

**Town of Chester
Selectboard’s Meeting
Thursday, January 18, 2024
Municipal Complex
Approved Minutes**

I. Preliminaries

Call the Meeting to Order
Roll Call
Pledge of Allegiance
Non- Public Session
Chairman’s Additions or Deletions
Public Comment (10 minutes)
Primary Election
NH DOT 102/121 Intersection Presentation
Solar Working Group
Post Office Foundation
Transfer Station Skid Steer
NHMA Legislative Advocate Request
Consent Agenda
Chairman’s Announcements
Roundtable
TA Report
Action Items
Potential Non-Public Sessions
Adjournment

1.1 Call to Order

Vice Chairman Couture called the meeting of the Chester Selectboard to order at 5:30pm.

1.2 Roll Call

Selectboard Present:

Chuck Myette (vis Zoom)
Steve Couture
Stephen Landau
Dana Theokas
Dick Trask

Town Administrator Debra Doda

Members of the Public Present at various times:

Aaron Berube, Police Chief
Justine Celentano, Town Clerk/ Tax Collector
Matt Davis
Mark Dooley, Bureau of Highway Designs

Tim Dunn, NH DOT
Phil Gladu, Fire Chief
Andrew Hadik, Town Planner
Steve LaBonte, NH Bureau of Right Away
Stacy Manfrates, TS Foreman
James Piper, Supervisor of Roads
Darrell Quinn
Kevin Scott
Michael Scott, Moderator
Trent Zanes, NH Bureau of Highway Designs

and other persons unknown to the Recording Secretary.

1.3 Pledge of Allegiance

Vice Chairman Couture led the attendees in the Pledge of Allegiance.

1.4 Non Public Session

Selectman Landau motioned to go into non-public session pursuant to 91-A:3(II) (a) public employees. Vice Chairman Couture seconded the motion. A roll call vote was taken Myette – aye, Trask– aye, Theokas –aye, Couture –aye, Landau – aye. With all in favor, the motion passed.

The meeting was closed to the public at 5:32 PM. Mr. Davis remained in the room.

Mr. Davis departed the meeting room at 5:51 PM.

The meeting room was reopened to the public at 6:00 PM.

Selectman Landau motioned to come out of non-public session Vice Chairman Couture seconded the motion. A roll call vote was taken Myette – aye, Trask– aye, Theokas –aye, Couture –aye, Landau – aye. With all in favor, the motion passed.

1.5 Chairman’s Additions or Deletions

Vice Chairman Couture added SHF Bonfire permission and a land use change tax to the consent agenda.

1.5 Public Comment

Chairman Myette thanked the Fire Department and members who assisted with the fire in Epping involving oil trucks.

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

II. Appointments

2.1 Primary Election

Moderator Scott mentioned the election rules will be followed. There will be areas where people can watch the voting and counting of ballots. There will be a full staff of workers and it is expected the Selectboard be present for the elections. Mr. Hadik pointed out the Attorney General’s office is on speed dial, and they will be out spot-checking elections in the state.

Absentee ballots will start being processed at 1:00pm. There have been 70 absentee ballots requested and 40 have been received. Mr. Scott encouraged all the voters to bring their identification with them. Mr. Hadik asked that if anyone makes a mistake on the ballot, they can request a new ballot.

The ballot machines have been tested and the ballots are ready. Ms. Celentano mentioned she has plans drawn up for the counting and assignments for everyone. Vice Chairman Couture thanked Ms. Celentano for putting together a plan for counting.

Mr. Scott reminded the independent voters to change their party back to Undeclared when they have finished voting; a table is set up near the exit. Also, if there are complaints or problems please speak to the moderator.

2.2 NH DOT 102/121 Intersection Presentation

Mr. Dunn presented the two options for the center of town, which have been updated from discussions at the presentation with the Planning Board. The purpose of this project is to improve the intersection and the need is demonstrated by the crash history. There have been a number of right angle and rear end crashes from 2013-2022. During that period of time there have been 92 recorded crashes.

