

**Town of Chester
Selectboard’s Meeting
Thursday, November 2, 2023
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)
Public Hearing: Dogs at Spring Hill Farm
Public Hearing UFB for Lane Road
Public Hearing: Converting Class VI portion of Dump Road to Class V
Ortins
Scarecrows
Consent Agenda
Chairman’s Announcements
Roundtable
TA Report
Action Items
Potential Non-Public Sessions
Adjournment

1.1 Call to Order

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

1.2 Roll Call

Selectboard Present:

Chuck Myette
Steve Couture
Dick Trask
Dana Theokas
Stephen Landau

Town Administrator Debra Doda

Members of the Public Present at various times:

Aaron Berube, Police Chief
James Brown
Victor Chouinard
Chris Hadik
Rhonda Lamphere, Town Treasurer
Bob Latham

Gene Methot, Historical Society
Nancy Myette
Mike Oleson
James Piper, Supervisor of Roads (SOR)
Nick Putnam
Jonathan Remillard
Beth Sautter, Spring Hill Farm Advisory Committee
Michael Shackelford, Historical Society
Kristina Snyder, Spring Hill Farm Advisory Committee
and other persons unknown to the Recording Secretary.

1.3 Pledge of Allegiance

Chairman Myette led the attendees in the Pledge of Allegiance.

1.4 Chairman’s Additions or Deletions

Chairman Myette deleted item 3.1, *Ortins*, from the agenda.

Public Comment

Chairman Myette opened the meeting to public comment at 6:01pm.

Mr. Latham, Donna Street, asked the Board when Carkin Street would be fixed. Selectman Trask replied the Town is working on it. The engineering has been completed. Chairman Myette pointed out the drainage issue has been fixed and the road is not flooding. Culverts need to be replaced. The estimates will be coming soon and there will be a warrant article at Town Meeting for approval for the project.

Mr. Latham mentioned there is also an issue with the plowing on Donna Street.

Mr. Putnam, Haverhill Road, has an issue with drainage from Haverhill Road onto his property and needs guidance. Chairman Myette suggested to speak to Town Planner Hadik for the design and Mr. Piper, Supervisor of Roads, to look at the issue.

SOR Piper noted that Haverhill Road is a State road and the State would need to be contacted.

As no other Members of the Public wished to be heard, Public Comment was closed at 6:07pm.

II. Public Hearings

2.1 Dogs at Spring Hill Farm

Selectman Trask motioned to open the public hearing for Dogs at Spring Hill Farm. 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 public hearing opened at 6:08pm and will stay open for one hour.

Ms. Sautter mentioned the Spring Hill Farm Advisory Committee (SHFAC) has been working hard to get visitors to the farm. Incidents with loose dogs were mentioned. A proposal for regulations similar to the ones at Wason Pond is being proposed.

Ms. Snyder stated with the increased use there have been more and more dogs. Selectman Landau inquired if the service dog exception needed to be on the document.

Selectwoman Theokas inquired how this would be enforced. Ms. Sautter mentioned the SHFAC has talked about it. They thought perhaps the Park Ranger could cruise through the farm randomly.

Mr. Chouinard, Harantis Lake Road, mentioned the sensitive habitat of wild animals. Having dogs run loose could spook an animal. He feels this leash regulation is a good idea because inevitably the Town will have an issue. Mr. Chouinard pointed out if a dog is off leash and charges someone, they may feel threatened and may defend themselves.

Mr. Hadik, Chester Street, asked if this proposal pertained to all ~450 acres of the property. It will just be for the farm and trails on Towle Road, not the Lane Road property. Mr. Hadik pointed out the Wason Pond “leash law” was never approved by the townspeople. Town Administrator Doda stated per RSA it is the Selectboard’s right to manage town owned property (and clarified later in the meeting that this was a regulation, not an ordinance).

Vice Chairman Couture would like the property identified in the document. Town Administrator Doda will add the maps and lots numbers.

As no further comments were forthcoming, the Selectboard moved on to the next public hearing.

2.2 UFB for Lane Road & Request for Impact and Offsite Improvement Fees

Selectman Trask motioned to open the public hearing for Lane Road. 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 public hearing opened at 6:25pm and will stay open for one hour.

Chairman Myette explained that the Lane Road wash out at the end of July was an emergency and not planned for in the budget. The Planning Board approved the use of impact fees and offsite improvements fees to help offset the \$203K that has been spent on the repairs. Ms. Lamphere, Town Treasurer, feels there is more money available in the general highway impact fee account created in 2011.

Mr. Brown, Lane Road, commended the Supervisor of Roads and the Police Department for their response to the situation. Kudos to Mr. Piper, the highway crew, and Bolduc Tree Services for the cleanup downstream. Although they were able to get a lot of debris, there is residual debris on the property and in the wetlands. Mr. Brown is uncomfortable with DES not visiting the site.

