

Town of Chester Selectmen/Water Commissioners/Zoning Board of Appeals Meeting Minutes for February 25, 2019

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

Barbara opened the meeting at 6:05pm, the Select Board recorded the meeting. Minutes of February 11, 2019 were reviewed and signed. Warrants were signed.

New Business

***Preston Webb** – discussion about property on Campbell Rd – Preston didn't attend the meeting

***Smith Vocational presentation by Michael Cahillane and Dr Andrew Linkenhoker** –

Michael began the presentation with a brief history of Smith Vocational and where the school currently is at today. Dr Linkenhoker explains the vocational students often return to their home towns to work and live after graduation. Enrollment is increasing every year. Some changes the school is undergoing are the addition of AP classes, Spanish, and classes in the arts. These additions enable students who desire to continue their education to have the ability to do so. Students are applying and accepted to both two- and four-year colleges, both public and private. *(Full presentation is attached to meeting minutes in Select Board office)* John would like to start a discussion soon about the possibility of a partnership between the Hill Towns with Smith and a sharing of services. Both Dr. Linkenhoker and Michael Cahillane were open to that. Barbara and John thanked them for coming.

***Discussion about adopting G.L.c.41 ss56** – This is the one signature designation for warrants and payrolls not otherwise presented during a posted meeting. – Barbara explains that the Select Board on accepting this, will need only one of the Select Board members will have to sign warrants and at the next meeting will report on those warrants. John made the motion to accept G.L.c.41 ss56 as follows: “I move that Barbara Huntoon , and if she is unavailable or unable, John Baldasaro, be designated to approve all bills, drafts, orders and payrolls not otherwise presented for approval at a posted meeting to the full board; provided, however, that if such bills drafts orders and payrolls are approved by Barbara Huntoon or John Baldasaro, each make available to the board, at the meeting following such action, a record of such actions and further, to ask Barbara Huntoon to include on the notice of each meeting of the board an item for such purpose.” Barbara seconds the motion all voted aye.

***Discussion about local excise taxes on short term rentals** – Barbara and John agree since there aren't any hotels or inns and only a few Airbnb's the town will wait till the future to consider adopting this tax. The state's new short-term rental tax (G.L.C.64G) will go into effect July 1, 2019.

Old Business

***HRMC - Board of Health - discussion about delegates to represent Town of Chester -**

Kathe explained the letter from HRMC. They expect the town to designate someone to be willing to attend their meetings as well as act as a liaison between HRMC, the Select Board and to the Transfer Station. They also need to set up a meeting with the Board of Health to tour the Transfer Station. HRMC's fee for the first year is \$5208 with a hazardous waste collection fee of \$800. John thought it was a good idea, since they would help with reporting, inspections and

grants for the Transfer Station. Bob Daley commented he may know someone who might be interested in being the representative.

Town Administrator update

Springfield MRF letter – Kathe explained a letter was received from the Springfield MRF sending notification that the contract will expire in 2020. They have sent language to be included on the ATM in the spring.

IT contract was sent over this afternoon by PVPC. This morning the Collector had an issue with her computer and Kathe explained she called Mollie at PVPC, so the Town didn't need to purchase a new computer if they were included when the installation of the new system went in. Mollie said we could use the grant money to purchase the computer since it was on the list of replacements. Carl from Novus is coordinating with the Collector for what is needed, and it will be ordered within the next few days. Barbara signed the contract.

Kathe spoke with Erica at PVPC for the Green Communities grant and the solar will be put out for bid in the next three weeks. The solar is for the fire station, d.p.w. and water plant.

The Town Accountant will be attending March 11-13 at UMASS Amherst

There have been changes on the Website it will list more updates. Barbara asked that all expired meetings be removed from the main page Kathe will get Wendy to remove them. John would like Kathe to investigate an online payment system, there have been issues in the past with the current set up.

Kathe brought up an issue that has arisen over the last week. Two different committees had come into the office letting her know they thought she would be responsible for clerical help to them. Kathe explained she feels she should be using any extra time for the Select Board office. Both John and Barbara said it isn't her responsibility to be the clerical help for other boards and committees. Kathe asked if a letter could be sent out from the Select Board that stated this. Barbara said she would put one together for Kathe to put out.

