

**Town of Chester
Board of Selectmen’s Meeting
Thursday, October 28, 2021
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)
Approval of Minutes
Items for Signature
TC/TX Office New Hire
Budgets
Solar Array RFP Review
Tax Rate Setting
PD Staffing
Chairman’s Announcements
Roundtable
TA Report
Potential Non-Public Sessions
Adjournment

1.1 Call to Order

Chairman Myette called the meeting of the Chester Board of Selectmen to order at 7:00pm.

1.2 Roll Call

Selectmen Present:

Chuck Myette
Jeremy Owens
Steve Couture
Steve D’Angelo
Stephen Landau

Town Administrator Debra Doda

Members of the Public Present at various times:

Aaron Berube, Police Chief
Justine Celentano
Mary Beth Ditoro, Library Trustee
Mike Ebbett, Block 5
Kandy Knowlton, Library
Liz Lufkin, Town Clerk / Tax Collector

51 Deb Munson, Library Trustee

52 Nancy Myette

53 Jean Packard, Assessing

54 Corinna Reishus, Recreation Director (Remotely)

55 Joanne Smith, Finance Director

56
57 and other persons unknown to the Recording Secretary.

58
59 *1.3 Pledge of Allegiance*

60
61 Chairman Myette led the attendees in the Pledge of Allegiance.

62
63 *1.4 Chairman’s Additions or Deletions*

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65 None

66
67 *1.5 Public Comment*

68
69 Chairman Myette opened the meeting to public comment at 7:01pm.

70
71 Selectman Landau thought the 300th Anniversary Gala was exceptional. Chairman Myette
72 mentioned the pictures were great from the evening. Big thanks to the 300th for putting the night
73 together.

74
75 As no other Members of the Public wished to be heard, Public Comment was closed at 7:03pm.

76
77 **II. Old Business**

78
79 *2.1 Approval of Minutes*

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81 An approval sheet for the previous meeting’s minutes was sent electronically.

82
83 *2.2 Items for Signature*

84
85 All members reviewed and signed the items in the signature folder.

86
87 **III. New Business**

88
89 *3.1 TC/TX Office New Hire: Liz Lufkin, Justine Celentano*

90
91 Town Clerk/Tax Collector Lufkin introduced Ms. Justine Celentano for consideration for the part-
92 time assistant clerk in the Town Clerk’s office. She is new to town and has an extensive background
93 in finance and business. Ms. Celentano will work 15 hours a week mostly on the DMV counter.

94
95 Chairman Myette inquired if the office will be reopening on Fridays. Town Clerk/Tax Collector
96 Lufkin confirmed the office will stay closed on Fridays for now.

97
98 ***Selectman Landau motioned to hire Ms. Justine Celentano for the assistant clerk’s position in***
99 ***the Town Offices. Selectman D’Angelo seconded the motion. A roll call vote was taken; Myette –***

aye, D’Angelo – aye, Owens – aye, Couture – aye, Landau –aye. With all in favor, the motion passed unanimously.

3.2 Budgets

3.2.1 Assessing

Ms. Jean Packard presented the Assessing budget with a 2.94% increase. The salary line was done by Finance Director Smith based on the pay matrix. Mr. Fogg, the town’s utility appraiser, was good this year, easy to get in touch with and would like to continue with the town.

3.2.2 IT (moved to later in the meeting)

3.2.3 Finance, Legal, Personnel Administration, Insurance, Advertising & Regional Associations

Finance Director Smith presented the Finance Budget with an increase of 6.07%.

Selectman Landau questioned the external audit line increase. Finance Director Smith explained the auditor’s need to cover their costs and there is documentation in the budget book for the increase. A request for bids will be sent out to the municipal auditors.

Finance Director Smith presented the Legal budget with no increases. Selectman D’Angelo asked what this encompasses and if it could be reduced. It was suggested to leave as is with consideration of dropping in the future.

