



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

**Monday, April 5<sup>th</sup>, 2021**

Open Meeting – Meeting in the Town Hall

Minutes signed, no warrants.

Selectmen John Baldasaro, Barbara Huntoon, and Richard Holzman present. Town Hall staff present included Town Administrator Kathe Warden, Administrative Assistant Jill Strong, Town Clerk Sister Judith Dalesandro, and Tax Collector Mary Ann Pease. From the Finance Committee Andy Myers, Bob Daley and Jessica Sakaske. From CMELD Jill Moretz, Derek Savoy and Duane Pease, Animal Control Officer Terry Donovan, and per the agenda Paul Lischette and Dave Christopolis from the Hilltown CDC. We also had residents Brian Fogue, Laura Wade and a few others. State Representative Natalie Blais and Jonathan Gould the Hilltown Community Liaison for Senator Adam Hinds participated remotely.

Barbara opened the meeting at 6:00 pm.

- **Remote call with Rep. Natalie Blais and Senator Adam Hinds's office about legislative priorities & concerns for Chester.** Barbara thanked them for having this meeting with us. Opening things up John brought up his concern regarding the new Police Reform Act which will be taking effect on July 1<sup>st</sup>. He asked what their stand on that was and what their plan was on how this act was going to be impacting these rural areas. The Police Reform Act will require any officers who have only completed the part-time academy to go back and complete a bridge academy to keep their certification as an officer. Natalie's reply was that they had been hearing this from multiple communities and they had met with Secretary Turco last week to discuss these challenges. John asked if any consideration had been thought about giving an exemption to the officers that have served over many years with no complaints. Natalie explained that they were going through all departments, what training the officers have had, some will be grandfathered in. Natalie sent an email to the Select Board with a more detailed explanation of how positions were going to be reviewed. John's biggest concern is retention of officers with full-time training may want a full-time position. Rich asked Natalie for an update on the East/West rail. Natalie assured us that we are moving in the right direction, President Biden is

highly supportive of rail and they recently reached out to Secretary Tesler to explore this with us. Rich then asked if she had any information regarding the American Rescue Plan Act. Natalie did not have any information on the specific amounts yet, but Senator Hinds was advocating for how this would be beneficial to the cities and towns of Western Mass and looking at the process of how the Rescue Plan is coming to Massachusetts. Barbara then asked if there was any way that we could work on getting more Covid-19 vaccines available in our area? Natalie explained that they were pushing for more but welcomed everyone to reach out to Governor Baker. Another question from Barbara was regarding Cannabis businesses; new contracts typically require the new coming business to submit a fee called a community impact fee which typically is a percentage. Her question was could this be changed to a flat fee instead of the percentage? Natalie said that they could speak with the Cannabis Control Commission, but she would also check to see if there was any pre-existing legislation. She asked Barbara if it would be helpful for the Select Board to speak to someone from the Cannabis Commission; Barbara said yes. Natalie will be emailing Kathe with the contact information they have for someone at the Cannabis Commission. Barbara also asked if there is some way to look at the inequity of what is expected from the state and the realities of small towns vs. cities. She stated small towns have the same standards as larger cities with more staff and resources and this is an issue. Natalie said she understood. Barbara thanked Natalie and Jonathan again for the meeting and welcomed them both to come visit Chester. Natalie thanked everyone and hoped she could come to Chester on Track which she had done in the past.

