



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

Monday, April 4th, 2022

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

Select Board members John Baldasaro and Richard Holzman were present, Jason Forgue was absent. Town Hall staff present included Town Administrator Kathe Warden, Administrative Assistant Jill Strong, and Town Clerk Terry Donovan. Highway Foreman Carl Baldasaro was present with Administrative Assistant Kathy Engwer, Water Commissioner Bob Daley, Finance Committee members Andy Myers, Andy Sutton, and his wife Jane were present with PVPC Grant Performance Senior Planner John O’Leary and representative for SHAEC Michele Kenney. Elizabeth, Liz, Massa participated remotely along with a few residents.

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

- **Chester Selectboard in association with Pioneer Valley Planning Commission will hold a performance hearing to review the public social serviced programs funded through the towns Community Development Block Grant Cares act program. The grants programs include the Huntington Food Pantry, Southern Hilltown Adult Education, and Hilltown Social Services Project. These programs are funded through the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development and the Department of Housing and Community Development, Massachusetts CDBG program.**

John O’Leary with PVPC introduced himself as the Grant Performance Senior Planner and discussed the Cares act program. He explained this grant was applied for in 2020 and was awarded for a total of \$100,572.00. There have been three programs through this grant Southern Hilltown Adult Education, SHAEC, was given \$41,455.00 and has served 146 individuals and 143 households. The Huntington Food Pantry was given \$36,000.00 serving 394 individuals and 166 households, and finally Hilltown Social Services was given \$10,000.00 serving 112 individuals and thirty-nine households, the remaining \$13,117.00 was for PVPC fees. John Baldasaro asked when this grant closed out, O’Leary answered that it closes out on June 30th of this year. Baldasaro thanked him for all the hard work, we had good numbers, great programs, and appreciated the work being put in. Bob asked how the numbers compared to last year, O’Leary answered that they were pretty close. Michelle commented that the Cares grant is different than the regular grant that is received and towns like Montgomery and Blandford have never been included before and has been great to have the opportunity to serve so many towns.

She stated that the numbers are higher because they are able to serve more towns. She went on to discuss some of the challenges that faced SHAEC with the Covid-19 pandemic as everything had to go remote but through grants, they were able to purchase Chromebooks for any GED students that needed them, and things have continued to be very successful. Rich stated that this is an example of the great work PVPC does for not only Chester but the surrounding communities. Michele explained that they have combined resources with the Food Pantry and are offering their Main St. office as a pickup for orders from the mobile market and they are happy to combine. Baldasaro thanked everyone for their work and for joining us.

- **Request from Eddie Harding to do an Eagle Project at the corner of Main St.:**

Eddie had not yet joined us as Kathe expected the first portion of the meeting to go much longer.

- **Request for \$15,150.00 for ARPA Funds from the Board of Health for a replacement hopper for the existing rubbish compactor at the Chester Transfer Station.**

The Board of Health has requested funds to replace the hopper at the transfer station in the amount of \$15,150.00. Liz explained that after their inspection last year they were told that DEP would no longer pass their current hopper. John commented that he remembered this discussion and was an expected cost and had no issue moving forward with this. However, Jason is the ARPA coordinator and as he was not present it would need to be given to him, they would vote on this, but it would be moved forward when Jason was back.

Rich made the motion for ARPA funds to be used to replace the hopper at the Chester Transfer Station, John seconded, all voted Aye.

- **Discussion about who will represent the town in the water shared resource with PVPC and Blandford.**

Kathe stated that someone needs to be the representative for the sought out shared services for the Water Department with Blandford along with PVPC. John stated that he believed this should be the job of the Water Commissioners along with the Town Administrator.

Bob went on to discuss that the Water Commissioners will be meeting with Mass Rural Water tomorrow in hopes to identify and isolate the source of the water loss. He explained that Tom Bean had met with Mark Boomsma on Monday at the Water Plant, and they discovered that there are beavers at the Austin Brook Reservoir. They are also planning a site visit of the plant in Blandford. In doing some work on budgets they have received some recommendations from Andy Myers and wanted to recommend him as the Financial Advisor for the Water Department. John stated that was fine and thanked everyone he appreciated the work being done and wished them luck with finding the source of the water leak. Bob stated that they are still considering his idea from a few weeks ago about isolating lines and thought they may have to do this if there are no results tomorrow.

- **Town Administrator:**

- *Continued discussion about Chester Theatre use of 10 Middlefield Rd. and updates of Chester Town Hall with possible vote to set a rent and discussion of clean out.*

Kathe stated that she spoke with Daniel Kramer again from the Chester Theatre who gave her the quote for fixing the bathroom on the main floor in the Town Hall. They plan on painting as well as covering the old linoleum floor and the quote he gave was between \$4,200.00 - \$4,800.00. Kathe explained that there was no money left in the Town Hall Repairs account and would need to do a reserve fund transfer for this but did not think it was a bad

price. John stated that he thought it was a little high and that we should reach out to some local contractors, and he would put together two or three names to contact.

