

**Town of Chester
Board of Selectmen Meeting
Thursday, April 11th, 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
300th Anniversary Committee
Bridle Path – Eversource
Budget & Warrant
Post Office Lease
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:

Steve D'Angelo
Joseph Hagan
Stephen Landau
Jeremy Owens

Selectmen absent:

Cass Buckley

Members of the Public present, at various times:

Aaron Berube, Police Chief
Greg Bolduc, Fire Chief
Matt Flanders, Eversource
Brennan Holmes, Budget Committee
Nancy Jolin
Rhonda Lamphere, Budget Committee
Elizabeth Larocca, Eversource

Jean Methot, 300th Anniversary Committee
Chuck Myette
Nancy Myette
Mike Oleson, Road Agent
Corinna Reishus, Recreation Director
Sue Reiter
Joanne Smith, Finance Director
Mike Weider, Budget Committee
Penny Williams, Tri-Town Times
And other persons unknown to the Recording Secretary

1.5 Pledge of Allegiance

Chairman Owens led the attendees in the Pledge of Allegiance.

1.6 Chairman's Additions and Deletions

There were neither additions nor deletions.

1.7 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 300th Anniversary Committee

Jean Methot appeared before the Selectmen with Nancy Jolin and Sue Reiter, two residents who are interested in being appointed to the 300th Anniversary Committee. They will be replacing two members whose schedules no longer allow them to attend meetings.

Mr. Methot stated that at their March meeting, they met with representatives from Brookline's 250th Anniversary Committee. He added that they are looking forward to getting business sponsors on board and that he will most likely return to the Selectmen several times over the next few years to request approval of various parts of the celebration. Many volunteers will be needed; the last Wason Pond Pounder had 108 volunteers for one day and

the 300th Anniversary Celebration events will take place over an entire year. He expects that ~40 different committees will be formed.

In response to a question from Selectman Landau, Rhonda Lamphere noted that the 300th Anniversary account currently contains \$27,363.47.

Selectman Landau moved to appoint Nancy Jolin and Sue Reiter as regular members of the 300th Anniversary Committee with terms to expire on May 31st, 2022; Selectman Hagan seconded the motion. The vote was four in favor with Vice-Chairman Buckley absent; motion carried.

The Selectmen thanked Ms. Jolin and Ms. Reiter for volunteering; they departed the meeting at 7:08pm.

Mr. Methot stated that he had planted daffodils three times now and that they were starting to come up; one should keep an eye out for them. There have been at least 1,000 bulbs planted and he is looking for additional places to plant should anyone have any suggestions. Last year he planted bulbs by the Firehouse walkway; this year he plans to plant at their wall. He would like volunteers to assist. He also asked for assistance in removing stumps in front of the Post Office.

He had attempted to plant at the front of the Town Pound on either side of the doorway; however, when holes were dug, water came up. Selectman Landau advised against planting inside the Town Pound as work is planned for there: trees will be removed and the stones that have fallen off the wall replaced.

The Selectmen thanked Mr. Methot for his hard work; he departed the meeting at 7:13pm.

3.2 Request to Use Bridle Path - Eversource

Matt Flanders and Elizabeth Larocca from Eversource appeared before the Selectmen to once again request permission to utilize Bridle Path in order to access their transmission equipment.

Ms. Larocca stated that they needed access to the utility corridor in order to replace their existing wooden structures with steel ones and using Bridle Path will allow them to avoid disturbing any wetlands. The FAA has given them preliminary approval to utilize their gate; they have gone to the Conservation Commission and to the Planning Board to request permission, and this is their last stop. Work from Derry to Rochester is planned to begin the last week of June and continue until the beginning of November.

Selectman D'Angelo asked if they were aware that the Town and Eversource were currently in litigation over the Utilities Assessment situation; they are. He suggested that their lawyers contact the Town's lawyers in order to reach an agreement and then return to see the Selectman in order to receive permission to use this Class VI road.

Selectman Landau added that the Town has already reached a settlement with NHEC and are working on two others. He asked if Ms. Larocca could tell the Eversource attorneys that they want to come to a settlement before work begins, and Selectman D’Angelo added that they should return in three weeks, on May 23rd, or sooner if the attorneys could work something out.

Mr. Flanders and Ms. Larocca departed the meeting at 7:28pm.

3.3 Budget & Warrant

Budget Committee members Michael Weider, Rhonda Lamphere, and Brennan Holmes appeared before the Selectmen along with Finance Director Joanne Smith to review this year’s Operating Budget and Warrant.

The Budget Committee would like the Selectmen to reduce the Operating Budget by ~\$37k-\$50k.

