



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

Monday, May 9th, 2022

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

Selectmen John Baldasaro, Richard Holzman, and Jason Fergie present. Town Hall staff present included Town Administrator Kathe Waden and Administrative Assistant Jill Strong, Chief Tammy Weidhaas was also present. Finance Committee members Andy Myers and Andy Sutton were present with Library Trustee Jane Sutton and Water Commissioner Bob Daley. There were also a few residents participating remotely.

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

- **Continued discussion about CDBG miscellaneous account to subsidize Huntington's ramp to Town Hall.**

Kathe opened the discussion stating that a month or so ago she had brought this up and we needed to move forward with a decision. Russell has met and discussed that they will allow from thirty-five to forty thousand to be released from these funds, we need to make a decision as well as one other community. John asked how much was in the account, Kathe answered that in total there was seventy thousand available. John asked if this was just from last year, Kathe answered no it was from all the years in the Housing Rehab account from money that has been paid back from homeowners who sold their home before it would be forgiven. Jason asked if the total was just for Chester or for the entire district, Kathe answered that it is for the entire district. John asked what the other community was that they were reaching out to, Kathe answered Middlefield. Kathe discussed that the original quote for Huntington to have this done was much lower but after Covid the price had gone up to \$140,000.00 for the ramp. John stated that he had no issue supporting this, Jason commented that this was the first time he had heard of one of the towns asking for this money, so it was not being pursued by a number of parties and also had no issue. John stated that he would be ok with doing the same amount as Russell, up to forty thousand, Jason and Rich agreed.

- **Continued discussion about Chester Theatre renting 10 Middlefield Rd. and updating women's room in Town Hall.**

Kathe stated that they were moving forward with the work on the women's room on the main floor of the Town Hall, colors had been picked out. She spoke with MIIA regarding insurance for 10 Middlefield Rd. for the three months that the Theatre planned to use it and our

premium would be \$3,496.08 per month. John asked what we were paying now, Kathe answered that for an unoccupied building it was around six thousand. Jason asked what we would be doing for the cost of the rental, Kathe answered that when she spoke to Daniel Kramer from the Theatre, they were ok with paying the cost of the insurance, but she also recommended in the contract to include that the Theatre would be responsible for the cost of water and electric also. The Select Board agreed John stating that he was fine with this as long as it covers our cost. Jason asked what would change with the insurance after the three months that they were there, Kathe answered that it would go back to the original fees and stated that she would confirm the insurance change was only for ninety days.

- **Discussion about labeling cemetery sections:**

Kathe opened the discussion stating that this was something that Jill and herself had discussed over the past year when they had been doing work at the cemetery. Pine Hill specifically is large and not labeled making it difficult to locate plots and determine sections without locating an existing burial that is on the map in the older books. Jill stated that the idea was to label the sections with a marker, they are already listed as sections A through Q. The marker would be made of stainless steel so they will last a long time, have a letter cut out of a six-by-six-inch plate and on a stake that is thirty-four inches tall. The quote is from Bedard Sheet Metal and the total for the markers to be created is \$1,046.20, which Jill commented with the cost of materials thought it was a good price. John stated that he thought this was a great idea but thought along with it we should create a map that is located somewhere at the cemetery as a key so people could easily locate sections. Kathe agreed stating that a copy of the current map could be made and turned into a board located at the cemetery we could also create a section on the town website that shows the map. Rich asked if we would be doing this at the other cemeteries in town, Jill answered not as of yet this quote to create the markers only included Pine Hill as it is very large in comparison to the others and not as easy to navigate. Jason asked where this would be paid from, Kathe answered that it would come from the cemetery fund. While discussing the cemetery Bob let us know that the Water Commissioners had checked the faucets at Pine Hill and all four are working properly.

- **Town Administrator:**

- *Preliminary discussion about the Annual Town Meeting warrant not including the budget.*

Kathe went on to discuss the draft of the warrant for the Annual Town Meeting which will take place on June 13th. The first few articles are business as usual, articles five, six, and seven all discuss the school, stating that we are going with the Alternative Assessment Method this year rather than the Statutory Assessment Method. Article eight deals with Vocational tuition costs which have not been finalized yet. Article nine is the acceptance of Chapter 90 funds, ten deals with CMELD operations, eleven is for unpaid invoices, twelve establishes a Water Department enterprise fund, thirteen also deals with the school. Article fourteen is to revote the FY22 Stabilization transfer, Kathe explained that we had received a letter from Janet at Eric Kinsherf's office about this that somehow doing this had been overlooked and not recorded on the FY22 tax recap sheet. Article fifteen is the hunting by written permission only bylaw that was proposed last year, although voted down there were enough signatures for it to be brought to the meeting again this year. Lastly, Articles sixteen and seventeen deal with establishing a police cruiser revolving fund and the limits which was discussed at the meeting last week to be created through detail charges.

