



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

Monday, January 24th, 2022

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

Selectmen John Baldasaro and Richard Holzman present, Jason Fogue was absent. Town Hall staff present included Town Administrator Kathe Warden, Administrative Assistant Jill Strong, Tax Collector Mary Ann Pease, and Town Clerk Terry Donovan. Chief Tammy Weidhaas was present as well as Highway Foreman Carl Baldasaro and Water Commissioners Kathy Engwer and Bob Daly. Elizabeth, Liz, Massa from the Board of Health participated remotely, some residents were present as well as participating remotely.

- **Highway Foreman Carl Baldasaro – Update on Highway Department.**

Carl provided the Select Board with a written update and explained what they have been working on. He stated that during this time of year their focus is on keeping the roads safe, plowing, sanding, as well as fixing and maintaining the equipment. It is also important that they keep an inventory on all supplies so that materials can be ordered as necessary. Currently Carl is also looking into recruiting new employees as two of the Highway Department employees will be leaving us; Jason is moving on to a new job and Tyler also is moving on. John asked if the person interested that he had mentioned to Kathe had filled out an application she answered yes. Rich asked how many employees Carl would be left with, Carl answered three including himself. Carl stated that we have Ron Radwich as well as Richie Small helping with snow removal. Rich asked if there were other contractors available to us, Carl answered yes Horning's Landscape out of Worthington as well as White Wolf can always be utilized. Rich asked Carl if he has had time to do any thinking about projects and plan for the spring. Carl answered that he was always thinking about things to be done and does have some things already planned. Rich asked if at the next meeting Carl could have a list of his plans prepared, Carl went on to explain that as of now his plans are to pave Middlefield Road with the possibility of continuing to Olin Ave. and Ed Lebleau Road, it depended on funds. Rich asked if there were plans to pave Skyline Trail, Carl answered no that Blandford Road needed attention before Skyline Trail and unfortunately due to time and money there would not be enough time to accomplish everything that needs to be done. Carl stated that it is difficult without the staff to do all the things that are necessary, Rich asked him to elaborate, Carl stated that all he would add is that it is difficult to

find people to do their job. John asked if Carl was comfortable with the staff he would have, Carl answered for now. Rich stated that he knew it was difficult but to plan accordingly so that when time and money is available, we can take advantage of the opportunity. He suggested working with subcontractors to accomplish things such as culvert cleanup along with tree and brush removal. Carl stated that if Rich had something in mind Ingell Road, East River Road, or anything specific and wanted to begin a culvert assessment on the roads he would be happy to work with him. Rich stated that he had identified a person to work on this, Carl asked if he was referring to Myron, Rich answered yes. Kathe stated that she has been looking at the MVP culvert assessment and road assessment to see which would be the most beneficial. John stated that we did have a plan that had some good information, but it was a few years old now. Kathe stated that she needed photos of the Abbott Hill culvert so that we could pursue the culvert and STRAP grant. Carl stated that he did have some pictures that he would send her.

Before moving on Bob asked if with the infrastructure bill at the state level would we be looking at having bridge work done, specifically the Main Street bridge. John answered no that they had not heard anything yet about funds. Bob asked if we had received the check that was awarded at the conference with Senator Hinds a few weeks ago, John answered no that the amount to be distributed to the towns had still not been determined.

- **Police Chief Tammy Weidhaas – Discussion of the use of Code Red phone/text alerts.**

John thanked Chief Weidhaas for joining us and stated that the purpose of the discussion with her was to discuss the robo calls to residents and what they should be used for and what they are designed to be used for. Chief Weidhaas stated that this was set up by our previous Chief Dan Illicky and was unsure of his plan for them, she explained that when putting them out there are two options for the calls emergency and outreach. Placing a call as an emergency message puts it high on the queue to go out and sends the message to all avenues that people have provided phone, text, and email. The outreach option only sends the message to what people have selected as their priority form of contact. Chief Weidhaas stated that in her opinion the use of the outreach message should not be used so frequently that when it comes time for an emergency call people do not listen or pay attention to the message. She stated that this is a great resource but if used too frequently she felt it would lose its touch. She explained that she has discovered that she can create groups within the calls which was helpful when needing to alert residents of William Street recently of a water main break. Rich stated that in his opinion we should not restrict the calls and it should be used for all official business the example was given if meetings are cancelled. Chief Weidhaas stated that she has never said no to putting out a call and that it was not difficult to do just time consuming. John stated that there has already been issue with the amount of time that Chief Weidhaas has needed to spend in the office, and this did not need to add to her plate. Liz commented that for the Board of Health they are required by the RDP annual grant to put out two to three reminders per year for the transfer station. John stated that was not a problem, but he did not believe it was necessary to send a message for individual board meetings. Rich stated that in his opinion any deviation from a schedule specifically this time of year it should be utilized due to the risk of safety in poor weather. Rich did not see that we currently use the calls too frequently. John stated that he respected that they have a difference of opinion but as we see the same people every week both in person and who participate remotely, we could reach out to those people and did not need to send a message to the more than nine hundred residents who receive the calls. Carl

