



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

Monday, February 13th, 2023

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

Selectboard members John Baldasaro, Jason Fogue, and Andy Sutton were present. Town Hall staff present included Town Administrator Don Humason, Administrative Assistant Jill Strong, Town Clerk Terry Donovan, and Tax Collector Mary Ann Pease. Water Commissioner Bob Daley was present with Finance Committee member Andy Myers, Planning Board member Rich Holzman, and Library Trustee Jane Sutton. Moe Boisseau, Irv Williams, and Jim Burke were present representing Littleville Fair.

John opened the meeting at 6:04 PM, warrants, minutes, and any correspondence was signed.

- **Public Hearing and vote to seasonally abandon road maintenance:**

John explained that this is something that needs to be done every year and we have not successfully done this in recent years. There are three roads that this applies to, a section of Kinnebrook Road to the Worthington town line, Smith Road from Captain Bemis Road also to the Worthington town line, and Round Hill Road from Park Knox to the last residence. He stated that these sections should be clearly marked by signs stating the road is closed for the season. He asked if there were any questions about this procedure, there were none.

Jason made the motion to seasonally abandon road maintenance for the winter to all applicable roads, Andy seconded, all voted Aye.

- **Littleville Fair Music Festival June 24th, 2023:**

Jim Burke opened the discussion stating that they had asked for this meeting so that the town was aware of the intentions of this music festival. The Littleville Fair is working with the Mass Cultural Council to build a new bathhouse with handicap access and hopefully a couple showers. They are holding this festival in addition to some other events in hopes to raise the money they need to match the grant which is \$110,000.00, their goal is to actually raise \$200,000.00 to cover additional expenses as there is a \$300,000.00 building cost. The festival as of now will have three bands and open on the 24th at 1:00 PM, with bands starting at 3:00 PM, and hoping to have everyone off the property at 10:00 PM. They are working with Skyline Brewery to be a beer vendor for the event and wanted to know any requirements from the town. They are expecting between five hundred and one thousand people, commenting that on a good fair day they typically have around eight hundred people. He explained that the food booth will be open, and Skyline will have beer and possibly wine but no hard liquor. John stated

that they would need to apply for a one day liquor license and suggested speaking with Chief Dubiel about having a detail officer for the event. Jim stated that Skyline would be applying for the liquor license and asked if they suggested having just one officer, John stated yes one would probably be fine, but they should talk with the Chief. Jim also stated that after speaking with Jill she would be reaching out to MEMA for a communication trailer for the event to improve cell service in the area. Jason asked if their license with the Board of Health was annual, Jim answered yes, they should be all set and they will be serve safe certified as well.

Jason asked where they were at with all the projects going on at the fairgrounds, Jim answered that the food booth renovations are complete as well as the fire suppression system. Jason stated that he would need to do an inspection as Building Inspector before the liquor license in granted. Don asked if there is a noise ordinance that they should be aware of, Mary Ann answered she believed it was 10:00 PM. Jim thought they would be fine as they planned to have everyone off the property by then. Jim stated that they will be charging thirty dollars for tickets, and they are looking for craft vendors also. John commented on the Wi-Fi at the property stating that it should not cost nearly as much as what Comcast had suggested when they were at the fair this past year and suggested reaching out to the Comcast rep about the community outreach that they need to do every year. The Board thanked everyone from the fair for joining us and wished them luck with the event.

- **Vote on in person vs. mail in ballots for local elections:**

This is something that has been discussed at previous meetings but as we are approaching our town elections we needed to hold an official vote to proceed. Terry has suggested that we not do mail in ballots for local elections as there is so much extra work and cost associated with doing this. Rich asked if absentee ballots would still be honored, John answered yes and this would only be for local elections state and federal still offered mail in ballots. John asked all that were present who were in favor of opting out of mail in ballots to please raise their hand. All present at the meeting who were residents of Chester raised their hands, there were none opposed.

- **Town Clerk update King Information:**

Terry stated that she is going ahead with King Information system completing our records clean up. She has them scheduled to come to Town Hall to start the process on March 20th, at a previous meeting we discussed us emptying the vault of all records and the racking system rather than paying them to do this task. The Board had suggested having the Highway Department help to do this and Terry asked if she should reach out to them with the date, John stated that they would take care of organizing that with them.

