



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

**Monday, February 28<sup>th</sup>, 2022**

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

Select Board members John Baldasaro, Jason Fogue, and Richard Holzman were present. Town Hall staff present included Town Administrator Kathe Warden, Administrative Assistant Jill Strong, Tax Collector Mary Ann Pease, and Town Clerk Terry Donovan. Water Commissioners Bob Daley, Tom Bean, and Lyle Snide were present with Finance Committee members Andy Myers, and Andy Sutton. Highway Foreman Carl Baldasaro was present as was Jane Sutton per the agenda. Town Accountant Eric Kinsherf was participating remotely as was Elizabeth, Liz, Massa from the Board of Health along with a few Chester residents.

John called the meeting to order at 6:00 PM, warrants, minutes and all correspondence was signed.

- **Conversation with Eric Kinsherf Town Accountant about Free Cash and the procedure to remove past due uncollectable taxes from outstanding real estate taxes, and Sara Hunter Town Treasurer for monthly updates.**

Eric joined us remotely, Sara did not she was not feeling well. Eric discussed the process of removing past due uncollectable taxes from outstanding real estate taxes. He stated that initially he believed we could abate these by using ARPA funds but has discovered that this is not an option. After meeting with the Finance Team, they have discussed using Free Cash. The plan is to have Mary Ann notify the Assessors who will then get approval through the state. Eric explained that we have \$99,000.00 in Free Cash and to take care of this will take \$85,000.00. John asked if by doing this it would boost our Free Cash for next year. Eric said that he believed so and the uncollectable taxes will be gone. Jason asked if there were any benefits to doing this other than having a cleaner balance sheet. Eric answered that it was better to collect them but these are all uncollectable and the main purpose is to clean up receivables. John asked Mary Ann what her input in doing this was and if it made things easier for her. Mary Ann answered that these are all properties that have been sold and it did indeed make things easier. Eric added that it benefits the owners of the properties if there is a problem on file with an old tax bill. Jason asked if there was any other way to do this through the DOR, Eric answered no this was the only option through the DOR. Jason stated that because we do have the ARPA funds

available this would be the year to do this as we have those funds available to us in replacement of Free Cash. He commented that we do need to bring this to either Special Town Meeting or the Annual Town Meeting and there is always a small chance that the voters will not be for this.

- **Mary Ann Pease for Hilltown Ambulance requesting to apply for ARPA money.**

Mary Ann presented the Select Board with an information sheet explaining the funds that the Hilltown Ambulance was requesting. The facility needed to be rewired with a total bill from Elm Electric of \$9,100.00, and the overhead doors need to be replaced which has an approximate cost of \$10,000.00. The Ambulance is approaching all of the communities to see if they could donate \$3,000.00 from the ARPA funds to help defer some of these costs. John stated that this is a critical community service and had no problem doing this. Jason stated that although they are not a town department or infrastructure within the town, he felt that this could still be used as a line item within town costs. Mary Ann commented that if anything were to happen to the Ambulance and they are sold any revenue is distributed back to the communities. Jason brought up that based on the meeting that he attended he thought some towns would be a no and if that is the case would this be enough. Mary Ann stated that she is hoping that the first town to do this will lead and the others will follow suit. The Select Board all had no issue doing this and would put it to vote. Bob commented that Mary Ann is a wonderful advocate for the Hilltown Ambulance and wondered if before this is voted if it would be put through an application process through the Finance Committee. Jason answered yes and that he has discussed putting something together as a working document where people can create a list of what they would like to request through ARPA funds. Jason had already hosted meetings to get suggestions, but things have changed, and the money can now be used for any government service that we want with a ten million dollar cap.

- **Jane Sutton requesting to be appointed as a Library Board member to fill the remaining term for Marianne Sullivan which ends on June 30<sup>th</sup>, 2022.**

Jane was present for the meeting and the Select Board all had a chance to review her letter of interest.

Rich made the motion to appoint Jane Sutton as a Library Board member, Jason seconded, all voted Aye.