John stated that we needed to look at Article seven and the name needs to be adjusted to the funding of the Alternative Assessment rather than the Statutory Assessment. Andy Myers commented that wording can be changed as we are not looking to take anything from Stabilization, Kathe asked if that is the case could this go away. Andy answered no it should be there for the vote as this is what Gateway presents to us. Kathe asked if Article five was ok, John answered yes. Jason stated that Middlefield has already had their vote and has voted for the Alternative Assessment, Kathe asked if these need to be on the warrant with other towns already voting. John reiterated what Andy had mentioned that it needs to be on the warrant because that is how it was presented by Gateway.

John asked if anything had been requested by Hilltown Ambulance this year that should have been on the warrant. Andy stated that there should have been for the ambulance replacement fund, John asked about the fire truck fund as well. Andy suggested that we check with Mary Ann and Laura about our free cash numbers as we are working to pay the uncollectable taxes through free cash which has been previously discussed. Jason asked if not having the fire truck fund on the warrant would mess up Chief Small for the grant that they were working on for the fire truck, John answered no the account currently has enough to cover them. John stated that we should wait to post the fire truck at a Special Town Meeting possibly in the fall when we have our free cash numbers for this year so that the taxes can be taken care of now.

Jason asked when the deadline for the warrant to be posted was, Kathe answered that it was seven days before the Annual Town Meeting. He wanted to do some reworking of the Junk Car Bylaw which was voted on last year that was not passed by the Attorney General. Jason thought he would talk to Town Counsel Tom Mullen about wording a part of it differently to have it revoted upon.

Andy brought up that it has been previously discussed to make the Assessors appointed rather than elected and that is something that should be added to the warrant. He also addressed the loan that was used to purchase trucks for the Highway Department, this should be amended as this has already been done and how it was funded impacts the budget. John suggested that the Article be revoted on as a former Treasurer did not pay for the trucks through the loan but through another account, determine the account the two trucks were paid from and vote to approve the transfer. Kathe said that she would talk with Eric and Sarah about this and get them hooked up with Tom Mullen so that it could be worded and done appropriately.

The next thing Andy addressed was the creation of the Water Department Enterprise Fund, stating that he had checked how it looked through Mass General Law as well as how other towns had done this. He suggested that there be a second Article to establish where the funds were coming from. The Water Commissioners were in the process of the rate study and in the next few weeks would be voting on the new water rates and hoped to hold a public hearing in conjunction with the Select Board meeting. Andy explained that the water rates had not been raised in twenty-five years and they needed to do something to fund the requirements from DEP. If everything passes the new rates will be reflected in the next water bill to go out on July 1st. Andy stated that even with the increase which will be a little over thirty percent, we still will be lower than the surrounding communities. Jason stated that Mary Ann was having issues with collecting excise taxes lately and what the plan was if they began having issues with water bills

how were they planning on paying for the Water Operator etc. if the funds have not been collected. Andy answered that is why they needed ARPA funds which would ensure they are covered for the first few months of the transitional period. John agreed that having a twenty-five to thirty thousand dollar nest egg would be a good idea. Andy stated that raising the rates should provide a surplus for the end of the year to put toward future improvements. Jason commented that he believed in the job description for Water Commissioners that rates would be determined and then proposed to the Select Board for approval. Andy stated the plan was to have the rates determined and meet with the Select Board at the meeting on May 23rd. John stated that he was fine with this and was happy to hear that the rate study was being completed. Kathe asked if the Board would like her to speak with Eric about deficit spending in the first quarter or how he would suggest setting this up for the Water Department, Andy answered yes that she should get some information from Eric. John commented that the easiest way would be to budget the additional money in the Water Department and whatever is left at the end of the year would go into free cash. Kathe stated that she would speak with Eric about this and the loan for the Highway trucks.

Chief Weidhaas asked in regard to the two articles about the cruiser fund, could there be wording added that the money could be used for equipment purchases as well. She gave the example of radios which are a big money item and could save the town in the long run as typically there is not enough money in her budget to cover expenses like that. John answered yes it could be changed to cruiser and equipment as anything they need is something that is also used on a detail.

