

**Town of Chester
Board of Selectmen Meeting
Thursday, February 8th, 2018
Municipal Complex
Approved Minutes**

I Preliminaries

Call the Meeting to Order
Roll Call
Pledge of Allegiance
Additions and Deletions
Public Comment
Approval of Minutes
Items for Signature
Budgets
Warrant Articles
Spring Hill Farm Board of Trustees
Maintenance Position
Roundtable
Non-Public Sessions
Adjournment

1.1 Call to Order

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

1.2 Roll Call

Selectmen present:

Cass Buckley
Steve D’Angelo
Jeremy Owens
Dick Trask

Selectmen absent:

Jack Cannon

Members of the Public present, at various times:

Greg Bolduc, Fire Chief
Mary Beth Ditoro, Library Trustees
Tiffany Coroka Gillen, Agricultural Commission/Spring Hill Farm Advisory Committee
Bob Grimm, PACT
Kandace Knowlton, Library Director
Richard LeBlanc, Spring Hill Farm Board of Trustees
Deb Munson, Library Trustees
Chuck Myette, Agricultural Commission, Spring Hill Farm Advisory Committee/Board of Trustees
Nancy Myette
Terence Traynor, PACT
Gary Van Geyte, Agricultural Commission
Penny Williams, Tri-Town Times
And other persons unknown to the Recording Secretary

1.3 Pledge of Allegiance

Chairman Trask led the attendees in the Pledge of Allegiance.

1.4 Chairman’s Additions and Deletions

There were neither additions nor deletions.

1.5 Public Comments

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 week’s meeting minutes is in the signature folder.

2.2 Items for Signature

Chairman Trask urged all members to review and sign items in the Signature Folder.

III. New Business

3.1 Budgets

3.1.1 Agricultural Committee

Gary Van Geyte, Chuck Myette, and Tiffany Coroka Gillen appeared before the Selectmen to defend the Agricultural Commission Budget request. They are asking \$600, which is a decrease of 14.29% from last year’s budget.

Mrs. Gillen is the representative from Agricultural to the newly formed Spring Hill Farm Advisory Committee.

As the Selectmen had no questions on this budget, Mr. Van Geyte, Mr. Myette, and Mrs. Gillen departed the meeting table at 7:02pm.

3.1.2 Government Buildings

This Department’s original request was for \$300,505, which is an increase of 15.49% over last year’s budget. Today, however, line 01-4194-1-650 GB Groundskeeping was increased from \$6,000 to \$8,000, based on some new information gathered by Groundskeeper John Dalrymple; as a result, the Government Buildings budget request is for \$302,505, which is an increase of 16.26% over last year’s budget.

Line 01-4194-1-415 GB Major Projects has increased to \$39,000. Projects planned for the year are the lead abatement of the Highway and Maintenance Garages, which require a certified contractor. Painting by the contractor is also included in these estimates, although using the County Workers instead would allow for a reduction.

Chairman Trask added that roof shingles on the annex are starting to blow off, and must be repaired.

Selectman Buckley queried line 01-4194-1-113 GB Maintenance Seasonal, which increased by \$10,000. The backup provided states that this increase was to hire a seasonal person to assist Groundskeeper Dalrymple in the good weather. Selectman Buckley believes this additional position is not necessary; this statement received general agreement.

Selectman D’Angelo queried lines 01-4194-1-639 GB Gas/Oil/Diesel and 01-4194-1-741 GB Truck Maint, which have increased 65% and 80% respectively. These increases are tied to the procurement of a second Maintenance Truck to be used by the Groundskeeping staff. Selectman D’Angelo is of the opinion that one truck is sufficient and can be shared.

The entire Maintenance Department needs to be looked at before the Budget can be amended and/or approved.

3.1.3 Library

Library Director Kandace Knowlton, Library Trustees Chairman Mary Beth Ditoro, and Library Trustee Deb Munson appeared before the Selectmen to defend the Library Budget request. They are asking \$164,610, which is an increase of 1.94% over last year’s budget.

