

**Town of Chester
Board of Selectmen’s Meeting
Thursday, November 4, 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
Eagle Scout Project
Budgets
Solar Array Discussion
Wason Pond Leash Ordinance
Cardboard Compactor
DPW Warrant Article
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
Steve Couture
Steve D’Angelo
Stephen Landau

Selectmen absent:
Jeremy Owens

Town Administrator Debra Doda

Members of the Public Present at various times:

Aaron Berube, Police Chief
Alex Brillhart
Dianna Charron

Colin Costine (Remotely)
Jonathan Eckerman, School Board Member
Nancy Myette
Jude Nuru, ReVision Energy
Leslie Packard
Darrell Quinn (Remotely)
Corinna Reishus, Recreation Director (Remotely)
Dan Weeks, ReVision Energy Vice President

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

Selectman D’Angelo added a discussion about the CIP.

1.5 Public Comment

Chairman Myette opened the meeting to public comment at 7:02pm.

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

II. Old Business

2.1 Approval of Minutes

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

2.2 Items for Signature

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

III. New Business

3.1 Eagle Scout Project

Mr. Brillhart reported that the boardwalk project at Wason Pond is complete. Mr. Dick Lewis (not present) donated materials, which lowered the cost. Signage will be installed reminding people that it’s a pedestrian bridge and horses are not allowed. There is ample space on the side cleared for both horses and the Fire Department’s Gator.

Selectman Couture motioned to allow Chairman Myette to sign the Release of Liability paperwork for the Eagle Scout walking bridge project at Wason Pond. Selectman D’Angelo seconded the motion. A roll call vote was taken; Myette – aye, D’Angelo – aye, Owens – absent, Couture – aye, Landau –abstained. With three in favor, the motion passed with Owens absent and Landau abstaining.

Mr. Brillhart will contact Town Administrator Doda about the excess funds and where they should go.

3.2 Budgets

3.2.1 Chester Senior Citizens

Chairman Myette presented the Chester Senior Citizen’s budget flat from last year.

3.2.2 Elections

Ms. Charron and Ms. Packard presented the Elections budget with a 49.22% increase. This budget fluctuates based on the elections each year. Ms. Charron added extra hours to train a new person and advised she will not be running again.

Ms. Charron mentioned the Supervisors of the Checklist purged 595 voters leaving 3,697 registered voters in the town.

3.2.3 Great Hill Cemetery

Chairman Myette presented a flat budget for the Great Hill Cemetery. This is the cost for grub control which is still a problem at the cemetery.

Chairman Myette mentioned the Trustees are looking for insurance that will cover lawnmowing. A meeting with the Trustees was held to help them understand the new fund.

3.2.4 Cemeteries (Village)

Town Administrator Doda mentioned this budget was not turned in and Finance Director Smith left it the same as last year.

Selectman Couture questioned why it was not lowered based on the history of not spending the budget. Selectman Landau pointed out there would be expenses with the new shed at the Village Cemetery. Town Administrator Doda pointed out they have more people to help with the mowing of the cemeteries.

3.2.5 Patriotic Purposes

Mr. Quinn presented a flat budget for Patriotic Purposes. Also, he has requested to have the flagpole repainted and replacing the pulley and halyard. It was suggested to paint the flagpole when Stevens Hall is going to be painted.

3.2.6 PD Budget Revisited

Police Chief Berube presented a revised Police Department Budget changing the Detective from part-time to full-time. Town Administrator Doda advised the Benefits budget was also updated with the change.

Chairman Myette inquired if there is enough workload or would the person also be on staff. Chief Berube noted patrol takes priority but there is enough workload for a 40 hour a week position.

Prior to hiring Detective Richard, the victims and cases did not get the attention or the follow up needed and any spare time was spent trying to catch up on paperwork and investigate cases.

