

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

Minutes

October 1, 2018

In attendance: Board Members, Town Administrator, Steve Cooper, Andy Myers, soon to be newly elected State Rep Natalie Blais and various members of the public.

1. Chairman Huntoon called the meeting to order at 6:00. Minutes of 9/17 were signed and September 24th minutes were put on hold for further review. Warrants were signed.
2. Barbara read various items from the "informational packet". Noted that the BOH had submitted another fee schedule voted upon at their last meeting. Barbara also noted she had not heard back from Ch. McDonald regarding a "renegotiation" of hourly rates with Health Agent Dennis LaCourse.
3. Natalie Blais attended the meeting to discuss what help she could be to the town of Chester. Barbara began by stating we need more money. Rene had questions regarding infrastructure money, re; increased Chapter 90 funds, restructuring the formula used to take into consideration the smaller towns, and their inability to meet some of the requirements of bigger towns and cities to take advantage of certain grants, etc. Andy Myers asked about changing the PILOT programs formula. Believes it should be based upon tax rates. Also should allow PILOT programs for non-profits. Barbara also thought Chester and surrounding communities could benefit from an East-West rail program, with a stop in Chester. There was also discussion concerning the "unfunded" mandates handed down from the state for towns and schools. Natalie noted that Adam Hinds has been somewhat successful with both school funding as well as railroad transportation issues. She (Natalie) looks forward to working closely with Adam and Smitty Pignatelli in regards to the same issues between Hampden and Berkshire counties. She is looking to work with PVPC on "shovel ready" projects in case Federal infrastructure monies are made available. She then asked what their thoughts were on a turnpike exit on Route 20? Barbara said she had mixed feelings, while John and Rene were in favor, although it was noted that any such exchange was many years off. John explained the progress that Chester has made with "shared services" with the other towns. He would like to see that momentum carried forward and whatever support Natalie could give would be welcome. We have expanded from a shared Economic Developer to talks regarding Police Departments, Town Administrators and more. He doesn't know if monies are actually needed or if regulations currently in place might need looking at. Andy mentioned the schools and certain SBA regulations. John confirmed that in the 25 years he has been a Selectmen, this is the most he's ever seen the six towns cooperate this much. Barbara mentioned that some of our financial elected positions are on the ballot this coming year to be appointed and feels that may help the Selectboard to hire qualified people to staff.

Natalie will be seeing us again. She has been to the Transfer Station, went by the Ballfield on the day volunteers were building the various improvements to the ballfield, and was very impressed by the numbers.

Barbara collected Natalie's contact info before she left.

4. Steve Cooper

Steve submitted his two week resignation letter. His last day will be 10/14/18. He has taken a position for Mass Highway on the turnpike. The board wished him the best and thanked him for his 7 ½ years in Chester. He also indicated that we could call him at any time if needed.

Rene asked if Chester had signed up to go with the State contract bid. Pat to call OSD and speak to Peter Lyons about getting on the list. We are included in the Hampshire County Bid, but Rene feels we would be better off going with the state contract.

Steve has obtained a list of four vendors so far for plowing this winter. Pat will contact them for their insurance coverage and rates.

Barbara asked the status of Smith Rd. Steve indicated they had looked at it and it was on the list. They have prioritized Middlefield Rd. as needing work first. Steve is unsure if the culvert on Smith Rd. is still plugged, or if the owner had it taken care of.

Rene suggested calling in someone like White Wolf to bring in his grader to take care of Smith Rd., Elder, Maynard, Round Hill and Abbott Hill. They will be able to get to them much quicker given our circumstances.

Barbara asked if we had heard anything about the grader brakes. Rene reported nothing as yet. He has been working on the International problem. He reported that he had spoken with the officials at Nutmeg. Bottom line is that Hartford is not going to allow their dealer to even look at our truck until we pay our outstanding balance. The company does not want concessions made outside of the class action lawsuit. Resolution? We are going to have to pay the two outstanding balances we have on this truck. Once we pay, they will take the truck in and check it out and give us their recommendations as to going forward. If we should choose to do something else with it in the future like a trade in, they would make some good concessions. We could possibly look at leasing a used plower/sander also. They are not going to budge. Rene recommended we pay the bill. Monies were carried forward for this purpose. Once we pay them they will take the truck, go through it and make a list of recommendations, before doing anything.

Bob Daley asked whether they would take a trade before paying the bill. Discussion. Barbara explained we needed to pay the bill.

Steve asked about servicing for the Freightliner. The Board decided to wait until the International is back in service.

