



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

Monday, July 12th, 2021

Open Meeting – This meeting is in the Town Hall in the COA room with a Virtual option.

Selectmen John Baldasaro, Richard Holzman, and new Selectmen Jason Forgue present. Town Hall staff also present included Town Administrator Kathe Warden, Administrative Assistant Jill Strong, Tax Collector Mary Ann Pease, Town Clerk and ACO Terry Donovan, Assessor Sister Judith Dalesandro, and Highway Foreman Carl Baldasaro. Also present were Andy Myers, Bob Daley, and Jessica Sakaske from the Finance Committee. Resident Brian Forgue was also present as well as some others participating remotely.

John opened the meeting at 6:00 PM.

- **Reorganization of the Select Board for FY2022:** This is the first Select Board meeting with our new Selectmen Jason Forgue. Opening the discussion John expressed that he was looking forward to working together. With a new member of the Select Board there is a restructuring of who is Chairman, Vice Chair, and Clerk. Rich made the motion to elect John Baldasaro as Chairman of the Select Board, Jason 2nd. John made the motion to elect Richard Holzman as the Vice Chairman, Jason 2nd. John made the motion to elect Jason Forgue as the Clerk, Rich 2nd.
- **Discussion of future Select Board meeting calendar:** In the past during the summer months the Select Board meetings were changed to meet every other Monday rather than every week. Rich made the point that there is a lot on our plate right now to take care of and thought we should continue to meet every week. Jason commented that he was also concerned as we have work to be done within the Water Department and Treatment Plant as well as with financials of hiring the new accounting firm. John said that this is something we could re-visit once we have started to make some moves on those projects but for now, we could continue to meet every week. Kathe mentioned that the Select Board meeting on August 9th would be a joint meeting with Blandford to review the shared police agreement. John asked if the meeting would be in Chester at the Town Hall or in Blandford? Kathe was unsure but would check with the Town Administrator in Blandford.
- **Resignation of Melvyn Hook – Town Moderator:** We received a letter of resignation for the Town Moderator, Melvyn Hook. John commented that Melvyn has done a good job under sometimes difficult circumstances, and this past Annual Town Meeting was one of the more

controversial meetings we have had in some time. John thanked Melvyn for his work with the town. Rich made the motion to accept the resignation of Melvyn Hook as Town Moderator, Jason 2nd, all voted Aye. John and Jason asked if anyone had any suggestions of someone interested to fill this position. Rich mentioned that we should make it known that this is an open position. Jason asked how we handle this position vacancy in the meantime as this is a necessary position. John said that he believed that the Town Clerk could sit in as Moderator, and Jason said that we should speak with Town Council Tom Mullen to know of the procedure. Sister Judith asked about the appointment of people within the Finance Committee as the Moderator must be informed of changes, she asked if the Finance Committee was a three-year commitment? The Select Board said yes, but Jason was unsure how accurate the dates were for reappointment as they had all gone to Melvyn in the past. Jason remarked as he is a current member of the Finance Committee he would like to continue as a member of the Select Board. Andy mentioned that he did not think Jason should continue as a member of the Finance Committee, the idea is that this keeps everyone at, "arm's length" and is a good format for checks and balances. John made the point that people who voted him to the Select Board should also have known that he is a current member of the Finance Committee. Andy agreed and there is a small-town exemption that allows this but also pointed out that Jason also being a member of the School Committee he thought the combination of the three was a conflict of interest. Jason had made a call and discussed this with the Ethics Commission, and it was ok, commenting that if there were multiple volunteers and was standing in the way of someone else joining the Committee he would gladly walk away. Rich stated Andy and Jason's points were well taken and objectively thought that Andy had the right decision and would place the Committee at an odd number of members making a simple majority when needing to take a vote on items. Bob suggested setting up a Zoom meeting to discuss all members and who is going to continue on the Committee and be reappointed. John agreed that the Finance Committee should all discuss this and since there is no issue with ethics it would be a personal decision.

- **Review/Discussion with Carl from his written list of high, middle, and low priorities to be addressed between now and Nov. 1st. Including road repaving and repair, guardrails, culverts, bridges, Prospect St. project, staffing and license status, equipment condition etc.:** Carl joined us around 6:30 PM as he had been working on a tree that was stuck under the Hampden Street bridge. Rich asked Carl if he had come up with a list of projects which they had previously spoken about. Rich thought that if the Select Board had a list of planned projects that they could better support Carl. Rich explained it did not need to be in great detail just a simple list of everyday projects as well as long term goals. Rich mentioned ideas such as paving Middlefield Road, fixing the culvert on Johnson Hill Road, as well as guardrails that needed to be replaced. Carl asked the Select Board how they would be supporting him? Rich answered that he did not know yet and that he wanted the list with how the items are categorized as high, middle, and low priority. Jason also commented that if they knew of the priorities of the projects, they could better support him if citizens were to ask any of them about projects to be done. Carl commented that he did want everyone on board with the Highway Department and was good to have everyone involved, he would be working on finishing the FY21 warrants and next week he would put together a list. Rich asked about paving and Carl let us know that they had received bids from FRCOG and the bid would go to Allstate Paving Co. out of Westford Massachusetts.