Chairman Myette questioned if someone on the department would be taking over for the remainder of this budget and if not, would there be enough in the budget for a full-time replacement. Chief Berube advised it will be close for this year and possibly the salary pool could be used along with Detective Richard cutting his hours. Also, the hiring process could take a few months. Chairman Myette inquired if surrounding towns might have a part time detective that could help fill in if needed. Chief Berube stated Fremont may have a part time detective, but all other agencies have full timers. They may be able to assist if we have someone new that might need a little training on certain aspects of the job but no agency would take on the caseload.

Selectman D’Angelo would like to discuss this in non-public before a decision is made. He questioned why the Police Chief could not help with the caseload. Chief Berube asked if he does the detective’s workload who would be doing his.

Chief Berube understands this is a tough situation being that it is in the middle of the budget, but Chief Berube was hoping to take advantage of Detective Richard helping with the hiring and onboarding process. Chief Berube suggested a Full-time Detective to better the department but understands if this cannot happen.

Selectman Landau feels the Park Ranger cannot be supervised by non-police personnel and it should be moved to either the Police Department or Animal Control budget. Chief Berube stated the Park Ranger was removed from the Police Department Budget since the ranger is providing that service to the Recreation Department and does not have police duties.

Selectman Landau questioned if the Ranger should have law enforcement capabilities. Chief Berube advised to have law enforcement capabilities would require attending the Part-Time Police Academy.

Chairman Myette inquired if the Park Ranger can write a fine or warrant under the Recreation Department or would he have to call the Police Department. Chief Berube stated to write the fine for a dog off leash, the Park Ranger would be acting under the authority of an animal control officer and the Board of Selectmen gave him the authority to issue animal control summons.

The goal was to get him under the Recreation Department and the Recreation Director could give the ranger guidance, updates on events, and when he would be needed at Wason Pond.

Chief Berube explained if he is under the Police Department Budget there are restrictions to what he can and cannot do. The park ranger can provide a broader range of duties if he is under Recreation such as drive the golf cart at Wason Pond. Chief Berube pointed out the park ranger is a ranger at Wason Pond and cannot perform other law enforcement duties. The animal control officer is managed by the Police Department, but it is its own entity.

3.3 Solar Array Discussion

Chairman Myette mentioned the Town recently requested proposals to lease an area of land owned by the Town for the development of a solar array. Revision sent in their well written proposal with a few options for the town to consider. The Board of Selectman had a few questions about the financing, paybacks, and uncertainties.

Mr. Weeks, ReVision VP, mentioned electricity is going up and solar is going down. He explained there will be no capital costs or responsibilities for the town with a solar array lease program. There are increased costs for a solar array at a landfill as it cannot be penetrated. Revision works with families and companies to invest in the projects and the utility customer will be giving a rebate to the town. Town meters would be grouped, and they would have to meet the net metering requirements.

Selectman Landau advised the lease is for 25 years and will need to be voted on at a town meeting. Mr. Weeks indicated to start the process, ReVision is asking for a Letter of Intent. If the town rejects the project, any money for permits or engineering cost incurred will be the responsibility of the town. Selectman D’Angelo requested an estimate of the potential expenses. Mr. Weeks mentioned Keene NH spent around \$50K – \$60K on the permits and engineering and Chester’s expenses would be much less. This project could potentially be paid for with American Rescue Plan Act of 2021 (“ARPA”) funds the town received.

3.4 Wason Pond Leash Ordinance

Chairman Myette reported the Wason Pond Commission approved and signed the Dogs at Wason Pond Conservation and Recreation Area regulations.

Selectman Couture motioned to approve the Dogs at Wason Pond Conservation and Recreation Area Regulations as signed by the Wason Pond Conservation and Recreation Commission. Selectman D’Angelo seconded the motion. A roll call vote was taken; Myette – aye, D’Angelo – aye, Owens – absent, Couture – aye, Landau – abstained. With three in favor, the motion passed with Owens absent and Landau abstaining.

3.5 Cardboard Compactor

Chairman Myette explained the Transfer Station is hauling cardboard out three times a month at \$325 per haul. The town receives \$124 a ton and is losing about \$65.00 every haul. Waste Management has proposed a lease option for a compactor and the town would only have to haul approximately once per month. While the lease is more money per month the town would be saving money.

