

**Town of Chester
Selectboard’s Meeting
Thursday, April 11, 2024
Municipal Complex
Draft Minutes**

I. Preliminaries

- Call the Meeting to Order
- Roll Call
- Pledge of Allegiance
- Chairman’s Additions or Deletions
- Public Comment (10 minutes)
- PACT Appointment
- Fire Department Budget Cuts Revisited
- Review Budget and Warrant
- Consent Agenda
- 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 Selectboard to order at 6:00pm.

1.2 Roll Call

Selectboard Present:

- Chuck Myette
- Stephen Landau
- Dana Theokas
- Dick Trask

Selectboard Absent:

- Steve Couture

Members of the Public Present at various times:

- Aaron Berube, Police Chief
- Joe Castricone
- Phil Gladu, Fire Chief / EMD
- Karl Knudsen
- Rich LaBlanc
- David LaVita
- Nancy Myette

51 and other persons unknown to the Recording Secretary.

52

53 *1.3 Pledge of Allegiance*

54

55 Chairman Myette led the attendees in the Pledge of Allegiance.

56

57 *1.4 Chairman’s Additions or Deletions*

58

59 Selectman Landau asked for the fields to be added, discussions will be during roundtable.

60

61 *1.5 Public Comment*

62

63 Mr. LeBlanc, 605 Fremont Road, pointed out the roads in town are falling apart. Former Road Agent
64 Oleson was always trying but never had enough funding. Mr. LeBlanc pointed out the school is
65 allowed to keep a certain percentage of the excess funding each year, maybe the excess money from
66 the school can be returned to the town to fund roadwork. Selectwoman Theokas mentioned the
67 voters in town voted to allow the school to keep those funds.

68

69 Mr. LeBlanc feels that putting a shim course on some roads will be the best value for the town. A
70 section of Fremont Road was previously shimmed, and it has lasted many years. SOR Piper believes
71 that section of was actually reclaimed, not shimmed.

72

73 As no other Members of the Public wished to be heard, Public Comment was closed at 6:03pm.

74

75 **II. Appointments**

76

77 *2.1 PACT Appointment*

78

79 Mr. Knudsen mentioned Mr. Grimm and Mr. Castricone have been discussing his return to the
80 committee for about six months.

81

82 Mr. Castricone said he has been helping out since early spring and will be setting everything up for
83 Town Meeting. There is a lot of new equipment to learn in the studio. Charman Myette is glad to see
84 Mr. Castricone helping out again in the studio. Selectman Trask welcomed him back.

85

86 ***Selectman Landau motioned to appoint Joe Castricone to the PACT Committee with a term to***
87 ***expire May 31, 2027. Selectman Trask seconded the motion. A roll call vote was taken Myette –***
88 ***aye, Trask– aye, Theokas –aye, Couture –absent, Landau – aye. With four in favor, the motion***
89 ***passed.***

90

91 *2.1 Fire Department Budget Cuts Revisited*

92

93 Chief Gladu had supplied the justification for his budget and would like the Board to reconsider the
94 cuts they made to the on-call, annual testing, and full-time salary lines.

95

96 Chief Gladu has implemented a program and the number of on call members responding is improving.
97 During the storm, they had thirty calls for the two days and had a total of eight people responding.
98 They were able to cover three calls simultaneously. Chairman Myette pointed out the budget
99 committee is asking for additional cuts, and it would be hard to justify increasing the budget.

100 Selectman Landau congratulated Chief Gladu on the negotiations for the new pumper. Chief Gladu
101 was able to find a pumper and negotiate the price. The cost will be \$639,190.00 and the town has the
102 funding available in the Fire Department Apparatus Capital Reserve Fund.

103
104 ***Selectman Landau motioned to approve the purchase of the Fire Department pumper.***

105
106 A warrant article is needed since the residents will need to vote for the expenditure from the Fire
107 Department Apparatus Capital Reserve Fund. Chief Gladu is working on setting up a show and tell of
108 the pumper before Town Meeting.