Kathy Engwer: Kathy was under the impression that the BOH would be at the meeting tonight also, but they weren't asked to be. Barbara asked Kathy to come to this meeting to continue her discussion of issues with the BOH from last week, when the BOS had to close their meeting to attend the Special Town Meeting. Kathy is still looking for a receipt for fees. She showed something that was given to a homeowner by Dennis LaCourse that was confusing as to who the homeowner should pay. All correspondence should be on Town of Chester letterhead.

Question on 245 Rte 20? Fee was somewhere in the \$1,400 range? Question: Do the BOH fee increases need Board of Selectmen approval?

5. School Committee vacancy: John moved to appoint Jason Forgue to the position of School Committee member until the next election. Rene seconded. Unanimous.
6. Building Inspector: Rene made a motion to appoint Jason Forgue to the position of Building Inspector when Art Lawler vacates his appointment on October 22, 2018. John seconded. Unanimous. Jason will be unable to sign off on any co's until he has received his designation as a Building Commissioner, which he has 18 months from his appointment to receive. In the interim he will have the Building Commissioner from Huntington act in this capacity.
7. Town Administrator position: Discussion held as to what the Board wanted to do going forward with the town administrator position. Barbara stated she wanted to hire Kathy Warden, from Hinsdale to fill that position. Pat was asked what she thought about Dec. 31, 2018. Pat responded that was all right. Barbara asked if she might stay on two weeks later. (Jan 14th) for training. Pat agreed. Pat will run the numbers to make sure there is enough monies in the account to get through to June 30th.
John suggested that the Board call an "all departmental meeting" sometime before this to make for a smooth transition.

Pat reported that the Accountant and Treasurer will be here on 10/22 to discuss reconciliation efforts. Also, the Board would like the Accountant's reports on a monthly basis, not on a quarterly basis.

Pat reported that the Chester Hill Association would like to use the auditorium for a square dancing affair on 11/10. The Board agreed.

At this time, John Baldasaro said he had something he would like to talk about. Given the circumstances we find ourselves in regarding the Highway Department, and now with Steve leaving, it's even more critical, he has decided he intends to apply for the position of Highway Superintendent. He knows he has to file a disclaimer. Rene wants to check legality of title, may have to change it. Pat will check with Town Counsel to make sure of what needs to be done. Suggestion was made to appoint him "Interim", but he doesn't feel this is necessary. Although he doesn't have all the necessary licenses, he will pursue getting them in the very near future. Barbara moved to appoint John Baldasaro as Highway Superintendent effective November 1, 2018 at the current rate of pay for this position. Rene seconded. Unanimous.

Bob Daley thanked John for "stepping up". He then asked if we had advertised for Carl's position at the transfer station. Pat asked specifically what she should be advertising, how much, how many hours, and where is the money coming from. Barbara asked when Carl would be leaving. Could we get a Senior work off person? Pat is having trouble filling positions now, she doesn't think so. Consensus is we should fill it with a 7 hour person, the hours that the transfer station is open. Pat will look at budget.

John Foley asked if we need a special town meeting for Town Administrator plan. No. Back to Highway. Rene asked if we could make the appointment for Highway Superintendent pending approval/advice from town counsel. Barbara asked for a motion to appoint John

Baldasaro as “interim” Highway Superintendent , effective November 1, 2018, pending approval/advice from town counsel. Rene seconded. Barbara and Rene voted in the affirmative. John Baldasaro abstained.

Barbara asked what would happen if she and Rene were at odds on a vote, and John could not vote, would the town clerk then be the deciding vote? The board believes so.

John Foley brought his thoughts on the new “tree”. We should use organic fertilizer.

John B. has spoken with Mr. Hultman regarding moving the monument. They are still researching how it can be done.

Bob Daley brought up using social media as a means to have residents involved in our town affairs. We need to do better.

Andy Myers. Discussed the article to sell town owned land that was on the warrant for the STM. If that comes through, maybe we could “earmark” the monies to purchase the property on Emory St. across from the ballfield.

Regarding the town’s sale of town owned property (Slocum property), Pat will check as to whether Article 5 voted at the Annual Town Meeting covers covers such a sale.

There being no other business before the board John made a motion to adjourn at 8:25, Rene seconded. Unanimous.

At this time John Baldasaro moved to adjourn the meeting so that the board could attend the special town meeting, and not return to public session. Rene Senecal seconded. Unanimous. Meeting adjourned at 6:29 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Patricia Carlino

Barbara Huntoon, Chairman

John Baldasaro, Vice Chairman

Rene Senecal, Clerk

BOS minutes 9/10/18