- **Accept resignation of Kathy Engwer as Water Commissioner:**

The Select Board received a letter of resignation from Kathy Engwer as Water Commissioner as she has moved out of town.

Rich made the motion to accept the letter of resignation from Kathy Engwer as Water Commissioner, Jason seconded, all voted Aye.

John stated that he appreciated all the work that Kathy has done for the town over the years, Jason agreed adding in all the capacities that she has worked for the town.

- **Tom Bean requesting to be appointed as Water Commissioner:**

Tom Bean was present for the meeting and the Select Board all had a chance to review his letter of interest and Tom has already helping with the Water Commissioners.

Rich made the motion to appoint Tom Bean as Water Commissioner, Jason seconded, all voted Aye.

John told Tom welcome aboard and thanked him for stepping up.

- **Captain Bemis Road update:**

Kathe explained that there has been an ongoing discussion as to whether Captain Bemis was still an accepted town road due to a resident's complaint who lives on Smith Road. She had received notification from the Inspector General who was asking what is going on, she reached out and sent pictures of both roads Captain Bemis and Smith Road. Upon investigation she discovered that in 2013 was not on the list but in 2019 was back on the list. She explained that this can not be done without approval and vote at a Special Town Meeting or Annual Town Meeting with a letter sent to DOT. Kathe thought that in 2018 when the GIS system was updated it could have been added in error. John agreed that was a strong possibility.

- **Water Department discussion:**

Bob opened the discussion and explained that when starting the Water Commissioners first dealt with the ACO from DEP with a list of non-compliance items. As of now they have retained Dr. Gullick from Water Compliance Solutions as a consultant, they have contracted with Housatonic Testing for bi-weekly testing at the Water Treatment Plant, and they have also hired Berlin Instruments to re-calibrate all the equipment. They are still waiting on Elm Electric for a quote on the SCADA system. Most recently they have been working to find the source of a water leak. They have worked with Mass Rural Water on multiple occasions as well as Prowler and the results have been inconclusive. There seems to be a leak on Maple Street based on a deepening depression that has been noted. The concern is the water usage is typically an average of thirty thousand gallons and as of February is up to eighty-five thousand gallons average. Tom commented that there could be a leak going into the river as they can not get to all of the isolation valves now, they need to wait for spring. There are two other valves that need to be located one at the old Cortland mill and the other near the railroad round house off Middlefield Road. There was a leak found on Middlefield Road at the old mill that Carl assisted in taking care of as well as a hydrant leak on River Front Street but even with those fixed, we are still losing water. Jason stated that he has keys to Cortland and could go there to check for water leaking, Tom asked if he could come along and to let him know when he would be doing that.

Bob went on to discuss that when the plant was originally opened it won an American Public Works Project of the year award in 1998 and is still working well. The work was done by Tighe and Bond and they have had continuous discussions with them for consultations. They have been given an extension with DEP for the ACO and the few remaining things that need to be taken care of. The instruments however are twenty-five years old and upon Berlin's assessment they suggested starting a list of prioritizing replacements. Bob commented that they need to decide on a management structure for cleaning the filters, someone who is responsible for shut offs as well as addressing leaks and issues with water meters. He understood that Kathe had spoken with someone who was interested in helping and Lyle agreed that this should be decided on tonight.

Kathe explained that she had spoke with a gentlemen Larry Turner, who is the former Water Superintendent for Hinsdale that has retired. She explained to him that we will be discussing with Blandford the creation of a shared Superintendent position, but we need help now. Because Larry has retired, he has let his licenses expire and is happy to work with us as long as Bernie was ok with him working under his licenses. Kathe has spoken with Bernie who has experience working with Larry and had no problem with this stating that hiring Larry would be the best thing we could do. Larry met with CMELD as well as Carl and said that he is willing to be our boots on the ground. He asked that he be hired as a special town employee so that he

could have insurance through the town however he would use his personal vehicle and asked that he be hired at the rate of \$35.00 per hour on call starting from the time he leaves his house until he gets home. Tom stated that before he is hired, he would like to have a conversation with him which Kathe said was fine and that she would call him tomorrow to set it up. Bob asked if everyone was ok with the \$35.00 per hour rate, Lyle commented that this would save them some money and Jason commented that this is standard as an on-call employee to be paid from the time you leave home. John stated that he believed this would be a good resource for the Water Commissioners.