Bob asked Carl about the problems on East River Road as well as the headstone being placed for Gene Waters. Carl commented that East River Road has a drainage problem that needs to be addressed and he had and would be placing the headstone for Gene. Rich asked about the Bromley Road paving project. Carl spoke with Dave Stokes and was working on finishing the shoulder. At this point he was concentrating on the dirt roads as we have had so much rain lately, and we currently have the help of White Wolf. Round Hill Road was currently a problem with washing out heavily along the side. He commented that this remains a problem because it is not a consistently maintained road as sections are closed during the winter months. However, due to people purchasing property on the road he thought it would not be long before the road needed to be open all year. Rich asked about the paving project that is going to be done on Prospect Street hopefully starting in the fall. John and Kathe commented that Carl would need to be aware of the progress on the project but did not need to oversee it due to the Engineering Firm that is working on the project. Rich was wondering if we could have any of the material that would be coming off of the road. Carl stated that there would not be any and the paving company will own anything but would take any scraps if there were some.

- **Discussion of Tae Kwon Do resuming in the fall:** Kathe received a call from Tom Armitage the instructor for Tae Kwon Do which was a class taught within the Town Hall. He called to ask if it would be allowed to continue in the fall. John had no issue with this as he thought it had been a successful program, Rich agreed. Jason asked if they paid to use the Town Hall, Kathe answered yes, they are charged a yearly rental fee.
- **Reappointments for FY2022 for the following positions:**
 - a. Stephanie Bodendorf – Recreation Committee: Jason made the motion to reappoint Stephanie Bodendorf to the Recreation Committee, Rich 2nd, all voted Aye.
 - b. Brian Forge – Planning Board: Jason abstained from this vote as Brian is his son. John had read Brian's letter of interest and made the motion to appoint Brian Forge as a member of the Planning Board, Rich 2nd.
- **FY2021 Transfers and Encumbrments:** John explained to Jason that this was standard housekeeping for end of the fiscal year. Money is moved from one account to another to pay any remaining balances in accounts for the year.
- **Review and discussion of the letter from DEP dated July 6th, 2021.** All members of the Select Board had a chance to review the letter we have received. John suggested having a meeting with DEP, our water operator Bernie St. Martin, the members of the Water Improvement Committee, and Dr. Richard Gullick our consultant from Water Compliance Solutions. John thought that it was better to work things out and have a discussion in person as a partnership with all involved rather than fighting about what should take place. Rich brought up that he believed it would be better to have a board of Water Commissioners rather than to leave that with the Select Board. This would take something off of their plate and place all of the information into the hands of people who are dedicated to these tasks. John suggested we speak to our Town Council Tom Mullen to discuss the procedure of how we are to change this. Kathe said that she could have the job vacancy for the Town Moderator as well as Water Commissioners to the town website. Brian asked if the people who would be interested in being a Water Commissioner should attend the meeting. John answered no, this should be a meeting with DEP and sitting officials. The meeting will be open so anyone can attend however there would be no comments or outside questions aloud this would be a focused group to deal with

the task at hand. John would be out of town this week so Kathe said she could put the meeting together for next week.