- **Highway Department:**

The Board was given the applicants for the Highway Administrative Assistant at the last meeting and now need to schedule the interviews. There were a total of five applicants, John asked if they wanted to cut down who they would be interviewing or schedule everyone. Andy answered that he thought they should interview everyone and that it should be quick. John asked if this Thursday the 16th would work for everyone, everyone agreed to February 16th at 5:30 PM. Don asked if they should be scheduled times for the applicants, John answered that it would need to be an open meeting so all are welcome to listen in to the entire meeting, but he thought assigning time spots in fifteen-minute intervals would be fine.

Andy discussed some project ideas on how to spend the remaining WRAP funds which need to be spent by the end of June. Some of the suggestions have been to pave the section of Emery Street by the train bridge as well as some guard rails. John thought that the paving would be too late to be taken

care of using this money but that guardrails was a good suggestion, sections of East River Road and Johnson could use them. Andy stated that there are a few vendors they can look at through FRCOG. Jason asked if it could be used for some of the tree removal, Andy answered that the money was pretty specific to road repairs not road side maintenance. Jason also suggested the small section of Bromley Road that has had problems since it was paved in 2021. John commented that was worth looking at and could be a small enough section that the money available would be enough, and we could look at smaller paving companies that do driveways etc. for that. Bob asked about the culvert replacement that is needed on Johnson Hill, Andy stated that he was instructed that before we spend a bunch of money on that it would be in our best interest to have an engineering study done and had been speaking with Bill Murphy from the Prospect Street project if they would be interested and available to do that for us. John stated that Moe Boisseau had let him know that he has one thousand to fifteen hundred yards of stone and rock that could be available to us, commenting that this could be good back fill material for Johnson Hill.

Bob stated that the pre-construction meeting for Prospect Street went well last week, the Water Commissioners were asked to ensure that the hydrants and valves on the street were operable. Last week on Friday they were able to flush hydrants, and everything is working properly. He was told that Bill will have the ground penetrating radar equipment this week on Thursday on the site.

Andy stated that he was working on the excess equipment that we have spoke of in the past going to auction. Jason asked what the company he had spoke to had told him was the percentage they receive; Andy did not know the answer yet and was waiting to hear. Jason gave the name of two auction companies that he knew of that do a lot of municipal auctions and suggested reaching out to the both of them as well to compare. John asked if there was a list of equipment, Andy answered as of now two things for the Highway Department the F350 and the grader. Bob commented that the COA van also could be listed, Andy stated that he would speak to Ann. John stated that there is a welder in the water shed that used to be used by the Water Department that we could see if this was worth adding to the list. Bob asked what the status was of the hot box that was ordered, Andy answered that it should be here in the next month or so.

Andy stated that we still have not received any records for the Highway Department that Kathy Engwer had. He had spoken with Chief Dubiel about having her visit Kathy to get them from her while she is working in Huntington. Jason asked that before we do this that we reach out to Chief Garriepy in Huntington so that he is aware. Andy went on to discuss that an Executive Session is needed to discuss things with a Highway employee. John stated that he needs to be notified seventy-two hours in advance with a right to have council or a person of his choosing present. John asked that it not be this week, Andy commented that the employee would be out on vacation next week also. John commented that it should be done during work hours or the employee will need to be paid overtime to come in. The Board all agreed to schedule the Executive Session for Tuesday, February 28th at 11:30 AM.

- **Steinhard & Hamilton Scholarships:**

Don stated that he was contacted by the guidance counselor at Gateway asking if both scholarships would be available this year. John answered yes, they are available every year, and asked what happened with the recipients this year who were having trouble receiving their funds. Jason stated that everything should be fixed now, the check for the recipient in question had been cut last week. He stated that the process needs to be improved so this does not happen again. John stated that Gateway has all of the instructions on the scholarships and the guidance counselors should be working to ensure that all Chester students get the applications and information. Jason stated that the information is

published on the school website for students to look at themselves but nothing is done to reach out to students letting them know there are scholarships they are eligible for. John suggested that we put the information on the town website as well. Jason commented that he knew the scholarship from the Chester Hill Association was having the same issue, Mary Ann commented that the Alumni Association also had the same problem they did not think enough students knew about the scholarship with only one applicant in the past year. Jason stated that we could all do a better job with marketing them, Don asked if there was a limit to the scholarships, John answered the Steinhard goes to the student with the highest GPA, the Hamilton is divided among the applicants.

