



**TOWN OF CHESTER BOARD OF SELECTMEN  
WATER COMMISSIONERS & ZONING BOARD OF APPEALS  
15 MIDDLEFIELD RD  
CHESTER MA 01011**

**Monday April 27, 2020 at 6:00pm**

Open meeting, (not an executive session) closed to the public.  
Signing of warrants, no minutes.

**Selectboard Members Present: John Baldasaro, Rich Holtzman  
Barbara Huntoon**

Selectmen held this meeting in auditorium due to social distancing. No public presence.  
Meeting was available on webinar.

John opened meeting at 6PM

**New Business**

**#1 Third quarter updates from Treasurer and Accountant**

Accountant – Paula thanked Selectboard making remote access available, allowing Paula to work from home.

Audit & Free Cash Certification – Audit is complete, financial statements and management report is included in Selectboard package. Overall went well, John had to go back several years to straighten out bank reconciliations, the auditors were not able to do as extensive of an audit as they would normally have done. The Engagement Letter (in which Adelson, the auditors, outlines what they will be doing and what they will charge) has to be redone to reflect the changes in what they did. The speed and completion of the audit was impaired by the, turn over in the Treasurer's position. Determined to have FY20 audit completed in a timelier fashion.

Free cash was certified on April 14, 2020. Will strive for a much timelier certification in FY21.

Accounting Software – Received a grant from Commonwealth of \$16,950 to complete the conversion of our current Softright Accounting System (Stat) to the Softright Accounting System (Umass) in order to comply with Commonwealth of Mass reporting standards. The Town accounting support person, Amy Lane, has completed the work to concert the General Ledger accounts and our Software Provider, Supportnet, is setting up our new system. Confident the conversion will be completed before end of FY20 and operation on FY21.

Department Expenditures – With  $\frac{3}{4}$  of the year completed, Paula has provided each department head details of their expenditures with comments about spending for the balance of the year.

- **Audit Expense.** This line item was budgeted with the assumption that CMELD would contribute towards the FY19 audit. In addition, Adelson and Co. has informed us that



the work they put into the audit greatly exceeded what they had expected and have requested additional payment. May be able to offset with unspent Veteran Benefits.

- Transfer Station Expenses – Line item was under budgeted in FY20. Will be able to offset the deficit with \$7000 budgeted for HRMC membership which was eliminated this year.
- Highway Department – Only concern for Highway is the uniforms account. Other expense lines, in particular, Stone/Gravel/Asphalt and Tree Removal, are considerably under budget which can offset Uniform account. Street Lighting is over budget to a budgeting misunderstanding and this, too may be covered by the under budget expense lines in Highway Department.
- Have spent \$358,000 on Chapter 90 projects which needs to be submitted to the state. This is having a negative effect on cash flow and free cash.
- Of note, Snow Removal Salaries and Snow Removal Expenses are currently over budget by \$76,000.

Corey Sparks is sending paperwork to State guy, Dave Stokes, for him to sign off on and get Chapter 90 monies reimbursed.

## **#2 Review and approve Forest Management Plan for grant**

Selectboard has a copy of the plan done by Lincoln Fish and Tobias Carter, identified all the species in Watershed, locations and different habitat types and stand descriptions and types of trees. Looks very good and John feels Board should go ahead and adopt this plan. Kathe pointed out the last page provided a breakdown of what to harvest and in what year. Barbara made a motion to accept forest management plan as presented, Rich second and all voted aye.

Rich wanted to make the public that the Town is responsibly managing this land to preserve for many generations to come. Rich asked how to raise the value. The Town has cut several stands in the past, but it has been a while since we have cut, there are still good quality stands on the property and there will be some thinning needed. If John had to rate the whole thing, he would deem it a medium value type of project. The plan is laid out so that it is done in sections, so by the time the plan is completed you will be able to go back and, do this forever if done properly according to this plan.

## **Old Business**

### **Review and discussion of FY19 audit**

Has Selectboard reviewed it. This item is on old business to keep it in front of board as a reminder and not lost in the shuffle. Board asked that it be put on the next meeting to approve and David could come in and talked about the report. Board agreed to that and that more





information would be available and the Board could ask any questions they should have. Agreed to delay review till David can come in front.

### **Town Administrator Update**

**Employee Handbook** – Another item that is being kept on agenda so as not to be lost in the shuffle. Is the Board ready to approve, does Board need more time to review, Barbara stated she would like more time to review it. Kathe asked that it be reviewed approved with any changes and accepted by July 1. Please put the review and acceptance on the next meeting agenda.

**Town Meeting** – Scheduled for June 8, 2020. If this is the date the warrant must be posted by May 22, 2020 and therefore the budget needs to be worked on ASAP.

John suggested that the board move to the last week in June. Monday the 29<sup>th</sup> was the date suggested. Gateway School has offered auditorium for meeting with social distance available. John does not believe people will go to Gateway to vote. The meeting can be easily held outdoors. Use the parking lot. Barbara made a comment about needing a sound system. Doesn't hurt to book the auditorium just in case. The plan would be to have it here outdoors unless something comes up and forces us to go inside. Rich asked why we would delay meeting date. John state that we will have a better budget idea from state, finance committee and school. Motion made by Rich to move the Town Meeting date to June 29, 2020, Barbara second, all voted aye.

