

## Town of Chester

### Board of Selectmen/Water Commissioner/Zoning Board of Appeals

#### Meeting Minutes

June 12, 2017

**Attendance** BOS: Chairman John Baldasaro, Clerk Rene Senecal, Town Administrator Patricia Carlino, Administrative Assistant Rosanne McClafin, Mike Donovan-Country Journal, Andy Myers, Terry Murphy, Annette LaMountain, Bob Daly, John Foley, Wilma Foley

- I. Open Meeting: Chairman Baldasaro called to order the meeting at 6:02 p.m. on June 12, 2017**
- II. Minutes approved as submitted:** Clerk Senecal requested future minutes include written list of attendees in minutes vs. attached sign-in sheet so that the minutes can reflect attendance upon posting to Town website. Noted by recording secretary.
- III. Warrants approved and signed**
- IV. Scholarship review:** 2 (two) applicants for Theodore Steinhard Scholarship Fund: Rachel LeBarron GPA 4.50 and Anna Pless GPA 4.39. Scholarship requirement to award to applicant with highest GPA. Chairman Baldasaro motioned to award \$1000.00 Theodore Steinhard Scholarship to Rachel LeBarron, Clerk Senecal seconded-unanimous. Miss LeBarron will be attending Boston College this fall. 3 (three) applicants for Hamilton Memorial Scholarship, Rachel LeBarron, Anna Pless and Nicholas Cooper. Scholarship requirement to distribute available funds (\$6000.00) equally, Clerk Senecal motioned to award \$2000.00 to each applicant as dictated by scholarship criteria, Chairman Baldasaro seconded-unanimous. Town Administrator Carlino to send letters of award notifications.
- V. End of year transfers:** MA G.L. c.44§33B APPROPRIATION TRANSFERS. Municipal Modernization Act, Alternative Year-end Procedure-During May and June, and the first 15 days of July of the new fiscal year, the select board, with the agreement of the finance committee, may transfer any amount from a departmental or other appropriation to any other appropriation. The procedure may not be used, however, to transfer funds from a municipal light or school department budget. Discussion of funds needed to finish FY16, once accounts are finalized for FY16, funds will be transferred according to above noted law to cover any deficit.
- VI. Memorandum of Understanding:** A formal agreement between 6 town (Chester, Huntington, Blandford, Russell, Middlefield and Montgomery) Community Compact Cabinet/Hilltown Collaborative for Shared Rural Economic Development Coordinator Service. 5 (five) applicants to be interviewed 6/14/2017 by Hilltown Collaborative committee members, position expected to be filled within 30 days. Discussion followed regarding office space/location for position. No determination made at this time regarding space. Additional discussion regarding job description, required qualifications and performance evaluation. M.O.U. approved and signed.
- VII. 2018 Appointments:** Town Administrator Carlino noted appointment letters sent to current appointees to declare interest in re-appointment. Advertisement to be posted regarding vacancies and encourage any interested parties to contact Town Administrator to submit letter of interest to any position for review by BOS for appointments to be made July 10,2017. Discussion followed regarding appointment of Veterans Agent.

All attendees voiced “genuine concern” and emphatically noted that experience and performance by agent most critical criteria for position, while local representative would be welcomed, knowledge and commitment of agent to veterans is most important, i.e. agent’s ability to provide service to both the veteran and the Town on the form of accurate reimbursements. Clerk Senecal noted he would like to see a more pro-active approach by agent in regard to “reaching out” to veterans, Chairman Baldasaro agreed, would like to meet with current agent to discuss process. Clerk Senecal noted premature decision made based on negative feedback he had been given and his own personal unsatisfactory result from current agent. Additional discussion regarding verification of validity of candidate’s qualifications and process for posting and “hiring” agent.