- **Town Administrator report:**

Don stated that he had been contacted by James with the Chester Theatre asking if they would have the same relationship this year and would be able to use the space at 10 Middlefield Road that they had last year for rehearsal. Jason asked if we had ever received payment for their use last year, Andy Myers commented that he thought Kathe Warden had worked out a deal with the Theatre as a trade for using the space they did the bathroom renovations in the Town Hall. Jason stated that he was not sure if it was an even trade, he believed they were responsible for paying to offset the insurance as well as any electric or water bills for the building. Mary Ann stated that she knew they had paid the electric bill while they were using the space but was unsure of any other payments. John stated that there should be a folder created by Kathe that would have the information and that he was open to the same arrangement the cost would be to offset the insurance and any bills while they are using the space. He suggested Don reach out to Kathe directly to get information, he said he could do that and that he would be having a meeting with the Theatre coming up.

Don discussed that the Board had received an official invitation from the Chester Foundation to participate in Chester on Track and the parade on May 20th. He also asked what our protocol is for the Memorial Day parade and anything that he should know when setting things up. John answered that we did not typically organize this event, the Historical Society has for the past few years. Don stated that he would reach out to them.

Don discussed that he had met with our Rep from Colonial Life who offered some information he thought could be helpful with our HR issues. They also discussed holding an information fair for all the town employees so they could learn about their benefits and what they are eligible for. John stated that was good and previously this had been done every year and would like to get back to doing that.

Don has made some progress with the National Opioid Settlement that is going on, the online portal for the town has been set up. John asked how much would be allocated to Chester, Don answered that there would be several payments over the next few years, this year we will get one payment of \$707.18 and a second of \$251.76. Don said he would get more information as he believes there will be restriction on how the money can be spent.

At the last meeting when speaking about the Chester Cultural Council Jessica Sakaske volunteered to be the Chair. The Rep for us Timothea has been in touch with her and the report that was necessary has been taken care of. Now we are working on getting everyone paid from the grants last year and get the Committee together to meet to discuss the awards for this year. Timothea would be coming in from Boston to meet with everyone coming up.

Don had another meeting with PVPC to discuss our IT options which he stated went very well. A company they suggested was Novis Insight who they believed Chester already had a relationship with. Andy Sutton agreed it was a good meeting, Andy Myers commenting that he believed Blandford used Novis so may be worth reaching out to them to see how they feel about their service. Don also let us

know that there is a meeting with Northeast IT at the end of the month to discuss their contract and invited the Board to be present at the meeting if any of them were interested. Terry asked if we were looking to replace Northeast IT, Mary Ann asked what the issues were. Jason commented that their response time has been an issue as well as our issue with payments in the past year, this would be to explore our options.

Don let everyone know that the new owners of the Pease Store will be hosting a Grand Re-opening February 18th. Their goal is to sell any of the merchandise that was left at the store as well as some of their Drowsy Dragon kitchen products. Jason commented that as Building Inspector he has seen some of their ideas for the building and utilizing the upstairs. Don also let everyone know that Tuesday, February 21st, is the 240th anniversary of Chester.

- **Public Comments and Questions:**

John discussed the Energy Committee meeting that was held with CMELD and Eversource. There were discussions at the meeting of CMELD being purchased by Eversource. Andy Myers stated that this is an initial exploratory meeting to discuss our options, with discussions of Eversource doing an infrastructure review of CMELD with our status as a utility, upgrading needs, and a possible offer. There were a lot of questions asked and if this were to proceed Eversource would be required to offer fair market value and a promise to not raise rates substantially. There was a concern that once this became public the rumors would start that the town is selling CMELD which is not the case this is purely informational at this time. At the end the town as a whole would make this decision and would need to be voted upon at two town meetings at least sixty days apart and would require two thirds vote for approval.

