

**Town of Chester  
Selectboard’s Workshop  
Thursday, November 30, 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)  
Workshop  
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 7:00pm.

*1.2 Roll Call*

Selectboard Present:

Chuck Myette  
Stephen Landau  
Dick Trask  
Dana Theokas

Selectboard Absent:

Steve Couture

Town Administrator Debra Doda

Members of the Public Present at various times:

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*

*None*

51 *Public Comment*

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53 As no Members of the Public wished to be heard, Public Comment was closed at 7:01pm.

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55 **II. New Business**

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57 *2.1 Workshop*

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59 The Board discussed the CIP items for this year. The consensus was to have a survey done for the  
60 repairs to the Post office support beams in FY 24-25 and repair the foundation in FY 25-26 with the  
61 replacement of the basement steps and bulkhead.

62  
63 Chairman Myette asked if the town is in the market to purchase new ballot machines. Selectwoman  
64 Theokas said it is a requirement for us to purchase new machines. Since it is a requirement Chairman  
65 Myette inquired if it is needed for the 2024 election. Town Administrator Doda believes that new  
66 machines are needed for the election. Selectman Landau asked if the town would be purchasing two.  
67 With this being a large voting year, it might be wise to have both machines working. Selectman Trask  
68 went to a demonstration in the summer for the new ballot machines. In his opinion Voting Works had  
69 the better machine, and they are local with backup machines if needed.

70  
71 Chairman Myette pointed out the town capital projects for FY 24-25 is \$5.1M and the following year  
72 is \$2.1M. It is up to the Board to decide what projects can wait, since it would be hard for the town  
73 to do all the projects without a bond.

74  
75 Chairman Myette stated the library is asking for \$31.5K to repair the water damage from improper  
76 construction years ago. It is not covered under insurance. Selectwoman Theokas would like to see  
77 more plans for the future. If they have nothing on the CIP, then no fees will be collected. Town Planner  
78 Hadik will be asked if there is another project that can be placed on Table 10 for the library.

79  
80 Chairman Myette pointed out the large expense for the Police Department is the cruiser. Chief Berube  
81 has asked that the cruiser stay in the CIP for FY24-25. Two of the current cruisers have over 100,000  
82 miles. Because of issues with manufacturing the department did not order a new cruiser last year  
83 and they are out of cycle with cruiser replacement.

84  
85 Chairman Myette mentioned during the Planning Board Meeting, Chief Gladu was asked how much  
86 would be needed and when it would be needed to purchase a new fire truck. If ordered it will be over  
87 a year and a half before it gets delivered. The current balance of the capital reserve for fire  
88 department apparatus is \$685K and the cost of the new fire engine is estimated at \$980K. The full  
89 \$980K will not be expended in the next fiscal year unless the company requires a full payment.  
90 Selectman Landau pointed out it is a 20-year-old truck, but it is not working every day so is it truly  
91 needed this year, or can it wait? Chairman Myette stated that question has been asked for several  
92 years. Chairman Myette feels it should stay on the CIP just to get it ordered and continue to add money  
93 to the account to pay for it.

94  
95 Town Administrator Doda added a warrant article to put \$125K, preferably from the UFB, into  
96 apparatus fund.

97  
98 Selectman Landau inquired if the town could keep the old pumper as a backup for when the Quint is  
99 refurbished. Selectwoman Theokas asked if Chief Gladu could supply the Selectboard with usage  
100 reports for all the vehicles.

Selectman Trask pointed out the roads were neglected for many years and that the town is playing catch-up. Chairman Myette feels the Carkin Street repairs should stay on since this was a drainage and safety issue. The Cole Road project is halfway through the permitting phase. The report identifies bidding to start in February of 2024 with construction occurring in the spring. Chairman Myette pointed out that Cole Road bridge needed to be fixed within 5 years and hasn’t been done yet. ARPA funds were set aside for the project but at this point there are not enough funds for the entire project.

Halls Village Road is on the CIP in phases and Chairman Myette pointed out a grant has been applied for, but the status is unknown. The Board discussed what road shimming could be moved to another year. Chairman Myette suggested asking SOR Piper to look through the CIP projects and try to balance out the projects making sure Carkin Street and Donna Street stay on the CIP for FY24-25.

The new 4A exit off 93 north will bring a lot of traffic to Chester and Halls Village Road.

The Wason Pond Causeway is the largest expenditure for Parks and Recreation. The engineering is complete, and a grant has been applied for. It would be a 50% match if the town gets the grant. Town Administrator Doda stated the grant if received has a three-year period for the work to be completed.

Chairman Myette suggested the Board look at what they feel are priorities, look at available funds, then warrant articles can be drafted.

Selectman Landau mentioned the equipment needed for the highway department. Chairman Myette mentioned at the Planning Board meeting that Mr. Weider (not present) mentioned the possibility of purchasing used equipment since many projects are finishing up and the equipment will become available. SOR Piper was asked to look into this and also what a lease option would be for the Town.

Selectwoman Theokas asked if inflation is factored into the numbers for road projects not happening for a few years. Selectman Trask advised that is hard to do because of the fluctuation in asphalt pricing. Some projects are labor driven, and others are asphalt driven.

