

Town of Chester Selectmen/Water Commissioners/Zoning Board of Appeals Meeting Minutes for April 1, 2019

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

Barbara opened the meeting at 6:00pm; the Select Board recorded the meeting.

New Business

Discussion with Library Trustees and COA Advisory Board RE: Proposed New Building -

John Foley said since the Select Board, Finance Committee, Library Trustees, and COA had seen the presentation from Joe Sullivan there will be question on the Annual Town Meeting warrant to see if the Town wants to go ahead with investigating a new Library and there will be another question to see if the Town wants to go ahead with a combined Library and COA building. John at Tuesday's COA meeting it was voted Ann Daley will represent the COA on the Building Committee. John said Ann was called out-of-town and couldn't be here tonight. John said the two groups serve the community and he considers them equal. The Library serves more than loaning books including helping with GED's and computer help which is very important. The COA is more than a club, there is an Outreach program and a Brown Bag program, which includes home deliveries. Both sites are in horrible conditions. The Library has had tenant issues and leaking roofs. The COA has no way to wash dishes and people must take things home to clean them. John asked about the feasibility study. Barbara said there haven't been any updates since last week and we are still waiting to hear from Pioneer Valley Planning Commission. John said that the Library Trustees had looked at many pieces of properties and have come up with the parcel next to the old Elementary school. The building will face Route 20 with parking behind the library. Location is good for both Library and COA. It would be economical to build a shared facility with both groups able to access the common meeting rooms and restrooms but also both sides could secure their side of the building. Barbara asks if this is what is talked about at the finance committee meeting. John said it is, and during the Finance Committee meeting, Finance Committee Member/Building Inspector Jason Forge made an observation that it would be easier for the building to be voted in if both groups had part in it since more senior citizens vote. John stated if the new marijuana testing lab is built that revenue could help pay for the building.

Susan Kucharski said COA related when the senior lunch program was first started, there was a large crowd. Being so successful the COA started looking at other sites to hold the lunch program, including the Chester Railway Station. Licensed Contractors Tom Huntoon and Jason Forge had investigated the possibility of expanding the COA room into part of the Police Station and restructuring the downstairs of town hall to make better use of the space. (Both said it was doable.) Since then the urgency has dropped off for the lunch program.

Susan agreed the COA has grown and the senior population is increasing. She has been to workshops for building Councils on Aging as well as talked to another director of a COA. Senior Centers must be designed to certain specifics necessitating they be multi-million-dollar projects. The projects also take many years to complete. Sue said that new Councils on Aging get funding

from Friends of COA 501c3 groups which raise the funds for the projects, since a COA cannot do so itself. Sue said regionalization has been looked at, but it is proven if people have to travel more than 10 miles they usually won't go. Sue feels that it isn't fair to put this kind of tax burden be placed on residents for a new COA/Library building.

Barbara said that the Library has done due diligence in work toward building a new library. She understands where the seniors are at but in reality, it will not work to do a joint venture at this point. The Friends of the Library have substantial funds while the COA does not.

Joe Sullivan said that the that bathrooms and parking lot can't be shared if grants are

Duane Pease said the current library has 1000 square feet and there would be space there if the COA wanted to use it, but Barbara said there are many issues with that building and it wouldn't be fair to put the seniors in that situation.

Jan (?) is concerned that the space for the COA is too small. She would rather see the money going to the seniors than to the library. Jan said that the seniors deserve better and more space. Jan feels the library should be put on the back burner for now.

John Baldasaro said the Select Board is in support of both projects and that the feasibility study needs to be reviewed. He said last week he was told by a Huntington Select Board member that Huntington is purchasing the Catholic Church and would be interested in exploring a shared venture. John went on to state Chester will not be able to afford a new COA at this point due to our size and the expense.

Elaine expressed her main concern was the access to downstairs, the doors were an issue. John Baldasaro said they were being looked at.

John Foley said he didn't understand why the COA and Library can't be shared facility, and feels a multi-municipal building would be more successful

Joe Sullivan said that when there are grants involved the projects have to be separated. the cost would be about 2% of the budget and he feels that it wouldn't add that much onto the tax rate.