Bob went on to discuss hydrant flushing which he stated will be the most important task for the fourth quarter. They have been researching private providers to conduct the hydrant flushing and reached out to Chief Small if there was interest in them conducting this and if so to put together an official proposal of a schedule and how they will be compensated. Upon doing their testing they have come to discover that the carbon levels are three times higher in Horne Pond than at the Austin Brook Reservoir which they no longer believe DEP will be able to deny switching to Austin Brook as the primary water site. John stated that if they have reached out to Chief Small continue to ask for what they need on a regular basis, and Kathe suggested that they actually reach out to Bobby Broga who has helped Chief Small with a lot of paperwork. Lyle commented that a challenge that they face is how the dosage scheme is set with flushing. As of now we can not open the hydrants and wait for them to run clear as that will deplete the treated water. John also commented that he agreed with the suggestion of using Austin Brook as a cleaner site, but the Water Operator disagrees, and this could be an issue. Carl commented that he also agreed that it is a cleaner site, but it has more turbulent during extreme weather conditions. Bob stated that he understood but this is not reflected in the testing, Tom commented that we will see what the spring brings.

Rich asked if the Water Commissioners felt that in their discussions that they had the support from the Select Board to do what they needed. The Commissioners said yes and that the suggestion of hiring Larry seems promising. Lyle stated that they are working on the budget and have factored \$24,000.00 for cleaning the filters and if the Highway Department could assist with that their time can be charged to the Water Department budget. Carl said they absolutely could do that but to keep it within the Water Department budget so that it could be tracked accordingly. Jason suggested that within the budget it be listed as contract services not Highway Department that way if an outside contractor needs to be called and billed there are no issues.

Lyle discussed the leak on Maple Street and stated that he knows they will need to dig and will coordinate with Bernie as well as Mass Rural Water. John stated that there was a similar situation years ago when the source of a leak could not be found and what happened was, they did shut offs on the main valves starting at the Water Plant but did this in the middle of the night so as not to disturb anyone's water usage. If they choose to go this route, they simply needed to let residents know of a date and time frame. Bob had drafted a robo call to go out to alert people of how they can help look for the leak. John asked who would be monitoring this because the contact number they provided is for the Select Board's office. Kathe suggested changing the contact to the Water Commissioners email so that all responses can be easily kept track of. The Water Commissioners agreed, and Lyle has access to this email. Kathe said that she would speak with Chief Weidhaas about putting out this call to see if it needed to be edited or shortened.

Andy discussed that in putting the budget together to accommodate for increases it is projected that there will need to be an adjustment to the water rate. John asked if there was a rate survey that would be done. Lyle answered that they were in the middle of doing just that. Lyle also commented that we needed to think about long term succession for a Water operator and how we can coordinate talks with Blandford or the other towns. John agreed and stated that he believed the most efficient way was to pursue the shared services and that gave us the highest chances of succeeding. John thanked the Commissioners for the update and all of their hard work thus far.

- **Highway Foreman Carl Baldasaro update:**

Carl was meant to meet with us in regard to hiring Ian Gifford, but he explained that Ian was held up at a job and would be unable to make it. He has been using Ian as a contractor to snow blow sidewalks etc. and would like to hire him as a part time temporary or seasonal employee so he could be utilized through the rest of the year for various tasks. This position would be kept under twenty hours with no benefits. Jason asked if Ian was interested in mowing, Carl said that is exactly what he was thinking.

Jason made the motion to hire Ian Gifford as a part time, temporary, and seasonal employee, Rich seconded, all voted Aye.

