

**Town of Chester
Board of Selectmen’s Meeting
Thursday, September 29, 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
IT Department Updates
Opening Fuel Bids
Planning Board Appointment
Wage Matrix Discussion
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
Steve D’Angelo
Steve Couture
Jeremy Owens
Stephen Landau

Town Administrator Debra Doda

Members of the Public Present at various times:

John Colman
Mike Ebbett, Block5
Andrew Hadik, Town Planner
Nancy Myette
Darrell Quinn
Ted Scott

Dana Theokas

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 Great Hill Cemetery to the agenda.

1.5 Public Comment

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

Ted Scott, 121 Derry Road, a twenty-seven (27) year veteran on the Fire Department observed several fire trucks failed to make an appearance in the 300th Anniversary parade. They were driverless due to staffing and leadership problems that the Board of Selectmen have not addressed.

Mr. Scott stated if the department does not have enough volunteers to staff a truck for the largest parade in town what happens if there is a large fire in town? Will not all vehicles respond? The lack of members either increases the response time or it could be possible that no one to shows up to a call.

Mr. Scott mentioned Engine #2 is coming up for replacement, it might be difficult to get the voters to pay for a truck that the Fire Department cannot staff.

Mr. Scott pointed out that during a meeting with the Town Administrator and the Selectmen Liaison, they indicated they had missed the ball with exit interviews and would have to fix that. Not one member has been contacted regarding their reasons for leaving.

Mr. Scott reiterated having three trucks and the gator not in the parade is a sign of a problem and the implications are frightening.

Mr. Scott’s statement is appended to the end of these minutes.

As no other Members of the Public wished to be heard, Public Comment was closed at 7:06pm.

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

101
102 *3.1 IT Department*
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104 Mr. Ebbett is requesting the servers be purchased this year and not the VM Licensing software. The
105 budget was approved for VM Licensing, and the servers were not approved. The servers are at the
106 end of their life and end of support.

107
108 Chairman Myette asked if there was a need to spend the money on the licensing. Mr. Ebbett advised
109 it is a lower priority than the servers. Selectman D’Angelo mentioned the meeting with Mr. Dobbins
110 (not present) where an evaluation of the servers was done. The servers were not denied, Mr.
111 Dobbins requested justification. Town Administrator Doda stated during budget season, the budget
112 was cut by \$10K based on members of the Budget Committee suggesting the town did not need the
113 servers.

114
115 Selectman Landau questioned if a server went down would it be repairable. Mr. Ebbett advised it
116 could be repaired and they sell the servers in pairs. If a server goes down all the information is on
117 the second server so the primary can be repaired.

118
119 Selectman D’Angelo asked what the cost to refurbish one of our servers. Mr. Ebbett advised the
120 servers will no longer be supported soon.

121
122 Selectman D’Angelo questioned the \$22,634.00 in the telephone and internet budget line. He feels
123 that is an extreme amount of money for internet service.

124
125 Vice Chairman Couture suggested keeping the conversation focused on the servers and the
126 recommendation by Mr. Ebbett. Selectman Landau agreed and asked what the recommendation is
127 to keep the town’s records secure. Mr. Ebbett recommends purchasing two servers in this budget.

128
129 ***Vice Chairman Couture motioned to approve the purchase of the two servers for \$10K and not***
130 ***purchase the VM Licensing software per the recommendation of Block5. Selectman Landau***
131 ***seconded the motion. A roll call vote was taken Myette – aye, D’Angelo – nay, Owens –aye,***
132 ***Couture –aye, Landau – abstained. With three in favor, the motion passed.***
133

134 Selectman Landau questioned the amount spent on the telephone and internet services. Town
135 Administrator Doda stated the telephone costs \$10,530.00 per year and internet is \$10,221 per
136 year between the two providers (for failover purposes).

137
138 Mr. Ebbett will continue to work with getting the town on the cloud in the future. Selectman Landau
139 requested an invitation to the meeting about bringing the town to the cloud.

140
141 *3.2 Opening Fuel Bids*
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143 Chairman Myette presented the bids for propane and oil for the winter of 22-23. The timeframe is
144 October 1, 2022, to September 30, 2023.