Finance Director Smith presented the Personnel Administration budget with an increase of 12.30%. This is benefits for the town employees based on actual rates and employees covered by HealthTrust.

Finance Director Smith presented the Insurance budget with an increase of 12.30%. Some of the rates are estimates since new rates come out in April of 2022.

Finance Director Smith presented the Advertising and Regional Association budget with an increase of 3.29%. Southern NH Planning Commission is estimated at a 5% increase, rates will be sent to the town late in 2022.

3.2.2 IT

Finance Director Smith presented the IT budget with an increase of 30.45%.

Finance Director Smith mentioned a previous meeting with Town Administrator Doda and Mr. Ebbett of Block5. IT is expensive but the town is safer now than we have been in the past.

Selectman D’Angelo noted in the Town Administrator’s report Finance Officer Duffy would be out of the office for a few days and can remotely work from home. He asked how the town is protected from someone else getting in the system. Finance Director Smith pointed out the employees can access the network with LogMeIn that was installed on their workstation. LogMeIn security is very tight.

Mr. Ebbett joined the meeting to answer questions about the IT budget. Selectman D’Angelo pointed out the biggest concern is an open system that allows for access from outside without a cloud-based system with several types of security. Mr. Ebbett explained that a multi factor or two factor authenticity is usually required to utilize LogMeIn. LogMeIn has been very secure and Block5 has not had any issues with it. Chairman Myette recommended implementing the two factor authenticities for LogMeIn.

Chairman Myette mentioned the significant increase in the IT Hardware Management and asked for an explanation. Mr. Ebbett explained the biggest item added is VM Host Server upgrades and licensing. During the last fifteen months, vulnerabilities have been discovered and needed to be patched; all of which had to be done after hours to not disrupt business. The version the town has is the \$700 version of VMware and it is running the Town Hall, Police Department, and Fire Department, Block5 is proposing to upgrade the town’s software enabling a patch to the system in real time by moving workstations from one server to another.

Mr. Ebbett mentioned documentation for the budget was provided to Town Administrator Doda and Finance Director Smith.

Another expense in the next budget will be the server upgrades. The servers will be replaced with refurbished units for a total of \$14K saving the town \$6K.

Selectman D’Angelo inquired why the town is not going to the cloud and what is available for the town for a cloud-based system. Mr. Ebbett explained the town cannot go to a cloud-based system and some of the applications the town is using can not be cloud-based without spending tons of money.

Mr. Ebbett offered to hold a meeting to explain what every department is using for their individual jobs. Selectman D’Angelo will coordinate with Town Administrator Doda to get a meeting scheduled.

3.2.4 Town Clerk-Tax Collector

Town Clerk/Tax Collector Lufkin presented the Town Clerk-Tax Collector budget with an increase of 6.73%.

Town Clerk/Tax Collector Lufkin advised one increase is Deputy Town Clerk/Tax Collector Cannon’s salary rate to a Grade 11 Step 7 from a Step 4. She is going on her eighth year, trained two Town Clerks and is very knowledgeable. The Selectmen will take this under advisement.

The Assistant Clerk’s budget will increase to allow for more hours based on the workload in the office. Selectman Landau asked for a performance review in a few weeks on Ms. Celentano. Town Clerk/Tax Collector Lufkin mentioned Ms. Celentano would be shadowing for a while. During Covid-19 the thought was the workload would decrease but it increased significantly. Motor vehicle registrations is still crazy even with no inventory on lots. Selectman D’Angelo asked what the revenues are for the year. Are they consistent with last year or the prior year? Town Clerk/Tax Collector Lufkin will gather the information and give it to the board.

Selectman D’Angelo explained the Town Clerk’s office is the focal point to get revenue and when someone is not in the office it could hurt the town, so he is supportive of the needs in the

department. He also thanked Town Clerk/Tax Collector Lufkin for all the time and effort over the last year and a half.

