



TOWN OF CHESTER BOARD OF SELECTMEN
ZONING BOARD OF APPEALS
15 MIDDLEFIELD RD.
CHESTER MA 01011

Monday, January 10th, 2022

Open Meeting – This meeting is held in the Chester Town Hall Auditorium with a remote option.

Select Board members John Baldasaro, Jason Fogue, and Richard Holzman present. Town Hall staff present included Town Administrator Kathe Warden, Administrative Assistant Jill Strong, Tax Collector Mary Ann Pease, and Town Clerk Terry Donovan. Highway Foreman Carl Baldasaro was present as well as Moderator Barbara Huntoon, Water Commissioner Bob Daley, and Finance Committee member Andy Myers. Per the agenda Sara Hunter and Eric Kinsherf with his colleague Janice Boucher joined us remotely.

John called the meeting to order at 6:00 PM, minutes and any correspondence were signed. We started the meeting with the Town Administrator update while we were waiting for Eric and Sara to join us.

- **Town Administrator update:**

- *Town Report:*

- Kathe informed us that Terry Donovan will be taking care of creating the Town Report along with someone for senior work off. She stated that this week everyone should receive an email of the details on what is required from them and when things will be due to Terry.

- *Discussion of Special Town Meeting date:*

- Last week the Select Board decided on a date for the Special Town Meeting to be on Monday, February 7th which after checking with the Moderator Barbara will be out of town and unable to attend. Kathe suggested the new date of Wednesday, February 16th at 6:00 PM and asked if we would still want to host the Select Board meeting that Monday evening or if the Board would like to combine the two. John stated that we could combine the meetings and have the Select Board meeting on Wednesday that week but to ensure people have proper time to attend the Select Board meeting will start at the usual time of 6:00 PM and the Special Town Meeting will start at 6:30 PM.

- Kathe informed us that she spoke with Daniel Kramer from the Chester Theatre Company about the bathroom repairs that have been up for discussion. He stated that they would like to move forward with the repairs for the bathroom downstairs and also offered that if the Town would pay for the materials to replace the floor for the bathroom on the main floor

as well as paint, they would cover the cost of labor. He estimated starting the project by mid-March or April. Jason asked if they had spoken with Nick Chiusano as the plumbing inspector about the drain in the floor of the downstairs bathroom. Kathe answered that she was unsure, Jason stated that he would reach out to Nick. The Select Board was all ok with this moving forward.

On Thursday Kathe explained we will be joined by Senator Hinds and Senator Comerford about the bill that was passed to award money for the July storms. Kathe explained that we still have the report that was created for MEMA with pictures documenting the damage. Rich asked if there was a chance that we could organize a luncheon at the Train Station, Bob commenting that they could take care of everything. Kathe stated that she would reach out to her contact and see if there was enough time.

Kathe has been working with Ira from PVPC for local businesses and they have begun working on a mass travel tourism grant which will promote the Chester Theatre, the Foundation, as well as the Route 20 Visitor's Center. They have another meeting on Wednesday this week and are hoping to have the grant submitted by Friday.

Another grant that Kathe has been looking into would be to address replacing the culvert on Abbott Hill Road. She explained that when she spoke with DOT it could fall under a culvert or a small bridge grant and the next step is taking measurements. We were told that we can use Chapter 90 funds for the preliminary engineering, a STRAP grant is also possible. We need to contact the Department of Ecological Restoration about the culvert grant to see if we qualify.

- Discussion about closing Town Hall again:

Last week Kathe was approached by some of the staff about closing the Town Hall again due to the uptick in Covid numbers. Kathe explained that she has reached out to her STAM group, and it was split down the middle with offices closed and open. Rich asked if the staff all felt the same wanting things closed. Kathe answered yes as most of the time we do not know who coming in and out of the building is vaccinated. John commented that he would rather not move backwards and thought that it could be left up to each office if they would be open or be available by appointment only. Rich stated that we needed to give residents notice which Kathe replied that it would be posted to the town website what the available hours will be.

Before moving to Eric and Sara Kathe also let us know that she was given a quote for insurance for 10 Middlefield Rd. for coverage with fire. The quote she was given was \$10,000.00 for the year and explained that there would be strict guidelines to be followed and the building would need to be checked for the policy.

