

**Town of Chester
Board of Selectmen Meeting
Thursday, February 21st, 2019
Municipal Complex
Approved Minutes**

I. Preliminaries

Call the Meeting to Order
Roll Call
Pledge of Allegiance
Additions and Deletions
Public Comment
Approval of Minutes
Items for Signature
Police Department Space Needs Study
PTA Trivia Night
Murphy Drive
Compensation
Fire Department Septic System
Highway Department
Roundtable
Adjournment

1.1 Call to Order

Chairman Owens called this meeting of the Town of Chester Board of Selectmen to order at 7:01pm.

1.2 Roll Call

Selectmen present:

Cass Buckley (arrived at 7:39pm)
Joseph Hagan (arrived at 7:22pm)
Stephen Landau
Jeremy Owens

Selectmen absent:

Steve D’Angelo

Members of the Public present, at various times:

Aaron Berube, Police Chief
Greg Bolduc, Fire Chief
Ben Clark, Deputy Fire Chief
Will Gatchell, Harriman
Alicia Haverty, PTA
Darrell Lockwood, School Superintendent
Nancy Myette
Michael Oleson, Road Agent
Corinna Reishus, Recreation Director
Royal Richardson, School Board Chairman
Maria Veale, School Board
Penny Williams, Tri-Town Times
And other persons unknown to the Recording Secretary

1.3 Pledge of Allegiance

Chairman Owens led the attendees in the Pledge of Allegiance.

1.4 Chairman’s Additions and Deletions

There were neither additions nor deletions.

1.5 Public Comment

As no Members of the Public wished to be heard, Public Comment was closed at 7:02pm.

II. Old Business

2.1 Approval of Minutes

An approval sheet for the previous weeks’ meeting minutes is in the signature folder.

2.2 Items for Signature

All members should review and sign items in the Signature Folder.

III. New Business

3.1 Police Department Space Needs Study

Will Gatchell of Harriman appeared before the Selectmen to update them on the status of the Police Department Space Needs Study. He and his colleague Judy Johnson have been meeting with the Working Group, consisting of Police Chief Berube, other employees, and residents, since January. Harriman had been chosen out of seven architectural firms that bid on the project.

Mr. Gatchell explained that Harriman has reviewed site plans, visited and assessed the existing Police Department, and are looking for potential development areas. They found the existing building in fair condition – two out of a ranking of one (poor) to five (new) – and that the Department’s needs are larger than the available space. Ventilation is a problem, and there is not enough room to segregate particular areas. Doubling the current space is most likely necessary.

Police Chief Berube noted that the Police Department has been in its current location since 1999, and that the impetus for a Space Needs Study was a discussion a few years ago about the need for a sally port (an entrance to bring detainees directly into the booking room rather than through the public lobby). They had discovered that the cost to build a sally port outstripped the useful age of the building.

Selectman Landau stated that Harriman is looking not only at the existing 84 Chester Street property but will be investigating other areas of Town as well. This project will not be complete in time for this year’s Town Meeting.

Recreation Director Reishus, who is part of the Working Group, noted that meeting minutes and documents will be available on the Town’s website, and that an information night will be scheduled in the MPR for the residents’ input. Police Chief Berube added that all residents are more than welcome to join the Working Group, which meets monthly; the next meeting will be on Monday, March 11th, 2019 at 9:00am at Town Hall. It is his intent that the entire process is as open and transparent as possible.

Mr. Gatchell departed the meeting at 7:22pm.

3.2 PTA Trivia Night

Alicia Haverty of the Chester Academy PTA appeared before the Selectmen to request permission to allow the consumption of BYO alcohol at their annual Auction/Trivia Night to be held from 7pm – 11pm on Saturday, March 23rd, 2019 in the MPR. Tickets are \$20/person. They will be procuring a Police Detail, which will be the only expense other than paying for the Trivia leader and prizes. They expect to raise between \$5-10k.

Selectman Landau moved to allow the Chester Academy PTA to hold a BYOB Auction/Trivia Night fundraiser in the MPR on Saturday, March 23rd, 2019; Selectman Hagan seconded the motion. The vote was three in favor with Selectman D’Angelo absent and Vice-Chairman Buckley yet to arrive; motion carried.