Mr. Dooley stated one of the issues with the intersection is the sight distance which is mainly due to the slope in front of Stevens Hall and the 6% grade on Route 102 at the intersection. Another issue is three of the four properties at the intersection are on the National Register for Historic Places. The Village Cemetery is the most sensitive. There are two anomalies under the Eagle Scout Memorial; these are likely graves and will need to be relocated before construction work will be started.

Mr. Dooley gave some background on the intersection. The state is estimating about 9,000 vehicles travel Route 102 daily and 6,000 travel Route 121 daily. Most of the crashes occur between 11am and 7pm. Mr. Dooley mentioned there have been interim improvements made to try to improve the intersection. Mr. Scott, Chester Street, asked if poor visibility is the root cause of the issue with the intersection. Mr. Dooley replied yes, poor visibility and the amount of traffic.

Mr. Zanes presented the two alternatives: signalized left turn lanes, or a roundabout. The state is comfortable with either option. Mr. Zanes walked through what the intersection will look like for each of the alternatives. Mr. Shriber, Jennifer Drive, mentioned roundabouts are the safest option; however, most drivers do not know how to drive in a roundabout. As for access to the properties on Haverhill Road, the state is confident they can maintain full access for the property owners, but it may need to be right in and right out.

Mr. Zanes mentioned crosswalks were mentioned at the Planning Board Meeting; if any sidewalks, crossings, or landings, these would need to be maintained by the town. Mr. Scott asked about pedestrian crossing at the intersection. Mr. Zanes mentioned a mid-block crossing would be placed

one car length from the intersection with a refuge in the middle if the town decided on a roundabout. Mr. Day asked what the traffic patterns would be near the school if pedestrians decided to cross there and if this would hurt the General Store’s business. Mr. Zanes pointed out the entrance to the school is beyond the scope of this project. As for access to the general store and the property on the corner, the state is confident they can maintain full access.

Mr. Zanes stated with the roundabout the grade on Chester Street will need to be dropped and the access to Stevens Hall and the Post office will not be feasible. The entrance will need to be reconfigured to be both an entrance and exit with a retaining wall in front of Stevens Hall. Selectwoman Theokas asked about the section in front of the church. Mr. Zane stated the shoulder will be slightly wider than what is currently there.

Mr. Dooley advised for safety and operations the signal and the roundabout meet the purpose and need for historic and cultural impacts. The signal will focus more on the approaches to the intersection while the roundabout will be focused more on the intersection. The 102 west entrance to the Chester General store will be closed; the entrance on 102 east will remain open in both options. The exit from the Post office will need to be closed if the roundabout is chosen. Mr. Zanes mentioned 2024 is referenced because projects are designed twenty years out to ensure a good level of service for 20 years to justify the expense.

Mr. Dunn mentioned the State considers additional factors for all projects such as environmental considerations. Both alternatives will likely have an adverse impact on historical resources and will need to go through mitigation due to the impacts. Archaeological recovery efforts will be needed in front of the cemetery and archaeological monitoring during construction. The State will also need stormwater treatment but that is in the next step of the project.

Mr. Dunn mentioned there are a few future public meetings planned and then a public hearing. Abutters will be notified via mail for that date.

Mr. LaBonte explained what the Bureau of Right of ways does for many projects. They operate under RSA 228:35 which summarized means whenever the right of way lines or boundaries are lost, the Commissioner of Transportation can re-establish those lines to the original extent they can. The best evidence for this project was the road itself. Mr. Methot pointed out the road was originally a ten-rod road. In 1792, they had a meeting house, and they would take the bodies and people who had died and bury them in the roadway. In 1747 they sold 5 rods of the 10-rod road making it what it is today.

Mr. Labonte explained a re-establishment plan will need to be filed with the Secretary of State and the Town Clerk’s office. The abutters will be notified. The re-establishment line determined that part of the cemetery and a small section of Haverhill Road in front of the general store are in the right of way. A discontinuance will be done for the section over the cemetery when the project is complete. Mr. Labonte explained the discontinuance process. With this process the right of way will be closer to the road on the cemetery side of the road. Vice Chairman Couture asked what happens if the Town does not accept it as a Class V Road. Since it already is a Class V Road the Town would need to discontinue the road.

