

**Town of Chester  
Board of Selectmen’s Meeting  
Thursday, January 27, 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  
CIP Warrant Articles (Funding and Projects)  
Cole Road Project Engineering  
Chairman’s Announcements  
Roundtable  
TA Report  
Action Items  
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

Members of the Public Present at various times:

Aaron Berube, Police Chief  
John Colman  
Mark Keddy  
Nancy Myette  
Darrell Quinn  
Corinna Reishus, Recreation Director (Remotely)

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*

Chairman Myette added a discussion on the Police Department Budget with Chief Berube.

#### *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*

Chairman Myette inquired about the Accounts Payable Manifest bill for \$800K. Town Administrator Doda advised this is moving money from the Unassigned Fund Balance for the warrant articles approved at Town Meeting. There are two transfers for \$400K and two for \$15K.

All members reviewed and signed the items electronically.

### **III. New Business**

#### *3.1 CIP Warrant Review*

Town Administrator Doda mentioned the suggestions made by Town Planner Hadik (not present) for the Capital Improvement Program (CIP) projects. Some of the projects could be purchased this year using impact fees and taken off the warrant article projects.

Chairman Myette reviewed the warrant articles.

Article #a – Road Agent – the Public Ways Working Group will present their recommendations about changing from an elected Road Agent to an appointed Road Agent. The current elected Road Agent’s term will end in March of 2023 if this is passes at the Town Meeting. The town will need hire a supervisor of the roads from March 2023 to July 1, 2023, and the Committee has suggested a transition period prior to March to work with the Road Agent.

Selectman Landau inquired if the Highway Department budget would need to be adjusted for the salary position. Chairman Myette stated there are two options. Option one is adjust the budget and option two is have the amount in the warrant article. Selectman Couture suggested placing it in the warrant article for transparency. Selectman Landau noted if this warrant article passes the salary and benefits will carry into future budgets. Selectman D’Angelo requested the discussion to be continued in non-public.

A report from the Public Ways Working Group will be sent to the Board of Selectmen prior to the presentation at the next Board of Selectmen’s meeting.

No changes to articles #b – Revaluation Capital Reserve Fund, #d – Solar Lease, #f – Establish Culverts and Crossings Capital Reserve Fund, #g1 – 300<sup>th</sup> Anniversary, #g2 – 300<sup>th</sup> Anniversary (renaming), and #h – CIP Funding, #i1 - Winter Road Maintenance Fund, #m – Master Plan, and # n – Funding Fire Department Apparatus Capital Reserve Fund. Article #e – budget will be discussed at a later date.

Selectman D’Angelo suggested inviting Mr. Grimm (not present) to a meeting to discuss Article #c – PACT. Currently PACT has \$88K in their fund and it continues to accrue. Selectman D’Angelo would like to understand what the plan is for the money.

The Board decided in article #i – CIP Projects to use impact fees for purchases of some of the items listed and take it off the warrant. Town Administrator Doda will advise the Department heads to go thru the process to purchase their CIP items utilizing impact fees and those items will be removed from the warrant article.

Selectman Landau mentioned talks about updating the security and Fire alarms and suggested moving the key card readers to be done with those upgrades. Chief Berube mentioned the \$8K is the key card reader equipment and it can be used with an updated security system and also provides a higher level of safety in the building.

Chairman Myette mentioned Road Agent Oleson would like the board to consider not reducing the number of roads in article #k - CIP Highway projects and use the unassigned fund balance to pay for the engineering on the bridges and culverts. Selectman D’Angelo feels there is not enough time to do all the work proposed in article #k. Town Administrator Doda advised the list of roadwork from the board is only about two weeks’ worth of work.

Selectman Couture is in favor of Road Agent Oleson’s suggestion. Selectman D’Angelo is not in favor of using money from the unassigned fund balance for the roads. That would require other warrant articles to be cut that are being funded from the unassigned fund balance. He advised Budget Committee Chairman Weider (not present) feels the unassigned fund balance should be used to offset taxes. Town Administrator Doda mentioned the historical building warrant article might not be approved.

Selectman Couture feels that the town would be able to get funding from the infrastructure money to pay for the engineering of the red listed bridges in the next budget year.