Ms. Haverty departed the meeting table at 7:24pm.

3.3 Murphy Drive

Police Chief Berube, Fire Chief Greg Bolduc, Superintendent Darrell Lockwood, School Board Chairman Royal Richardson, and School Board member Maria Veale appeared before the Selectmen to discuss the situation on Murphy Drive. When there is a large amount of traffic on Murphy Drive, vehicles block the road and Fire Department vehicles are unable to exit. This happens every morning and afternoon on school days as parents inappropriately form two lanes in order to turn both left and right, rather than obeying the intended single lane restriction.

Mr. Richardson stated that parents had been informed not to do this, and that the school had placed staff in the parking lot to direct traffic. When they see the Fire Department doors open and the vehicles needing to exit, they stop traffic from exiting the parking lot, but this does not help with the traffic already blocking Murphy Drive. He added, however, that this occurs for only about 15 minutes each morning and afternoon.

Fire Chief Bolduc noted that it is not only a problem during school time, but that any event in the area – sports, evening events, Town Fair – is an issue, and that when Exit 4A is constructed, the additional traffic going through Chester will cause even more of a problem. If there is an accident on Murphy Drive, no-one will be able to get in or out.

Superintendent Lockwood agreed that it is not only an exit problem, but an entrance problem for the volunteer firefighters. Short term solutions will be less expensive, but they won’t solve the problem – the road, which was planned twenty years ago, is a dead end. The exiting parents go around the buses, drive up on the grass, etc.; if there are lines painted, and signage, at least the Police Department would be able to enforce. Making the intersection right-turn-only would cause problems further down 102 with illegal U-turns, etc. Selectman Hagan asked if the Police Department would be able to station an officer at the intersection in the morning and afternoon; Police Chief Berube replied that he could not guarantee he would have the resources every day.

Mrs. Haverty stood and was recognized. She opined that restricting Murphy Drive to one lane would make the exiting traffic even worse than it already is; Superintendent Lockwood stated that cars doubling up on the right make it dangerous for the driver attempting to turn left.

Selectman Landau stated that he had made the right-turn-only suggestion as it could be implemented immediately. Murphy Drive should not be a cul-de-sac. A long-term plan is needed for another exit; perhaps a study is needed, much like the Police Department Space Needs Study. Both Selectman Hagan and Vice-Chairman Buckley agreed that an egress road, plus a road out to Stockman Drive, would be

optimal. Selectman Landau added that the egress road would need to be gated in order to prevent usage by anyone other than the Fire Department.

Superintendent Lockwood, Mr. Richardson, and Mrs. Veale departed the meeting at 7:52pm; Police Chief Berube and Fire Chief Bolduc remained at the meeting table.

3.4 Compensation

Chairman Owens noted that various Department Heads had expressed concern over the recent merit raise process, and the lack of communication from the Selectmen. He explained that the Selectmen believed that there was no solid process in place, other than the annual COLA raises, and that the evaluations had all been handled differently by the Department Heads. He accepted responsibility for the lack of communication.

Fire Chief Bolduc stated a plan had been in place since 2016 which called for a COLA in July, evaluations in December, and possibly merit increases after that. The plan had not been followed this year, and there had been no communication from the Selectmen. He was concerned that he had no answers for his employees and that this had the potential to hurt morale. Police Chief Berube added that although the last two years’ COLA increases had been large, three years ago it was small and four years ago there was no increase at all. That had been the impetus for the Selectmen to create the plan in 2016.

Vice-Chairman Buckley stated that his issue with the plan from 2016 was that using the 20-year CPI chart, even a poor employee could increase his pay by 30% over eight years with the COLA only. He added that he is not in favor of merit increases other than in extraordinary circumstances.

Chairman Owens stated that evaluations needed to be done whether they were tied to raises or not, so that employees would know how they were performing; Police Chief Berube noted that having Department Heads meet with the Selectmen to go over the evaluations would be beneficial.

Selectman Landau is currently working on a new pay matrix with some interested employees.

Police Chief Berube departed the meeting table at 8:12pm; Fire Chief Bolduc remained, and was joined by Deputy Fire Chief Ben Clark.