109
110 Selectman Landau amended the motion.

111
112 ***Selectman Landau motioned to approve the purchase of the pumper contingent upon the***
113 ***approval at Town Meeting, thanked Chief Gladu, and have the show and tell of the pumper at***
114 ***Town Meeting. Selectman Trask seconded the motion. A roll call vote was taken Myette – aye,***
115 ***Trask– aye, Theokas –aye, Couture –absent, Landau – aye. With four in favor, the motion passed.***

116
117 Chief Gladu mentioned the refurbishment of the Quint is on the CIP in a few years.

118
119 **III. New Business**

120
121 ***3.1 Budget Review***

122
123 Chairman Myette mentioned at this point the Selectboard and Budget Committee have two different
124 budgets. Selectman Trask advised the Budget Committee is looking for the Town to have no higher
125 than a 5% increase. Selectman Landau pointed out the budget can be dropped further but the Town
126 will not be able to provide the services the residents are asking for. Selectman Landau commended
127 the Recreation Department; the pickleball program has been successful and the players donated the
128 funds to have the lines painted on the floor in the MPR.

129
130 Chairman Myette pointed out the Town is in a good position. The Town is debt free, collects on a
131 timely basis, and has a healthy unassigned fund balance which can and has been used to lower taxes.
132 He would like to look at what is really needed and not just make cuts to the budgets.

133
134 Selectwoman Theokas asked where the funds for the repairs to Lane Road came from. Town
135 Administrator Doda stated those funds came from the Unassigned Fund Balance with DRA approval.

136
137 The Board discussed the employees’ salaries with the longevity and COLA adjustment. The Budget
138 Committee has asked for a reduction in the COLA. Last year was the first COLA adjustment for the
139 employees. Selectman Trask mentioned the longevity will help in the future to get the employees
140 back on track. Selectman Landau is not in favor of changing the employees raises. There are other
141 areas in the budget that can be cut. One example is the Transfer Station snow plowing, the town owns
142 a machine that can be used for snow removal and if the storm is too big, we can close for the day.
143 Another line to cut is the street lighting.

144
145 The Budget Committee is meeting on Monday with their final proposed budget. The Selectboard will
146 hold another meeting on Wednesday night to finalize their budget. The public hearing is on Thursday.
147 Chief Berube asked for the revised budget to be sent to the Department Heads, so they know where
148 the cuts were made.

149

150 The Board discussed the warrant articles and whether to move forward with them.
151

152 Selectwoman Theokas asked for a reduction of \$250K from taxation in #beta one - Highway CIP CRF
153 Funding. A few numbers were thrown out and the Board settled on \$1,403,798.00 with a tax impact
154 of \$1.90.

155
156 With the reduction in funding the Board questioned if all the work could be done. Town
157 Administrator Doda replied yes. Selectman Landau suggested Dump Road be removed. Selectwoman
158 Theokas is in favor of removing even though they have a proposal by a donor that would save the
159 town money. SOR Piper is in favor of keeping Dump Road. This deal is not going to get any better, and
160 it will be the town’s engineer overseeing the project and done to the town’s standards. The final
161 decision was to keep the warrant article as is.

162
163 Selectman Trask suggested lowering the amount to \$150K for #delta one Fire Department Apparatus
164 CRF Fund considering the town has the funding needed for the pumper purchase. The Selectboard
165 agreed with the change.

166
167 Town Administrator Doda mentioned the addition of \$5K in the Fire Department Apparatus Spending
168 Warrant for equipment transfer.

169
170 Winter Road Maintenance ETF Funding can be amended on the floor at Town Meeting if not all \$105K
171 is needed.

172
173 The line in the budget for legal is \$60K which the Town uses every year. The suggestion was to take
174 \$30K from the budget and fund the rest from this account. The Selectboard will need to be agents to
175 expend. Selectman Trask asked for the cap to be removed. If this warrant article passes the Board
176 will take \$10K from the legal line in the budget.