John Baldasaro says that building costs due to prevailing wage would add costs to a project.

Joe Sullivan says that the cost of the project would be about \$700,000 for the project and it is about \$250.00 per square foot. With a grant it may fund only 50% of the project so there will still need to be money raised. Barbara Huntoon said the Westfield COA's new building has furnishings and accessories proved by donations from area businesses, but Chester doesn't have that luxury.

Sue Kucharski said when she went to a workshop as COA director she asked what it would cost for an architect to come out to the see the current COA and how to make best use of the current space and that alone would be \$7,000. Sue said the Library space is much more needed than the COA at this time. The COA just needs to make better use of the current space. The library needs to have a new library.

Barbara said that both the Library and COA need more space but the COA doesn't need it to the same degree. She believes an article on the Town Meeting warrant for pursuing the construction of a new COA center will not pass at this point. Barbara stated she appreciates John Foley's passion for a new center and agreed both entities need new space.

Terry Donovan says that the Library Trustees will be putting forward a warrant article to see if the residents will endorse a new library idea going forward.

Duane Pease said that the Friends of the Library are looking to apply to many foundations including the Gates Foundation to help with the project.

Barbara said the Library is positioned to move forward, but the COA is not at this time. She appreciated everyone's comments.

Discussion of Lane Construction payment for East River Rd project – John met with Ray Peters and will be fixing the East River Road issues in July. Ray asked John for the \$22,000 that is owed. John said we can pay that and then the retainer will wait on completion of the project. John said that there are two Chapter 90 projects from FY 18 Johnson Hill Rd & FY 19 Middlefield Rd which was never done. Because of this \$160,000 are still in the Chapter 90 account. The Town needs to send a letter that these projects weren't done, and the State will release the money for use this year. John would use that for gravel work on the dirt roads, then he can move money from the Gravel account to cover the money owed to Lane.

Ron Ouimette – discussion of Maynard Hill Rd. – wasn't present for discussion, but John said he spoke with him on costs of rebuilding catch basins on Middlefield Rd. Barbara asked if he still had an issue with Maynard Hill and John said he was all set.

Barbara asked if there were any other highway issues, John said he was hoping the asphalt plant will be opening this week and there was some patching to be done at Bromley Rd, Middlefield Rd, and Skyline Trail.

Bob Daley asks if Erica Johnson was coming on April 9 for Hamden St and John said it was for a walkthrough only to check out the project.

Old Business – none at this time

Departments and Committee updates – none at this time

Town Administrator update

Police Shared grant - met with Josh Garcia, Chief Ilnick & Eric Weiss of Pioneer Valley Planning Commission (PVPC). Meetings will be scheduled in June and July for one meeting per month for the two Select Boards to meet to start review of the shared agreement policy. Kathe said a day needs to be picked, Barbara said the third Monday would work to leave the second and fourth Mondays available for Select Board meetings.

COA grant update – Kathe said she spoke with Erica Johnson from PVPC about the feasibility study, to contact the company that performed the work to find out where the results were. It was supposed to be done by the end of March 2018. Erica promised the results soon.

Citizens Comments

Bob Daley asked about the new Veterans Agent – Kathe said Jessica is the new agent and is being mentored by Tom Geryk. She has been with the agency for 6 plus years.

Kathy Engwer spoke with George Lyttle to see if he is interested in the selling his property on Emery Street to the Town for use for parking for the revamped ballfield. Discussion followed of how the Town would fund the project and Free Cash was suggested. Kathy said she will work up an offer with a clause in it subject to Town Meeting approval.

Barbara made a motion for the meeting to adjourn to executive session G.L.c. 30A,ss21(a)(2) to conduct strategy sessions in preparation for negotiations with nonunion personnel or to conduct collect bargaining sessions or contract negotiations with nonunion personnel and that the meeting will not return to open session when concluded. John seconded the motion. Barbara voted aye and John voted aye. Meeting adjourned at 7:41pm.

Warrants were signed.

Respectfully submitted

Katherine Warden

Barbara Huntoon Chair

John Baldasaro Vice Chair

Vacancy – Clerk

Meeting Minutes for April 1, 2019 contain 4 pages including signature page