01-4130-1-998 EX Salary Pool: There was some discussion about how the figure in this line was arrived at; it is based approximately upon CPI at the time the budget was created, which was 3.2%; the actual figure is 4%, as that was what was used last year. Selectman D’Angelo suggested compromising and calculating the salary pool using 2.5%. Selectman Landau agreed with the compromise, stating that he was currently working on a wage matrix which would eliminate the need for COLAs and merit increases, but that this would not be complete until after Town Meeting.

Mrs. Lamphere stated that benefits go up every year and that employees have not been asked to contribute more for many years; Mr. Weider added that taxpayers are absorbing these costs.

No changes were made to this line.

01-4130-1-110 EX Contract-Minutes: This line was dropped from \$8k to \$6k based on current usage.

01-4150-8-314 IT Hardware Management: The Town owns their PCs and pays a monthly fee for support, per contract. This line was underbudgeted last year.

Mrs. Lamphere would like to remove the credit card terminals for the Police, Fire, and Building Inspector’s offices for a total of \$1,725. She would prefer that only the Town Clerk’s office have a credit card terminal and that people needing to pay any of the three departments listed above use cash or a check or go to the Town Clerk’s office. Finance Director Smith agreed that reconciliation of these terminals can be difficult due to the time lapse between persons making payments and the money arriving in the bank; however, if the reports are clear, this can be done. Police Chief Berube stated that having a terminal would allow him to serve the residents better, as the Town Clerk has limited hours. Chairman Owens and Selectman D’Angelo agreed that everyone uses credit and debit cards now.

In the end, the \$1,725 was removed from the Budget.

01-4153-1-320 LE Services: This line is currently underspent, but litigation is ongoing with the utilities. Selectman D'Angelo suggested setting up an escrow.

01-4191-2-117 PB PT Clerk: As this line has not been used for the past two years, it was reduced to \$1.

01-4194-1-415 GB Major Projects: This line still has 84% remaining; the Budget Committee would like to know why the same amount is being requested for the upcoming year. Selectman Landau listed some of the projects planned for next year: installing vents, sealing the cistern, painting, stabilizing the balcony, and moving the Maintenance workshop into the basement at Stevens Hall; painting the Highway Garage; bringing the Community Center into ADA compliance; and renovating the Town Pound.

01-4194-1-129 GB Snow Removal: This is a salary line which has not been used. Selectman Landau suggested leaving \$1k in it so that it could be used when a member of the Maintenance Department is plowing with the handed down Highway Truck. Mr. Weider countered with leaving \$1 in it and adding \$1k to 01-4194-1-741 GB Truck Maintenance instead. In the end, \$1 was left in the Snow Removal line and \$1,500 was added to the Truck Maintenance line.

01-4195-1-110 CEM Equipment and 01-4195-1-690 CEM Miscellaneous: No backup was received for this budget request, and both lines were doubled for an additional \$3,000 over the current year's budget. Selectman Landau stated that the Village Cemetery trustees had planned to purchase a new leaf blower and mower using the Equipment line, and the Miscellaneous line was to level the driveway that allows hearse access into the North Chester Cemetery. The Miscellaneous line was left alone, and the Equipment line was dropped back to this year's figure of \$2,000.

01-4196-1-522 INS Workers Comp: Mr. Weider would like to know why this figure has increased by 13.71%, when the Town's EMR is low. Finance Director Smith will investigate.

01-4210-1-110 PD Salary – Chief: This line is increased while all of the other Departments' salary lines are flat because the Police Chief is under a contract which runs through 2021. Police Chief Berube explained that every year he receives a CPI increase up to 3%.

01-4210-1-130 PD Salaries – Town Special Detail: This line is used when the Town requests a special detail officer at an event.

01-4210-1-221 PD Wason Pond Ranger: This is for security at Wason Pond; the Ranger is a Town employee. It was stated that the Ranger is worth every penny.

01-4240-1-645 BI Travel and 01-4240-1-430 BI Vehicle/Gas: Both of these lines are high, but little has been spent. There is some ongoing legislation that, if passed, will require quite

a bit more travel for training purposes.

01-4312-1-109 HSB Road Agent: This line is for the Road Agent to bill his time against. Mr. Weider stated that it had been originally set at \$10k but was always overbilled; the Budget Committee believes that the time Road Agent Oleson spends on road projects billed to the Capital Improvement Program should be billed there as well.

The Budget Committee suggested that as the Highway Department was going to be funded a good amount for roadwork this year that various lines could be cut. Selectman D'Angelo suggested that the Highway Budget be left flat at this year's figure of \$704,140. Road Agent Oleson stated that it was the bad roads that were costing the Town so much to repair; if lines were cut, he would most likely need to stop cold patching, etc. If the Town would start spending money on major road repairs, it was likely that the budget could be stabilized and possibly reduced.

