

Town of Chester Selectmen/Water Commissioners/Zoning Board of Appeals

Meeting Minutes for March 18, 2019

Attending: Select Board members Barbara Huntoon & John Baldasaro, Town Administrator Kathe Warden and various members of the public

Barbara opened the meeting at 6:00pm, the Select Board and Country Journal recorded the meeting. Minutes of March 11, 2019 were not available for approval and signatures. Warrants were signed.

New Business

***Trout Unlimited** – Presentation for culvert replacement on Kinnebrook Road. Erin Rogers of Trout Unlimited is working to replace a culvert on Kinnebrook Road. MASS DOT requires Chapter 85 review, and for a bridge with a span of more than 20 feet, would require 125 feet of highway grade guardrail from the center of bridge. MASSDOT said Trout Unlimited could use a smaller grade guardrail with the Town of Chester approval. Barbara said a letter of approval had already been drawn up and the Board has signed it. Erin said Kerry Banks from Trout Unlimited will coordinate with Highway Superintendent John Baldasaro on when the construction date would be for road closure.

***Ron Ouimette** – Maynard Hill Rd discussion of road issues – Since Ron was not present at the meeting, this topic was passed over.

***Discussion and possible vote to accept new domain name for Town of Chester** – Kathe said that with the IT conversion for Town Hall, there was the ability for the Town to adopt a new domain name. Currently the domain names of Chesterma.org and Chesterma.us are available. Kathe said that Chesterma.gov is available but the yearly subscription for that is approximately \$2400.00 and the other subscriptions are under \$100.00. John asked if there were going to be separate emails for individual Select Board members, and Kathe said there will be. She is creating a list of all the addresses that would be needed. Barbara said she would prefer if chesterma.us was used because .org emails sounds more like a nonprofit. John was fine with the .us. Barbara asked when the change would be, and Kathe said should be in the next 2 months. Barbara asked if Tax Collector Mary Ann Pease had received her new computer, and Kathe said the swap is going to happen on Tuesday.

*** Discussion and possible signing of letter to give Highlands Footpath permission to create a trail through Watershed land between Gobble Mtn and Route 20.** Kathe said she thought Andy Myers was going to be there to speak about it but he is not. Barbara asked what his input is and Kathe said Andy told her he was in favor of the Highlands Footpath Trail to be able to continue the work for creating new trails. Kathe said she left the letter for permission opened, and there was no expiration date. Barbara and John were fine with that. Bob Daley asked if the creation of this new trail would be through privately owned land, and Barbara said it is going through watershed land. John said the Town would not approve any trail plans that encroached on privately owned land.

Departments and Committee - No updates at this time.

Old Business

***Glenn Posey** – continued discussion of Marijuana Testing Facility. Glenn said he wanted to update the Select Board from last meeting. He is tentatively purchasing a 3 ½ acre parcel from Revive Chester, LLC, which is a flat pad area on the railroad side of the Baystate Drive, which is in a commercial zone. He would like to schedule a community outreach meeting. John said before Glenn can have the community outreach meeting, he needs to have a host agreement in place. John also told Glenn there are two host agreements previously negotiated with the Town that Glenn could look at for guidance. John said Glenn will need a letter of non-opposition from the Select Board first. He also instructed Glenn to put together a business plan that included financials, security plan (including a meeting with the Police Chief), and a building plan and get that to the Board. A host agreement can be negotiated after that. Once those steps are completed, Glenn can schedule the community outreach meeting. John said since there was a letter of non-opposition signed for that property previously, there should be no issue. Barbara said she cannot sign the letter or participate in discussions because of her relationship to one of the owners of Revive Chester, LLC (her husband, Tom Huntoon). She will sit in on discussions just to be aware of what is going on with the Testing Facility.

John said he wanted Glenn to understand the process could take a few months, and Glenn said he understood. Heather Anello, who attended the meeting with Glenn, asked if the outreach meeting could be scheduled now and if the town sends out the letters to the abutters or would Glenn responsible for that? Barbara said that Glenn would be responsible for notifying abutters and by sending out letters and putting a notice in the paper. Glenn asked how precise the layout of the building needs to be and John said that he needs to give the town the same information he would give the Cannabis Control Commission. John asked Glenn to send the requested information to the Select Board office so letter of non-opposition could be issued and then the process will go from there. Glenn asked if there is an appeal process, John said that the Select Board is the granting authority.

