



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

**Tuesday, May 31<sup>st</sup>, 2022**

Open Meeting – This meeting is held in the Chester Town Hall Council on Aging room.

Selectmen John Baldasaro, Jason Fogue, and Richard Holzman were present. Town Hall staff present included Town Administrator Kathe Warden and Administrative Assistant Jill Strong. Andy Myers and Andy Sutton from the Finance Committee were present along with Library Trustee Jane Sutton as well as Water Commissioners Bob Daley and Lyle Snide.

John opened the meeting at 6:00 PM, minutes and correspondence were signed, there were no warrants.

- **Review of Solar Agreement with CMELD:**

Due to an absence of one of the Electric Light Commissioners CMELD postponed meeting with the Selectboard however the Board chose to have a discussion of their plans. At a Selectboard meeting on March 28<sup>th</sup> the Selectboard had met with CMELD and the Commissioners to discuss a purchase power agreement as well as the purchase of Renewable Energy Certificates or “RECS” for the solar installation at the Town Garage, Pole Barn, and Fire Station. At this meeting it was agreed by the Board for the purchase price of RECS at \$26.00 per unit but no contract was finalized. After having Town Counsel Tom Mullen review the contract, he suggested that the Board not sign it as it was generically written and the language, as well as terms and conditions should be tightened up to better suit Chester. Tom also informed the Board that in the contract it was stated that the purchase of RECS was for a period of twenty years which the Board is not allowed to negotiate a contract of any length longer than five years.

John stated that he was frustrated with this project as it had begun in May of 2020 and has been feeding power to the grid with no compensation or offset of charges given to the town. He explained that the solar field at the garage is active and online and we are able to acquire reports to view the output. Andy Myers as a private citizen has gathered information about the solar project and our options. Andy’s suggestion was to do what we needed to finalize the Green Energy Grant and hand over the project to CMELD for them to take care of. The grant remaining open is preventing us from moving forward with other green grants that have been available. He stated that we need to lean on PVPC to close out the grant which is part of their contract. Jason was hesitant as there have been multiple

attempts over the past year to reach out to PVPC to do just that with no success. Andy stated that it needs to be a constructive sit down in person meeting and best case scenario they finish the grant worst case we need them to hand over any paperwork they have on the project so that we can close out the grant. Kathe stated that she would reach out to Mark Rabinsky and Jean Pfister from Green Communities for a checklist on what we need to do to have this finalized. She stated that so far, she knows she needs the interconnection approval paperwork. Jason stated that since all three units have meters that have been installed this paperwork should exist because the meters being installed would need the Electrical Inspector John Vanheyningen's sign off. Kathe stated that she would reach out to him about this. John asked if Rich as PVPC Representative has had any success with reaching out to PVPC about getting this completed. Rich answered that there was an openness to getting this resolved and as this has been a complicated issue, we need to clearly set our expectations and our desired actions of PVPC.

Andy went on to discuss that once we have the Green Grant closed his suggestion is to turn over the solar project to CMELD. There is not a lot of money to be made in the sale of RECS and if we allow CMELD to take over the project and claim all the credits in return the three locations should not receive any further electric bills. John stated that he was ok with this option, and it was time for a change. He stated that the initial conversation with CMELD had gone well discussing a purchase power agreement however when they came to our meeting in March it had been decided that they only wanted to purchase the RECS. He commented that he was disappointed that no one from CMELD joined them this evening to discuss this and was the second time meetings have been cancelled, questioning what were the benefits the town was getting from working with CMELD. Twenty percent of the time spent on the audit as well as the Treasurer and Accountant is spent on CMELD and therefore they should be responsible for twenty percent of the cost, Rich and Jason agreed.

Rich had written a suggested Article for the Annual Town Meeting Warrant which would create an Energy Committee. Rich read the suggested Article with a copy provided to the other Selectboard members. John stated that he had no objection to this, Jason asked if the Electric Light Commissioners would be eligible to be on this Committee. Rich answered no that he felt it should be independent of Electric Light and the Selectboard. Jason asked what authority they would have, John answered none they would be advisory and provide the Board with recommendations. He commented that we need to take control of the future of Chester. Rich agreed stating that this is not a political fight but a pursuit to get what is best for our community. Jason asked who would appoint this Committee, Rich answered that it would go through the Selectboard. John stated that there needs to be language in the Article explaining who and how the Committee is appointed. Kathe reminded everyone that this needs to be together for the Warrant to be posted which needs to happen in three days. The Selectboard was fully on board with pursuing this Article being added to the Annual Town Meeting Warrant as well as pursuing handing over the solar project to CMELD in return for no electrical charges to the buildings in question.

- **Review ATM Warrant and Budget for Annual Town Meeting on June 13<sup>th</sup>, 2022:**

Other than adding the Article that was just discussed there were no major changes to the Warrant for the Annual Town Meeting. Kathe commented that we can remove the Regional Agreement for the school as it was voted down by Montgomery. Jason asked if this could be left on so that we could still vote even with the known outcome, Kathe answered yes that she would leave it on.

