

**Town of Chester  
Board of Selectmen’s Meeting  
Thursday, January 6, 2022  
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  
Potential Solar Installation  
Auditors RFP  
Police Department Budget  
Cole Road Engineering  
Final Budget and Warrant Review  
Chairman’s Announcements  
Roundtable  
TA Report  
Action Items  
Potential Non-Public Sessions  
Adjournment

*1.1 Call to Order*

Vice Chairman Owens called the meeting of the Chester Board of Selectmen to order at 7:02pm.

*1.2 Roll Call*

Selectmen Present:

Chuck Myette (Remotely)  
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  
Gene Blanchard  
Elizabeth Buchanan  
Jude Nuru, ReVision Energy  
Mike Oleson, Road Agent

Corinna Reishus, Recreation Director (Remotely)  
Dan Weeks, ReVision Energy  
and other persons unknown to the Recording Secretary.

### *1.3 Pledge of Allegiance*

Vice Chairman Owens led the attendees in the Pledge of Allegiance.

### *1.4 Chairman’s Additions or Deletions*

None

### *1.5 Public Comment*

Vice Chairman Owens opened the meeting to public comment at 7:03pm.

As no Members of the Public wished to be heard, Public Comment was closed at 7:04pm.

## **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 Potential Solar Installation (moved to later in the meeting)*

### *3.4 Cole Road Engineering (moved from later in the meeting)*

Road Agent Oleson submitted the Proposal for Engineering Services for the Cole Road culvert project. The total for the study, design, permit and bid services are \$183,100.00, with an overall estimate of \$600K to \$800K for the total project. Road Agent Oleson stated the permit is good for five (5) years; however, he would like to start the bidding process in February of 2023 and have the work completed that summer or fall.

Selectman Couture questioned if the town was under a retainer with Gale Associates as the bid seems a bit high. Town Administrator Doda will contact Dubois & King to ask if a proposal can be submitted quickly.

Selectman D’Angelo asked about other projects in town. Road Agent Oleson advised Hanson Road Bridge may have to be raised and that would require involvement with the State. Halls Village Road is ready to be reclaimed without the culvert work. He also mentioned roads in town that need a binder coat once completed the roads could be taken off Table 10 of the Capital Improvement Plan (CIP).

101  
102 *3.1 Potential Solar Installation*  
103

104 Selectman Couture advised that the Selectmen cannot commit financially without a Town Meeting  
105 vote. He questioned the possibility of having the upfront money rolled into the contract.  
106

107 Mr. Weeks advised that ReVision asks for their fees upfront to start the development and designs,  
108 budgeting, and other activities to get the project rolling. If the project is not approved, then they will  
109 need to be reimbursed for their out-of-pocket expenses. Mr. Weeks offered to specify a lesser  
110 amount to get some of the necessary projects started with the payment being deferred.  
111

112 ReVision will attend both the Public Hearing and Town Meeting to speak about the project.  
113 Selectman Landau mentioned talking numbers and not formulas used for the project.  
114

115 The life expectancy of the solar panels is 25 years; however, there are some panels that are 40 years  
116 old and still producing at 80%. With this agreement, the investor is responsible for damage in the  
117 first 25 years either to the cap or the panels. Revision will monitor the system and perform annual  
118 inspections.  
119

120 Selectman Couture mentioned a revision to the letter and a vote next week. Mr. Weeks suggested  
121 starting the process now if it is likely to be approved with the new terms.  
122

123 ***Selectman Couture motioned to enter into a letter of intent with ReVision, reducing the amount***  
124 ***to \$25K and if the Warrant Article does not pass at Town Meeting the money will not be due***  
125 ***until after June 30, 2022. Selectman D’Angelo seconded the motion. A roll call vote was taken***  
126 ***Myette – aye, D’Angelo – aye, Owens –aye, Couture – absent, Landau – aye. With all in favor, the***  
127 ***motion passed unanimously.***  
128

129 *3.2 Auditors RFP (moved to later in the meeting)*  
130

131 *3.3 Police Department Budget*  
132

133 Police Chief Berube spoke to the Board in July about concerns with the upcoming budget. He was  
134 told during that discussion to have very specific justifications for the increases. He provided the  
135 justifications with actual figures and was asked via email to look for possible reductions in the  
136 budget.  
137