It was decided to fund engineering of bridges, roads, and culverts and not fund the historical buildings warrant article.

Chairman Myette advised some of the roads on the CIP projects are only waiting for topcoats. If the wear coat is not put down on the road, it will fall apart quicker after the basecoat has been done. The Road Agent has put together a list of roadwork for the next 7 to 10 years to keep the town on track.

Warrant Article #k is on hold.

Article 12 – Funding of Culverts & Crossings Capital Reserve Fund will be funded with the accrued interest from the Winter Road Maintenance Expendable Trust Fund and another warrant article for \$250K for culverts and crossings funded from the unreserved fund balance.

Article # 0 – Funding Historic Building Capital Reserve Fund removed from the warrant articles.

### *3.2 Cole Road Project Engineering*

This was moved to later in the meeting then moved to the next Board of Selectmen’s meeting on February 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2022.

### *3.3 Police Department Budget (added to the agenda)*

Police Chief Berube mentioned previous Board of Selectmen meetings where he explained issues and deficiencies that he has seen year after year in the budget. He watched the Budget Committee meeting on Monday where he was vilified. There were comments made that were directed toward the Police Chief. Chief Berube explained he has nothing to hide and will answer any questions he is asked.

Chief Berube explained the matrix is in place for the officers’ salaries and without salaries the budget is increasing by 2%. Chief Berube worked with the Board of Selectmen on the budget and comments are being said that the Police budget is outrageous and over inflated.

Selectman D’Angelo indicated the issues that jumped out were the on-call supervisor and holiday pay. He suggested Chief Berube go to the Budget Committee meeting and justify the budget to them. Chief Berube mentioned the change many years ago where the Department heads provide the budget to the Selectmen and the Selectmen go to the Budget Committee eliminating being attacked by the Budget Committee. Vice Chairman Owens agreed and mentioned the very unprofessional behavior.

Chairman Myette pointed out the Police Chief came to the Board with areas of the budget that were deficient, and the Board asked for justification. Some of the items were buried into other lines of the lines. Chief Berube gave validations for the line items that were new or increased as requested by the Board .

The Park Ranger was removed from the Police Budget in Fiscal year 20-21. Numerous towns have this position under the Recreation Department as the day-to-day guidance was primarily provided by the Recreation Department. The Park Ranger calls the Police Department if it is a Police matter. When the Ranger was removed from the Police budget the amount was absorbed into other lines in the budget that are historically overspent.

Selectman D’Angelo pointed out it has been moved to Animal Control and not Recreation. The real question asked was if the Park Ranger was necessary. Everyone agreed that a Park Ranger is necessary at Wason Pond.

Chief Berube mentioned the Budget Committee stated the vehicle maintenance line was outrageous. Selectman D’Angelo indicated the problem was the lines were consolidated into one line item. Chief Berube stated the lines were consolidated and reduced by \$1.5K.

Selectman Couture questioned if the Budget Committee was given the same book with the justifications that was provided to the Board of Selectmen. If they opened to the tab and read the justifications it is explained in the budget book.

Chief Berube mentioned the assistance from regional partners and how he has not provided the information to the Board. He has not been asked for the information, his liaison mentioned the topic had come up and it would be wise to do some research. He explained the Sheriff’s Department is willing, but they will need a multiyear contract signed, which would include compensation, cruisers, and a station to work out of. He advised the Sheriff’s office works Monday thru Friday during the day. State Police can help only when they have someone available.

Some of the comments Chief Berube was given by other towns when asked about additional resource help from our mutual aid were “if the town creates their own emergency by eliminating a shift, they are on their own for providing services”.

Chief Berube directed attention to the comment that the town has never paid for holiday pay. The town has paid the officers a premium for working the holiday, but it came out of the overtime line. It is impossible to pay for the holidays, court, training, and vacation coverage with the amount in the overtime line. This is the reason the schedules were altered, and the officers were not getting compensated for going to court or training on their day off. The Fire Department budgets for \$7,500 in overtime for one employee, if the town budgeted the same for the Police Department it would total \$52.5K. If the Department had that amount, all the overtime, holidays, court, and training would be covered.

