

**Town of Chester**  
**Board of Selectmen/Water Commissioner/Zoning Board of Appeals**  
**Meeting Minutes March 13, 2017**

Chairman Baldasaro called meeting to order 6:00 p.m.

Minutes of 3/6/2017 meeting were approved and signed.

Warrants were approved and signed.

### **Highway Department**

All trucks running and prepped for impending blizzard conditions, plow blade on grader. Highway worked with Water Dept. and Mike Leach to resolve water leak issues on School St. Chairman Baldasaro opened topic of last week BOS meeting and what was discussed in John Murray's absence and the difficult position in determining what can be discussed in open meeting vs. executive session regarding the Superintendent's position. Clerk Senecal stated that he heard people felt it had been predetermined in the last meeting to remove John from his position and stated that was inaccurate. Chairman Baldasaro noted the primary discussion regarded the BOS frustrations with time spent on Highway Department issues during meetings and concern with Highway Dept. efficiency. Need to find a way to eliminate the "weekly torture sessions". Chairman Baldasaro also stated the BOS does not want reports regarding daily management of Highway Department, that Superintendent Murray needs to prioritize and devise a "strong plan" that should be adhered to unless issues of public safety arise and that Superintendent Murray should not try to "make everyone happy". The BOS does not want to micro-manage the position and that Superintendent Murray should be more pro-active vs. re-active. Clerk Senecal suggested Superintendent Murray reach out to other superintendents and MASSDOT staff to take advantage of the information they can provide. Superintendent Murray to devise 1,3, and 5 years' plans. Chairman Baldasaro asked Superintendent Murray how comfortable was he in the position, and Superintendent Murray stated he was 100% confident and comfortable with the job. Vice-Chairman Huntoon noted that they "were tired of going round and round" about the same issues such as brush cutting. Chairman Baldasaro stated it was not up to the BOS to prioritize regular maintenance and that Superintendent Murray should only need to provide priority list for larger projects, that Superintendent Murray needs to stick to his plans. Chairman Baldasaro stated he was happy to see people present and opened meeting to citizen comments on this topic.

Kim Sakaske – has lived here her whole life and she and many other people feel John does a great job. Craig Boyer – stated that he felt that road conditions were excellent, John was doing a great job -summer and winter, thinks a 4<sup>th</sup> man would benefit the department and the town. Lynn Pease – noted that the BOS points were well taken, need improved communication and prioritization, and that John (Murray) is a kind-hearted person but does not do things in order to be "well-liked".

Clerk Senecal would like to see Superintendent Murry report plan to BOS, have confidence in the plan and that he (Murry) should not ask the BOS what they want, as they do not know, that it is Murray's job to know what needs to be done, and agreed that a 4<sup>th</sup> person would be beneficial, also if the superintendent feels one is needed, he should "fight for it". Richard Holzman commented that this was a difficult conversation to have and that he felt it was well handled, that the BOS should endorse Superintendent Murray's plan not redirect from it. Chairman Baldasaro noted that once a plan is in place, the BOS should discontinue having Superintendent Murray present every meeting. Vice-Chairman Huntoon would like to see Superintendent Murray attend a management class or seminar. Clerk Senecal noted that many are available from UMASS Transportation and through Berkshire County Superintendents Association and stated that even though Superintendent Murray has administrative help, he needs to be more familiar with Chapter 90 processes etc.

### **Jason Forgue**

President GYAA, Treasurer Little League Baseball. He would like permission to improve Emery St. ball lot, CMELD is donating dirt for infield, Highway Department is donating trucking time to deliver dirt. Forgue would like to see improved lighting to allow for night games, CMELD has agreed to absorb cost for additional lighting. Forgue would

like to build an equipment shed, BOS agreed that would be fine, just need to be aware of water lines and pull applicable building permits. GYAA is not looking for any funds, would like to put in a soccer field, currently pays GRSD \$9800.00 for soccer field use, and pays additional money for baseball field use. BOS in agreement, and feels it would contribute to the community to have facilities available.

