



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

Monday, July 11th, 2022

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

Selectmen John Baldasaro, Jason Forgue, and Andy Sutton 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. Highway Foreman Carl Baldasaro was present with Admin. Assistant Kathy Engwer. Water Commissioners Bob Daley and Lyle Snide were present along with Finance Committee member Andy Myers, Jessica Sakaske from the Rec. Committee, Library Trustee Jane Sutton, and Planning Board Member Richard Holzman. Nicholas Chiusano and Elizabeth, Liz, Massa from the Board of Health participated remotely along with several residents both present and remote.

John opened the meeting at 6:08 PM, warrants, minutes, and any correspondence was signed. He apologized we were running a few minutes behind everyone had been across the street handing out water.

Before going into the agenda John opened the meeting with a discussion of the water situation in Chester that has been ongoing since Friday last week. He stated that on Friday a State of Emergency was declared around 10:00 am, the clear well at the water treatment plant had gone empty due to a water line break. As of now the line has been repaired and water is back on. He thanked everyone for their hard work and for their response as well as thanked all the residents for their patience. The Water Commissioners Lyle, Tom, Bob, and new Water Department employee Timmy Moriarty, as well as Mass Rural Water and Mark Boomsma all worked through the weekend to get this fixed. John discussed that this was a serious situation and we needed answers as to why this happened, the surrounding towns Fire Departments were all on standby and a lot of people stepped up but that we needed an official answer. His first question is that he had been under the impression that the alarms at the plant had been turned off and wanted to know if that was in fact true.

Lyle answered that Elm Electric has since been at the plant to test the alarms as they were told by the Water Operator Bernie St. Martin that he never received an alarm to alert him of a problem. John stated that when you call the number for the plant the automated system that tells you information was stating that the alarms had been deactivated. Bob confirmed that was correct and as of now Elm did not find an issue with the alarm system. Lyle stated that they were told the alarms were deactivated on Friday morning once the Water Operator saw the condition of the clear well. John stated that there were too many unanswered questions and asked when the SCADA system first was showing a spike in

that years ago when he was a member of the Selectboard the Water Operator had resigned and they had sent a few people to school in Connecticut to get their license. John stated that he remembered that, and they have tried that on multiple occasions and each time when the person is close to finishing and getting their license, they leave the town.

Mike asked if there was or would be an emergency plan in place to prevent this from happening again and residents are without water for three to four days. Jason Forgue answered that the Water Commissioners and Selectboard have been actively using ARPA funds for data collection and making improvements to the water plant. John commented that he would like to see the data alerts or alarm go to more than one person but stated that within two hours of being notified of the problem eight hundred cases of water had been ordered and was available in less than twelve hours which was a good response time. Another resident asked if we had an emergency water supply, John answered that we did not but that was something he wanted to do going forward have things available on hand. A resident participating remotely asked when we would be handing water out again this week, Kathe answered that MEMA would be back the next two days and the plan was to be across the street again from 4:00 pm – 6:00 pm. Kathe asked for volunteers to help as she had an appointment tomorrow evening and would not be able to stay the entire time, Bob stated that he and Ann would be there to help. Bradley asked if we were to get more water if we could ask about getting gallon bottles rather than the individual bottles, Kathe answered yes, she would check and stated our first order with Polar we took what they had available on hand and would be able to get to us that day. Mike suggested reaching out to the local breweries for water donations.

John stated that to lift the boil order we needed two clean tests from DEP, one had already been done so if it is clean and another tests clean tomorrow we could have water back by Thursday. Jason Green asked if there was a high and low level alarm system, John nor the Water Commissioners were sure of this and would check. Andy Myers suggested alerting the other towns Water Department as to what happened in Chester. Kathe stated that if the Water Commissioners decided that they would like to talk with Springfield to let her know as this had been initiated by MEMA and could use our mutual aide agreements to make this happen.