- **Discussion of who owns the propane tank at the Town Hall.** Kathe has been looking at the prices for propane and before placing an order needed to know if the tank that is at the Town Hall is owned by us or if it is owned by a fuel company. John believed that it was ours, Rich asked if the tank was above or below ground, John answered that it was below. Rich thought that any tanks below ground were not owned by a fuel company they were only privately owned.
- **Discussion with vote of rental amounts for William Ivey Long for the school.** Kathe let us know that she had spoken to William Ivey Long who currently owns the old Chester Elementary school across from the Town Hall. The Town will own the building approximately mid-August however, they will need more time to empty the building of their things. Until they are able to do that they asked if we would allow them to rent two of the rooms for storage. John asked Kathe if she knew of the time frame that they were looking to rent the rooms, Kathe answered that she thought through the end of this year. The Select Board agreed that this was ok to do, Rich stated that we need to establish a reasonable rate to make this beneficial for the Town. Jason stated that we should research what the market rate is for storage before we decide on what we will be charging. John suggested that we reach out to Kathy Engwer who is a realtor to see if she has any insight. Andy also suggested reach out to the owners of Carm's and the Chester Common Table as they have recently rented the space behind Carm's to Canna Testing. Kathe stated that we could continue this discussion at next weeks Select Board meeting once we have done our research.
- **Finance review of the Treasurer and Accountant status.** Kathe has spoken with our accountant Eric Kinshurf who gave her an update. He stated that the FY21 books are now closed, and they have begun the reconciliation process. Sara Hunter who is acting as our Treasurer also assured us that FY20 is also finished, and they are now reviewing bank statements to reconcile our accounts. There were some discrepancies for money that came from the Green Communities Grant also because there were some Chapter 90 funds we did not get back in time. Jason asked if this was money that was allocated but never spent. Kathe explained that the Green Communities Grant was before her and was used to install the solar panels at the Town Garage. She had looked into us using the remaining funds when the boiler needed to be replaced in the Town Hall, but this was not allowed because we needed to do an energy evaluation on the building before this could be done. Mary Ann asked about the possibility of putting solar panels at the Town Hall. John and Jason both agreed that as were had not been satisfied with the installation of the solar panels at the Town Garage they would want to research a different company to do that, but it would be helpful across the street at the old Elementary school as well. There is currently \$85,000.00 in accounts that should be used by the end of September. Andy stated that we should be doing something to prevent problems in the future with free cash. Mary Ann explained that we would need a meeting to vote on the Town floor to use free cash. Jason asked why Eric and Sara were not with us to answer questions. Kathe stated that she could ask them to participate virtually. Kathe asked if the meeting this coming week would work to meet with them or would the Select Board like it to be sooner. John answered next week or the week after would be fine. Andy stated that he was disappointed that we had not received

the information about the discrepancy sooner. He commented that if we know about this, we have a chance to make revisions to the budget.

Before moving to public comments Jason asked Jessica Sakaske if she would like to be reappointed to the Recreation Committee, which she answered yes. Jason made a motion to reappoint Jessica Sakaske to the Recreation Committee, John 2nd, all voted Aye. A discussion was started about the possibility of having some logging done at the Water Shed, timber currently is priced well and could bring the Town some added revenue. Pricing out the timber we will need to use a forester, which R. Duane Pease had given John the name of someone to use. We pay the forester, but it is paid through a percentage of the timber sales. Bob asked if there had been a comprehensive report from the last time it had been logged. John was unsure because at that point they were only doing selective cutting.

- Public Comments and Questions:

- Brian Forgue thanked the Select Board for the appointment to the Planning Board. He thanked anyone who helped with the cemetery clean up this past Saturday. Brian mentioned that he was interested in the position of Cemetery Commissioner as it is currently vacant. He had a list of ideas such as improved landscaping and maintenance, as well as researching if any of the cemeteries in town could be designated as historical sites. John asked Brian to put in writing his letter of interest so that it can be placed on the agenda for a future meeting, and he welcomed his enthusiasm. Jason commented that during the cleanup of the Chester Hill Cemetery they had discovered stones that had been turned over and in the brush. Pine Hill which they will be working on at their next cleanup also has stones that are now in the woods. We also have undeveloped land in the area as an opportunity for expansion.

- Andy brought up that there is a meeting on the PILOT program (Payment in lieu of Taxes) and he was happy to go to the meeting. He thanked Jason for the cemetery cleanup.

- Terry Donovan our new Town Clerk had spoken with the Ethics Commission and explained to her that she could be sworn in as Town Clerk by a justice of the peace. She was sworn in that morning and could now assume her duties in the position.

- Mary Ann asked about our current water operator was he still active as there had been discussions that he would not be with us much longer. John assured that he was still with us, and Jason Ellershaw from the Highway Department was still interested in being involved, he had taken his test to be an operator and was waiting for his license.

- Jason asked Kathe if at this point the new Accountant and Treasurer had assumed all of their responsibilities. Kathe answered that she was still doing payroll and Mary Ann was continuing with any turnovers as well as sending any checks.

The meeting will be moved into Executive Session, John made the motion to adjourn and go into Executive Session, Jason 2nd, all voted Aye.

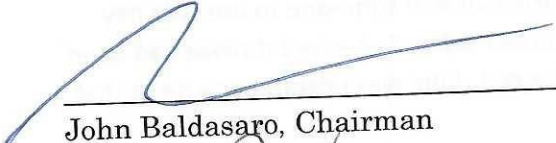
Meeting Adjourned 7:19 PM.

Respectfully Submitted



Jill Strong, Administrative Assistant

7/26/21
Date Signed



John Baldasaro, Chairman

7/26/21
Date Signed



Richard Holzman, Vice Chairman

7/26/21
Date Signed

Jason Forgue, Clerk

Date Signed