- **Discussion of Fuel Pump issues with CMELD Commissioners.** At the Select Board meeting last week Derek Savoy and Duane Pease explained a problem with the gas and diesel pumps. These are used by Chester as well as Middlefield and Blandford and every five to six months approximately 500 gallons is unaccounted for, translating into around \$3,000.00 in uncollected funds. Jill Moretz, manager of Chester Municipal Electric Light Department called the vendor and was told the pump needed to be replaced. Tuesday April 6, 2021 the pump is being looked at to see if it in fact does need to be replaced or simply re-calibrated. A question was raised whether ordering the fuel as well as paying the bills for this should belong as a responsibility of CMELD or could this be turned over to the Select Board and the Treasurer's office. Barbara brought up that since we do not have a current Treasurer, only an interim with a lot of work on their plate, it is best to keep things as they are for now. The discussion of turning things over from CMELD the Select Board decided should wait for a decision until we have properly working pumps. This discussion will be put on the agenda for the Select Board meeting on April 26<sup>th</sup>. John also brought up that because we have two other towns that use these, we can discuss with them if they would contribute to the cost if we do indeed need to replace the pump.
- **Canna Testing LLC review and possible signing of the host community agreement.** All the Select Board members had a chance to review the agreement which included an annual community impact fee of 3% of Canna Testing LLC's revenue that does not require us to provide examples of ways this is harming or impacting our community. The agreement also has Canna Testing LLC as required to annually donate \$10,000.00 to non-profits within Chester. Rich made the motion to accept and sign the host community agreement from Canna Testing LLC, John 2<sup>nd</sup>, all voted Aye.



- **Discussion with Paul Lischette and Hilltown CDC for a PILOT for Chester Commons.** Paul gave us an explanation of their plan for the Chester Commons and plans for the building repairs. The program they are working with is a Capital Grant Program called One Stop for Growth. One of their largest expenses is going to be installing an elevator and bringing things up to code making everything handicap accessible. They were looking to get assistance from the town so they can get their full application submitted which requires the town to give a letter of support. Paul and Dave both assured us that this would not impact our ability to apply for grants and they would take care of the application process as much of it that they could do themselves. Paul also let us know that filling out the full application of this grant, allowed up to five sites for rehabilitation. Barbara brought up with that in mind we could include maintenance and bringing to code the old Chester Elementary school. Paul also stated CDC is hoping to do a PILOT (Payment in Lieu of Taxes) for Chester Commons. Tax Collector Mary Ann Pease stated taxes on the building are currently \$9,000.00+. CDC would like to offer \$6,000.00. The Select Board all agreed this was not enough. CDC is to set up a proposal and get back to Board on this.
- **Review job description and responsibilities of COA Director with COA bylaw committee.** This is rescheduled to the Select Board meeting on April 26<sup>th</sup>.
- **Update student Vocational policy to match Gateway Regional.** Barbara read the student Vocational policy which was voted on April 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2019. The policy stated that all students needed to submit applications no later than April 1<sup>st</sup>. This did not match the policy of the Gateway school which had the deadline of March 1<sup>st</sup>. The amended policy reads as follows, "Effective April 5<sup>th</sup>, 2021, the Chester Board of Selectmen have made policy that all students, that are residents of Chester, (which will be determined by the annual street census), who are eligible to apply to Smith Vocational School, Westfield Technical Academy or any other state accredited vocational school must apply no later than March 1<sup>st</sup>." The policy included that the residence is decided by the street census which would be decided if a child lives with one or more parents due to a separation. John made the motion to accept the policy change, Rich 2<sup>nd</sup> all voted Aye.
- **Review Junk Car Bylaw.** Jason Forgue our building inspector could not stay for the meeting but wanted to participate for this section of the meeting so Barbara called him so he could listen via speaker phone. The Select Board all had a chance to review the Junk Car bylaw, John thought that it was outlined very well with fines and an appeals process listing the Town Clerk as the hearing official. In the bylaw it designates a junk vehicle fund where all fines/penalties should go. John thought this account could grow to a large amount if we put everything in one account unless we decided to put a cap on it. Mary Ann asked if this would supersede the bylaw that was set up years ago, and if it gave a good description of what constitutes a junk car? John told all yes. A resident was concerned about the description of a junk car and if it included cars that were registered, and people were paying excise taxes on. John clarified that the bylaw included this because to avoid fines, people had left vehicles registered, or simply left license plates on them so they did not look to be a "junk car." Jason brought up that this fund should be kept to assist if we have a property that we are attempting to have cleaned up and the owner does not have the funds to move everything.