Mr. Dunn presented the rough estimate and schedule for the intersection.

Vice Chairman Couture asked about cues and would like to know how long he will be waiting. That will be brought at the next meeting.

Selectman Trask mentioned in 2015 the Department of Transportation did traffic work for the exit 4A project and in 2035 the projected number of cars going through the intersection was 16K. The projection today for 2045 is 13K. Has the State considered the additional vehicles from the new exit? Mr. Dunn stated he has had conversations with the Bureau of Traffic regarding the new exit on 93.

2.3 Solar Working Group

Mr. Broadwater stated the mission of the Solar Working Group was to assess and recommend solar power options to offset municipal electrical costs and provide revenue to the town. Nine volunteers were appointed in May of 2023 and have spent over 300 hours researching and gathering data.

Mr. Broadwater explained all the different phases of the project. After careful consideration, the group is recommending to the Selectboard to utilize one of the options from ReVision Energy.

Vice Chairman Couture thanked the group for their time and energy into the project.

Chairman Myette thanked the group for putting together a question-and-answer sheet addressing questions and concerns from Town Meeting in 2023. This is a nice size project and will be of no cost to the town.

Selectwoman Theokas asked about the size of the project and if trees would be cut for the project. One of the projects is behind the burn pit and some trees would need to be cut. With the fence it will be around two acres for the array. Mr. Zankel, ReVision Energy, mentioned his company worked on a preliminary design and used GIS maps to locate wetlands and kept the town setbacks in mind when designing. Mr. Quinn pointed out where a dug well is on the property. If the array is approved a more comprehensive study will be done on the property.

Vice Chairman Couture feels the next step be for the selectboard to discuss this further at the next meeting. Copies of the ReVision proposal will be sent to the Board and Town Administrator Doda will draft a warrant article. Ms. Zankel offered assistance in writing the warrant article.

There was a discrepancy in the length of time cited in the documentation, so the group is going to double check their data.

Ms. Veale mentioned the group is willing to continue working together to find ways to help reduce taxes.

III. New Business

3.1 Post office Foundation

Selectman Landau mentioned the foundation can be done in sections. He has spoken to the mason, and he is willing to do small sections with the piers being first. Chairman Myette stated that phasing the project is great idea.

3.2 Transfer Station Skid Steer

Town Administrator Doda mentioned the repairs for the skid steer total up to \$4K and another \$6K is estimated for repairs. If the town were to trade the value is \$10K and the town would not have to pay for the repairs thus far. A new machine would cost around \$87K.

Ms. Manfrates, Transfer Station Foreman, mentioned this machine is used for snow plowing, moving the metal container, and for brush. Vice Chairman Couture asked if the gap could be covered by other pieces of machinery until Town Meeting. Selectman Landau asked if the town should take a chance on leasing a new machine prior to Town Meeting. Chairman Myette feels the skid steer should be fixed now and then the Board can decide what to do. Selectman Landau will look into different companies for pricing.

Vice Chairman Couture motioned to fix the skid steer. Selectwoman Theokas seconded the motion. A roll call vote was taken Myette – aye, Trask– aye, Theokas –aye, Couture –aye, Landau – abstained. With four in favor, the motion passed with Landau abstaining.

The Board requested Ms. Manfrates put together an analysis of what she uses the skid steer for and how often it is used.

3.3 NHMA Legislative Advocate Request

A new bill is being presented to attempt to prevent organizations that represent town managers, town clerks, libraries, police chiefs, fire fighters, town planners, and every other entity from supporting or opposing specific legislation. The bill would also assign criminal penalties to those that do.

Selectman Trask asked that Chester Representative Ford be invited to a meeting to explain the bill. Chairman Myette asked for clarity on the bill before supporting or opposing.

IV. Consent Agenda

4.1 Land Use Change Tax

4.2 Bonfire at Spring Hill Farm

Selectman Trask motioned to approve the consent agenda as presented. Selectman Landau seconded the motion. A roll call vote was taken Myette – aye, Trask– aye, Theokas –aye, Couture –aye, Landau – aye. With all in favor, the motion passed.