Barbara received a phone call from Greg Harrison quite upset that he was on Blandford Rd driving a school van with a student in it. The road was icy, and he couldn't make it up the road. He stated he hadn't called John, he didn't understand why the roads were in bad condition. Barbara asked him to come to the meeting tonight and he said he would. Greg chose not to attend and instead sent an email that Barbara read aloud. John replied that there is a procedure in place if any bus driver has questions on a road's safety. The driver calls his/her company dispatcher and they call the DPW and the DPW responds immediately. John says there isn't enough personnel, but they are doing as much as humanely possible. The crew treat the main roads first and handles the side roads after that. Barbara asks Kathe to email Greg and ask him to come to a meeting.

John said there have been 17 plowable snow events and he is not using outside contractors to keep costs down. Currently he is at a break even point with the budget, where last year at this time the highway budget was \$60,000 in the red. Barbara asks if he had a fourth person how

much it would help, and John said it would increase plowing by 25%. He has 4 trucks and only 3 people in the highway dept.

Comcast sent a letter to negotiate the new contract, Barbara asked that it be put off until October since the new contract doesn't start till July 2020.

The Town of Becket sent a letter stating they were giving Comcast permission to supply seven Becket homes with broadband since it isn't feasible for Becket to build out in their area.

Citizens Comments

Andy Myers gave a budget update from the Finance Committee. He reviewed the preliminary budget with the Select Board. The Finance Committee is trying to keep the budget under 2.5%. One of the big issues is the Assessors; Andy had talked to Regional Resources Group and they will hold the previous amount RRG had quoted to Chester for assessing services. Several Finance Committee members would like the Select Board to meet with the Assessors, to discuss the budget, assessed values, high taxes and that Chester pays out the highest amount in Assessors in the Hilltown communities. Andy returned to the report and pointed out the capital requests. The budget is running tight, but it's got room to move. Next step is to review Health insurance and the Gateway school budget. Bob Daley thanked Andy of all his work on both the Finance Committee and the Hilltown Collaborative. John and Barbara both thank him for all he does.

Andy urged that the Economic Development agreement needs to get signed and sent to Montgomery and Russell. He asked if Barbara or John could attend those meetings to get the signatures. Barbara said she had just received an email with an editable version and will send that version to Kathe to make the changes requested by Montgomery and agreed to by Chester so it can be signed.

Bob Daley asked if there was any movement on the sale of the Slocum property. Barbara said they are going to move forward with it. John said it will be a sealed bid with a starting of a minimum of \$35,000. Wilma asks if the remainder of the money after the property for the ball field is bought could it be used for helping to purchase the land for a Library COA combination property. John said that could be looked into.

Bob Daley asked if anything else has been heard from the CDC, regarding their proposal for the former Chester Inn. Barbara says there hasn't been. Andy Myers said if there is housing it needs to be senior housing and John and Barbara both agree.

John Foley says he doesn't want to see the Chester Inn become section 8 housing but would like to see it be senior housing or senior housing and offices combination. He asked if anyone knew how high the water level would be, Barbara stated that the entire down town is in a flood plain or flood way. Andy Myers said there are set of plans from the past and a previous owner and the theatre had both looked at it but had thus far chosen not to pursue it and the building inspector's recommendation for a special permit for them.

Barbara said she read the email about Keystone Bluff. John said it was decided at ATM not to put more restrictions on companies looking to start up. Barbara said she wasn't sure the cannabis

growing project on Abbott Hill should move forward, John said he didn't know if it even would either due to all the restrictions put on by the Cannabis Control Commission.

Andy Myers also shared that the Theater would like to install another bathroom downstairs and will provide updates as that project moves forward. The Theater will be looking into air conditioning and assisted listening device sound system for the auditorium. Andy asked if the roof leaking will be fixed soon.

John motioned to adjourn at 8:05pm, Barbara seconded the motion, all vote aye.

Respectfully submitted

Katherine Warden

Barbara Huntoon Chair

John Baldasaro Vice Chair

Vacancy – Clerk

Meeting Minutes for February 25, 2019 contain 4 pages.