John stated he believes Glenn's company could become a major testing facility for Western Mass and would be an asset to Chester.

Town Administrator update:

*** Update on submissions for Natalie Blais projects** - Kathe said she submitted two projects with documentation to support both. The first project is for the replacement of the electronic panel for the elevator for \$40,000. The second project is for all 3 exterior doors, including electronic openers, for \$45,000. Barbara asked about the roof project and Kathe said she couldn't get any roofers to come and give bids at this time. John and Barbara agreed both submitted projects are vital and thanked Kathe.

***Update on IT Project** - Kathe said the IT update project is on track and should be starting the first week of April.

***Town Administrator -**

- Kathe asked the Select Board to sign a letter to the Dept. of Local Services (DLS) for the request of financial planning and forecasting. DLS could not accept an email for the request. Zack Blake told Kathe DLS would start on the project the first week of October and should have it done in approximately 45 days.
- Kathe said to follow up with Barbara's questions for last week, there are Green Community Signs up at the entrance to town hung below other signs. Kathe can call Green Communities and request more signs if the Select Board thought was necessary. Barbara said a couple more would be good.
- Kathe contacted Erica Johnson of Pioneer Valley Planning Commission about the COA feasibility study that had been done. Erica said she would get back to Kathe about the status on it.
- Kathe had spoken to Mary Beverly of Adams about the Town withdrawing from the Berkshire Health Plan and Mary felt it could be allowed. Berkshire Health Group will be meeting on March 25 to vote on the Town leaving.
- Kathe said Gail Kusek from Becket Cares had stopped in and wanted a clarification on the Select Board's status of the Becket Spring. Barbara said while she applauds Becket Cares devotion to the cause, the Town of Chester can't support Becket Cares. John said the Select Board can't go against the Becket Select Board, so the Board respectfully declines.

Highway update -

- John said Abbot Hill will be getting 6 loads of stone to help out the road. John said they are working on the potholes on Bromley Road, Prospect St, and Middlefield Road.
- Highway equipment is running fine and is in good shape. John wanted to stress that no equipment has been sent out for repair, it's all done by the crew and that has helped the budget.
- Barbara asked how Hampden Street is holding up considering the weather and when the project is to be completed. John said if the weather stays sunny, it will dry out the road. There is a walk-through on April 9 and he is hoping the construction crew will be able to finish up after that.
- Barbara asked the status of East River Rd billing and new road issues, and John said he is meeting with Ray from Lane Construction tomorrow and there are many issues to be discussed. John feels the road is not holding up like it should be.

Citizens Comments -

- Gene Waters asks if the company that was here tonight is the same as the company that came before to a meeting. Barbara said it was a different company and will be a marijuana testing lab not a marijuana growing facility.
- John Foley said there were some bad areas on Abbott Hill, and John appreciated the confidence John Baldasaro had in contacting the neighbors and listening to what they all had to say about the condition of the road.

- Bob Daley asked about RCAP Solutions start date. Kathe said that RCAP has been working on the report, requested materials, and took of copies of material back with them on the day they were in Chester and met with Bernie and John. John said they are putting together a spreadsheet with a lot of information and will be giving the town recommendations of what can be done for the future regarding the town’s drinking water.
- Bob said he wanted to thank everyone who worked on the Gateway budget process. He wondered if it’s possible to reduce the school budget. John said it is a responsible budget and a good investment for the town. Bob is concerned the budget will strangle the town in the future. John said school administration is actively increasing the programs offered to attract more students. The budget with the Stabilization Assessment method is only a 1.9% increase. Country Journal reporter Peter Spotts interjected and said Russell will be saving \$100,000, if Russell votes to go with the Statutory method instead. John said all 6 towns must vote in agreement of the Stabilization Assessment method, otherwise the budget will resort to the Statutory method.
- Tom Huntoon expressed gratitude for the Town’s support of Glenn Posey’s testing lab project. It is a low impact project for the Town and will be good to see the area redeveloped and bringing more tax revenue and potential jobs.

Barbara motioned to adjourn at 7:05pm, John seconded the motion, all vote aye.

Respectfully submitted
Katherine Warden

Barbara Huntoon Chair

John Baldasaro Vice Chair

Vacancy – Clerk