commented that he was going to remove himself from the calls due to the abundance of calls regarding the foot clinic, vaccination clinic and the like. John stated that they were split in opinion and to table the discussion until next week when we had the third member to help make the decision. Carl commented that we could possibly put a survey in Watts News, John stated that may be a possibility. John thanked Chief Weidhaas for her time and for joining us.

- **Town Clerk Terry Donovan – Request to appoint Holle Garvey to Board of Registrars.**

Terry was with us this evening to discuss someone she would like appointed to the Board of Registrars. Terry provided the Board with the information of this person which is resident Holle Garvey. John commented that he had no problem with this.

Rich made the motion to appoint Holle Garvey to the Board of Registrars, John 2nd, all voted Aye.

- **Board of Health – Problem property updates.**

Liz was joining us from the Board of Health to discuss a list of problem properties that are recurring fines, the list was provided to the Select Board to view. Liz stated that she wanted the Board aware of the progress that has been made. She stated that they also wanted direction from the Board as to the next steps if they would be moving further with the properties and pursuing going to court as the fees associated with that would be beyond the Board of Health budget. Jason had asked that some of them be put on a priority list specifically two of the long-standing properties 64 and 189 Route 20. Liz stated that to her understanding both properties have now been abandoned. John stated that he understood and agreed that going back and forth to court can become expensive and he asked if Mary Ann knew if any of the properties could be pursued for taxes. Kathe shared the list with Mary Ann. Mary Ann stated that at a quick glance there were two that she believed she could pursue for tax title, another she believed had been put for sale, and two others she believed had been foreclosed on by the bank. Mary Ann mentioned that the bylaw to attach the fines to tax bills had not been approved in time for this year so the fines could not be added to bills until next year. Terry added that everything had been approved with the exception of the junk car bylaw. However, Mary Ann did state that approximately \$32,000.00 has been collected in fines which is in a revolving fund and that could be used for court fees. John stated that we should set up the priority list and move forward using these funds, Liz stated that she would do that. Rich asked about a property that was not on the list on Skyline Trail that had been discussed at a previous meeting. Liz stated that the owner had purchased a home and should be closing this week and moving everything from the property. Rich asked about a property that is on Emery Street that was also not on the list. Liz answered that property has already accrued \$36,000.00 in fines and have had no response, they would not be spending any more on the property and would wait until the fines can be added to the tax bill. Mary Ann stated that an option would be to have a municipal lien certificate for the property. John and Rich thanked the Board of Health and Mary Ann for their work on this.

- **Town Administrator Kathe Warden**

- *Discussion and possible vote to accept MA DOT portable speed feedback sign for three years.*

Kathe explained that she had spoke with Francisca Heming from DOT last week who offered Chester the use of speed signs for three years. The option for the signs was to be either on a stand-alone pole or on a trailer, Kathe asked Chief Weidhaas her preference who stated she would rather them on a trailer. Kathe explained that the first three days it simply records data but after that period it will display that data on the screen. We can decide the roads that they

are placed on and Chief Weidhaas told Kathe that she had worked with them before and would take care of programming them, we will have them in three locations for two weeks. John stated that this was a good idea but to keep in mind that this is how they determine speed limits, if there is a spot on Skyline Trail that is marked at 30 mph, but this records everyone going 45 mph there could be a change.

Rich made the motion to accept MA DOT portable speed signs for three years, John 2nd, all voted Aye.

- Update on 10 Middlefield Rd.

Kathe stated that the deed had been transferred and the town officially owns 10 Middlefield Road, the old Chester Elementary School across from the Town Hall. She has the insurance information from MIIA which the Select Board needs to sign off on tonight. Kathe stated that we needed to decide what we would like to do with the building so that she can pursue an appropriate grant. Rich asked what the insurance would be, Kathe answered that it is fire and theft, and the cost is \$10,000.00 for the year. Rich asked when we could get into the building, Kathe answered that she had the locks changed and we could go in at any time. Bob thanked everyone for their work on taking possession of the school and suggested that the Select Board appoint an advisory committee to discuss ideas for the building and the next steps.