Chairman Myette mentioned there are many things not on the CIP that should be such as, red listed bridge repairs, a highway building, sally port for PD, paving at the Municipal Complex, new school, and a new police department building. Selectwoman Theokas pointed out when looking at the police department building, the town offices should be looked at since this building is not meeting the needs of the town.

Selectman Trask feels the Planning Department should have a coordinator position that is working 25 hours for the Planning Board which would give Town Planner Hadik time for the future planning of Chester. Chairman Myette stated there is an open position for a coordinator that has not been able to be filled. There is a clerk working in the department to help since the coordinator position has not been filled.

The Master Plan is being started now. Selectman Trask suggested reviewing the previous master Plan. Chairman Myette stated the master plan can be an agenda item at the next workshop.

Chairman Myette asked if a bond might be needed for some of the very high-priced items that have not made it on the CIP such as the red listed bridge repairs, a sally port or other buildings that are needed. Some of these projects run in the millions and it would be very hard to raise that amount of funds in a year.

The Board discussed COLA. Every employee gets a two percent increase every year and a COLA is in addition to that. Chairman Myette explained the difference between government and private sector raises.

Selectman Landau mentioned that some of the job descriptions do not fit on the matrix. Town Administrator Doda stated an issue with the matrix is that it was drawn up in 2019, cost of living increased 16% since then, and the matrix has only been adjusted once by 3%. Employees are falling further and further behind compared to their peers. Selectwoman Theokas pointed out the information provided about the salaries shows Chester is being fair in what they pay the employees.

Selectman Trask mentioned over the last three years natural gas increased 29%, electricity 25%, major appliances 12%, used cars 35%, car insurance 33%, and groceries increased 25%. Selectwoman Theokas pointed out in the wage matrix procedures an additional step is given every 3 years for longevity. Chairman Myette feels Chester is not far off on the matrix at this point, so it does not need to be adjusted. Selectwoman Theokas pointed out a 1% COLA increase for the town is \$33K and a 2% COLA increase is \$60K.

The COLA will be discussed at another meeting. Selectwoman Theokas asked for a calendar reminder to be set up to review the matrix and would like the forecast on the longevity increases. Chairman Myette opined that the longevity is based on grades, not on hire date. The longevity increases should be done in groups of employees, so the longevity bump does not hit all at once.

The Matrix procedures have never been approved by the Selectboard. Selectwoman Theokas pointed out for the wage matrix these items are needed: job descriptions, salary survey, where our employees are at, and the service needs in the town. Selectman Myette feels the goals this year should agree on the Matrix procedures and a COLA increase. The Matrix can be looked at before prior to the budget prep next year and all the pertinent information can be gathered.

#### **IV. Selectmen’s Business**

##### *4.1 Chairman’s Announcements*

Chairman Myette announced the following meetings:

Monday December 4, 2023	ZBA Site Walk for Busche Academy at 12:00pm. Parties will meet at Wadleigh Hall (40 Chester Street) and the tour will begin
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Chairman Myette explained that Busche Academy is looking to erect a large inflatable sports building on the property.

Monday December 4, 2023	Wason Pond Commission Meeting at 7:00pm
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Wednesday December 6, 2023	Planning Board Meeting at 7:00pm
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Wednesday December 6, 2023	School Board Meeting at 6:00pm
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Thursday December 7, 2023	Selectboard Meeting at 6:00pm
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Christmas with Santa and the tree lighting are coming soon, and this weekend is Christmas in the Village and the annual Boy Scouts food drive at the Transfer Station.

#### 4.2 Roundtable

Selectman Landau  
*Nothing to report.*

Selectman Trask  
*Nothing to report.*

Selectwoman Theokas mentioned the Fire Department and Maintenance Department cleaned under the bridge and tested the gate at Wason Pond. Kudos to Mr. Bellemore. Chairman Myette mentioned a standpipe for the gate was recommended a few years ago and should be put in the budget.

Basketball has started and the buildings are very busy with different events such as pickleball.

Chairman Myette  
*Nothing to report.*

#### 4.3 Town Administrator’s Report

*Nothing to report.*

#### 4.4 Action Items

Town Administrator Doda has received another call about selling the Post Office. Chairman Myette said the answer would be no every time this comes up.

The question was asked if payroll could be processed on Thursday December 21, instead of Friday December 22, 2023. The Board has no issues with processing early.

The Board has the information for the PD sallyport in their folders.

#### 4.5 Non-Public Session(s)

Chairman Myette announced non-public sessions on employment and reputation.

***Selectman Landau motioned to go into non-public session pursuant to 91-A:3(II) (a) public employees, (c) reputation, and (e) pending litigation. Selectwoman Theokas seconded the motion. A roll call vote was taken Myette – aye, Trask– aye, Theokas –aye, Couture –absent, Landau – aye. With four in favor, the motion passed with Couture absent.***

The meeting was closed to the public at 9:42PM.

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

The meeting was reopened to the public at 9:52 PM.

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

*Selectman Landau motioned to seal the minutes of the second non-public session, on Pending Litigation. Selectwoman Theokas seconded the motion. A roll call vote was taken Myette – aye, Trask– aye, Theokas –aye, Couture –absent, Landau – aye. With four in favor, the motion passed with Couture absent.*

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

## **VI. Adjournment**

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

The meeting was adjourned at 9:55 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Janis A. Jalbert

Recording Secretary