



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

**Monday May 24<sup>th</sup>, 2021**

Open Meeting – This meeting is Virtual.

Selectmen John Baldasaro, Barbara Huntoon and Richard Holzman present. Town Hall staff present were Town Administrator Kathe Warden, Administrative Assistant Jill Strong, Town Clerk Sister Judith Dalesandro, and Tax Collector Mary Ann Pease. Police Chief Tammy Weidhaas, Animal Control Officer Terry Donovan were participating, and Jason Ellershaw from our Highway Department. From the Board of Health, we had Elizabeth Massa, Nick Chiusano, and Greg Harrison. From the Finance Committee Andy Myers, Bob Daley, Jessica Sakaske, Jonathan Glionna, and Jason Forgue with his son Brian. We also had Lora Wade who is a new member of the Water Improvement Committee as well as a few Chester residents.

Warrants and minutes to be signed at the Select Board's availability. Barbara asked if anyone was recording the meeting, no one answered that they were.

- **Jason Ellershaw – discussion about Water Dept.** Jason updated us on where he was with his training for working within the Water Department. He is scheduled to take his T1 exam on June 1<sup>st</sup> and his D1 exam on June 26<sup>th</sup>. He will need to have his T1 exam and a full license before he can proceed to take his T2 test and work in our Water Plant on his own. Last week he did some training with Dr. Richard Gullick who has been our consultant from Water Compliance Solutions. Jason asked if he did continue to proceed in licensure for assisting as a Water Operator would there be any compensation, such as a pay increase? John asked if he had done any training with our current Primary Water Operator, Bernie St. Martin? Jason answered no, he and Dr. Gullick had reached out to Bernie because it would indeed be beneficial to have his help, but they have had no response. Rich explained things right now are a work in progress and the decision on what to do moving forward is complicated. John asked Jason to put in writing what he is thinking of as far as additional compensation so that the Select Board can discuss it. The Select Board all thanked Jason for his hard work and for moving forward in getting his licenses to work within the Water Department.
- **Greg Harrison – request to be considered for the Cemetery Commissioner** Greg explained that he was interested in working as the Cemetery Commissioner as he enjoys working for the town and thought he could help with the grounds keeping as he has done with the transfer station



and the ball field. Barbara explained that the job of Cemetery Commissioner is more of plot locations and keeping track of burials and not grounds keeping; we do have someone else who does take care of that. John did mention that in years past the Cemetery Commissioner did do grounds keeping and that would be very welcomed as it would be great to have the expansion that was proposed at the Pine Hill Cemetery years ago accomplished. At this time Greg would like to look into the details of the job more before he made a final decision, and he would get in touch with Kathe. Doing the grounds keeping for the transfer station and the ballfield he has been using his personal equipment and asked if this was something that would be recommended, or he would continue to use if he would be working in the cemeteries? The Select Board told him that the person currently doing the grounds keeping uses town equipment supplied by the Highway Department and that would probably be the best if he took over as well. Barbara thanked him for his interest in the position.

**Finance Committee – present FY22 budget to Select Board** Andy Myers gave us a budget summary and explained that there were multiple decreases which gives us the opportunity to invest in the town. Free cash is being postponed until November because we will not have free cash certified this Fiscal Year. John mentioned that this report was very helpful as it gave good data and allowed for more and better tracking of the revenue. Andy told us that they will have the Final Budget ready for the Annual Town Meeting and per his research with our assessing firm, Regional Resource Group, the average home values are predicted to go up by ten percent. The Finance Committee had discussed and come up with two figures of funds to be moved from the Education Stabilization Account for our share of Gateway. The two options were to move the entire amount of \$82,784 or a smaller amount of \$23,325, both are projected to result in a lower tax rate next year. John suggested the larger amount as the account was not meant to be used as a long-term stabilization. Barbara disagreed as she felt that we should not completely deplete the account and other expense could come up. John and Andy both explained that the account can not be used for extra expenses it is set up specifically for the Gateway school budget so it would need to be used toward this portion of the town's taxes. John also explained that with the budget for Gateway known and voted on it will not change and was not in favor of having this money on a lock for Gateway. Jason also disagreed as he also felt that depleting the account was wrong as he believed a large issue with the town stemmed from the failure to plan. We could indeed save the funds for a time when we really need them. Barbara agreed and felt that it is always good to have a cushion. Rich suggested splitting the figure down the middle as he thought that John and Jason both made good arguments and asked how Andy and the rest of the Finance Committee felt about this? Andy said that they did not take a vote at the Finance Committee meeting, but he thought that the consensus was to go with the lower amount, but he was personally happy with a compromise. Bob Daley suggested a more cautious approach, Jonathan Glionna and Jessica Sakaske both agreed with going with the lower amount. Andy told us that he would send all the information in a document to Kathe to prepare for the warrant for the Annual Town Meeting. Rich had a question about the summary from Andy the expenses for the Water Department were left blank. Bob explained that they were unsure about a further contract with Dr. Gullick as well as if we would be creating a plan with White Water – Water and Waste Water Solutions which has been a topic of discussion. The Water Improvement Committee has a meeting on Thursday and will be discussing these things. Jason asked about the finances needed for the Water Department if we would be able to use any of the money



from the American Rescue Plan which we should be receiving? Kathe believed that was a possibility because one of the options for use was for, "infrastructure" but she would be speaking with Senator Hinds office to verify. Barbara and John agreed that we should not need all these things for the Water Department such as Dr. Gullick and White Water and the contract with Dr. Gullick might not need to be so costly. Jason Ellershaw asked to be included in the meeting with the Water Improvement Committee on Thursday which Bob said he would indeed do and thanked and encouraged him for pursuing a future in the Water Department. In a previous meeting it had been suggested that the Finance Committee present the budget at the Annual Town Meeting as they are the ones who prepare the budget. Barbara asked if they would be prepared to do this? Bob mentioned that he actually would be out of town so he would be unable to do that, as Jason is on the School Committee, he suggested him presenting that portion of the budget. Finance said they would work it out among themselves, but the Select Board also offered to help.