- **Meet with Eric Kinsherf and Sara Hunter to discuss Free Cash submission.**

Eric opened the discussion thanking his colleague Janice stating that they were ready to have Free Cash submitted this week. The number that they have and plan to submit is approximately \$200,000.00 commenting that the revenue was \$63,000.00 more than projected. Janice thanked Sara as well as all the Town Hall staff that has helped stating that she was looking forward to closing out everything. Sara reiterated this thanking Janice for all of her hard work as well as the help from Town Hall staff, she stated that the cash books were messy, and everyone has been a great help. John commented that this was not an easy situation and there were a lot of roadblocks, he thanked the team saying that they had done a great job. Andy asked when they anticipated the 2022 reconciliation to be completed. Sara answered that at the end of the

fiscal year they should be back to a month-to-month reconciliation but right now they are playing catch up for the last six months. John thanked the team again for all of their hard work.

- **Continued discussion about FY23 Budget, Finance Committee.**

Last week there was a discussion about Jason continuing on the Finance Committee as a member of the Select Board and John had suggested reaching out to Town Counsel Tom Mullen. In an email from Tom, he explained that per State Ethics Law there is no problem with a Finance Committee member being elected as a member of the Select Board. He stated that the Town is free to amend its bylaws or create a bylaw that limits a person's eligibility to be on said committee and attached examples of bylaws written by other towns that did something similar. John stated that if we chose to do this, we needed to be careful as multiple people hold positions on different committees and to not limit the pool of eligible people. Rich stated that he believed this should be for precise positions not to be involved with the Finance Committee. Andy commented that the letter from Tom was very informative and looking at the information our bylaw is out of date and stated that he had drafted a new one and had a copy for each of the Select Board members. Barbara commented that she agreed with John stating that as a member of the Planning Board Rich equally is in a powerful position and that should be looked at as well. Rich stated that at times he would recuse himself if necessary and that the Planning Board does not present to the Select Board in the same way that the Finance Committee does. John disagreed stating that the Planning Board helps to shape the future of the town, any time that a bylaw is updated it is brought before the Select Board and specifically when working on the marijuana bylaws there were multiple meetings had where they worked on the language of the bylaw. John reiterated that we need to take a close look as almost every Board of Selectmen has had a member that serves multiple positions. Andy stated that this is a recommendation of best practices and thought it should be brought to the Special Town Meeting for a vote, we should move forward on updating our bylaw and let the town decide.

Barbara asked in the interim would we appoint people and stated that when she reached out to everyone who is currently on the Finance Committee asking if they wished to continue, she had yet to hear a reply from Andy. Andy stated that according to our current bylaw due to term limits he is ineligible as it states the appointment is a three-year term and he has already served six. Barbara verified that no one has been appointed to the Finance Committee in three years, Andy answered yes. John stated that he did not feel we should limit terms as we have a limited pool of people who understand the process. Andy mentioned that he recommends a separation of power also with departments applying for salary increases this should be brought to the Select Board not Finance as the Town employees do not report to the Finance Committee, they report to the Select Board. John agreed saying that was a good idea and he was happy to do that, Rich agreed. John stated that any member of the Board of Selectmen can request a warrant and put an article together for the Special Town Meeting. Rich stated that he would do that.

- **Discussion and possible vote on completing the Solar Installation.**

Rich began the discussion stating that he understood this project at the Town Garage has had issues for a while now and felt that it was stuck. He stated that we are losing more money in the energy generated than the cost it would take to make it right. Elm Electric has stated that they are ready to do the work and that we should move forward to have this taken care of once and for all. John stated that we first needed the purchase power agreement

completed with CMELD. Jason commented that negotiating the contract was also part of the contract to be completed by PVPC. John commented that we know the kilowatt usage and the energy generated and it should be negotiated for retro from the day that it was turned on. Andy commented that he had spoken with CMELD Commissioner Terry Murphy and was told that their next meeting is Wednesday and that the Select Board should attend. John stated that we did need to set up another meeting with CMELD and the Select Board so that we could get this done. Bob asked if the original agreement had CMELD listed with supervision responsibilities of the project and did that happen. Jason stated that in the agreement CMELD is mentioned to review and accept the design plan but not the supervision of the project as a whole. Bob commented that PVPC has done so much good work. John did not disagree but stated that he did not like being ignored and that twenty-five years ago there was a similar problem and felt that we were getting to that point again. Kathe stated that tomorrow she would speak with CMELD about setting up a meeting.