He went on to explain the on-call supervisor line and how the Board of Selectmen put professional development very high as a priority for the Police Department. This is a cost-effective way for the supervisors to get experience and exposure.

Chief Berube pointed out that having adequate coverage is paramount in law enforcement. Both the Fire and Highway Departments require a minimum of two people for every single call for service. The Police Department works 24 hours a day, and they respond to domestics, sexual assaults, motor vehicles with fatalities often with only one officer. He stated a human life has the same value whether you work for Fire, Highway, or Police.

Chief Berube spoke about Police Department statistics in other towns in southern New Hampshire excluding Derry and Raymond. The average population is 4800 people with an average of 8 full-time officers and 5 part time officers. Kensington and East Kingston are the only towns in Rockingham County without 24-hour Departments.

Chairman Myette pointed out the Chief has the justifications and the support of the Board of Selectmen. He apologized for the Budget Committee making some of the comments. Chief Berube explained he was not coming to the Board for an apology, he just wants to be transparent.

#### **IV. Selectmen’s Business**

##### *4.1 Chairman’s Announcements*

Chairman Myette announced the following meetings for next week:

Monday, January 31, 2022                      Budget Committee Meeting at 7:00pm

Wednesday, February 2, 2022 Planning Board Meeting at 7:00pm

Thursday, February 3, 2022 Board of Selectman Meeting at 7:00pm

Chairman Myette announced the following events:

Sign up to run for office ends Friday, January 28th, 2022. List available on the Town Clerk’s page.  
Town Clerk’s office will be open for candidacy only from 3:00 to 5:00pm

Tuesday February 1, 2022 -Last day for Petition Warrant Articles to be turned in.

#### *4.2 Roundtable*

Selectman Landau mentioned the loss of Bob Healey and Mrs. Root recently.

Selectman D’Angelo questioned the parking issue on the Town Administrator’s report. Town Administrator Doda mentioned with all the events on the weekends the lot is filling up and cars are parking on the side of 121. This makes it difficult to pull out of the parking lot safely. The Highway Department will be placing no parking signs near the entrances on 121 as well. Recreation Director Reishus advised she asked that the clothes closet volunteers park out back to free up some spaces. It would be nice to also have the town vehicles park back there on the weekends as well.

Selectman D’Angelo suggested adding carbon monoxide detectors when the alarm system is upgraded.

Selectman Landau inquired about the transfer station and the upcoming storm on Saturday. The consensus is to close for the day. Town Administrator Doda will send out a notice on all available medias and post it on the signs in town. Selectman D’Angelo suggested opening longer on Wednesday.

Selectman Couture mentioned there is a draft agreement being worked on for the town fields usage and maintenance between the school and town. Selectman D’Angelo questioned if an estimate to fix drainage on the field was received. Recreation Director Reishus was notified by maintenance that the drainage issue has been resolved utilizing a local contractor. Selectman Landau will get an update.

Vice Chairman Owens

*Nothing to report*

Chairman Myette mentioned the Spring Hill Farm Winter Fest happening on February 26<sup>th</sup>. They will have a chili cookoff, hayrides, games, bonfire and more.

#### *4.3 Town Administrator’s Report*

Town Administrator Doda mentioned the School Board Chairman asked what the Town would be doing for Town Meeting regarding mask mandating and/or separate rooms. Selectman D’Angelo advised the Town Moderator needs to make the decision not the Board of Selectmen. Town Administrator Doda will reach out to the Town Moderator.

4.4 Action Items  
Nothing to report

4.5 Non-Public Session(s)

Chairman Myette announced non-public sessions on reputation and budget.

**Selectman Landau motioned to go into non-public session pursuant to 91-A:3(II) (c) reputation. 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 9:04 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 9:53 PM.

**Selectman Landau motioned to seal the minutes of the first non-public session, on Pending Litigation, for an indefinite period. 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 Landau motioned to seal the minutes of the second non-public session, on Employment, for a period of sixty (60) days. 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 Landau motioned to seal the minutes of the third non-public session, on Reputation, for an indefinite period. 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 Landau motioned to seal the minutes of the fourth non-public session, on Reputation, for an indefinite period. 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.**

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 9:57 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

349 Janis A. Jalbert  
350 Recording Secretary