- Discussion about inequity of Vocational Transportation reimbursement from the state and to join an upper hilltown group in lobbying legislators for changes.

Kathe was informed that there are towns looking to form a Vocational Advisory Group consisting of towns that have students who elect to go to Vocational schools that must pay a tremendous amount for transportation. John stated that he had read what she had sent to them and was ok with this.

- Grants update:

Kathe provided the Select Board with a list of grants that we have been awarded over the last three years which total just shy of two million dollars, and an additional one million dollars we are waiting to receive. The grants we are waiting for are for the Fire Department one for \$645,000.00 and the other for \$388,000.00, these will help to purchase a new fire truck as well as Scott Air-Paks.

- Schedule Kristen Smidy to come to another Select Board meeting.

Kathe spoke with Gateway Superintendent Kristen Smidy who stated that she would like to schedule another time to come to a Select Board meeting. John and Rich both agreed that sounded good and to schedule her whenever it works best for her.

- Schedule Town Administrator review and contract negotiation.

Kathe wanted to schedule with the Select Board her contract review and stated that this would need to be in Executive Session. John asked when we did her review last, Kathe answered either February or March of last year. John asked if she had a time frame in mind, Kathe answered in the next few weeks. John stated the meeting on Monday February 7th would work.

Before moving to public comments Kathe had one more thing to address, she had received a letter that the town's cable license will be expiring in the next few years. The Department of Telecommunication's has requested that a committee be put together to take care of this. John stated that he has been through this before and is very familiar, this is the time to negotiate the other build outs in town. Our license is a ten year license which we can negotiate a one to ten year license. John stated that we can negotiate for the Fire Department

as well as Highway but not for residential rates. Kathe verified the time the contract expires which is three years from now. John stated that typically the Advisory Committee consists of the Select Board and anyone else who may be interested. Kathe stated that she will send a notice to Comcast that we will begin this process within six months.

• **Public Comments and Questions:**

Andy Myers had the Article written for the purchase of the land, Parcel four, on Middlefield Road by Mass Fish and Wildlife, and gave a copy to the Select Board to view. He stated that the other parcels in question five and six may still need to be voted on and that Mass Fish and Wildlife was not interested in Parcel six. They would still be doing the survey to fix the boundary lines. Rich asked if this address' the concerns of Dave Pierce, Andy answered no but that pertained to Parcel five and six which was not the concern.

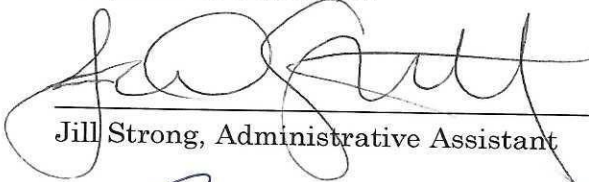
John made the motion to accept the language of the Article as written, Rich 2nd, all voted Aye.

Bob asked if we had any information on the timber harvest that had been a discussion at the Water Plant. Kathe answered that it would be going out to bid in February. Bob also asked if we knew how the town of Blandford handled their robo calls. John answered it had been taken care of by their Town Administrator and was for emergencies only. Bob stated that outreach could be posted to the website, which John agreed stating again that because they have a difference of opinion this will be revisited at the meeting next week. Bob commented that the people virtually there is some difficult with everyone hearing them and could we use a set of speakers. John answered that when we had tried this in the past it seemed to cause sound issues for everyone involved which is why we no longer were using them.

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

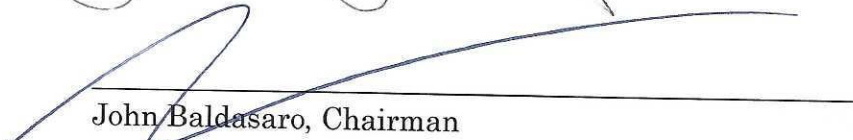
Meeting Adjourned 7:12 PM

Respectfully Submitted



Jill Strong, Administrative Assistant

1/20/22
Date Signed



John Baldasaro, Chairman

1/31/22
Date Signed



Richard Holzman, Vice Chairman

1/31/22
Date Signed



Jason Fogue, Clerk

1/27/22
Date Signed