V. Selectmen’s Business

5.1 Chairman’s Announcements

Vice Chairman Couture announced the following meetings:

Monday January 22, 2024	Budget Committee Meeting at 7:00pm Chester Historical Society meeting and "Early Surveying" presentation at 7:00pm
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Wednesday January 24, 2024	Planning Board Meeting at 7:00pm
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298 Thursday February 1, 2024

Selectboard Meeting at 6:00pm

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300 Vice Chairman Couture announced the following events:

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302 Presidential Primary Tuesday January 23, 2024 7am to 7pm in the MPR, 84 Chester Street

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304 The Building Department will reopen on January 22, 2024.

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306 *5.2 Roundtable*

307

308 Chairman Myette stated the town may want to consider looking into online permits for some of the
309 departments in town.

310

311 Selectwoman Theokas asked what buildings have been impacted from weather. Town Administrator
312 Doda stated during the storm last week water flooded the hallway to the meeting room and Town
313 Administrators Office. Some ceiling tiles were lost, and the rug needed to be dried out using fans. The
314 MPR had a flood and an officer helped dig a trench to get the water away from the doors. Recreation
315 Director Reishus and Town Administrator Doda got the water off the gym floor. There are new leaks
316 in the Tax Collectors office, and the MPR hallway and Police Department continue to leak. Selectman
317 Landau mentioned the engineers suggested pitching the roof near the skylights.

318

319 Selectman Landau pointed out Shattigee Road is not yet repaired on the Raymond side. The estimate
320 is about three months for the repairs.

321

322 Selectman Trask

323 *Nothing to report.*

324

325 Chairman Myette

326 *Nothing to report.*

327

328 *5.3 Town Administrator’s Report*

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330 Vice Chairman Couture thanked Town Administrator Doda for the initiative with the electricity audit
331 and hopefully there will be some savings from that.

332

333 The Wason Pond bridge grant was approved. Town Administrator Doda was congratulated for all her
334 work on a successful grant application.

335

336 *5.4 Action Items*

337 *None*

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339 *5.5 Non-Public Session(s)*

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341 Vice Chairman Couture announced non-public sessions on reputation.

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343 ***Selectman Landau motioned to go into non-public session pursuant to 91-A:3(II) (c) reputation.***
344 ***Vice Chairman Couture seconded the motion. A roll call vote was taken Myette – aye, Trask– aye,***
345 ***Theokas –aye, Couture –aye, Landau – aye. With all in favor, the motion passed.***

346

347 The meeting was closed to the public at 9:05PM.

Selectman Landau motioned to come out of non-public session Vice Chairman Couture seconded the motion. A roll call vote was taken Myette – aye, Trask– aye, Theokas –aye, Couture –aye, Landau – aye. With all in favor, the motion passed.

The meeting was reopened to the public at 9:15 PM.

Selectman Landau motioned to seal the minutes of the first non-public session, on Public Employees. Vice Chairman Couture seconded the motion. A roll call vote was taken Myette – aye, Trask– aye, Theokas –aye, Couture –aye, Landau – aye. With all in favor, the motion passed.

Selectman Landau motioned to seal the minutes of the second non-public session, on Reputation. Vice Chairman Couture seconded the motion. A roll call vote was taken Myette – aye, Trask– aye, Theokas –aye, Couture –aye, Landau – aye. With all in favor, the motion passed.

Selectman Landau motioned to seal the minutes of the third non-public session, on Reputation. Vice Chairman Couture seconded the motion. A roll call vote was taken Myette – aye, Trask– aye, Theokas –aye, Couture –aye, Landau – aye. With all in favor, the motion passed.

VI. Adjournment

Selectman Landau moved to adjourn the meeting. Vice Chairman Couture seconded the motion. A roll call vote was taken Myette – aye, Trask– aye, Theokas –aye, Couture –aye, Landau – aye. With all in favor, the motion passed.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:17 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Janis A. Jalbert
Recording Secretary