**VIII. Overview of ATM held 6/10/2017:** Town Administrator Carlino noted “good turn-out”, Chairman Baldasaro felt there was a lot of good discussion and interaction. Discussion followed regarding adoption of Stretch Code which will enable Town to pursue “Green Community” certification. Clerk Senecal noted there are many grants available in “green dollars”. Grant funds are even available for low emission equipment, he is currently pursuing a \$62,000.00 grant to offset the cost of a “green” bucket loader. Chairman Baldasaro also pointed out the Town’s eligibility for funds up to \$136,000.00 toward energy efficient upgrades that will be available once the Green Community designation is made. Clerk Senecal “tickled pink” to see attendance, Chairman Baldasaro felt “best meeting in a while, good productive spirited discussion.”

Town Administrator Carlino noted Andy Myers has agreed to represent Chester in upcoming GRSD budget deliberations.

Chairman Baldasaro referenced letters in information package from COA Director/Town Clerk regarding appointment of Veterans agent and refusal of committee member to be sworn in and provide contact information, clarified that if a committee member fails or refuses to be properly sworn in, they cannot serve. Bob Daly asked who were current Finance Committee members, Finance Committee Chairman Andy Myers answered, members are Johnathan Glionna, Jason Fogue, Rosanne McClafin, Michael Hickson and himself, and that the committee can have up to 7 (seven) members. If anyone is interested they can contact the Town Moderator-Richard Holzman- for appointment.

Town Administrator Carlino will be attending a “Treasurer/Collector” conference the week of June 18.

Discussion of upcoming BOS meeting dates due to vacation schedule of BOS members. Suggested meeting dates for July- 10 and 24, August 7 and 21, Chairman Baldasaro motioned to adopt meeting schedule as discussed, Clerk Senecal seconded, unanimous.

Town Administrator Carlino informed the Board and attendees of vandalism to newly installed lights at the Emery Street ball lot pavilion. CMELD installed lights and a new service box last week, all lights were smashed, box broken and trash strewn about area sometime over the past weekend. CMELD is considering offering a reward for information. Clerk Senecal asked if any damage would be covered by insurance.

**CITIZEN COMMENTS:** Bob Daly- “troubled” by the spending of \$200,000.00 from free cash, can someone do a better job managing budget? Clerk Senecal assured Mr. Daly the BOS has taken steps to improve spending. Chairman Baldasaro explained the BOS’s determination to use free cash to cover deficit and reduce tax rate to benefit taxpayers, the stabilization fund currently has \$400,000.00 + and will provide security for emergencies, using free cash to reduce tax rate may promote growth, additionally, approximately \$87,500.00 will go back into free cash from sale of tax auctioned properties to aid in rebuilding balance in

free cash. Also, the Town has some good, sustainable, long term revenue coming in from cell tower lease, solar farm and (if approved by the State) the industrial facility proposed for Baystate Dr. and that lowering the tax rate may promote home sales which in turn will increase the tax base. , Clerk Senecal also noted that in emergency situations a towns ability to cover its own expenses with available free cash is often taken into consideration by outside agencies and a large balance may prohibit receipt of funds from these agencies.

Terry Murphy offered the observation that if Chester did not vote down the GRSD budget the district would likely lose Russell to Westfield, further reducing the community ability to cover these expenses. Chairman Baldasaro would like to see more involvement and hopes to foster more communication with GRSD. Clerk Senecal noted he would like to see raises given to GRSD staffing, office managers, superintendent etc. AFTER the budget is set as opposed to the way it is done now. Gateway cannot expect taxpayers to unequivocally cover all costs, towns are level funding their budgets, people are going without raises, why can't Gateway follow suit.

Chairman Baldasaro asked Admin Asst to check into Highway Dept plan to work on Kinnebrook Rd.

Clerk Senecal asked Admin Asst to check into completion date for potholes repair on Middlefield Street.

There being no further discussion,

Chairman Baldasaro motioned to adjourn at 7:28 p.m. Clerk Senecal seconded, meeting adjourned.

Next regularly scheduled meeting June 19, 2017 6:00 p.m. Chester Town Hall.

Minutes submitted by: Rosanne McClafin Recording Secretary

Minutes approved by:

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John Baldasaro – Chairman

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Barbara Huntoon – Vice-Chairman

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Rene Senecal - Clerk