177
178 Chairman Myette explained #iota one – Establishment and Funding of Bridge Repair and
179 Replacement CRF is to help fund the repair costs for the red listed bridges in town. Selectwoman
180 Theokas pointed out many of the warrant articles are being funded from the unassigned fund balance.
181 She suggested prioritizing the warrants.

182
183 Article #iota two – Establishment and Funding of Contingency Fund will be used for emergencies in
184 the Town. Selectwoman Theokas asked if there was a definition of an emergency. There is not,
185 however there will need to be a public hearing prior to utilizing the fund. If nothing is expended from
186 the account that fiscal year, it will go back into the unassigned fund balance.

187
188 Selectman Trask asked for the one-time brokerage fee to be added to the article for the Post Office
189 Lease Warrant Article.

190
191 The Board discussed the need to speak to the petitioned warrant articles for hand counting at the
192 elections. If these are passed, the Town needs to know this will increase the budget.

193
194 Article #upsilon – Conservation Easements was condensed to one article with approval from Mr.
195 Chouinard, Chairman of the Conservation Commission.

196
197 Selectman Trask suggested Chairman Myette and Town Administrator Doda renumber the articles
198 for Wednesday night’s meeting.
199

200 Chief Berube asked where the Selectboard feels the budget is going. Chairman Myette advised there
201 are two budgets at this point. Chief Berube pointed out the increase for the COLA and longevity were
202 morale builders for the employees in town. If you look at the town’s top three departments, all of
203 them have openings. The departments are trying to retain the employees they have and attract
204 qualified candidates.

205
206 Chief Berube suggested utilizing more funding from his special detail account to purchase the cruiser
207 for the Police Department in order to keep the COLA at 4% like they had motioned. Selectman Trask
208 stated this would not help with the budget. Chairman Myette thanked Chief Berube for the suggestion.
209 He pointed out the number being thrown is a five percent increase. It is a bottom-line budget; the
210 board will look at where they think they might be able to cut but in actuality some of the budget lines
211 might be overspent in departments. That will be the operating problem for each of the departments
212 going forward if these major reductions being asked for are passed.

213
214 **IV. Consent Agenda**

215
216 *4.1 Veterans Credit & 4.3 Elderly Exemptions*

217
218 Selectman Landau pointed out a discrepancy in one of the documents. This document will be
219 removed.

220
221 ***Selectman Trask motioned to approve the Veterans’ Credit and Elderly Exemptions requests.***
222 ***Selectman Landau seconded the motion. A roll call vote was taken Myette – aye, Trask– aye,***
223 ***Theokas –aye, Couture –absent, Landau –aye. With four in favor, the motion passed.***

224
225 *4.2 Minutes March 7, 14, 21, 2024*

226
227 ***Selectman Trask motioned to approve the minutes of March 7 & 14, 2024. Selectwoman Theokas***
228 ***seconded the motion. A roll call vote was taken Myette – aye, Trask– aye, Theokas –aye, Couture***
229 ***–absent, Landau – abstained. With three in favor, the motion passed.***

230
231 ***Selectman Trask motioned to approve the minutes of March 21, 2024. Selectwoman Theokas***
232 ***seconded the motion. A roll call vote was taken Myette – aye, Trask– aye, Theokas –abstained,***
233 ***Couture –absent, Landau – abstained. With two in favor, the motion passed.***

234
235 *4.5 Intent to Excavate*

236
237 Chairman Myette stated this is for the Garabedian property; they excavated 66,000 cubic yards and
238 are asking for another 100,000 cubic yards this year. Chairman Myette stated the 100,000 yards is
239 the numbers that were put forward to the Planning Board not to exceed.