138 Chief Berube asked the Board what they would like to see removed or what should be reduced from  
139 the budget. Selectman Couture advised the Board would like the Department Heads to help with the  
140 cuts, so they are aware of what was being proposed to cut. There are increases and there has been  
141 discussion about the justifications. Selectman Couture asked what is most important if we cannot  
142 afford all the increases.  
143

144 Chief Berube advised he could reduce the increase to the budget presented by transferring one of  
145 our full-time officers into the Detective position, leaving us at our current full time staffing and  
146 eliminating the midnight shift. This would mean there is no officer in town from midnight to 8 AM  
147 and State Police will respond to a call if they are available. Vice Chairman Owens will not support  
148 this. Selectman Landau agreed and asked what happens when your house is broken in to or you are  
149 having a heart attack after midnight. Police are usually the first ones on the scene during the  
150 overnight, and when there is no one, who will come then?

Selectman Landau suggested adding another a full-time officer by promoting a part time officer in the budget. That would decrease the part time budget line. He advised, in looking at the budget, the holiday pay and overtime line can be reduced without changing the services provided by the Police Department. Chief Berube advised the budget presented included another full-time officer. Selectman D’Angelo asked if the Sheriff’s Department might supplement the town by helping to cover during the day Monday – Friday. Chief Berube advised that is when he works and provides supplemental coverage.

Chief Berube mentioned there is a need for more part timers in the department. The department usually has six and they are down to four. These officers provide coverage for vacations, sick time, and allow for shifts to have two officers on patrol in town.

Selectman D’Angelo pointed out a pay matrix was established in town and all the increases are hitting the budget in the FY 22-23. He suggested another look at the entire town budget to decrease it by another \$125K.

Selectman D’Angelo suggested a \$25K cut from the Police Department Budget. Selectman Landau suggested taking the \$18K legal expenses out of the Police Department budget and put in the Legal Expense budget leaving only \$7K left to be cut. Chief Berube mentioned when all the vehicles were combined, he had reduced that line by \$1.5K, and the tracking is done in house for the vehicles.

Selectman D’Angelo questioned if there would be enough in the fuel line. Chief Berube stated no that is not enough. There was \$32K in prior years but it keeps being reduced year after year. Electric cars have been mentioned at previous meetings and Chief Berube stated he was getting cost estimates to have it placed on the CIP in the future. A fully equipped electric vehicle would run about \$116K, but there will be more options for electric vehicles when the time comes.

Chief Berube reiterated the requested budget changes are to move the prosecution line to the legal budget and cut an additional \$7K from the police budget. All members of the board were in agreement.

### *3.2 Auditors RFP (moved from earlier in meeting)*

Selectman Landau requested that the current auditors are notified of the Request for Proposal (RFP) going out. They should know we are satisfied with their work, but that an RFP is done every few years.

All Selectmen agreed to go forward with the RFP.

### *3.4 Cole Road Engineering (moved to the beginning of the meeting)*

### *3.5 Final Budget Review*

Town Administrator Doda reported a reduction in the Fire Department budget after adjusting the full timer salary, call member officer stipends, and fire chief’s salary.

The legal budget will stay the same but will incorporate the Police Departments prosecutor’s budget line.

Selectman Landau suggested decreasing the cemeteries budget by about \$6K.

Selectman Couture pointed out the library could be asked to use more money from the trust funds for this budget. We are supportive of aligning their pay structure with the matrix, but it may not be possible for the town to fund this year. The suggested amount to decrease would be around \$10K.

Selectman Landau suggested taking \$12K from the welfare budget, with the understanding that any requests will need to be fulfilled per the RSA.

Town Administrator Doda mentioned the 300<sup>th</sup> will discuss if they will pay for the fireworks this year, and as such that line could be decreased to \$1.

Selectman D’Angelo asked if the summer wages were reimbursed from the recreation revolving account. Recreation Director Reishus explained the town gives the money to help provide half day summer programs to keep kids out of trouble. This is purely for the salaries for the summer programs.

Recreation Director Reishus mentioned the playground line can be reduced to \$100.00. She feels the bark mulch can be covered in this current year’s budget. In the Wason Pond budget, signs can be reduced if laminated paper signs are used.

Vice Chairman Owens inquired if an upgrade to permanent bathroom facilities would be better than paying for the portables every year. Recreation Director Reishus advised this is on the CIP for the FY 28-29.