### **Finance Committee**

Andy Meyers noted that the committee met with almost all departments in one day and now have a very active committee and provided suggested FY18 budget. FY18 budget reflects a 3.5% overall increase for the Town and 1% increase for GRSD, numbers for vocational expense are not available yet but may still drive down Gateway numbers. Largest increase in budget due to new administrative position and benefits. After lengthy discussion, it was determined that the majority of departments have level funded their budgets. Small increase to Library due to mandatory increase in minimum wage and Transfer Station due to cost of stickers, etc. Highway Department line items were reduced to remain level funded. The BOS is recommending no COLA this year, Chairman Baldasaro indicated that salary survey indicate our salaries are currently on the "high end" and sees more critical need to reduce tax rate by applying free cash. The Town still does not have free cash figure, waiting on D.O.R. Additional discussion regarding COA expansion needs and associated cost and options. Chairman Baldasaro asked for additional information regarding group health insurance 46 % increase, Town Administrator Patricia Carlino noted that this line item has been underfunded for 2 years, will research with Town Accountant. Additional discussion regarding GRSD budget, towns need to vote down budget to force Gateway "back to the table". Mr. Holzman noted that there needs to be a "out of the box" solution for significant savings, closing Chester Elementary School would solve multiple issues for the town (COA expansion, Police Dept. Town Hall etc.)

Finance Committee to fine tune budget.

Andy Meyers brought up William St turn around, stated that that Steve Salvini estimated \$2500 for prep work and \$50-\$60 thousand for paving. Need to confirm road length. Also, the Highland Foot Path Trail Committee is seeking 503c status, the fee is \$300, Chester's portion is \$50.00

**Treasurer Cheryl Provost** – brought Mark Jones investment professional from Bancorp to review option for the mandatory OBRA coverage. Mr. Jones to prepare information and provide presentation to BOS and employees.

### **Old Business:**

- BOS would like letter from Eversource stating no interest in purchase of CMELD.
- Jason Fogue willing to help with COA expansion.
- Rene Senecal to be submitted for consideration as MPO.

### **Other Topics:**

- Hilltown Collaborative Community Compact Cabinet's Efficiency and Regionalization grant for a shared economic development position approved for \$100,511.00 which is expected to fund the position for a full two years.
- Corrected minutes from meetings 1/23/2017 and 2/13/2017 approved.
- Memorial Day committee, Fay Piergiovani has related she has new members for "new" committee, Kathy Engwer and Janice Brown.
- Town Hall to be closed 3/14/2017 due to impending storm.
- Warrant for town caucus submitted by Town Clerk for approval.
- 17 bid packages requested for demolition of 37 Middlefield Rd

### **Citizen Comments:**

- Mr. Hickson – what is Hilltown Collaborative Community Compact? – Town Administrator pat Carlino clarified-committee to develop shared services for hilltowns to improve economic positions and provide additional services.
- Mr. Foley – violently opposed to medical marijuana facility, concerned with cost of additional police for security and potheads driving around. Chairman Baldasaro clarified the facility would have to comply with strict state regulations, provide their own security, maintain air filtration system and is a growth and medical distribution center for offsite locations, as well as providing up to 11 full time and 17-part time employees, the majority of

which are agreed upon to be from local available work force, as well as noting they will not seek any tax exemptions.

**Additional questions and comments:**

Clerk Senecal are we (BOS) going to run an ad for the Highway Superintendent and proposed Public Work Superintendent position as discussed by the board? Or are we (BOS) negating it? Vice-Chairman Huntoon questioned if “we should wait and see”. Chairman Baldasaro noted it could take some time to determine if efforts by Superintendent Murray will satisfy issues, it may be beneficial to put “feelers” out to see what the work force may have to offer. Vice-Chairman Huntoon again noted John (Murray) should not be “blind-sided”. Clerk Senecal stated that when he was Chester Highway Department Superintendent the job was posted, once with his for-knowledge and once without. Chairman Baldasaro would like to inform Superintendent Murray of their (BOS) intent to post help wanted ads to gather information and would like to proceed with both advertisements. Vice-Chairman Huntoon also suggested a “white-board” for job projects/proposals. Clerk Senecal would like to see a 1,3, and 5-year action plan from the highway department.

Chairman Baldasaro motioned to adjourn, Vice-Chairman Huntoon seconded, all in favor. Meeting adjourned 8:55 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Rosanne McClaflin Recording Secretary

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John Baldasaro – Chairman

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Barbara Huntoon – Vice-Chairman

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Rene Senecal -Clerk