Selectman D’Angelo voiced his concern about making sure the staff at the Transfer Station have been properly trained to use the compactor. Town Administrator Doda stated the staff would be trained and this option is safer and cheaper than what is currently in place.

Chairman Myette suggested a decision be made after the pricing for a mixed paper compactor is received.

3.6 DPW Warrant Article and CIP Discussion

Selectman Landau noted the idea for a DPW is not just from the Board of Selectman but also the Road Agent.

Chairman Myette mentioned this goes back to 2017 and what would be the best option for the town as it grows. A feasibility study was done, and the recommendation was for a Public Works Director.

Some benefits to having a DPW would be combining some of the departments in town such as the Transfer Station and Groundskeeping.

Chairman Myette pointed the board would need to discuss some of the options in the report. Having a DPW would allow for more control, but we have to look at if it will cost the town more. Some of the upfront costs would be for the people, equipment, and buildings. Chairman Myette suggested looking at the costs and if some costs are similar, it would be a good start for a transition.

Chairman Myette indicated there is still work to do prior to putting together a warrant article for Town Meeting.

Selectman D’Angelo feels there is no value to the report considering it was done over 5 years ago. To have a good discussion, we need to have a breakdown of the actual costs over the last few years and what the town owns for equipment. Selectman D’Angelo mentioned the Road Agent asked for another employee and will continue to hire an MLM employee for some of the work being done. This brings concerns up about the operations of that department. It is hard to predict the workload for rain, wind and snowstorms so looking at the past will give the Board an idea for expenditures.

Chairman Myette suggested forming a small committee to focus on getting the information needed if this is to be placed on the warrant articles for the Town Meeting.

Selectman Landau pointed out the Town Engineer estimates the cost to be the same with either a DPW or an elected Road Agent. If the town does not invest in the equipment, then the town will be at the mercy of the person elected as Road Agent. This has been raised multiple times in the past and decisions are not made so it continues to be pushed off.

Selectman Landau suggested warrant articles to purchase some of the equipment that would be needed for the department. Chairman Myette stated someone will have to explain to the town the reason for the warrant articles.

Selectman Couture advised it is key to get Road Agent Oleson’s intentions for the future. He would like input from Road Agent Oleson on option A. Then a decision can be made for how far into the option A we are willing to go with personnel and equipment.

Selectman D’Angelo stated that Town Planner Hadik and Mr. Mike Weider have a good grasp on how the CIP works. He pointed out the Planning Board will need to help the Board understand what the town’s needs are.

Chairman Myette advised the Board of Selectmen need to tell the Planning Board what direction the CIP should go in to help them in the CIP planning process. Selectman D’Angelo indicated the CIP has become a wishlist for departments.

Selectman D’Angelo mentioned the assessment for the Fire Department has not been done and the Planning, Town Clerk, Highway and Police Departments have all asked for additional employees. He advised the Board needs to set the priority for what is really needed in the town. The Town Clerk’s office brings in the revenue, a person is needed in Planning to learn everything for when Town Planner Hadik retires and then Public Safety.

Selectman D’Angelo pointed out more information is needed and then decisions can be made.

Selectman Landau explained that the Board needs to plan to spend money or keep the town from growing.

Chairman Myette pointed out a decision can be made in a few weeks on a DPW once all the facts are on a spreadsheet. And then it will be determined if this is what the town needs and have justification to get the support from the town.

Selectman Landau indicated there are items on the CIP that could be eliminated such as a commercial dishwasher in the kitchen and equipment sheds. We need to ask ourselves if we really need to spend the money on certain things. And some of the items listed on the CIP are not in the correct departments.

Selectman D’Angelo mentioned the impact fees and finding items to purchase using the impact fees. Chairman Myette explained Town Planner Hadik is investigating how much the town has in impact fees and which ones are coming due to be sent back to the builders.

Selectman Landau stated some of the items listed on the CIP are not in the correct departments such as the Wason Pond well pump which is not listed under maintenance. This could be taken off the CIP if the town uses impact fees for the water line.