Library Trustees Chairman Ditoro explained that the cost of many items had risen – electronic resources, museum passes, etc. – whereas revenue is slightly down, and additional funding was needed.

Selectman D’Angelo described the library as a ‘valuable service to the community’.

As the Selectmen had no questions on this budget, Library Director Knowlton, Library Trustees Chairman Ditoro, and Library Trustee Munson departed the meeting at 7:23pm.

3.1.4 Spring Hill Farm Advisory Committee

Mr. Myette and Mrs. Gillen appeared before the Selectmen to defend the Spring Hill Farm Advisory Committee budget request. This newly formed Committee is asking \$500.

Mrs. Gillen stated that many good ideas had been floated at the Committee’s first few meetings; their next meeting is on Monday, February 19th, and they expect these ideas to be presented and details hashed out. They plan to communicate their information via hard-copy rather than social media – signage, flyers, letters – and are asking for \$500 to do this.

As the Selectmen had no questions on this budget, Mr. Myette and Mrs. Gillen departed the meeting table at 7:26pm.

3.1.5 Benefits

This budget request is for \$718,298, which is an increase of 0.96% over last year’s budget.

Due to the items paid for by this budget (FICA, Medicare, Health Insurance, etc.) there is really very little control over the amount other than hiring practices.

The Selectmen had no questions on this budget.

3.1.6 Ambulance

Fire Chief Greg Bolduc appeared before the Selectmen to defend the Ambulance budget request. They are asking \$120,002, which is an increase of 1.41% over last year’s budget. However, as the Ambulance contract is still being negotiated, this figure may change.

Fire Chief Bolduc, Chairman Trask and Selectman D’Angelo met with Derry’s Fire Chief and Town Administrator to go over the Ambulance contract, which expires this year on June 30th.

Fire Chief Bolduc stated that Derry staffs four ALS (Advanced Life Support – paramedical level) ambulances. He added that Chester averages ~200 calls per year, and in the ten years that he has been on the Chester Fire Department, only once has Derry been unable to send an ambulance. He reached out to private ambulance providers, but none were able to meet Derry’s price for the same level of service.

Selectman D’Angelo noted that due to Fire Chief Bolduc’s negotiations, the increases of 10% per year in the previous contract had been brought down to a much more reasonable flat, 2%, and then 3% over the seven years. Fire Chief Bolduc added that verbiage indicating that the Town would be charged transport fees (when delivering a patient to the hospital themselves) or intercept fees (when the Rescue Truck transports a patient who worsens, necessitating a meet-up with Derry Ambulance) has also been removed.

Chairman Trask noted that the Town had offered to extend the dispatch contract, which expires in 2020, in return for a discount on the ambulance; Derry declined this offer, but suggested instead two different options to extend the dispatch contract at reduced increases. Option A extends for seven years, and Option B for ten; Option B’s increases make a much more favorable bottom line. This decision has yet to be made.

Both contracts have twelve-month, no-reason out clause; termination for breach is 120 days.

The Ambulance contract needs to be finalized before this budget can be amended and/or approved.

On another subject, Selectman D’Angelo noted that he and Fire Chief Bolduc had discussed possibly using Per Diem workers to cover the Fire Station 24/7, sometime in the future. The Fire Department is having a good turnout, but not many new members. Selectman Buckley stated that one of the benefits of an all-volunteer Fire Department is that during the evenings, when the Fire Department is not staffed, volunteers are home and able to respond. Fire Chief Bolduc noted, however, that the hours of 3am – 7am are particularly difficult, as people are sleeping in preparation for their day jobs.

As the Selectmen had no further questions on this budget, Fire Chief Bolduc departed the meeting at 7:43pm.

3.1.7 Warrant Articles

Three Departments have submitted Warrant Articles: Assessing, PACT, and Police.