**Discussion and update of transportation from Gateway, Smith and Westfield Schools-** Kathe sent a copy of the email she received from Stephanie Fisk, business manager for Gateway. Steph is the only responding. At this point Gateway has not laid anyone off and have no plans too. DSE has encouraged them to continue to pay support staff, as they continue to work and there is no reason to not pay them. There are unemployment claims for substitute teachers. Steph is waiting for guidance from the State in regards to, paying vendors, in particular transportation. After all expenses are paid for the year, unexpected monies are placed in the ED account and the amount is certified by the state. There is a limit as to how much can be kept in that account, 5% of the total budget for next year. Any monies in excess of that amount will be returned to the towns. District uses the ED on a yearly basis to offset the Town assessments. FY 21 state revenue picture looks poor and school may need to use more of the ED money to offset revenue shortfall that we did not anticipate this February when revenue assumptions were used to determine Gateway's FY21 budget. Barbara saw an email that DSE





could not offer any kind of guidance. John said that common sense dictates that the buses are not running, and the Town should not have to pay for the time that the buses have not moved. Kathe has repeatedly called Lecrenski, the bus company, and has received no return call. Kathe has not paid the April bill for vocational transportation, that was received. Thinking it would generate a returned phone call, but after legal counsel advice to not pay. Technically the Town cannot pay for a service that was not received. Kathe is thinking that vocational schools will have the same answer as Gateway, but feels that vocational should be looked at differently, as they are tuition students. Vocational student cannot be taught welding online, with no physical training available, so we cannot pay for services not rendered. Rich agreed that if the transportation is not being provided for vocational students the bill should not be paid. Bus companies are businesses and it stands to reason that they laid the drivers off and they are collecting unemployment. It should be treated just like any other business during this time and the bus company should be using the resources made available to small businesses. Gateway controls the bus contracts for the students at Gateway. Rich suggested using buses to deliver meals that the school has provided. Barbara stated that providing food seems to be working fine now. Kathe will reach out to Stephanie to get lunch numbers. John questioned that only substitute teachers have been laid off. Need more information from vocational schools as well as Gateway. The Board wants to express to Gateway that the payments to bus company should not be going out. Other towns are waiting to see what direction Chester takes. Accountant is required by law to not pay any invoices if services have not been provided.

**Still in the Air RE: Tower** – Kathe sent the proposal for the contract and was advised to do nothing right now. The company is trying to extend contract but pay less money.

**Received a check for \$2500 for Covid Response** – Paula the accountant is going to set up a donation account so other people could donate if they want. Rich wanted to know how the donation account would be set up and Kathe answered that she has no idea because she just received. The person who donated did mention the first responders, police, fire EMT and the elderly.

The Board spent some time trying to figure out why they cannot hear anyone that is remotely attending the meeting. Asked Lorna Wade to call in with a question. What is the policy is with the town as far as HIPPA. Do people that work in the Town Hall share the locations of Covid positive. The answer was no we do not divulge the name or address. The Town is only given notice that there is a positive but not name or address. Lora saw a violation on FB but did not want to discuss it right now. Asked about Marijuana operation and John answered that they were moving forward and just waiting for their license to be approved.



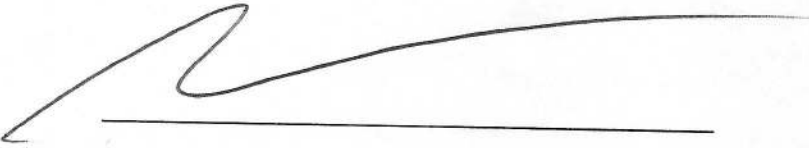
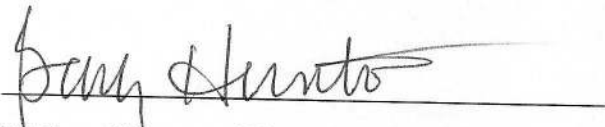
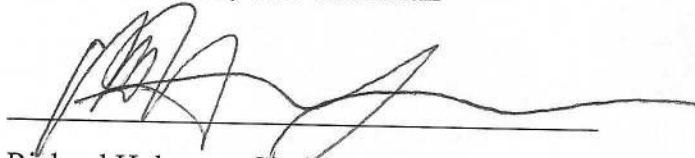
Barbara saw a post from Bradley Clemmons, a Chester resident who works at Walmart, stating that Walmart is going to dump last years stock of seed packages and he thought it would be a great donation. Need a letter from Town agreeing to take the donation. They can be put out over weekend on the Town Hall steps for everyone to help themselves.

Sister Judith asked about the 2 warrants that the Board had to sign. They have signed. Sister talked about early voting, no contested races and lots of vacancies. Promoting early voting by mail which is similar to absentee ballot. The voter must request a ballot by mail.

Barbara made a motion to adjourn and Rich second, all voted aye.

### **Meeting adjourned at 7:05 PM**

Respectfully submitted  
Kathy Engwer - Administrative Assistant

  
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John Baldasaro, Chairman  
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Barbara Huntton, Vice Chairman  
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Richard Holzman, Clerk