Funding of Bridge Repair and Replacement CRF was moved forward unanimously. One of the bridges will be receiving a grant from the state. The town will need to have funds available for the 80/20 match. This match for one of the bridges is \$400K.

Article #35 - Elderly Tax Exemptions Modification was moved forward unanimously.

Article #36 - Disabled/Blind Tax Exemptions Modification was moved forward unanimously.

Article #37 – Petition - Land Use Change Tax Funds Reallocation. The request is to change the proceeds for the Land use change tax to being split between conservation and roads 50/50. This must appear on the ballot as it was petitioned. Chairman Myette and Selectwoman Theokas are opposed, Selectman Landau abstained, and Selectman Trask is in the affirmative.

Article #38 – Establishment of Hand Counted Ballots ETF. Town Administrator Doda explained how she came up with the estimate if the counting of ballots was approved.

Article #39 – Petition - Paper Ballots, #1 must be on the ballot but it was unanimously not supported by the Selectboard.

Article #40 – Petition - Paper Ballots, #2 must be on the ballot but it was unanimously not supported by the Selectboard.

Article #41 – Petition – Paper Ballots, #3 must be on the ballot but it was unanimously not supported by the Selectboard.

IV. Consent Agenda

None

V. Selectmen’s Business

5.1 Chairman’s Announcements

Chairman Myette announced the following meetings:

Thursday, April 18th, 2024 @6pm Selectboard (Budget, Warrant, SB2 Public Hearing at 6:30pm)
– Main Meeting Room

5.2 Roundtable

None

5.3 Town Administrator’s Report

Nothing to report.

5.4 Action Items

Nothing to report.

5.5 Non-Public Session(s)

None

VI. Adjournment

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249 ***Selectman Trask moved to adjourn the meeting. Selectwoman Theokas seconded the motion. A***
250 ***roll call vote was taken Myette – aye, Trask– aye, Theokas –aye, Couture –absent, Landau – aye.***
251 ***With four in favor, the motion passed with Couture absent.***

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253 The meeting was adjourned at 8:14 PM.

254
255 Respectfully submitted,

256
257 Janis A. Jalbert
258 Recording Secretary