John commented that Carl needed to keep an eye on his budget to ensure he had enough for payroll. Jason stated that it looked like it should be ok for a while. Rich asked Carl for an update on where things were at with the Highway Department.

Carl discussed that they had Ron Radwich working with them as a temp as they are currently short staffed. He commented that Ron had worked with the proposed new Water Department employee Larry for years and spoke highly of him. Equipment right now has been an issue the Freightliner broke down which we were able to get a truck from White Wolf to use in the meantime. Carl explained that there is no charge for the use of the truck until Ron actually starts it and it is in use. The International broke down in this past storm due to issues with the sander chain but Carl thought it would be fixed this week. Last week when the weather had been warmer before the storm, they had been out fixing potholes and the mower is also fixed and CMELD had been using it last week on the hill. Carl stated that it is currently parked at Station two. He went on to discuss a water issue on Prospect Street where water was bubbling out of a catch basin and needs to get in touch with the homeowner to see if there is a problem inside or maybe a sump pump that could be the cause. John asked if the water had been tested for chlorine, Carl was unsure but stated that if not it needed to be. Bob asked Carl if there were any plans in place to clean out the catch basins as they noticed the one by the train station was filled with debris. Carl answered that this usually takes place in April but is weather dependent. Rich stated that after a meeting with PVPC the Prospect Street project is set to begin in June of this year, and it is a very complex project. He asked if Carl had a chance to follow up with Myron Marcoulier about working with him to mow, and if we could make this happen. Carl stated no that he had not had a chance to do that and when he did, he would let the Select Board know. Jason reminded Carl to get working on the document to post to the website, Carl asked if Jason would get in touch with him so they could work that out. Rich asked if there had been any progress made on the stop sign at the intersection of East River Road and Bromley. Carl answered no that he had reached out to Bartlett about creating a four way stop but has yet to hear back.

Carl had some questions about a road that he believed was discontinued that a resident had inquired about, the road had connected North Chester Road to Crane Road. John believed that was in fact discontinued but they agreed Carl should check with the Assessor's office, John also referenced a project that was done by UMASS that he thought would be helpful because it referenced the meeting date and vote when roads were officially removed from our list. John said years ago things were not always done properly so Carl should investigate each of the roads in question.

- **Town Administrator Kathe Warden:**

- ***Littleville Fair grounds and concert for June 17-19<sup>th</sup>, 2022 discussion:***

- Kathe discussed that she had met with the Littleville Fair Director's as well as Chief Weidhaas about a concert that they would like to host on their grounds this coming summer. It will be a weekend long event with camping and is intended to be an ice breaker for hosting more events. They are anticipating around five hundred people in attendance. Jason stated that we would also need to reach out to MEMA for an evacuation plan and asked if she knew the name of the group interested in using the facilities because he had just turned someone down in Chesterfield. Kathe did not off hand but said she would get the information to him.

- ***Update on meeting with Jose Delgado:***

- Kathe met with the Western Mass Representative for Governor Baker Jose Delgado in Springfield today. They discussed the money that should have been given to the town for the July rainstorms and explained to him that this money was extremely important to the town as we are fastly approaching this season again.

- Kathe has reached out to Superintendent Kristen Smidy to give information about the wood dump that is located on the Chester Elementary School grounds. We received a call from DEP stating that we need to have third party inspections of the landfill. This should have been happening but has not and they explained that going forward from July 1<sup>st</sup> this year this needs to take place. Kathe explained that it is listed properly as a wood dump and not simply a landfill, but it still needs to happen. Bob asked if there was an idea of cost for the inspection, Kathe answered that she was waiting for an answer, and they were looking at having the same inspector that does the transfer station to hopefully save on costs. Liz commented that she did get one price so far, but she was unsure what actually happens at the inspection. Kathe mentioned before moving to public comments that she would be out of the office on Thursday for a conference but would be in for a bit on Friday to wrap things up before her vacation next week. She was given a quote to replace her computer in the office of \$1,600.00 and would be putting in a request through ARPA funds.