Assessing

The Assessing article asks to add \$30,000 to the Town Revaluation Capital Reserve Fund in preparation for the next Town revaluation in 2021. This Warrant Article appears yearly, although not always for this amount. The Town’s assessment is currently at 85%. The Selectmen had no questions on this Article.

PACT

The PACT article asks for \$35,383 to be withdrawn from the PACT Special Revenue Fund, and will have no tax impact.

Bob Grimm and Terry Traynor of the PACT Committee joined the Selectmen at the meeting table to defend this request. Selectman Buckley noted that although there is a fair amount of equipment on the list, much of the requested amount is intended to fund a part-time TV Station Coordinator. He added that some neighboring towns do not have as good a station as the Town does, and he would prefer that Chester not ‘get ahead’ of other Towns, or do work for them. He is not in favor of adding an employee, which would have a downstream effect on the Town’s budget. Mr. Grimm noted that the person, who they expect to cost ~\$20k, would not be a Town employee unless the Comcast Franchise Fees ran out, which there is no indication that they will do.

Selectman D’Angelo noted that the current PACT volunteers put in extraordinary amounts of time to provide the services that they do; Selectman Buckley countered that more people should volunteer. If not enough people volunteer, perhaps the service is not necessary.

Mr. Traynor played a brief video prepared by the PACT committee members, showing a typical day; this 2-½ minute video took 7 hours to create. He explained that the part-time person could manage the volunteers, purchase supplies, maintain equipment, watch VCR tapes to digitize, arrange his or her own schedule to film events when no volunteer is available, etc., and added that many towns with smaller TV Stations have employees.

Insofar as the School is concerned, there is not much activity; Mr. Grimm stated that the School Board meeting is filmed once a month. The part-time person could train School employees to work in the studio, and film events there him/herself. There are, again, not many volunteers at the School.

Selectman D’Angelo thanked the PACT Committee and volunteers members for their efforts, calling it a ‘labor of love’.

Mr. Grimm and Mr. Traynor departed the meeting at 8:03pm.

Police

The Police Department article asks for \$35,000 to purchase and up-fit an off-road utility vehicle and trailer. As these funds will be drawn from the Police Detail Special Revenue Fund, there is no tax impact.

This vehicle would be used to patrol trails and answer calls in the woods, where a regular vehicle cannot go. Selectman D’Angelo asked why the Police couldn’t borrow the Fire Department’s 4x4 vehicle, and if this vehicle would be purchased in lieu of a new cruiser. Selectman Buckley stated that it might not have any tax impact upon purchase, but every year funds would have to be raised and appropriated for its maintenance, and when it reached the end of its useful life, the Police Department would expect it to be replaced.

Chairman Trask suggested that Selectmen take their Budget Books home and come back prepared to discuss areas that could be cut, or items that need to be added. Selectman D’Angelo pointed out that the Budget was due to the Budget Committee next Friday - February 16th, 2018.

3.2 Spring Hill Farm Board of Trustees

Mr. Myette and Richard LeBlanc appeared before the Selectmen to discuss future plans for the Spring Hill Farm Board of Trustees. Selectman Buckley is also a Trustee.

Mr. Myette noted that the Board of Trustees has not met recently as they have nothing to discuss until the Selectmen decide about the future of Spring Hill Farm, based on input from the Spring Hill Farm Advisory Committee. They still plan to assist with the Farm by providing volunteer labor, funding, etc., as the Advisory Committee desires, in order to ensure that the land remains intact and that the buildings and trails are maintained.

There is equipment at the Farm that was purchased by the Trust; after March 7th, 2018, when the Sweets move out, this equipment will need to be stored and maintained. Chairman Trask asked that an inventory be made of that equipment.

There will be one cow (Norma) remaining on site; she will need to be cared for as well. Mr. LeBlanc plans to manage that situation.

The Farmhouse will need to be winterized; the Maintenance Department will handle this.

