

Town of Chester
Board of Selectmen/Water Commissioner/Zoning Board of Appeals
Meeting Minutes May 22, 2017

1. Chairman Baldasaro opened meeting 6:00 p.m.
2. Minutes from May 15,2017 meeting approved.
3. Warrants approved and signed.
4. Highway Department-Crack seal bids/6 bid packages requested, 1 bid submission package received. Sealcoating Inc. was only bidder. Bid came in approximately 20% over estimate, Admin. Asst. to consult MASSDOT. Street sweepers (Split Excavating/Hampshire County bid winner) work not as good as previous vendor, report to be made to Hampshire County COG. Admin. Asst. to determine who did sweeping on Rte. 20. Vice-Chairman Huntoon asked about employee cell phone policy, Town supplies phone to "ON-CALL" employees, if employee declines town issued none, The Town will reimburse 50% of cost, not to exceed \$85.00.
5. Finance Committee-vocational education expense down this year from last. Snow and ice total deficit \$103,655.03. Article 19 on Annual Town Meeting proposed warrant verbiage to reflect "up to \$100,000.00" to reduce the tax rate. Discussion followed regarding pros and cons of applying various amount to the tax rate. Reduction of the tax rate expected to be a welcome "relief" to residents. Newly created Economic Development Coordinator position to stimulate growth in region. BOS in agreement that reducing the tax rate is in the best interest of the constituents. Finance Committee Chairman Andy Myers noted that the Town of Russell may see as much as a \$2.00 per thousand increase this year. Finance Committee to meet one half hour prior to Annual Town Meeting to review school budget as voted on by the Town of Huntington to determine effect on Chester. Andy Myers noted open meeting regarding the shared services proposals June 7, at 5:00 pm, Stanton Hall with Lt. Gov. Karen Polito, encouraged select board and residents to attend. The "State" approves of this initiative and may support additional projects with funding. Finance Committee member Jason Fogue questioned if these shared services would effectively provide "a bail-out for Russell or Blandford", Chairman Baldasaro, Vice-Chairman Huntoon and Finance Committee Chairman Andy Myers noted that this endeavor would not be "bail-out" service, but a "pooling of resources" providing "strength in numbers, helping all towns and in the best interest of the Town of Chester". Chairman Baldasaro noted that the towns cannot depend on "projected growth" it is getting more and more difficult for the towns to "stand on their own", this is a "good proposal, worth consideration." Vice-Chairman Huntoon in agreement and suggested attending the meeting for additional insight.
6. Town Administrator-Pat Carlino- Annual Town Meeting-Proposed Warrant: Article 23, adoption of the Stretch Energy Code, would like Jim Barry from Green Communities to attend and explain benefits of adopting the code, will schedule presentation for June 5, 2017 BOS meeting. Having a "Green Community" status will provide additional grant opportunities to the town. Jason Fogue questioned if adopting the code would force changes to the "new" building code, Chairman Baldasaro stated it would not. Article 24, Dog Control By-Law, Vice-Chairman Huntoon would like Animal Control Officer Terry Donovan present at Town Meeting to explain. Chairman Baldasaro asked to have all department heads present at Town Meeting. Town Administrator Pat Carlino to provide information packets to highlight warrant items for voters. Electric Light Board member Michael Hickson questioned Article 27 verbiage, Town Administrator Carlino noted that the item must be written exactly as petition was submitted.

Chairman Baldasaro asked if there were any more questions or issues, Treasurer Cheryl Provost noted that the shared software expense should be split evenly between Treasurer and Accountant expenses -correction to be made. Treasurer Provost also asked that "Assistant Treasurer" salary be transferred to "Treasurer Salary", Finance Committee Chairman Myers and Chairman Baldasaro noted that there has been no budget line item for an Assistant Treasurer for past 2 years, and that all salaries will be level funded for FY18-no COLA raises. Treasurer Provost questioned if the level funding of salary applied to CMELD employees, Chairman Baldasaro stated no- CMELD is not under the control of the BOS. Clerk Senecal feels that any COLA increases should accurately reflect actual current cost of living increase. A. Myers felt that "employees of the Town, are employees of the Town" there should be continuity, employee morale could suffer, questioned merit raise vs. COLA, would like to see a meeting/discussion between BOS, CMELD and Finance

Committee. Vice-Chairman Huntoon requested Town Administrator to co-ordinate meeting. Clerk Senecal would like “in-lieu of tax” payment from CMELD reviewed.

Michael Hickson asked to discuss the request he made to be appointed Veterans Agent. (Item unforeseen, presented 5/22/2017) Current representative is available locally the last Tuesday of the month for 4 (four) hours or in Northampton by appointment, Mr. Hickson stated that as a local representative he would be available evenings and weekends, he currently works for the Veterans Affairs Hospital in Leeds and is very familiar with benefits and services available to veterans and expressed a desire to help veterans in need. Chairman Baldasaro noted that in the past there has been difficulty in timely processing of services and payments and that it is critical that these items be kept current and accurate. Clerk Senecal feels Mr. Hickson has the interest of our resident veterans as his focus, and prefers local representation. Clerk Senecal motions to appoint Michael Hickson as Veterans Service Agent effective July 1, 2017, Vice-Chairman Huntoon seconded, unanimous.

Vice-Chairman Huntoon asked what is causing the water on Route 20, and have we tested it to ensure it is not a town water leak. Clerk Senecal stated there is a state drain there, Administrative Assistant to contact Mass Dot to clarify.

Chairman Baldasaro presented research which resulted in the removal of the Old State Road parcel from the upcoming auction May 25, 2017. It appears the cell tower is located on the parcel, the Town is to pursue a survey, have a deed drawn and create a separate parcel.

Treasurer Provost requested payroll be submitted by 9:00 a.m. Tuesday May 30 due to the Monday holiday.

Chairman Baldasaro question if Treasurer is now “balanced” Treasurer stated, “mostly done” she still does not have access, has been unable to connect with software (Acella) helpdesk. Town Administrator to contact Acella to clarify.

Discussion of IT challenges, website development, cannot address effectively unless funding is voted for at Annual Town Meeting.

No citizen comments.

Next regularly scheduled meeting June 5, 2017 at 6:00 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Rosanne McClafin – Recording Secretary

John Baldasaro – Chairman

Barbara Huntoon – Vice-Chairman

Rene Senecal – Clerk