- **Public Comments and Questions:**

- Carl asked if the piano that is in the auditorium belonged to anyone or if we could sell or part with it, he was interested.

- Jason discussed the ambulance and that he had been contacted by a few of the surrounding towns about a replacement for the service. Jason stated that this is not where he saw this going but thought that we should participate in the RFP so that we are prepared if there is a change. Mary Ann commented that she had been aware of this and agreed that she did not think anything would come of it and this has come up in the past but because of the cost of using an outside service it was not an option to all the towns. Jason had spoke to the bank about the scholarships and suggested that they get in touch with Sara. He stated that he had seen the

library was moving forward with going back into their building and wondered if the lease had been straightened out. He had received a call from the contractor about getting the renovations started and thought that this was the time to make sure everything was ironed out.

Jason said there will be a budget meeting at the school on Wednesday, there is a virtual option for anyone who would like to join. He updated us on some of the problem properties. The property that had a fire on Bromley Road should begin being torn down next week. The property that has been in question on Skyline Trail the people have moved out but have still left things on the property which the owner says is weather related and they will be working on it. Rich asked if they were accruing fines for the junk on the property which Jason answered yes.

Mary Ann asked Jason in regard to the issues in the library building if the renovations would take care of the problem with the front door. Jason said he imagined that it would he has not yet received a site plan but if it was not in there that they could bring anything up that they were concerned about. Mary Ann was told by Paul from Hilltown CDC that there should be some things monitored in regard to the mold concern. Jason told her to reach out to him if there was anything they would like him to look at.

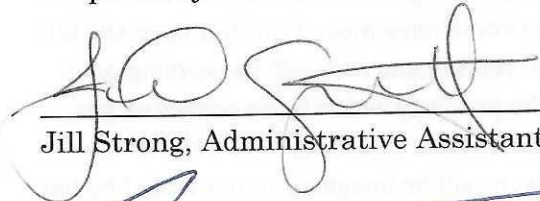
Andy Myers brought up that he had been looking at the accounting reports which have been very helpful. He had noticed that money had not been deducted from the educational stabilization account last year. This will need to go to Special Town Meeting or be addressed at the Annual Town Meeting so the payment can be made to Gateway. He let us know that Mass Fish and Wildlife had approved the purchase of the property on Middlefield Road and after the snow is gone, they would go forward with the survey.

Andy Sutton asked if there had been any decision made as to what would be done with 10 Middlefield Road the old Chester Elementary School. John answered not yet they first need to move forward with a feasibility study. Andy gave the suggestion of moving the library to that location. Rich commented that has been discussed but there is a process. John stated that first the feasibility study will be done and then it will go to the town to be voted on. Mary Ann asked if there was a group that would be coordinating this, John answered not yet.

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

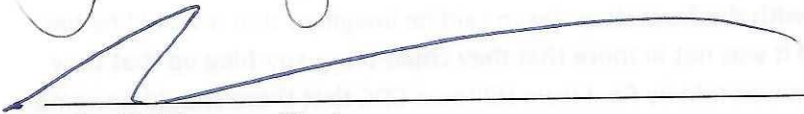
**Meeting Adjourned 8:09 PM**

Respectfully Submitted,

  
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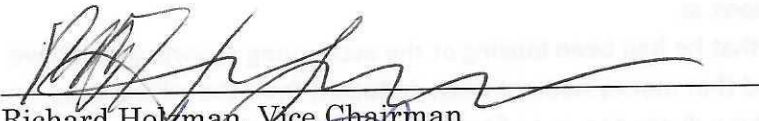
Jill Strong, Administrative Assistant

3/8/22  
Date Signed

  
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John Baldasaro, Chairman

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Date Signed

  
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Richard Holzman, Vice Chairman

3/8/22  
Date Signed

  
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Jason Fogue, Clerk

3/14/22  
Date Signed