Chairman Myette thanked Mr. Brown for staying at the scene until the Police arrived to close the road. He thanked Mr. Piper and also former Road Agent Oleson for the relationship he built with the contractors over the years. The road was fixed ahead of schedule.

Chairman Myette suggested following up with DES about the debris downstream. Town Administrator Doda read a letter from DES stating no further work is required on Lane Road. Mr. Oleson stated in the past the requirement was to remove all the asphalt.

Vice Chairman Couture mentioned he works for DES and can not comment on the subject.

As no further comments were forthcoming, the Selectboard moved on to the next public hearing.

2.3 Converting Class VI portion of Dump Road to Class V

Vice Chairman Couture motioned to open the public hearing to convert a portion of Dump Road to Class V. Selectman Trask 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 public hearing opened at 6:44pm and will stay open for one hour.

Mr. Remillard mentioned there are problems every year with the dirt portion of Dump Road leading up to the Highway Shed. Mr. Remillard has worked with former Road Agent Oleson in the past to keep it passable in the winter. Mr. Remillard thought it would be great to work with the Town and pave a section of the road to get rid of the issues.

Chairman Myette mentioned the part of Dump Road from 102 to the Transfer Station is Class V and past the Transfer Station is Class VI. Because it is a Class VI road, the Town cannot spend funds on it. If it is opened it will need to be maintained by the Town.

Selectman Landau asked what standard the road will be built to. It will be built to a Class IV standard.

Mr. Oleson, Chester Street, is in support of this. There have been issues for years with vehicles trying to get to the salt shed. This is free labor for the town.

Selectwoman Theokas stated the Town is already plowing, and this will make it easier for people to get to the shed.

As no further comments were forthcoming, the Selectboard moved on; the public hearings will remain open.

III. Appointments

3.1 Ortins – Composting follow up (deleted from the agenda)

3.2 Scarecrows: Historical Society

Chairman Myette presented a proclamation to Mr. Methot and Mr. Shackleford, members of the Historical Society, from Congressman Pappas recognizing the Chester Historical Society’s annual scarecrow celebration.

IV. New Business

4.1 Engineering RFP Opening

Chairman Myette opened the proposals for engineering from Dubois & King, Gale Associates, and Underwood Engineers. The Board will review the packets over the next few weeks and make a decision.

4.2 Wage Matrix Review (COLA)

Town Administrator Doda mentioned last year the matrix was adjusted by 3%. The CIP in September is 2.6% and inflation is at 3.7%.

Selectman Trask motioned to discuss the wage matrix. 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.

Selectman Trask mentioned last year the employees were given 3% when CPI was at 8.1%.

Selectman Landau feels the employees know they have a job and last year was not a great year. Selectman Landau has always supported the employees, but he also needs to support the town. Vice Chairman Couture reminded the Board the employees were given a bonus last year.

Selectman Trask suggested a 5% increase. Selectman Landau mentioned the Board should also be looking at the benefits. Town Administrator Doda stated the rates are in for benefits next year. Medical is going up 14.6%, Dental up 4.7%, Short term disability down 1.3%, and long term will be going down 15%.

Selectwoman Theokas motioned to approve a 3% increase. Vice Chairman Couture seconded the motion.

Chairman Myette feels the Board should look at the numbers for the budget. He agreed with seeing what the different numbers will do to the budget.

Vice Chairman Couture withdrew his second for the motion.

TA Doda was tasked with making a table with the impact of different percentages to the budget.

Selectwoman Theokas withdrew the motion.

The discussion will be continued on December 7th.

V Consent Agenda

4.1 Minutes October 5, 2023 & October 19, 2023

Vice Chairman Couture motioned to approve the minutes of October 5, 2023. 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.

Vice Chairman Couture motioned to approve the minutes of October 19, 2023. Selectman Trask seconded the motion. A roll call vote was taken Myette – abstained, Trask– aye, Theokas –aye,

Couture –aye, Landau – abstained. With three in favor, the motion passed with Myette and Landau abstaining.

II. Public Hearings (con’t)

Vice Chairman Couture motioned to close the public hearing for Dogs at Spring Hill Farm. Selectman Trask 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.

Town Administrator Doda will add the tax maps and lot numbers to the document.

Selectman Trask motioned to close the public hearing for Lane Road. 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.

Town Administrator Doda will change the numbers to the most recent amounts.

The public hearings for Dogs at Spring Hill Farm and Lane Road closed at 7:29pm.

2.1 Dogs at Spring Hill Farm (con’t)

Vice Chairman Couture would like the section on service dogs be amended to refer to ‘in compliance with disability act’.