Before moving to public comment Kathe had one more issue to discuss, a resident had emailed her about an issue with his vehicle. Back in January going up Blandford Road one of the center markers had become lodged in a tire and had sent pictures as well as an invoice, he was looking to be reimbursed for the damage at the total of one hundred dollars. She stated as this was not on the agenda they did not need to decide tonight if they all wanted to think about it. John asked how we would pay for something like that, Kathe answered that it would come from Highway general expenses. Jason commented that his only concern is what would follow and how many more complaints we would begin to receive. Chief Weidhaas stated that although sympathetic how do we know that this happened in Chester. Kathe answered that it was initially reported to the Highway Foreman Carl Baldasaro at the time of the incident. Jason asked for this to be added to the agenda for the next meeting so that they could have time to think about it.

- **Public Comments and Questions:**

Rich asked about the discussions that have been happening with the Highway Foreman about the status of projects that were and projected to happen was being worked on. Jason stated that he had created the list to be published to the town website but was waiting for input from Carl. Rich stated that he suggested in the next few meetings that Highway create a list of priorities for the next six months. This way the Select Board can hear the ideas and decide together a plan that can be accomplished with the available funds and resources. He stated that it was better to have a plan in place to show things are being worked on it a positive direction. Jason agreed stating that the sheet he created stated plans for the next thirty days, six months, and three years. John commented that after speaking with our DOT Representative Dave Stokes he was recommending paving projects that may not be necessary or urgent be put on hold as the costs are thirty to fifty percent higher.

Jason went on to discuss ARPA, he is working on having the request form created and posted to the website. There have been issues with submissions however Kathe stated that she had heard from another community they were also having issues. Jason stated that the report he had been trying to submit was due a week ago Saturday and had reached out but has not yet had a response, he offered to mail it in but was told not to. Jason stated that he was also working on the problem properties and any that were not a Board of Health related issue he was moving to Housing Court. He also asked Kathe what the status of the scholarship accounts were, Kathe answered that to her understanding they were all in LLP.

Rich asked about the heating upgrades that have been a discussion for the Fire Station on Bromley Road. He stated that he understood that the company with the quote for oil was holding the price for a month and that we should move forward with a decision. John stated that we needed more quotes to make a proper decision.


Andy addressed the on-going solar project issues at the Town Garage. He stated that a company he uses is Northeast Solar and has been happy with their service, he reached out to them about coming by to take a look at the garage and get their input. He stated that he hoped that Jason could be there, and the plan was to have them come sometime next week. Jason stated that he could and to make sure that Jeremy from CMELD could be there as well as he will be responsible for running the overhead.

Bob stated that the COA had a great picnic today at the train station with he believed forty-four people in attendance. He stated that there was some help that the Water Commissioners would need from the Highway Department. The screens at Horn Pond needed to be cleaned and believed that Highway had done this in the past. John answered yes, they had but did not believe they had in a few years as the access road is no longer as accessible. He believed the Water Operator Benie St. Martin had kept a boat up there for this purpose and that may be the only way to get to them at this point. He suggested that the Commissioners go to take a look especially now before the weeds have grown up too much. The next thing they needed done was to have the Water Department Shed located at the Town Garage to be cleaned out of any Highway Department items.

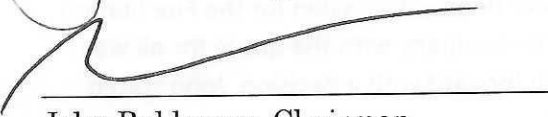
Bob stated that the work done on Friday last week by the Water Department went well and the usage is already down by twenty-five thousand gallons. They would be meeting with Mass Rural Water again this week to look at a possible other leak location on Prospect Street. He stated that the clear well which was under four feet for a while has already began to replenish and if all continues to go smoothly, they can move forward with hydrant flushing. Currently they will also be working on the brush cutting and removal as well as the recommendations from Berlin Instruments. John stated that they had the support of the Select Board and to bring forward invoices when they were received to be paid through the ARPA funds.

Rich made the motion to adjourn, Jason seconded, all voted Aye.
Meeting Adjourned 7:14 PM

Respectfully Submitted



Jill Strong, Administrative Assistant



5/11/22
Date Signed

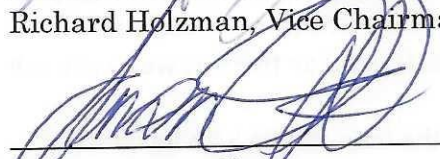
5/23/22
Date Signed

John Baldasaro, Chairman



Richard Holzman, Vice Chairman

5/23/22
Date Signed



Jason Forgue, Clerk

5/24/22
Date Signed