Kathe reached out to MIIA about our insurance plan for 10 Middlefield Rd. and how it would work if the theatre were to rent space. She was told that we would need to re-write our policy for when they are in the building and when they leave. John stated that he was ok with that, Kathe stated that she would move forward with the policy. She and Jill went on a walk through the building last week with Ian Gifford about doing a clean out and he quoted the price of \$2,000.00 to clean out and move everything necessary from the building. John and Rich both thought that was a good price and was ok to move forward with him doing this. Kathe asked the Select Board what they had in mind to charge the theatre for rent. John verified that it would be the entire first floor, Kathe answered yes along with the bathrooms. John asked what we were paying for the insurance, Kathe said she was unsure of the number off hand but would get it for them. Rich asked how long they would be occupying the building and how much they paid to use the Town Hall, Kathe answered it would be from mid-May until mid-August and believed the rent for using the Town Hall was \$2,400.00 but would also verify that. John suggested that we should offer the rate of half our insurance to help offset the cost, Kathe stated she would get those numbers so we could continue the discussion next week.

- Continued discussion about July 2021 storm allocation:

Last week we learned that the town will be receiving \$590,034.00 in money for the July rainstorms. Kathe explained that she was told by the Accountant and Treasurer that two accounts will be set up for this money one for revenue and the other for the expenses that money will be used for. This will be earmarked for the Highway Department after paying off the DOR override of \$79,000.00. John stated that some of this also should be used to replenish the sand and gravel as well as the contract services accounts as these were expended due to the storm. Kathe asked Carl how much he anticipated he would need for the remainder of the year in these accounts, Carl answered \$30,000.00 in each should be enough. Carl asked if some should be put into salary, John answered that we should be careful about doing that as any remaining funds in that budget after July 1st would go toward Free Cash and be put into General Funds.

Rich stated that he urged Highway along with other departments that are requesting ARPA money to use this for the best possible outcome and to hope fewer recovery needs such as this are necessary. Less of a catch up or temporary fix and more of a permanent impact. John stated that the accounts in question need to be replenished then have a discussion as to what projects they would like to focus on as well as looking into Hazard Mitigation funds specifically for repairs on Abbott Hill. He stated that too much money has already been spent on this road and we should look into improving drainage and the possibility of paving sections for a long-term fix.

Rich commented that another important thing to investigate was contracted services for certain functions. John stated that this is a larger discussion as it would be a major structural change, we would need to look at data to decide if it is possible and affordable. John commented that grading although is costing more money to contract out we do have a more experienced operator and get a better result so certain situations have added value.

Andy stated that the Highway Department budget that was proposed for this year is significantly higher and hoped some of the increases could be covered by this money. John

explained that no one expected this budget to be passed one hundred percent, but the Select Board had asked Carl to come up with a budget that would cover everything he needed to take care of things for the entire year. He stated that they would be discussing projects that would be a good investment along with a budget that works while supplementing with the storm money. Carl stated that so far this year we have been lucky due to weather along with materials that have been used none of the roads have been terrible this year in compared to last year certain sections were impassable. He added that some of the numbers for his budget would indeed change as the grader he was looking to purchase he believes will cost around \$50,000.00 rather than the \$100,000.00 requested. Rich commented that was a lot of money including fuel as well as maintenance. Carl stated that he did not disagree in the idea of investigating contract services and has been great having someone like Ron but he did not like the idea of being without a piece of equipment as the grader is used in multiple circumstances even some snow storms you need the grader.

The gentlemen requesting to do the Eagle Project had still not joined us, so Kathe quickly explained what she knew about the project. She stated that his idea had been given in a handout for the Select Board to view and was asking to clean and refurbish the common area at the end of Main St. In the project he planned to remove all trash, replace boards in the benches, power wash all the bricks, trim hedges, remove any dead plants, and plant new perennials in the planters. John and Rich both agreed this was a great idea.