**Town Administrator – Continue discussion about changing fees for weekend burials and changing notification time for burials from 48 hours to 96 hours. With possible vote to change time and costs.** Kathe had brought up to us at the meeting last week a suggestion about changing the cost and notification time for burials. She spoke with the surrounding towns of Otis, Blandford, and Middlefield to discuss their costs. Otis and Blandford both had a flat rate for burials regardless of if it was a full burial or a cremation - Otis \$650.00 and Blandford \$800.00. Middlefield did have a variance like we do of \$500.00 for a full burial and \$100.00 for a cremation. Our current charge is \$500.00 for a full burial and \$100.00 for a cremation the same as Middlefield, the suggested change was to make it \$750.00 for a full burial and \$175.00 for a cremation. Rich had suggested that we take the average from the towns as our cost, John made the suggestion to follow suit with Otis and Blandford and have a flat rate of \$750.00 for full burial and cremation. Barbara agreed with John as we are not setting a precedent, we are following what other towns have already done. She reiterated what she mentioned last week that in our wording about the notification process we be careful to include exceptions for religious customs.

John made the motion to have to cost for all burials, full or cremation \$750.00. Rich 2<sup>nd</sup>, all voted Aye.

Barbara made the motion to change the notification for burials from 48 hours to 96 hours with the exception of religious practices requiring a prompt burial. John 2<sup>nd</sup>, all voted Aye.

**Town Administrator:** Kathe let us know that as of June 15<sup>th</sup> the State of Emergency for Massachusetts will be lifted by Governor Baker. This will mean that remote meeting will end by 100% and need to be in person which will conflict with the meetings we had set up to be remote due to the Chester Theatre Company needing the Town Hall space. Barbara asked if Kathe had spoke to the Fire Department about using the Fire Station for those dates? Kathe answered that she had awhile back, but she would speak with Chief Richie Small again.

#### **Public Comments and Questions:**

- Jason Forgue let us know that he has still been working on the problem with the solar panels and has been speaking with CMELD and our Electrical Inspector to figure out the best course of action. He asked about our Memorial Day celebration, which Barbara told him would be on



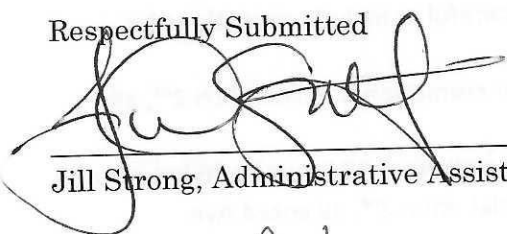
Monday, May 31<sup>st</sup> and be starting at 9:00 AM. Barbara also asked if he would be willing to help organize the parade lineup and he said he would and that he would try to get some of the kids from the Little League teams to participate. He also asked about the funds from the American Rescue Plan; they are meant to go into their own account, and he is curious if this account had already been set up by the new Accountant or Treasurer? Kathe was unsure if this had happened, she would send an email but she would be on vacation this week so she would follow up when she returned to the office after Memorial Day. Another question he had was where we were with bylaws that should have been submitted to the Attorney General? Sister Judith told him that she had submitted the Stretch Energy Bylaw and the Dog Bylaws. She went on to state the town has thirty days to submit the newly drafted Recall Bylaw to the Attorney General after it is voted on, then the Attorney General must approve it before it comes back to us.

- Barbara asked Kathe if we had heard from PVPC about when they would be starting the project to pave Prospect Street? Kathe had not heard the details yet and thought after June 1<sup>st</sup> things would start to go out to bid. Barbara asked if she thought it would be completed this year and how much of the road was being completed? Kathe was unsure if the road would be completed this year, it depended on when it was started. John explained that the project would be done in three phases and would take some time to complete.
- Barbara asked Kathe about re-opening the Town Hall. Kathe said that after checking with staff about hours people were interested in being available, the suggestions ranged from staying the way things are to being completely open again. The thought for now is to start on July 1<sup>st</sup> being open on Tuesday and Thursdays from 11:00 AM – 3:00 PM. This would start things slow, and we can move along from there.

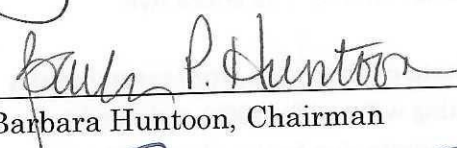
John made the motion to adjourn, Barbara 2<sup>nd</sup>.

**Meeting Adjourned 7:19 PM**

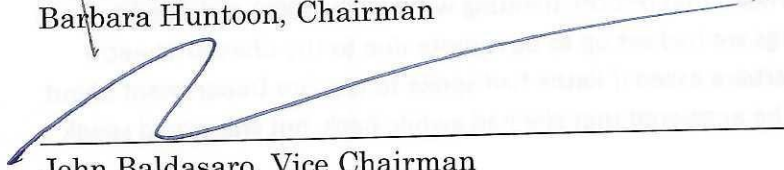
Respectfully Submitted

  
Jill Strong, Administrative Assistant


5/26/21  
Date Signed

  
Barbara Huntoon, Chairman

6/9/21  
Date Signed

  
John Baldasaro, Vice Chairman

          
Date Signed

  
Richard Holzman, Clerk

6/8/21  
Date Signed