240
241 ***Selectman Trask motioned to approve the Intent to excavate. Selectwoman Theokas seconded***
242 ***the motion. A roll call vote was taken Myette – aye, Trask– aye, Theokas –aye, Couture –absent,***
243 ***Landau –aye. With three in favor, the motion passed.***

244
245 *4.4 Disabled Credit*

246
247 ***Selectman Landau motioned to approve the Disabled Credit request. Selectwoman Theokas***
248 ***seconded the motion. A roll call vote was taken Myette – aye, Trask– aye, Theokas –aye, Couture***
249 ***–absent, Landau –aye. With four in favor, the motion passed.***

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V. Selectmen’s Business

5.1 Chairman’s Announcements

Chairman Myette announced the following meetings:

- Monday, April 15th, 2024 @ 7pm Budget Committee – Main Meeting Room
- Monday, April 15th, 2024 @ 7pm Spring Hill Farm – Rangeway Meeting Room
- Tuesday April 16th, 2024 @6pm Solar Working Group – Rangeway Meeting Room
- Tuesday April 16th, 2024 @7pm ZBA Meeting – Main Meeting Room
- Wednesday, April 17th, 2024 @ 6pm School Board – Chester Academy
- Wednesday, April 17th, 2024 @ 6pm Selectboard – Main Meeting Room
- Thursday, April 18th, 2024 @6pm Selectboard (Budget, Warrant, SB2 Public Hearing at 6:30pm) – Main Meeting Room

Chairman Myette announced the following events:

Saturday, April 13th from 9am – 12pm The Annual Rabies Clinic will be held Rain or Shine at the Town Hall. Please contact Ark Animal Homecare for an appointment and to pay in advance.

5.2 Roundtable

Selectman Landau pointed out the flooding issue on Nichols field is still an issue. Selectman Landau has been working on the funding for the project. The baseball/ softball league and Booster Club have agreed to make donations. Selectman Landau is waiting for word from the School Board if they are also willing to help fund the project. Selectman Landau is hopeful there will be no expenditure from the town. Selectman Trask asked if there were available impact fees. There is about \$1,500.00 available in impact fees and those will be used for the project.

Chairman Myette reiterated the Town knows there is a drainage problem on the upper field. The Board had previously approved funding for a project on the fields; Chairman Myette asked if that work been done. Selectman Landau does not believe that work has started. Chairman Myette inquired if the two projects can be done simultaneously. Selectwoman Theokas and Selectman Landau explained the project, and where the water would drain.

Selectman Trask suggests a motion to approve the fields to be fixed. Selectwoman Theokas clarified they would be accepting the donation from Chester baseball and softball for \$4500.00 and a donation from the booster club, impact fees from Recreation. They are just waiting for the donation amount from the School Board. Chairman Myette asked if the Town would be supplementing the remainder of the project with funding from the town. The board agreed it would be supplemented with town funds.

Chairman Myette stated all the permits need to be in place prior to any work being done.

300
301 **Selectman Trask motioned to approve the repairs to the town fields up to \$10K utilizing**
302 **donations from Chester baseball and softball, booster club and school board, Recreation impact**
303 **fees, and the remainder to be supplemented by the Town. Selectwoman Theokas seconded the**
304 **motion. A roll call vote was taken Myette – aye, Trask– aye, Theokas –aye, Couture –absent,**
305 **Landau –aye. With four in favor, the motion passed.**
306

307 Selectman Landau mentioned Maintenance Director Cavanaugh has been receiving quotes for the
308 roofs. Chairman Myette pointed out discrepancies with some the bids that have been received.
309

310 Selectman Trask is exploring a grant for a generator utilizing the hoop building as the matching funds.
311

312 Selectman Trask asked the Board if he could put together a five-person exploratory committee to
313 start looking into the space needs for the Highway Department.
314

315 **Selectman Trask motioned to for a space needs committee for the highway department.**
316 **Selectman Landau seconded the motion. A roll call vote was taken Myette – aye, Trask– aye,**
317 **Theokas –nay, Couture –absent, Landau –aye. With three in favor, the motion passed.**
318

319 Selectwoman Theokas asked if the Board just wanted to isolate it to the Highway Department, she
320 believes we should have a strategic land plan. Chairman Myette mentioned there has been a strategic
321 land protection plan committee for many years, but it was dissolved about three years ago. Chairman
322 Myette feels there should also be a committee for 84 Chester Street. Selectwoman Theokas would
323 like to wait to form other committees after the Town elections.
324