145
146 Selectmen Landau pointed out when the town changes vendors there is an additional cost for
147 inspections, new equipment, and removal of the old equipment. Selectman Landau mentioned with
148 bidder #2 there is a limit on the amount used and then it would be a variable price.

Vice Chairman Couture motioned to award the bid to bidder #1 for the oil and propane contract. 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.

3.3 Planning Board Appointment

Town Planner Hadik explained Ms. Theokas served as an alternate on the Planning Board in the past. She has agreed to come back as an alternate. Town Planner Hadik stated Ms. Theokas is a great addition to the Planning Board. Chairman Myette mentioned Ms. Theokas is very knowledgeable and helpful.

Selectman Couture thanked Ms. Theokas for volunteering.

Selectman Landau motioned to appoint Dana Theokas as an alternate member on the Planning Board with a term to expire on May 31, 2025. Vice Chairman 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.

3.4 Wage Matrix Procedures

Chairman Myette mentioned inconsistencies with the rate sheets for new hires and annual reviews. The policies were not finalized and there have been changes. Chairman Myette suggested one matrix for the entire town eliminating the Fire Department matrix. A discussion is needed about the longevity increase every three years. Would the longevity increase be based on date of hire or position held in the town?

Town Administrator Doda advised it would be hard for the call members to be added to the town’s matrix. Selectman Landau mentioned prior to Chief Gladu there was no assistance creating the matrix from the Fire Department. Selectman Landau noted that he believed that the longevity increase was only for the Police Department and full time Fire Department members not the administrative jobs in the town.

Selectman Landau suggested a meeting with the Wage Matrix Committee.

Chairman Myette would like to see clear job descriptions with details on what certifications have increases and what certifications do not have an increase prior to budgets being submitted. The departments would be the ones looking at this information. Job descriptions and certifications will tie into the review process and the budget. Chairman Myette asked for the document to be reviewed and brought back to the Board in 30-60 days.

Selectman D’Angelo asked for reviews to be added and the Board should get the reviews prior to the rate increase. Town Administrator Doda mentioned reviews are mentioned in the draft.

Vice Chairman Couture feels the longevity increases should be to retain an employee in a position not based on total years in the town. Town Administrator Doda confirmed the original discussion was for years of service, however Chairman Myette felt it should be in a position.

Vice Chairman Couture suggested not going back to the committee but try to figure out a way to incorporate the Fire Department into the wage matrix. Chairman Myette stated the committee is needed to make sure all the job descriptions are correct and make changes to the matrix if needed. The committee should clarify all the information in the matrix policy. Vice Chairman Couture

suggested providing the committee with the specifics of what the Board of Selectmen are looking for in the document.

Vice Chairman Couture recommended tabling the conversation to give time for review and give Town Administrator Doda or the Wage Matrix Committee questions to answer. This will be added to the next meeting’s agenda.

3.5 Great Hill Cemetery

Mr. Colman stated the Great Hill Cemetery has expanded the usage and the cemetery is seeing more traffic. The road maintenance is a continuous project for the Trustees. Storms and hard rain continue to cause issues with rutting on the road and corners in the cemetery. Richard Bellemore (not present) has suggested remix be used to on the roads in the cemetery. The Board was presented with a quote to fix just the corners for \$2750.00 and another for the entire cemetery costing around \$35K. Mr. Colman advised the new fund would cover the cost for just working on the corners if the Selectmen approved.

Chairman Myette suggested adding the project for the entire cemetery to the Capital Improvement Plan. Mr. Quinn stated the Trustees try hard not to be a burden on the Town. They did request a few years ago to have a ground penetrating radar survey done to get a picture of what is under the cemetery for ledge.

Mr. Colman has requested a revised quote to fix from the entrance to the circle and all the corners in the cemetery. Chairman Myette suggested utilizing the large fund to be reimbursed for perpetual care on an annual basis. Look at the budget and the small fund and see if the project can be funded by the Trustees or if they need to ask the town for money to fund the project. Look at the useful life of the cemetery before going into the new area. Now is the time to have an engineering estimate for the new section to determine if it can be blasted or bring in fill to raise the area.