- **Update from Highway Foreman Carl Baldasaro and discussion and possible vote for using Storm Relief Funds for FY22 outstanding invoices:**

As Carl is John's brother John has recused himself from this discussion. Carl went on to discuss the funds that he is requesting for past invoices. He explained that the contract services and gravel accounts were depleted by the storm damage last July. He initially asked for thirty thousand dollars out of the storm funds and did not want to ask for more because thought if it was not needed it would have the account in excess at the end of the fiscal year and the money put to general funds rather than stay with the Highway budget. He also stated that the diesel account is short, and we are all aware of the price increases this year.

Andy Sutton asked about the dates on some of the invoices commenting that some where from June of this year. Carl answered that it has been continual repair from the storms last year. Jason added that it took awhile to get the money for the storm allocation and the Highway Department was playing catch up. Carl stated that they should be in good shape for this coming year if there are no major weather complications as they have put a lot of material down and done some cleaning and a lot to assist with mitigation.

Jason asked what was left in the contract services and gravel accounts as of now. Kathy Engwer answered that both accounts were at zero they have been paying invoices through other accounts that

The Selectboard had all received the official email from Kathe giving her resignation as the Town Administrator. John thanked Kathe for her work the past few years stating that she had gone above and beyond, had been a pleasure to work together, and wished her success in Becket. Kathe thanked the Board and explained that she had put a general advertisement for the position together and suggested to get it out as soon as possible. She stated that her last day would be August 3rd and offered to help on Monday nights for meetings as well as to monitor emails if the position is not filled before and suggested looking at an interim person. She stated that she has already spoken with Barbara Huntoon who offered to help do the meeting minutes as Jill will be gone on maternity leave by the end of August as well. John asked if she had spoken to anyone who already was interested in the position, Kathe answered that she had spoken in person to one and heard of another but nothing definite. Kathe explained that the only grants that were open right now were the Green Community Grant for the solar that is being worked on as well as the MVP grant which she stated involved three communities and if all goes well, she will let Blandford know that they should be the one to take the lead on this. Andy Myers stated that the Energy Committee could help with the Green Community Grant. John stated that we should get the ad posted and go from there, Kathe stated that she would post it to the town website as well as to the STAM and MMA sites.

- **Appointments for FY2023 continued if necessary:**

Kathe stated that Jessica Sakaske needed to be appointed to the Recreation Committee and that she had been told by Rich Holzman that James Higby was interested in the Energy Committee. Jason asked if we had received a letter or the paperwork from James, Kathe answered no.

John made the motion to appoint James Higby to the Energy Committee contingent on him agreeing to the position and completing the paperwork with the Town Clerk, Andy seconded, all voted Aye.

Jason made the motion to appoint Jessica Sakaske to the Recreation Committee, John seconded, all voted Aye.

- **Town Administrator update:**

Before moving to public comment Kathe had a few more things to discuss. She stated that they would be doing water distribution again tomorrow from 4:00 – 6:00 pm and would continue through the week as needed, a robo call would go out again. Once we receive the clear results from DEP the boil order would be rescinded.

The other thing she wanted to inform everyone of is that the House had just passed a bill that would mandate remote access and participation to all meetings such as the Selectboard, Planning Board, Finance Committee, Fire Department etc. by April 1st, 2023. She explained that as of now no funding has been released to assist with this transition and we should begin to think of how and where we could make this happen.

- **Public Comments and Questions:**

Jessica let us know that this Friday would be the second movie night hosted at the ballfield on Emery Street and encouraged everyone to attend.

Andy Myers asked if the meeting with CMELD that had been cancelled had any talks of being rescheduled. John stated that there had not been anything yet, but the Board needed to follow up and get it rescheduled. Kathe stated that Jill Moretz would be back next week from vacation, and she would speak with her about it.

Several others thanked Kathe for her dedication and service to the town stating that she would be dearly missed and had been a wonderful teacher.