The budget has been updated as per the recommendations of the Selectboard. Andy stated that once the Finance Committee had met again to go over the Selectboard recommendations they only

disagreed on one department which was the Police Department. Andy explained that the Finance Committee did not agree on the increase and instead suggested a five percent increase for salary for Police Chief as well as Department salaries. They had met with the Blandford Finance Committee who also agreed on the five percent increase. Andy stated that the Warrant would present the higher amount, but the Finance Committee would have another sheet listing their suggestions to present at the Annual Town Meeting and that Police Chief Weidhaas should also be there to explain her requests in the budget. Another suggestion that Andy brought up was to go over the budget section by section rather than have it approved as a whole. Kathe stated that she needed to have this together to be posted in time and the Selectboard simply needed to sign the final page and she would make the necessary changes tomorrow. A copy of the Warrant and the budget would be placed on each chair at the Meeting for people to follow along.

- **Possible discussion about Water Rates with Water Commissioners:**

The Water Commissioners provided a handout with the proposed new rates following their rate study, there were two breakdowns one with a thirty-three percent increase, the other thirty-eight percent. The Commissioners were proposing the second option the increase of thirty-eight percent. There was a notation on the handout explaining that although rates will have a significant increase, we are still considerably lower than the surrounding communities. The average annual rate for Chester is listed at \$475.00, Blandford at \$846.00, and Huntington at \$800.00 plus. Lyle explained that it converts to an increase of thirteen dollars per month for the average user. John commented that this was very reasonable and thanked the Water Commissioners for their work stating this gets us much closer to where we need to be, the Water Department has not been properly funded in many years not allowing us to make the necessary improvements to our water. The Selectboard was fine with the suggested water rates by the Commissioners. Rich commended the Commissioners on the phenomenal progress that has been made and the relationship they are building with DEP. Lyle explained that they had met last week with Tighe and Bond about an Assessment Management Grant that would be perfect for our needs. It works to provide a GIS distribution system rather than the current maps which they have found are not always reliable. The grant proposal is being worked on and is due by August 12<sup>th</sup>. Bob stated that the next critical thing they will be looking at is flushing which they are meeting again with Mass Rural Water on Thursday.

- **Town Administrator update:**

Kathe did not have anything further to discuss this evening. Jason asked if we should continue the discussion of the mowing bids. Kathe answered that she had it on the agenda for next week.

- **Public Comments and Questions:**

Jason stated that he was still waiting for help on the reporting process with ARPA that he had reached out to the U.S. Treasury about eighteen days ago. He also discussed that prior to Chester on Track he was contacted by Barbara Huntoon about having Emery Field mowed for the event and the Foundation agreed to pay for half of the cost to have Sam Mazzaferro who put in a mowing bid take care of it. Jason would like to pay for the other half of this cost. Kathe said he just needed to make sure that she received our copy of the bill and would have it taken care of.

Rich asked how things were going with the cemetery cutting. Kathe had seen Don Gauthier who currently does this and went over the remaining funds for the year and to coordinate a schedule to not go over budget. Jill commented that she knew that Pine Hill had been completed for Memorial Day but had heard Fisk Eastman on Bromley Road had not. Jason stated that the only mowing bid we received did not include the cemeteries.

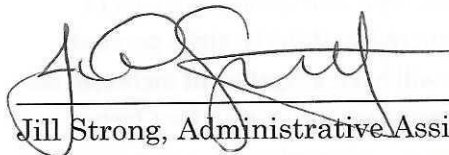
Andy Myers let everyone know that this Saturday the Chester Hill Association is putting on a pancake breakfast and craft fair from 9:00 AM to 2:00 PM. He explained that this will replace Maple Fest which they had been unable to do because of the Pandemic. He stated that there will be no wagon rides, but the Police Department was informed of the event.

Bob asked if the Selectboard could request the Highway Department to mow and cut brush along Reservoir Road. John stated that they would ask.

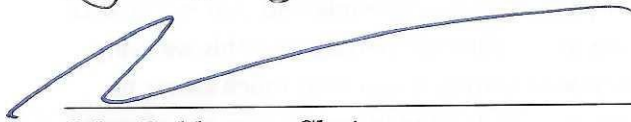
Jason made the motion to adjourn, Rich seconded, all voted Aye.

**Meeting Adjourned 7:01 PM**

Respectfully Submitted

  
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Jill Strong, Administrative Assistant

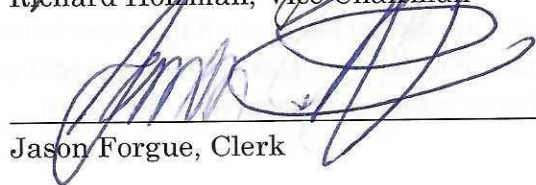
6/8/22  
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Date Signed

  
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John Baldasaro, Chairman

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Date Signed

  
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Richard Holzman, Vice Chairman

6/8/22  
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Date Signed

  
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Jason Forgue, Clerk

6/22/22  
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Date Signed