Vice Chairman Couture motioned approve the dogs at Spring Hill Farm regulations. Selectman Landau seconded the motion. A roll call vote was taken Myette – aye, Trask– nay, Theokas – nay, Couture – aye, Landau – aye. With three in favor, the motion passed with Theokas and Trask opposing.

Selectman Trask is against this regulation. The Town already provides a safe place to walk where dogs must be on a leash – Wason Pond.

2.2 UFB for Lane Road & Request for Impact and Offsite Improvement Fees

Selectman Trask motioned to move forward with sending the letter with the corrected amounts for Lane Road. Selectwoman Theokas 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.

TA Doda will ask Town Planner Hadik to have the Planning Board approve the third amount as noted by Treasurer Lamphere and send another letter to the Board. Selectman Trask would like to retract the motion until the Planning Board sends the third letter.

Selectwoman Theokas motioned to not move forward with the letter until the Board receives all documents. 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. Selectmen’s Business

5.1 Chairman’s Announcements

Chairman Myette announced the following meetings:

Monday November 6, 2023 Wason Pond Commission Meeting at 7:00pm

Wednesday November 8, 2023 Planning Board Meeting at 7:00pm

Monday November 13, 2023 Budget Committee Meeting at 7:00pm
Recreation Commission Meeting at 7:00pm

Tuesday November 14, 2023 Conservation Commission Meeting at 6:00pm
Solar Working Group Meeting at 7:00pm

Wednesday November 15, 2023 Planning Board Meeting at 7:00pm

Thursday November 16, 2023 Selectboard Meeting at 6:00pm

Chairman Myette announced the following events:

Wednesday November 8, 2023 Reverse Parade for Veterans at Chester Academy. Veterans arrive between 8:45am and 9:00am. Reception in the CA Cafeteria following the parade.

Friday November 10, 2023 Town Offices closed for Veteran’s Day.

There is no official ceremony on Friday November 10 for Veterans Day; however, the Legion will be serving breakfast from 8:00am to 10:00am for Veterans.

Also, the Legion is selling poinsettias again this year. Look on the Legion’s website to order yours.

5.2 Roundtable

Selectman Landau mentioned he may have a tree on his property, or someone can look on Town owned property for a tree. Vice Chairman Couture pointed out he has been in contact with a large tree farm and a 16-to-18-foot tree will cost \$850.00. He will be happy to follow up with any questions.

Chairman Myette suggested purchasing a tree this year and arrange to have someone look on town owned properties next year.

Selectman Trask
Nothing to report.

Vice Chairman Couture stated the Solar RFP deadline has been extended by one week.

Selectman Landau asked for the Board to consider voting to approve the old floor scrubber and batteries to be sold to the highest bidder after the bids are closed on November 10th. If the Board waits for the next meeting to approve the sale the bidder may drop out and not respond.

Selectman Landau motioned to sell the floor scrubber and batteries to the highest bidder. Selectwoman Theokas seconded the motion. A roll call vote was taken Myette – aye, Trask– nay,

Theokas –aye, Couture –aye, Landau – aye. With four in favor, the motion passed with Trask opposing.

Selectwoman Theokas suggested having a celebration lunch or dinner for the volunteers on the boards, committees, and commissions in town. Chairman Myette stated the Board would have to determine a budget.

Chairman Myette
Nothing to report.

5.3 Town Administrator’s Report

A request for money for the holiday party was discussed. Town Administrator Doda mentioned the Board usually gives money for the holiday party and the employees also bring in items.

Vice Chairman Couture motioned to spend \$300.00 for the employee holiday party. Selectwoman Theokas 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.

5.4 Action Items
None

II. Public Hearings (con’t)

Vice Chairman Couture motioned to close the public hearing to convert a portion of Dump Road to Class V. Selectman Trask 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 public hearing closed at 7:55pm.

Vice Chairman Couture asked for this to be tabled for discussion in non-public session.

Selectman Trask motioned to convert a portion of Dump Road to Class V from the Transfer Station to the access of the sand pile at the salt shed. Selectwoman Theokas seconded the motion. A roll call vote was taken Myette – aye, Trask– aye, Theokas – aye, Couture – abstained, Landau – abstained. With three in favor, the motion passed with Couture and Landau abstaining.

Selectman Landau asked SOR Piper if there were potential Christmas trees on the salt shed property. SOR Piper has not ventured past the firing range on the property.

5.5 Non-Public Session(s)

Chairman Myette announced non-public sessions on legal advice and reputation.

Vice Chairman Couture motioned to go into non-public session pursuant to 91-A:3(II) (c) reputation and (I) legal advice. Chairman Myette 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 8:00PM.

Selectman Trask 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 8:23 PM.

Selectman Landau motioned to seal the minutes of the first non-public session, on Reputation. Selectman Trask 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 Public Employees. Selectman Trask 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. Selectman Trask 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 8:27 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Janis A. Jalbert
Recording Secretary