Town Clerk/Tax Collector Lufkin explained the need for a new printer as the current printer is not able to handle the increased workload. This may be able to be lowered once a quote comes from a printer vendor. They have a program where if you purchase the ink they give an HP print, scan, and fax printer free of charge.

3.2.5 Library

Ms. Kandy Knowlton presented the Library budget with an increase of 13% after being level funded last year. The library is being conservative with the Trust Fund income this budget cycle since they lost \$4K last year.

Ms. Knowlton mentioned with Covid -19 the raises planned for last year were put on hold. The Library Trustees approved \$4.00 an hour equity raises for the three library aide positions. They currently range from \$10.70 to \$13.55 and if they were to leave it would be hard to replace them with the current pay rates. Selectman D’Angelo questioned why the library was not raised to the \$15.00 minimum pay for a part-time employee. Ms. Knowlton advised the library is a separate entity and the Library Trustees are the ones that make the decision for pay rates.

3.2.6 Executive, Town Administrative, Street Lighting, Other Health, General Assistance, Intergovernmental

Town Administrator Doda presented the Executive budget with an increase of 4.65%. The increases on dues and postage are based on actual numbers from previous years.

Town Administrator Doda presented the Town Administrative budget with a decrease of 2.06%. Salaries increased by the matrix and other items went down based on history.

Town Administrator Doda presented the Street Lighting, Other Health, and Intergovernmental welfare budgets are flat from this year’s budgets. Street lighting is based on the actual for the seven lights we have in town. She explained other health and intergovernmental are charitable donations for welfare.

Town Administrator Doda presented the General Assistance budget with a decrease of 11.06%. The town has a duty to provide assistance when a person has the need. In the last year and a half, the town has had two people requiring help. Burials were bumped based on actuals and other areas were decreased. Selectman Landau suggested not decreasing the rents budget line. Town Administrator Doda will leave the line at the current fiscal years budgeted amount.

3.3 Solar Array RFP Review

Selectman Couture stated there was one response to the RFP for leasing land for a solar array at the old landfill. They provided the town with 2 options one to lease the property and one to purchase the solar array. All the municipal power would be covered with this proposal.

Chairman Myette advised to finance the project and do not go for a bond there is better revenue than leasing. Leasing has some uncertainty in payback based on the market. Selectman Couture would like to speak about negotiations in a nonpublic session.

Selectman Couture mentioned the power goes to the grid and the town gets paid back on the electricity bill.

3.4 Tax Rate Setting

Town Administrator Doda stated the tentative tax rate is \$20.84 based on a decrease of \$0.53 in the municipal portion, county taxes flat, local education increased by \$0.80 and state education increased \$0.04 resulting in a \$0.31 increase to the tax rate. There are two options to consider; keep the rate at \$20.84 or use \$225K from the Town’s unassigned fund balance (UFB) to bring the tax rate back down to the current rate of \$20.53.

Selectman D’Angelo mentioned the school retained \$225,995.00 which could have been used to help keep the taxes from increasing. Town Administrator Doda advised the school was contacted and no one was available to come to the meeting this evening.

Selectman D’Angelo explained by using UFB money to offset taxes the town may not have the ability to use it for the town’s warrant articles such as funding for a fire truck or repairs to Stevens Hall. Without a tax increase the town has managed to do road work on many town roads.

Town Administrator Doda noted the UFB has 19.67% and the recommended max is 17%. Selectman Landau explained there are two more plaintiffs in the utility case.

Vice Chairman Owens stressed the town should make it clear at Town Meeting that the municipal rate decreased, and we continued with road work.

Selectman Couture motioned to set the tax rate at \$20.84. Vice Chairman Owens seconded the motion. A roll call vote was taken; Myette – aye, D’Angelo – aye, Owens – aye, Couture – aye, Landau –aye. With all in favor, the motion passed unanimously.