At this point, in order to move the process along, Selectman Landau suggested taking the remaining funds to be cut from one of the Welfare sections and allowing Finance Director Smith to make the calculations. Finance Director Smith departed the meeting at this time to complete this task in her office.

The Warrant was the next subject to be discussed.

#10 CIP Funding: Mr. Weider would prefer that the amount raised by taxation in this article be decreased from \$800k to \$600k. **Chairman Owens moved to decrease the funding requested in Warrant Article #10 CIP Funding to \$600k; Selectman D'Angelo seconded the motion. The vote was four in favor with Vice-Chairman Buckley absent; motion carried.**

#11 CIP Projects: Selectman D'Angelo is concerned that even with the \$52k allocated to the Library Renovations out of the CIP they will not have enough money to begin the work; Selectman Landau stated that if this is determined to be so, the line can always be deleted at Town Meeting.

Mrs. Lamphere inquired about the cost last year for the cruiser, which was \$51,931; Police Chief Berube actually spent less as he was able to swap some equipment from the old cruiser to the new one. It is unlikely that he will be able to do that this year as the car's interior will have changed.

#12 Highway CIP Funding: Last year between the CIP and the Highway CIP, \$600k was requested from taxation; this year it will be \$1.3m.

#13 Highway CIP Projects: If Warrant Article #12 does not pass, there will not be enough money in the Highway CIP to fund this article.

#23 Increase in Veterans' Property Tax Credit: Passage of this article may lead to a reduction in revenue of \$55k.

#24 Increase in Veterans' Property Tax Credit/Disability: Passage of this article may lead to a reduction in revenue of \$22k.

Finance Director Smith returned at this time with a bottom-line budget figure of \$4,676,900.

Mrs. Lamphere is opposed to decimating the Welfare lines, as it leads to a perception that the Town is unwilling to help people. Selectman Landau countered that he has been looking at the services received for the donations made and that they are not necessarily comparable.

There was some disagreement about why this entire process had taken so long. Finance Director Smith decried this last-minute slashing of the budget, stating that it will look terrible and disregards the last five months of work by the Finance Department and Department Heads. She would like to see this procedure made more effective.

The Budget Committee departed the meeting at 9:51pm.

3.4 Post Office Lease

The US Postal Service has requested that the Town renew its lease for another five (5) years, as permissible by their current lease which expires in September 2019. The rent will increase slightly; there are some repairs to the foundation still needed. This does not need to go in front of Town Meeting.

Selectman D'Angelo moved to renew the Post Office lease until September 2025; Selectman Landau seconded the motion. The vote was four in favor with Vice-Chairman Buckley absent; motion carried.

IV. Selectmen's Business

4.1 Roundtable

Selectman Landau:

- He is concerned that Warrant Article #8, Purchase of Stone Property, will not pass. He suggested the addition of a second Warrant Article to purchase the property using an alternative funding source – the UFB. He is interested in this property for four main reasons: (1) a second exit is needed from Murphy Drive, (2) the Wason Pond Community Center is in need of extensive renovations, possibly in the \$60-\$80k range, and (3) the house on the Stone property has a paved parking lot, multiple bathrooms, and an ADA compliant rear section, and (4) the property is in the center of Town.

The asking price is \$495k, although no negotiations have taken place and it has been for sale for many years. He suggested that it could cost \$300-\$500k to renovate the house (to which Selectman D'Angelo is opposed), and possibly \$500k-\$750k to extend the road. This work would not need to be done immediately. Selectman Hagan opined that this purchase would be a great opportunity. This Warrant Article will be moved

forward and placed between Articles #14 (Town Administrator) and #15 (Steeple Repair). The recommendations were as follows: *YES: Hagan, Landau, Owens NO: D'Angelo ABSENT: Buckley*

- An additional Warrant Article was drafted, suggesting a change in Town Meeting date from May to March. This Warrant Article will be moved forward and placed between Articles #8 (Purchase of Stone Property) and #9 (Operating Budget). The recommendations were as follows: *YES: D'Angelo, Hagan, Owens NO: Landau, ABSENT: Buckley*

Selectman D'Angelo:

- Upon discovering that the Fire Department purchased radios in July and the Police Department is still waiting to purchase theirs, he grew concerned that there is no 'Central Purchasing' in Town. Is this something that the Technical Review Committee could coordinate?
- He is also concerned that there appears to be many differences of opinion on how CIP funds are spent and would like an opinion from DRA or Town Counsel.

Selectman Hagan:

- Nothing to report.

Chairman Owens:

- Nothing to report.

V. Adjournment

The next regularly scheduled meeting of the Board of Selectmen will be Thursday, April 18th, 2019.

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

The meeting was adjourned at 10:14pm.

Respectfully Submitted,

Debra H. Doda,
Recording Secretary