The Selectmen will inform the Trustees and other interested parties when the property is empty so that the process may begin. Selectman Buckley will update on the situation at the meeting of March 8th, 2018.

Mr. LeBlanc and Mr. Myette departed the meeting at 8:20pm.

3.3 Maintenance Position

Vice-Chairman Cannon, who was not in attendance tonight, is reviewing the existing job description for the Maintenance Supervisor position. There was some discussion about whether the job needed to be part-time or full-time, if two part-timers could be hired rather than one full-timer, if a Supervisor is actually needed rather than a handyman type employee and what the pay difference would be, if the job description should specify certain upgraded skills, etc. Selectman Buckley is of the opinion that a Maintenance employee with upgraded skills might preclude the need for many outside vendors.

IV. Selectmen’s Business

4.1 Roundtable

Selectman D’Angelo:

- The Snow Day Procedure was discussed again at this morning’s Department Heads meeting. There is some concern about the ‘premium pay’ situation, which only applies when Town Hall itself would be open (8am – 4pm) and does not apply to those who work on second and third shifts, no matter when the snow event might take place. It was opined that persons who work as Police, Fire, or Highway expect to work on off shifts and in all sorts of weather because that is the nature of their job; it was added that when Town Hall closes and employees are sent home, it is hoped that they take work with them if at all possible. BOS AA Doda should give each Selectman a copy of the current Snow Day Procedure and a list of the ‘essential personnel’.

The Selectmen agreed that the procedure for a delayed opening or an early of closing of Town Hall is as follows: **Road Agent Michael Oleson, Police Chief Berube, and Selectman Owens will consult and decide if the Building should be opened late or closed early; this information will be provided to Fire Chief Greg Bolduc, who will disseminate it to the employees via “I Am Responding”.**

Selectman Owens:

- Nothing to report.

Selectman Buckley:

- Nothing to report.

Chairman Trask:

- Police Chief Aaron Berube has drawn up a proposal to hire a 'Ranger' for the Wason Pond property; Selectmen should take their copy home to read and be prepared to discuss at next week's meeting. Police Chief Berube believes that the maximum this project will cost will be \$10k; Finance Director Joanne Smith will be asked to put a line in his budget for this amount for the meantime.
- Police Chief Berube sent out suggestions for the 'No Smoking' sign design for the 84 Chester Street property. One was chosen, and signs will be ordered.

4.2 Non-Public Session

Selectman Buckley moved that the Board go into non-public session under RSA 91-A:3 II (a) Public Employees and RSA 91-A:3 II (e) Pending Litigation; Selectman Owens seconded the motion. The vote was four in favor with Vice-Chairman Cannon absent; motion carried.

The meeting room was closed at 8:39pm.

The meeting room was re-opened at 8:58pm.

Selectman Owens moved that the Board come out of non-public session; Selectman D'Angelo seconded the motion. The vote was four in favor with Vice-Chairman Cannon absent; motion carried.

Chairman Trask moved that the minutes to the first non-public session, on Public Employees, be sealed for a period of six (6) months; Selectman Buckley seconded the motion. The vote was four in favor with Vice-Chairman Cannon absent; motion carried.

Selectman D'Angelo moved that the minutes to the second non-public session, on Pending Litigation, be sealed for a period of one (1) year; Chairman Trask seconded the motion. The vote was four in favor with Vice-Chairman Cannon absent; motion carried.

Selectman D'Angelo moved that the minutes to the third non-public session, on Pending Litigation, be sealed for an indefinite period; Selectman Buckley seconded the motion. The vote was four in favor with Vice-Chairman Cannon absent; motion carried.

V. Adjournment

The next regularly scheduled meeting of the Board of Selectmen will be Thursday, February 15th, 2018.

Chairman Trask moved to adjourn the meeting; Selectman Buckley seconded the motion. The vote was four in favor with Vice-Chairman Cannon absent; motion carried.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:00pm.

Respectfully Submitted,

Debra H. Doda
Recording Secretary