Selectman D’Angelo pointed out the impact fees process is it must be approved by the Planning Board and then the Board of Selectmen approve the release of the money prior to the purchase being made. Items in the CIP can be purchased using impact fees.

IV. Selectmen’s Business

4.1 Chairman’s Announcements

Chairman Myette read the request for the return of the HealthTrust surplus to the employees.

“HealthTrust declared an 8.44% Return of Surplus for FY 21 (Jul’20 – Jun’21). The surplus was for Medical, Dental and Short-Term Disability. Finance is requesting the BOS approve the proportionate return of the Medical and Dental surplus to the employees.”

The surplus was \$34,903.79 Medical, \$2,229.22 Dental, and \$705.46 Short Term Disability (\$37,838.47 total).

Selectman D’Angelo motioned to approve the proportionate return of the Medical, Dental, and Short-term Disability to the employees. Selectman Couture seconded the motion. A roll call vote was taken; Myette – aye, D’Angelo – aye, Owens – absent, Couture – aye, Landau –aye. With four in favor, the motion passed with Owens absent.

4.2 Roundtable

Selectman Couture mentioned federal funds or state funds may become available; he has asked that the Wason Pond walking bridge designs and costs estimates be updated. Selectman Landau questioned if there are design plans for the red listed bridges in town. Chairman Myette advised

there are estimates but no designs on the red listed bridges and the bridges keep moving on the CIP.

Selectman Landau stated the Ash Street Bridge (Wason Pond Walking Bridge) does not have to be wide considering there is another way around Wason Pond without crossing the bridge. In case of injuries on the beach the bridge should accommodate the Fire Department’s Gator. Chairman Myette explained the Fire Department and Road Agent Oleson asked for a regular sized bridge. A tractor or excavator needs access to clean out the culvert and the Fire Department would like access with an ambulance.

Chairman Myette advised the number on the CIP for the engineering of the Ash Street Bridge was a number thrown out for a two-lane bridge. The Dubois & King representative thought that estimate was high, and the entire bridge might be built for close to that amount if it was about 12 feet wide.

Selectman Couture attended the School Board meeting last night and the parent feedback meeting prior to meeting. Some parents are unhappy about masking and unmasking and when virtual learning is available and not available. Currently the entire campus is mask required including non-school activities. This is affecting non-school activities such as basketball.

Selectman D’Angelo
Nothing to report

Selectman Landau has one non-public on reputation.

Chairman Myette mentioned an email about stop signs at the intersection of Harantis Lake and East Derry Road that was sent to the Highway Safety Committee and the Board of Selectmen. The signs were put up to get people to slow down. Chairman Myette advised the email should be forwarded to the Road Agent to address.

4.3 Town Administrator’s Report

Town Administrator Doda mentioned she is starting to work on a grant application for updating the senior center.

4.4 Non-Public Session(s)

Chairman Myette announced one non-public session on Legal.

Selectman Landau motioned to go into non-public session pursuant to 91-A:3(II) (I) legal advice. Selectman Couture seconded the motion. A roll call vote was taken; Myette – aye, D’Angelo – aye, Owens – absent, Couture – aye, Landau –aye. With four in favor, the motion passed with Owens absent.

The meeting was closed to the public at 9:46 PM

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

The meeting was reopened to the public at 10:38 PM.

Selectman Landau motioned to seal the minutes of the first non-public session, on Reputation, for a period of sixty (60) days. Selectman D’Angelo seconded the motion. A roll call vote was taken; Myette – aye, D’Angelo – aye, Owens – absent, Couture – aye, Landau –aye. With four in favor, the motion passed with Owens absent.

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

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

V. Adjournment

Selectman Landau moved to adjourn the meeting. Selectman D’Angelo seconded the motion. A roll call vote was taken; Myette – aye, D’Angelo – aye, Owens – absent, Couture – aye, Landau – aye. With four in favor, the motion passed with Owens absent.

The meeting was adjourned at 10:41 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Janis A. Jalbert

Recording Secretary