Jason asked if the next ARPA payment had been received, Don nor Mary Ann were sure and Don stated that he could ask at the Finance Team meeting tomorrow. Jason then discussed the School Committee budget meeting which took place last week, he stated the budget did not include the new paraprofessional position that is being discussed. He stated that enrollment is up but vocational enrollment did not change in the way he had hoped. He stated the next meeting is on March 1st and invited all to attend.

Andy Myers stated that the Finance Committee had their first budget meeting this past Saturday and they reviewed the budgets that they have received so far. They are hoping to hold the all department budget meeting on Saturday, March 11th and a separate zoom meeting to review the Accountant and Treasurer contracts. He stated that this is a re-eval year for the Assessors so costs will go up, not drastically but there will be an increase. He stated the Gateway budget will increase approximately 2.98 percent commenting that he did not feel the state contributed their fair share. Jason commented that is why when Representative Boldyga was at the meeting last week he asked if he had read the rural schools report and discussed reaching out to him to be more involved. Andy Myers also stated that Chapter 70 would also increase by 8/10 of a percent and in comparison, to other areas in the commonwealth this number should be much larger.

Bob commented that there has been discussion about putting together a district wide campaign to work toward fully funding rural school aide. After speaking with Gateway Superintendent Kristen Smidy, he was informed that if not funded properly there would need to be painful cuts in the school including Martha Clark who has been working to expand the vocational programs and helping to create the Water Operator program. He also informed everyone that there will be a brunch held at the train station on March 5th for Senator Paul Mark and we could use this platform to present our case for rural aide.

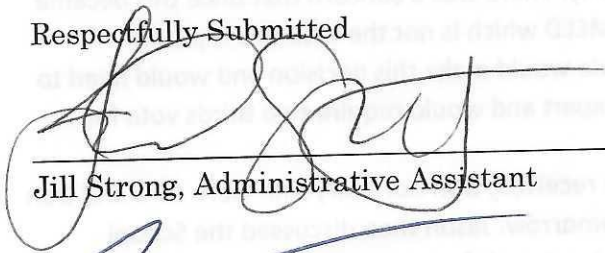
Rich stated that it was wonderful to see the positive support by the Board for the Littleville Fair, commenting that it is amazing what they have been able to do on the grounds. Jason stated that the new bathhouse is a dream of theirs and at \$300,000.00 this was a big price tag and hoped they were able to achieve their goal. John agreed stating that he believed a go-fund-me page would be started.

Before closing Jill made the announcement that she would be giving her resignation. She stated that it would not be immediate and would help to make the transition to a new employee and help Don get a handle on things as best as possible before she leaves. Anything pertaining to Emergency Management she would ensure is taken care of through the end of the fiscal year when a new person could be appointed. Although the situation is complicated at the moment she would still be interested in doing the Highway Department Administrative Assistant position at this time.

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

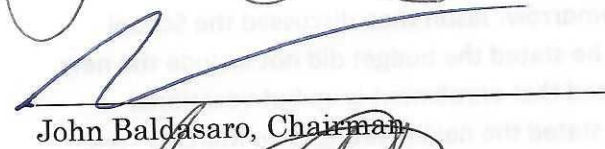
Meeting Adjourned: 7:25 PM

Respectfully Submitted



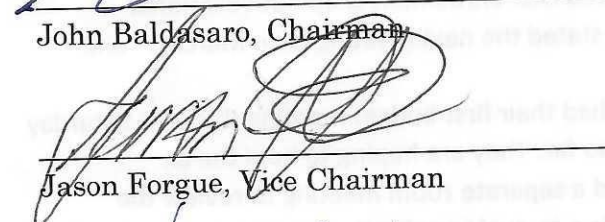
Jill Strong, Administrative Assistant

3/22/23
Date Signed



John Baldasaro, Chairman

3/22/23
Date Signed



Jason Forgue, Vice Chairman

3/29/23
Date Signed



Andy Sutton, Clerk

Date Signed