- **Highway update:**

Carl gave a quick update stating that they have been working on plowing and sanding as well as fixing some equipment. The International broke down there was a problem with a hydraulic line also there were some large rocks mixed in with the sand that have caused a problem with the conveyor. John said if there are anymore that they should take pictures, he asked what the availability was with sand and salt. Carl answered that sand is ok but salt is getting low and reaching out to get more there is limited availability and has put in a call to Ellen with FRCOG. They have already gone through for the year what was used all of last year, the ice storms are extremely expensive. Jason stated that he knew they had been busy with the storms but that we needed to get the document together for the town website. Carl answered yes that the two of them needed to sit down to put it together. Carl stated that some residents had done some work on Round Hill Road that was done improperly and caused more problems. He asked that people please leave work to be done by the Highway Department.

Rich asked if residents had been made aware of Senator Hinds and Senator Comerford coming on Thursday. Kathe stated that she was not asked to reach out to make people aware but would ask her contact if she should be doing that.

- **Public Comments and Questions:**

John stated that in the chat there was a question from a resident if there were at home Covid tests available to be distributed to residents. Kathe answered no we had not received any to do that. Another question in the chat stated that Huntington had been delivering sand to seniors and asked if we would be doing that. Carl stated that he wished we could, but we do not have the personnel to carry that out.

Jason stated that he had attended a webinar regarding the ARPA funds which is now allowing things to be much more flexible. It was explained that submitting anything under ten million dollars for government services we would not be required to use the previous formula. He also discussed the Regional School Agreement and stated that the last meeting everyone came to an agreement of a formula that will work for all six towns. Andy commented that it was a good meeting, Jason agreed stating that it was nice to have everyone on board.

Bob gave an update on the Water Department stating that they are halfway through the testing with Housatonic Testing. The Commissioners have been there with them when they are performing the tests, three of the tests have shown that the TOC levels at Horn Pond are twice

as bad as those at Austin Brook. Last week Berlin Instruments came and was able to recalibrate all but two pieces of equipment which they will be providing a quote to take care of those. The Commissioners also met at the plant with Tighe and Bond and they will be coming back to us with operational improvements as well as a possible change in the dosing schedule. Elm will be here on Wednesday to begin updating the SCADA system. They plan to have things to present to DEP by early February. John stated that was all great news. Bob also had an update regarding East West Rail which he stated Mass DOT has now expressed their support and is discussing the two daily stops in Chester from Albany to Springfield.

Rich made the motion to adjourn, Jason 2nd, all voted Aye.

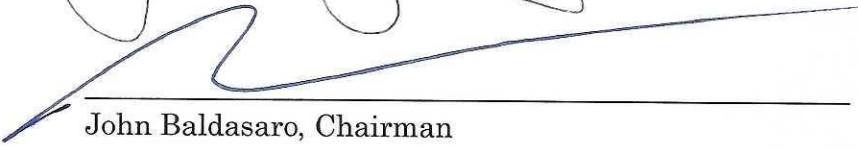
Meeting adjourned 7:31 PM

Respectfully Submitted



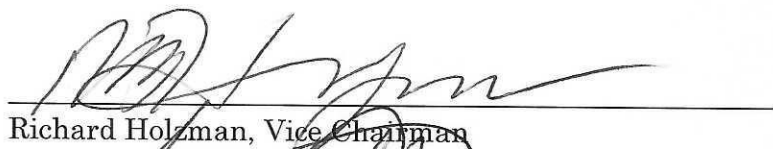
Jill Strong, Administrative Assistant

1/19/22
Date Signed



John Baldasaro, Chairman

1/24/22
Date Signed



Richard Holzman, Vice Chairman

2/20/22
Date Signed



Jason Forgue, Clerk

1/27/22
Date Signed