Selectman Landau suggested to lower the fire/security line since the key card readers are in the CIP. Town Administrator Doda explained that the security needs to go to bid, and a new system cannot be added to the key card readers in the CIP without Planning Board approval.

Selectman D’Angelo suggested cutting \$35K from the Highway budget and letting Road Agent Oleson make the adjustments. He mentioned roadside cleanup can be flatlined and there is no need for on-call stipends in Highway, Police, or Fire. Police Chief Berube advised the stipend is for on call supervisors. If they take calls and are not paid it is an unfunded liability for the town and with this there is no liability.

Selectman Couture inquired if the beaver control line needed to be as high as it is. Town Administrator Doda explained that was calculated by how many beavers are trapped in a year and the town would be paying for the trapper’s insurance.

Town Administrator Doda will make adjustments for the next Board of Selectmen’s meeting.

Chairman Myette directed attention back to the welfare budget and feels that there should be a minimum of \$2K. Everyone was in agreement.

#### **IV. Selectmen’s Business**

Vice Chairman Owens asked for confirmation on the Town Meeting on Thursday March 10<sup>th</sup>, 2022, at 6:00 pm. It was an acceptable date for all.

##### *4.1 Chairman’s Announcements*

Vice Chairman Owens announced the following meetings for next week:

Monday, January 10, 2022	Budget Committee Meeting at 7:00pm
	Winter Carnival at Spring Hill Farm Meeting at 7:00pm

Tuesday, January 11, 2022	Conservation Commission Meeting at 7:00pm
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Wednesday, January 12, 2022	Planning Board Meeting at 7:00pm
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Thursday, January 13, 2022	Board of Selectman Meeting at 7:00pm
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Vice Chairman Owens announced the following events:

*No events to report*

#### *4.2 Roundtable*

Selectman Landau suggested adding “for the Selectmen” after “Respectfully Yours” in the closing of the letter to Congressman Pappas. This will show a united front. Selectman D’Angelo mentioned sending the documentation on Cole Road and the list of projects on Table 10 of the CIP with the letter.

Chairman Myette requested a call be made to all parties receiving the letter, so they have an idea this letter is coming with a request to identify if more information is needed or other individuals the letter should be sent to.

Town Administrator Doda will add the information and send out the draft for approval.

Selectman Landau has one nonpublic for the evening.

Selectman D’Angelo questioned the Town Administrator’s report about a sign on the building of Town Hall. Town Administrator Doda advised some people are still going to Stevens Hall looking for either Town Hall or the Police Department. The granite sign in front is reportedly hard to read. Chairman Myette suggested a sign above the entry way into Town Hall. Selectman Landau will ask if that could be considered for an Eagle Scout project.

Chairman Myette attended the Public Ways Working Group meeting. The Committee has worked on the expectations, job description, and how to advertise for it. The group is working on a one-page flyer explaining the position to the residents and will ask about having an interview to be broadcast on PACT. The Committee will do a presentation at the Board of Selectmen’s Meeting on January 27<sup>th</sup>.

Selectman Couture mentioned Police Chief Berube’s suggestion in the Town Administrator’s Report about using some of the ARPA funds to pay for Covid-related absences. That might be a possibility if there are more grants coming in the future that could pay for the Cole Road culvert repairs.

Chairman Myette

*Nothing to report*

Vice Chairman Owens

Nothing to report

#### 4.3 Town Administrator’s Report

Selectman D’Angelo questioned if Narcan is in all the cruisers and were they expired. Chief Berube advised they are not expired; however, he is updating the grant to get more.

Town Administrator Doda

Nothing to report

#### 4.4 Action Items

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

Vice Chairman Owens announced two non-public sessions on pending litigation.

**Selectman Landau motioned to go into non-public session pursuant to 91-A:3(II) (e) pending litigation. 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 9:11 PM. Mr. Blanchard and Ms. Buchanan remained in the meeting room and departed at 10:23 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 –aye, Couture – aye, Landau – aye. With all in favor, the motion passed unanimously.**

The meeting was reopened to the public at 10:36 PM.

**Vice-Chairman Owens motioned to seal the minutes of the first non-public session, on Pending Litigation, for an indefinite period. Selectman Landau 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.**

**Vice-Chairman Owens motioned to seal the minutes of the second non-public session, on Pending Litigation, for an indefinite period. Selectman Landau 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. 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 adjourned at 10:40 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

351 Janis A. Jalbert  
352 Recording Secretary