325 Selectwoman Theokas is working with Mr. Bellemore for a moose grant to help with the repairs to
326 the headstones in the cemeteries.
327

328 Chairman Myette mentioned the seniors have two trips planned. One will be on Mount Washington,
329 and the other will be to Fosters for lunch.
330

331 *5.3 Town Administrator’s Report*
332 *Nothing to report.*
333

334 *5.4 Action Items*
335 *Nothing to report.*
336

337 *5.5 Non-Public Session(s)*
338

339 Chairman Myette announced non-public sessions on reputation.
340

341 **Selectman Trask motioned to go into non-public session pursuant to 91-A:3(II) (c) reputation.**
342 **Selectman Landau seconded the motion. A roll call vote was taken Myette – aye, Trask– aye,**
343 **Theokas –aye, Couture –absent, Landau – aye. With four in favor, the motion passed with Couture**
344 **absent.**
345

346 The meeting was closed to the public at 9:30PM. Mr. Bourcier remained in the meeting room.
347

348 Mr. Bourcier departed the meeting room at 10:11 PM.
349

350 *Selectman Trask motioned to come out of non-public session. Selectman Landau seconded the*
351 *motion. A roll call vote was taken Myette – aye, Trask– aye, Theokas –aye, Couture –absent,*
352 *Landau – aye. With four in favor, the motion passed with Couture absent.*

353
354 The meeting was reopened to the public at 10:47 PM.

355
356 *Selectman Trask motioned to seal the minutes of the first non-public session, on Property.*
357 *Selectman Landau seconded the motion. A roll call vote was taken Myette – aye, Trask– aye,*
358 *Theokas –aye, Couture –absent, Landau – aye. With four in favor, the motion passed with Couture*
359 *absent.*

360
361 *Selectman Trask motioned to seal the minutes of the second non-public session, on Reputation.*
362 *Selectman Landau seconded the motion. A roll call vote was taken Myette – aye, Trask– aye,*
363 *Theokas –aye, Couture –absent, Landau – aye. With four in favor, the motion passed with Couture*
364 *absent.*

365
366 *Selectman Trask motioned to seal the minutes of the third non-public session, on Reputation.*
367 *Selectman Landau seconded the motion. A roll call vote was taken Myette – aye, Trask– aye,*
368 *Theokas –aye, Couture –absent, Landau – aye. With four in favor, the motion passed with Couture*
369 *absent.*

370
371 *Selectman Trask motioned to seal the minutes of the fourth non-public session, on Reputation.*
372 *Selectman Landau seconded the motion. A roll call vote was taken Myette – aye, Trask– aye,*
373 *Theokas –aye, Couture –absent, Landau – aye. With four in favor, the motion passed with Couture*
374 *absent.*

375
376 *Selectman Trask motioned to seal the minutes of the fifth non-public session, on Public*
377 *Employees. Selectman Landau seconded the motion. A roll call vote was taken Myette – aye,*
378 *Trask– aye, Theokas –aye, Couture –absent, Landau – aye. With four in favor, the motion passed*
379 *with Couture absent.*

380
381 *Selectman Trask motioned to seal the minutes of the sixth non-public session, on Reputation.*
382 *Selectman Landau seconded the motion. A roll call vote was taken Myette – aye, Trask– aye,*
383 *Theokas –aye, Couture –absent, Landau – aye. With four in favor, the motion passed with Couture*
384 *absent.*

385
386 **VI. Adjournment**

387
388 *Selectman Trask moved to adjourn the meeting. Selectman Landau seconded the motion. A roll*
389 *call vote was taken Myette – aye, Trask– aye, Theokas –aye, Couture –absent, Landau – aye. With*
390 *four in favor, the motion passed with Couture absent.*

391
392 The meeting was adjourned at 10:52 PM.

393
394 Respectfully submitted,

395
396 Janis A. Jalbert
397 Recording Secretary