



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

**Monday, June 6<sup>th</sup>, 2022**

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

Selectmen John Baldasaro, Jason Forgue, and Richard Holzman were present. Town Hall staff present included Town Administrator Kathe Warden, Administrative Assistant Jill Strong, Town Clerk Terry Donovan, and Tax Collector Mary Ann Pease. Finance Committee members Andy Myers and Andy Sutton were present with Library Trustee Jane Sutton, Water Commissioner Bob Daley, as well as Moderator Barbara Huntoon and Highway Foreman Carl Baldasaro.

John opened the meeting at 6:05 PM, warrants, minutes, and all correspondence was signed. There was an issue connecting to the virtual meeting platform and the meeting could not be opened so we proceeded with the in person meeting as to not hold things up.

- **Mary Ann Pease – Tax Collector – increasing the municipal lien certificate fees:**

Mary Ann explained that when people are purchasing properties or refinancing a municipal lien certificate, MLC, is requested and has been charging twenty-five dollars. As we have municipal water and electric this will show here as well as any taxes that have not been paid. Mary Ann stated that as of March 30<sup>th</sup> this year she has collected approximately \$1,800.00 in fees. She asked if the Selectboard would support her in raising the fee to fifty dollars as of July 1<sup>st</sup> the start of the new fiscal year as many other towns charge more than we do, and the Registry of Deeds has also raised their fees. The Selectboard all agreed that they would support this commenting that it could be raised more than what she was requesting. Mary Ann thanked the Board stating that she would start here and if there were no problems, we could revisit it again the next year. Rich asked what the surrounding communities similar to ours were charging, Mary Ann answered that she was unsure she did not check with all of the towns.

Jason made the motion to raise the municipal lien certificate fee from twenty-five to fifty dollars, John seconded all voted Aye.

- **Review, discussion, and possible vote for mowing bids:**

At the meeting on May 23<sup>rd</sup>, we opened the only bid that was received for mowing town properties which was from Sam Mazzaferro. Sam's bid included the Emery Street ballfield at \$4,625.00, Hampden Street Park at \$1,600.00, and the town center properties 10 and 15 Middlefield Road as well as the monument at \$2,625.00, he did not submit a bid for any of the town cemeteries. Rich asked Jason who has been taking care of Emery Street what his opinion of the bid was and how



approving a variance for allowing more than one dwelling unit on any property as he thought it could cause problems. John commented that before going down this path with this resident as well as what was being done at Brookside Lodge, they should look carefully at the zoning bylaws and may need to more tightly define or alter the wording and suggested to Rich that the Planning Board begin this process.

- **Town Administrator:**

Kathe stated that "Juneteenth" will be observed by the state on Monday, June 20<sup>th</sup>, and wanted to know if the Selectboard was still ok with this. She also wanted to confirm that the Selectboard meetings would move to the summer schedule of the second and fourth Monday of every month rather than every week. John stated that they were, the Annual Town Meeting is next week, the 20<sup>th</sup> would be observed so after resuming June 27<sup>th</sup> it would move to the summer schedule. He asked Kathe if the Theatre was aware that we would need the auditorium next week, she answered that they were. Mary Ann asked if there was a contingency plan to continue the Annual Town Meeting on the following night if things started to go too late. John answered that the plan was to complete everything but that evening they would see how things go and if necessary, could continue to another night.