3.5 PD Staffing

Police Chief Berube announced the ARPA Grant was approved for the radar message board. Paperwork should arrive soon, and a radar request form will be put on the website for citizens to request it on roads in town. Also, Chester was one of 3 towns that was awarded small portable sign boards that can attach to signs. Road Agent Oleson will use these to hopefully make work zones safer.

Chief Berube informed the Board that Det. Richard has given his intent to retire from the Police Department on November 1, 2021, but he is willing to stay until December 1. He has over 30 years in law enforcement and came to Chester in 2016. This position has allowed officers to spend more time with community outreach and on the roads. He handles juvenile investigations including appearing in court for the juvenile diversion cases, sexual assaults, major investigations, evidence technician, and a crime scene investigator. He is also a valued member of the Internet Crimes Against Children Task Force (ICAC).

Det. Richard had been grandfathered at 32 hours a week and has mentioned the job is overwhelming. All retirees are now limited to 24 hours a week with the changes to NH Retirement System for retirees making it hard for to find someone to fill the position. Chief Berube asked the

Board to consider changing the position to Full-Time and Det. Richards has offered to help with the hiring process and with the onboarding.

Chief Berube indicated the Police Department budget is estimated to increase by \$10K to \$15K based on experience for the position. Chairman Myette advised the department heads will be coming back in December for a second budget review and asked the Chief to have the revised budget. Chief Berube pointed out Det. Richard will be gone by then.

Selectman Couture summarized to take advantage of Det. Richard’s expertise in the hiring of a candidate, a decision needs to be made by the Board if the position will be Full-time or Part-time so it can be posted.

Det. Richard’s current caseload for 2021 is 135 with seven aggravated felonious sexual assaults. The cases are fraud, first and second-degree assaults, domestic violence cases, and several juvenile diversion cases. When he is not doing follow-ups or contacting victims or other agencies, he is in the evidence room. Det. Kennedy was recently able to remove some of the medical death drugs from the evidence room. Any seized medication from untimely deaths and suicides are confiscated and the town must pay to have them destroyed. Det. Richard worked with the DEA and saved the town thousands of dollars by getting permission to send them in with the Drug Take Back program.

Selectman Couture inquired if the current budget would support a new position. Chief Berube advised the current budget will be close, starting November 1st Det. Richard will be reducing his hours and that will be a cost savings. The estimate to get the best candidate to fill the position could be up to three months based on background checks and certifications.

Chief Berube was asked to revisit the budget and attend the next Board of Selectman meeting.

Chief Berube announced the OHRV has been delivered to 2Way to get upfitted for emergency lights and some parts are backordered. The OHRV will have a Fish and Game plate which gives them the ability to travel within Chester and trailered to other towns. The Police Department is requesting a letter from the Board of Selectmen to traverse roads to go property to property in Chester to perform their duties.

Town Administrator Doda will draft the letter to the Police Department.

Selectman Landau motioned to send a letter to the Police Department authorizing them to use town roads for performing their duties on the OHRV. Selectman Couture seconded the motion. A roll call vote was taken; Myette – aye, D’Angelo – aye, Owens – aye, Couture – aye, Landau – aye. With all in favor, the motion passed unanimously.

Selectman D’Angelo asked about training. Chief Berube advised NH Fish and Game will inspect the OHRV and equipment then they provide 4-5 hours of training to all the officers.

IV. Selectmen’s Business

4.1 Chairman’s Announcements

Chairman Myette announced the following meetings for next week:

Monday, November 1, 2021 Wason Pond Commission Meeting at 7:00pm

347
348 Wednesday, November 3, 2021 Planning Board Meeting at 7:00pm
349 School Board Meeting @ 7:00pm
350 Thursday, November 4, 2021 Board of Selectmen Meeting at 7:00pm
351
352 Chairman Myette announced the following events:
353
354 Friday October 29, 2021 Trunk or Treat at Chester Academy from 6pm to 8pm
355
356 Sunday, October 31, 2021 Trick Or Treat from 6pm to 8pm, parking available at Busche
357 Academy
358
359 Saturday November 6, 2021 Scouting for Food at the Transfer Station
360
361 Saturday November 13, 2021 Scouting for Food at the Transfer Station
362
363 Saturday November 20, 2021 Scouting for Food at the Transfer Station
364
365 Scouting for Food donations can also be dropped off during the week at the Town Hall.
366
367 *4.2 Town Administrator’s Report*
368 *Nothing to report*
369
370 *4.3 Roundtable*
371
372 Vice Chairman Owens would like to discuss at another meeting if the Road Agent position should be
373 non-elected and if the town should have a DPW in the future. Chairman Myette suggested inviting
374 Road Agent Oleson to a meeting in December to discuss further. Town Administrator Doda will
375 send the MRI report to the Board to review.
376
377 Selectman Couture
378 *Nothing to report*
379
380 Selectman D’Angelo
381 *Nothing to report*
382
383 Selectman Landau spoke with the town engineer and in the next few months the French and
384 Nichols Fields will be surveyed. A price range for the conservation areas will be provided.
385
386 Selectman Landau was informed the architect used for the Stevens Hall work is retiring and the
387 firm is closing. He will keep his business going and would like to be on the Stevens Hall Renovation
388 Committee.
389
390 Chairman Myette met with the Great Hill Cemetery Trustees about insurance and their new trust
391 fund.
392
393 Chairman Myette had a conversation with Maintenance Director Cavanaugh about the cardboard.
394 Currently the town puts it in a roll off container and it gets picked up three times per month. A
395 discussion on the proposal from another management company will be brought to the Board at
396 another meeting.

A quote was received for a new audio and visual PA system for the MPR. Selectman Landau mentioned the screen needs to be 15’ wide not 13’. Town Administrator Doda will talk to Mr. Grimm about a larger screen.

Selectman Landau motioned to purchase the portable PA system for \$375. Vice Chairman Owens seconded the motion. A roll call vote was taken; Myette – aye, D’Angelo – aye, Owens – aye, Couture – aye, Landau –aye. With all in favor, the motion passed unanimously.

4.4 Non-Public Session(s)

Chairman Myette announced three non-public sessions on reputation and property.

Selectman Landau motioned to go into non-public session pursuant to 91-A:3(II) (c) reputation and (d) property. Selectman D’Angelo seconded the motion. A roll call vote was taken; Myette – aye, D’Angelo – aye, Owens – aye, Couture – aye, Landau –aye. With all in favor, the motion passed unanimously.

The meeting was closed to the public at 9:24 PM.

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

The meeting was reopened to the public at 10:14 PM.

Selectman Landau motioned to seal the minutes of the first non-public session, on Reputation, for an indefinite period. Vice-Chairman Owens seconded the motion. A roll call vote was taken; Myette – aye, D’Angelo – aye, Owens – aye, Couture – aye, Landau –aye. With all in favor, the motion passed unanimously.

Selectman Landau motioned to seal the minutes of the second non-public session, on Reputation, for a period of one (1) year. Vice-Chairman Owens seconded the motion. A roll call vote was taken; Myette – aye, D’Angelo – aye, Owens – aye, Couture – aye, Landau –aye. With all in favor, the motion passed unanimously.

Selectman Landau motioned to seal the minutes of the third non-public session, on Property, for a period of one (1) year. Vice-Chairman Owens seconded the motion. A roll call vote was taken; Myette – aye, D’Angelo – aye, Owens – aye, Couture – aye, Landau –aye. With all in favor, the motion passed unanimously.

V. Adjournment

Selectman Landau moved to adjourn the meeting. Vice-Chairman Owens seconded the motion. A roll call vote was taken; Myette – aye, D’Angelo – aye, Owens – aye, Couture – aye, Landau – aye. With all in favor, the motion passed unanimously.

The meeting was adjourned at 10:20 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

447 Janis A. Jalbert
448 Recording Secretary