3.5 Fire Department Septic System

Fire Chief Bolduc and Deputy Fire Chief Clark appeared before the Selectmen to discuss the Fire Department’s Septic System, which dates from ~2000. For the past few years it has been freezing up repeatedly, necessitating expensive emergency measures.

Selectman Landau has procured quotes for a new septic system from one contractor, both pipe & stone field (\$17,900) and concrete chamber (\$28,900). Part of the expense is due to the fact that the pipe runs under the driveway and parking lot. The CIP only contains \$22,000 for this work, and it is scheduled for FY20-21. He would like to ask the Planning Board to increase the amount by another \$8k – 10k.

Fire Chief Bolduc stated that Building Inspector Bunker prefers the concrete chamber, as it handles surges better and is more able to withstand being driven over. Deputy Fire Chief Clark added that he had received quotes from a second contractor - \$17,800 and \$37,000 respectively – and is waiting to hear from a third. The current tank is undersized, and a second tank would be added. The area would need to be marked to prevent parking or driving over it in the future.

Selectman Landau moved to ask the Planning Board to increase the allocation of \$22,000 for the Fire Department Septic System by \$8k-\$10k; Vice-Chairman Buckley seconded the motion.

The vote was four in favor with Selectman D’Angelo absent; motion carried.

Fire Chief Bolduc and Deputy Fire Chief Clark departed the meeting at 8:23pm.

3.6 Highway Department

Road Agent Oleson appeared before the Selectmen to discuss the StreetScan work and other Highway Department related issues.

Dependent on the weather, roads will be posted in March, limiting them to vehicles under 33,000 pounds.

Lane Road was closed recently due to mud. Unfortunately, there was some vandalism to the barriers – some were smashed and thrown into the woods. Road Agent Oleson cautioned against such vandalism in the future.

Representatives from StreetScan are on the agenda for next week’s meeting. He noted that their work excluded dirt roads, and they missed Reed Road. He agrees with all of their findings other than the end of Fremont Road; the number of alligator cracks on that road mean that it needs more work than they might expect. All roads that they marked green had been redone in the past dozen years. They estimate that 55-60% of Chester’s roads are in failure. The website, user name, and password will be forwarded to the Selectmen in order that they might review the work before next week’s meeting.

He also wished to discuss a possible roadwork bond. He believes that \$10m over ten years would allow a lot of the really bad roads to be repaired – North Pond, East Derry, Halls Village, Jennifer, Holman, Parker, Rand, etc. - while other roads in better condition are repaired and/or maintained using CIP funds. Vice-Chairman Buckley believes that this is not possible and would like to explore options other than asphalt paving or turning roads to dirt, although it is unclear what those options might be and who would know. Selectman Landau stated that one option might be to continue to maintain the larger, feeder roads while privatizing the smaller roads.

Chairman Owens is concerned that the Town’s roads have reached a point of significant deferred maintenance.

Road Agent Oleson departed the meeting at 8:43pm.

IV. Selectmen’s Business

4.1 Roundtable

Selectman Landau:

- Nothing to report.

Selectman Hagan:

- Nothing to report.

Vice-Chairman Buckley:

- Nothing to report.

Chairman Owens:

- The Seniors sent a card to the Selectmen, thanking them for raising their budget from \$10k to \$15k.
- Health Trust is holding a public hearing on rate setting on March 7th, 2019.
- The Historical Society would like their office floors refinished; Selectman Landau is working with

them on this.

- A request has been received from the Robert Frost/Old Stage Coach Scenic Byway Council, asking for a donation of \$200 to support the byway. The Town had previously donated \$200 in December 2017. **Selectman Hagan moved to contribute \$200 to the Robert Frost/Old Stage Coach Scenic Byway Council; Vice-Chairman Buckley seconded the motion. The vote was four in favor with Selectman D’Angelo absent; motion carried.**

V. Adjournment

The next regularly scheduled meeting of the Board of Selectmen will be Thursday, February 28th, 2019.

Selectman Landau moved to adjourn the meeting; Vice-Chairman Buckley seconded the motion. The vote was four in favor with Selectman D’Angelo absent; motion carried.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:45pm.

Respectfully Submitted,

Debra H. Doda
Recording Secretary