Mr. Colman will get a price for having test pits or borings done to verify the map they have is true with where the ledge is in the cemetery.

Mr. Quinn stated for the money to be used from the new fund the expenditure must be approved by the Trustees and the Selectmen.

Vice Chairman Couture motioned to approve the expenditure for road improvements up to \$5K at Great Hill Cemetery with two conditions. Condition #1 a formal quote for the work is received and condition #2 is the official vote by the Great Hill Cemetery Trustees. 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.

IV. Selectmen’s Business

4.1 Chairman’s Announcements

Chairman Myette announced the following meetings and upcoming events:

Monday October 3, 2022	Wason Pond Commission Meeting at 7:00pm
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Wednesday, October 5, 2022	Planning Board Meeting at 7:00pm
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School Board Meeting at 7:00pm

Thursday, October 6, 2022

Board of Selectman Meeting at 7:00pm

Chairman Myette thanked the members of the 300th Anniversary Committee for the outstanding parade, Fire and Police Departments, and the residents in town that supported the event. All the events have been well planned and well thought out.

4.2 Roundtable

Chairman Myette mentioned the request for the trash pickup day organized by Ms. Podlipny (not present) on October 15, 2022. Ms. Podlipny has volunteers and ABI will dispose of the trash collected. The Selectmen are in agreement on the date.

Selectman Landau attended the Historical Society meeting. Stevens Hall is working out for the museum. The Historical Society is planning on having the piano tuned for a concert before Christmas. During the meeting, the last schoolhouse in Chester was mentioned. Selectman Landau stated the building is empty and inquired if the town might be interested in preserving the building. There may be a stipulation in the deed that the attorney is looking into.

Selectman Landau asked for consideration to get a quote for the inside framing above the Post Office to make the space usable. The stairs on one side of the building needs to be fixed as one step is not up to building code. Chairman Myette suggested asking the Building Inspector if the building is usable, then the Board can decide if money should be invested in the stairs. Chief Gladu advised both stairways are not compliant.

Vice Chairman Couture

Nothing to report

Selectman D’Angelo

Nothing to report

Selectman Owens:

Nothing to report

Chairman Myette mentioned the Planning Board public hearing for the Garabedian gravel pit. The pit goes from Fremont Road to Old Sandown Road with many abutters. The object of the public hearing was to show the plans which are also online. Most of the attendees were upset for many reasons about the gravel pit. The Planning Board has sixty-five days to review the documents to determine if the gravel pit can go forward.

Selectman Landau inquired about the acreage of the proposed gravel pit. Chairman Myette advised the lot is over 100 acres. The first phase for gravel excavation is 18 acres. Selectman D’Angelo mentioned the recently finished paving on Fremont Road. Chairman Myette stated Fremont Road was finished with the understanding this project was in the works. A performance bond is needed for any damage done to the road.

Selectman Landau has concerns with receiving documents for employment and pay raises via Eversign. These documents are sent, and the Board does not discuss them. He mentioned new hire

documents for a department and was unaware of a person being hired. He feels the liaisons should be aware of this information.

Selectman Landau mentioned the agenda and how some items get on the agenda without the Selectmen’s knowledge. Selectman Landau suggested seeing the items and having all the information prior to the meeting so the Board can have a discussion. Chairman Myette agreed that items show up on the agenda and the Selectman have no idea what is going to be discussed. It would be a good idea to have knowledge of the agenda items to prepare for them and many items are sent for signatures without justifications or enough information.

Vice Chairman Couture stated the agenda items can be added to the agenda by 8:00am Wednesday morning. He mentioned that in another town items are due one week in advance for the Board to review prior to the meeting. It also consisted of a summary report for each agenda item and the recommendation by the Town Administrator or Department Heads with justification.

Vice Chairman Couture will work on updating the Board of Selectmen procedures and policies with Town Administrator Doda and can add possible improvements to the process.

4.3 Town Administrator’s Report

Chairman Myette suggested the blank wall in the Town Hall hallway for the Proclamation Day items the Town received. The Selectmen agreed with the location. Town Administrator Doda will put in a work order request.