- **Review revolving account for Code Enforcement.** All the Select Board members had a chance to review the bylaw and account information for Code Enforcement. John again wanted something added so the account would have a cap. All agreed but not on the amount at this time.
- **Review new bylaw that would allow Code Enforcement fines to be added to real estate tax bills.** Jason is going to come up with a list of violations and fines and is going to reach out to Liz Massa from the Board of Health for input as well. All these fees should end up in the same account. Jason asked if we could do anything retroactive or would we just be able to do this going forward? John said that anything that is outstanding could be added. Mary Ann also added that outstanding water and electric bills are done in the same way so fines we should have no problem adding to the tax bill.
- **Resignation of Paula Beck as Town Accountant.** Barbara read the letter of resignation from Paula Beck listing her last day of April 29<sup>th</sup>. John accepted Rich 2<sup>nd</sup>, all Aye.
- **Discussion of Town Accountant and Treasurer positions.** John opened the discussion; a major issue now we have no accountant or treasurer. Kathe gave us the information for Eric Kinshurf who was recommended by Sarah Hunter from Blandford. She expressed that it is time for the Select Board as well as the Finance Committee to realize how important these positions are. Mary Ann added that the Tax Collector from Windsor and Worthington, Kirsten Henshaw, uses Eric and speaks very highly of him. John stated that we needed to do something and find money for this because this needs to get back on track. There was a suggestion to take the money from the educational stabilization fund which John did not think would affect the tax rate much because the school budget fluctuates. The Select Board all agreed this was a smart move to try a working with a firm. Barbara would like to move forward with finding funding for this so we can have Eric start working with us. Bob Daley from finance was opposed to this decision because not all members of the finance committee were present for the meeting for discussion. Barbara made the point that there was a quorum at the meeting with a majority, Andy also made the point that the Finance Committee is here to advice while the Select Board is the final decision. John brought up that because this was not on the agenda for the meeting, we would not be voting on it at this meeting which would give the Finance Committee time to meet before a decision is made.

**Town Administrator:** Terry Donovan, Animal Control officer gave her letter of resignation, Barbara read her letter aloud. Terry was present at the meeting, John told Terry that she has been the best ACO we have had. He asked her if there is anything, we can do to change your mind if there are issues what are they and what can we do to correct them? Barbara remarked that she knows it is not because Terry does not like her job, which Terry assured her that she was correct. John stated that if there are problems or concerns among staff bring them up to the Select Board. If people are concerned about an open format, the meeting could be moved to an executive session. Barbara reminded everyone town hall staff are colleagues and professionals and need to conduct themselves as such. Kathe let us know that she will be submitting paperwork for a reserve fund transfer.

**Public Comments and Questions:** There were no additional comments or questions.

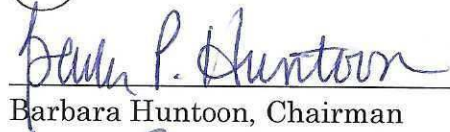
John made the motion to adjourn, Barbara 2<sup>nd</sup>, all voted Aye.

**Meeting Adjourned 8:37 PM**

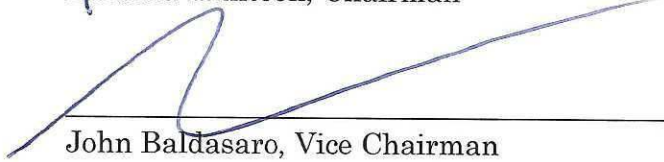
Respectfully Submitted

  
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Jill Strong, Administrative Assistant

4/14/21  
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Date Signed

  
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Barbara Huntoon, Chairman

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Date Signed

  
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John Baldasaro, Vice Chairman

4/26/21  
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Date Signed

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Richard Holzman, Clerk

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Date Signed