Rich stated that he would like to pursue the Highway Superintendent position being posted as it has been two years with a temporary position. Posting it would allow the Board to interview people and hire someone who best fit the position. John stated that as Carl is his brother and would be most likely applying for the position, he wanted to recuse himself. Jason stated that as we will be passing the budget next week we should wait until this happens, so we have an accurate number to post for salary with the position. Rich stated that in his opinion the Highway Superintendent should be a salaried position rather than hourly the same as the Town Administrator with a possible winter adjustment that would be based on the intensity of the winter. Jason stated that he disagreed and what you would be saving in overtime from the Superintendent you may have to spend in contracted services to ensure plowing is completed. Mary Ann asked if our Highway Department has summer hours, Kathe answered no they are five days 7:00 AM to 3:30 PM. John commented that there has been no request for this. Rich stated that other towns do this and believes that there is some flexibility in the budget and a structural change is necessary. Jason stated that proper wording needed to be determined for the posting to include no overtime and in the proposed budget to be voted on next week there was not enough money in contract services to cover plowing. Jason asked Rich if PVPC had agreed to do the contract service analysis that was discussed at a previous meeting. Rich answered no that they had not, but he thought that we needed to decide here what we want and what is in the best interest of the town. John commented that they had just finished the budget process and money can not be moved between salary and expenses without a town meeting vote. Rich stated that his idea for more contract services is thought that because we have had issues with equipment upkeep contractors using their own equipment would create less of a problem for us.

- **Carl Baldasaro Highway Foreman – update on issues, work priorities, and activities, current to November:**

Carl opened commenting that he agreed that there are ways to do things more efficiently, that we could all do better to make things more organized. Currently the Highway Department is working on grading roads and has hired Ron from White Wolf, they are working on Smith Road and will be moving to Kinnebrook then coming downtown to work on Round Hill. Carl discussed some of the projects that are on his list to be completed working on culverts, specifically one on Johnson Hill



Carl answered he did not know off hand at the moment but that it was on the list. Bob asked what the timeline was for the culvert on Abbott Hill Road. Kathe answered that particular project was being run by Westfield Wild and Scenic to get the permits and engineering done but explained that it is a long project because it includes DEP. Kathe stated that the engineering had just been put out to bid and estimated a two-to-three-year project. Rich asked when the Prospect Street project was planned to start. Kathe answered that the final information was being requested by the Chief and things should be going out to bid next week.

A resident brought up a few spots that needed attention for mowing, at the bottom of Johnson Hill he explained there is so much overgrowth by the bridges that it is very difficult to see and was concerned that it was becoming a safety issue. Also, at the top of Johnson Hill exiting to Skyline Trail he explained that it should be cut back approximately two to three hundred feet to have proper visibility. The last location he mentioned was the intersection of Bromley and East River Road at the stop sign it should also be cleared around two hundred feet for proper visibility. Carl thanked him stating that he was telling the right person.

Before moving to public comment Kathe wanted to discuss a few more things the solar project, she explained that she had been in contact with PVPC, and they were waiting to hear when we were able to meet. She also explained that she had been in contact with the Inspector General's office regarding the resident on Smith Road and was asked to set a date for a fall meeting to announce the discontinued roads for winter. Carl commented that he had a run in with this resident when he was on the road looking at property for a resident that was requesting a driveway permit and was threatened by the person Kathe was discussing.

- **Public Comments and Questions:**

Andy Myers stated that regarding the solar project he believed that we should move forward with turning everything over to CMELD for the credits so that we could discontinue our electric bills at the locations. John stated that he would be happy to do this once we are able to meet with them to have a discussion, commenting that the first step is to get the Green Grant closed. Andy stated that he had drafted a letter to send on behalf of the Selectboard and thought they should go forward with sending that. Jason asked if a new meeting date had been proposed after the last was cancelled, Kathe answered no she had not heard anything yet. John stated that he would like to have a discussion on town floor at the Annual Meeting next week to put things in motion with a clear message.

Andy stated that he has also been in contact with Mass Fish and Wildlife, and they are working on the survey for the land on Middlefield Road they are interested in purchasing. Andy explained that they were having a difficult time as the maps do not match the deeds so this would not be closed out by the end of the fiscal year as they had initially planned. However, they were not going to give up, the initial appraisal was for one hundred thousand dollars, but they expect to have it go up as there is a discrepancy in the amount of acreage. John thanked Andy stating that he was glad this was happening as we would not have been able to pay for this to happen alone.

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

**Meeting Adjourned 7:56 PM**