4.4 Action Items

Nothing to report

4.5 Non-Public Session(s)

Chairman Myette announced four non-public sessions on reputation.

Vice Chairman Couture motioned to go into non-public session pursuant to 91-A:3(II), (a) public employees and (e) pending litigation. 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.

The meeting was closed to the public at 9:02 PM

Vice Chairman Couture motioned to come out of non-public session. 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.

The meeting was reopened to the public at 10:44 PM.

Vice Chairman Couture motioned to seal the minutes of the first non-public session, on Public Employees, for a period of thirty (30) days. 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.

Vice Chairman Couture motioned to seal the minutes of the second non-public session, on Public Employees, for a period of thirty (30) days. 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.

Vice Chairman Couture motioned to seal the minutes of the third 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.

Vice Chairman Couture motioned to keep the minutes of the fourth non-public session, on Reputation, unsealed. 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.

V. Adjournment

Vice Chairman Couture moved to adjourn the meeting. 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.

The meeting was adjourned at 10:49 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Janis A. Jalbert
Recording Secretary

Ted Scott

121 Derry Rd.

27 year veteran of the Fire Department

On Saturday, I was pleased to be able to observe most of the 300th parade. It was a nice variety and the largest parade that I remember in Chester in quite some time. As the parade drew to a close, however, I quickly realized that several fire trucks failed to make an appearance, and were still parked in the station. I found it sad that, just last year, every truck, including the department’s Gator, made it into the Town Fair parade, but this year, celebrating the milestone 300th anniversary, Engine 2, Tank 2, and the Forestry truck were left driver-less in the station. This was probably only noticed by past department members, but is indicative of the staffing and leadership problems that some of us have been trying to get the Board of Selectmen to address for the last few years. Looking to hire more full-time people is a waste of time because even the larger departments cannot find qualified people. Volunteerism and staffing of call departments like the Chester Fire Department is a problem nationwide, but some of the reasons that Chester has such personnel issues need to be researched and addressed, as some have said over and over.

The inability to get all of the apparatus in the 300th parade has a couple of attendant implications that go with it. The first and greatest implication is that, if there aren’t enough people to staff the trucks in a parade of this importance, when there is a major fire in the town of Chester, some of the trucks aren’t going to be staffed either. It has been several years since there has been a house fire in town, but it’s only a matter of time before tragedy strikes a family or families in this town again, and the fire department needs to be prepared. The second implication is that when the Fire Department comes before the town in the future to replace engine 2, they may find it extremely difficult to persuade the taxpayers to spend several hundred thousand dollars on a truck that they can’t staff.

It is my understanding that some of the younger members are being trained to operate the apparatus, which is commendable, but when you review the roster,

408 qualifications, abilities and availability of the members, the younger members
409 who are learning to run the trucks are the same very few members who are the
410 only interior firefighters on the department, creating another conundrum.

411 A lack of men and women on the fire department leads to increased response
412 times, an inability to get necessary equipment on scene in a timely manner, if at
413 all, and a greater reliance on surrounding fire departments for mutual aid, who all
414 have longer response times coming to OUR emergencies. Truly, the PEOPLE are
415 the greatest resource a call fire department has, before trucks and equipment. I
416 have said for several years now that the Chester Fire Department needs to find
417 ways to stop the hemorrhaging of people from its ranks.

418 I resigned from the fire department on Dec. 14. During that week, one person
419 was fired and 3 others besides me resigned. Roughly 2 years ago the members of
420 the department met with the Town Administrator and the selectmen’s liaison
421 about certain personnel issues and both of those town officials stated that they
422 had dropped the ball regarding exit interviews and they would have to pay more
423 attention to getting that detail done when people leave. I am not aware of
424 anyone being contacted about reasons for leaving since we initially had that
425 meeting. Moreover, I **know** that none of the several people who have resigned or
426 were fired in the past year have had any contact about their separation.

427 In the meantime, other names have disappeared from the roster as well.

428 The Fire department left 3 trucks and the Gator out of the town’s 300th
429 anniversary parade. That’s just one sign of a major problem. The implications are
430 frightening.