Before moving to public comment Kathe had one more thing to discuss. She explained that she received information and paperwork from Fire Chief Richard Small that our FCC license had expired and was alerted by the State Police after the tower was being serviced. The expiration date was January 10th, 2022 and we are now past the thirty day grace period. When Kathe reached out to the FCC about this, she was told that we should have been receiving notice about this up to six months before the expiration. The cost she was given was \$400.00 for the frequency and an additional \$200.00 for the waiver as this is a business frequency not a public safety frequency. It was explained that this was the case because when we received the authorization to use the frequency there were no public safety frequencies available and a waiver was granted. If we could not get this waiver again and had to pursue a new public safety frequency all of the radios and tower would need to be reprogrammed. The FCC told her that for an additional \$150.00 they would take care of all of the paperwork with the exception of writing the waiver. John stated that we needed to keep the frequencies as they were, and the waiver should be simple and was ok with the FCC doing the remaining paperwork. Kathe requested that this money be taken from the Fire Department budget as this would have been only a \$175.00 charge if the paperwork had been completed on time. She stated that she was disappointed and getting frustrated with the number of things that get brought to her because other departments do not feel it is their job. John agreed and stated that they had fought hard for these frequencies and was a lot of work to get it done and should not have fallen to the wayside.

- **Public Comments and Questions:**

Terry asked about the Fire Station that is on Bromley Rd. as it abuts her property. She stated that there is an accumulation of junk out back and recently an old fire truck is there as well as a snow blower. She commented that it is becoming a junk yard and wanted to know how we can go about getting it moved. John stated that they can ask the Chief about this.

Terry went on to discuss her role as Animal Control Officer, she stated that she has mailed out over one hundred dog license renewal reminders. As Town Clerk she has been working on the Annual Report and still needs something from the Select Board. She also wanted to request ARPA funds for the use of a masseuse to come in once a month for health and wellbeing of the Town employees. The Select Board chuckled and stated it is something they could consider.

Kathy Engwer had questions about Larry Turner who was hired for the Water Department and asked if the job for reading and changing water meters was ever posted. Kathe answered that it had not and when we were having problems with water, she had reached out to Larry who is the former Water Superintendent for Hinsdale. Larry offered to come in and is using his personal vehicle and because of his knowledge of water systems there was no training involved. Bob commented that he was under the impression that the job did not need to be posted and that Larry was not hired just to change meters. Kathy commented that thirty-five dollars per hour is a lot of money and thought the job should have been posted.

Kathy went on to discuss an issue that she had when issuing bills to CMELD, apparently there was a sixteen-dollar mistake and instead of crediting the account the entire check for the five different accounts was shredded. She asked if there was any type of protocol for dealing with this, Kathe answered that this has not come up since she has been here. John added that this does not make a lot of sense and needs to be fixed. Kathe explained that there have been continuous problems with bills that are split between CMELD and after speaking with the Accountant and Treasurer they suggested CMELD be issued a bill for their portion of services with July 1st suggested as a start date. John agreed that this needs to change and asked that the Accountant and Treasurer put together what of their time is spent toward CMELD and bring it to the next Select Board meeting that we have with CMELD for discussion. Andy suggested that this be placed as an article on the Annual Town Meeting warrant. John stated that they would try this first and if things did not go smoothly, it would be placed on the warrant for the town to lead.

Kathe also mentioned that according to Mass State Law anything with a cost over \$50,000.00 needs to be put out to bid and she was unsure if CMELD was doing this with the purchase of gas and diesel for the pumps located at the garage. She stated that to her understanding when Carl has gone to CMELD to inquire about the cost he was not given an answer. Carl stated that this was true and to get the cost he went to the source.

Bob had a few questions, he asked Kathe when she was in the building across the street did she notice a filing cabinet downstairs. Kathe stated that she did not but that she was not looking for one. Bob was curious because he was told that there was a filing cabinet with information about the building that he thought would be beneficial to keep. His next questions were for Carl, he first asked if the Highway Department owning their own hot box would be beneficial. Carl stated yes that a hot box allows them to fix potholes year-round as well as to heat up reclaim millings to a usable temperature. They currently are able to use Southampton's at any point but typically everyone wants it at the same time and if you have it planned and that day it rains you are not longer able to do the work you set out to do. His next question was with Mass Rural Water coming tomorrow he wanted to know if the Highway Department could have someone clean up drainage at a few locations. Carl answered that they had plans to do culvert

work tomorrow but could offer some help. John asked what the critical locations are, it was decided that a location on Maple Street is what would be needed for tomorrow.

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

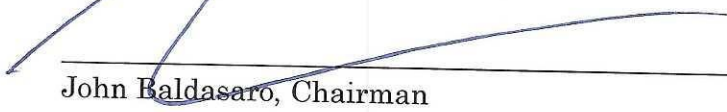
Meeting Adjourned 7:17 PM

Respectfully Submitted



Jill Strong, Administrative Assistant

4/25/22
Date Signed



John Baldasaro, Chairman

4/29/22
Date Signed

Richard Holzman, Vice Chairman

Date Signed



Jason Forgue, Clerk

5/2/22
Date Signed