



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

Monday, February 27th, 2023

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

Selectboard John Baldasaro, Jason Fogue, and Andy Sutton were present. Town Hall staff present included Town Administrator Don Humason, Administrative Assistant Jill Strong, Tax Collector Mary Ann Pease, Town Clerk Terry Donovan, and CMELD Admin. Rosanne McClafin. Elizabeth, Liz, Massa and Nick Chiusano from the Board of Health were present with Water Commissioner Bob Daley, and Library Trustee Jane Sutton. Kiersen Broman who works for the COA and is also a Chester resident and her husband Bill were also present. Officer Frank Murphy also joined the meeting.

John opened the meeting at 6:02 PM, warrants, minutes, and any correspondence was signed.

- **CMELD Commissioners want to discuss records in the basement:**

Rosanne opened the discussion explaining that due to the records project there are records for all departments including CMELD in plastic totes and bankers boxes on the floor in the basement in various locations. Two of the CMELD bins were found in the COA office next to the shredder with the clear intent to destroy the records. She explained that they were clearly labeled as belonging to CMELD and no one within the COA had come to them and asked if they could dispose of their records. They did not go through the paper that was in the shredder to determine if records belonging to CMELD had already been destroyed. Rosanne explained that utility records can be different than a municipality and some things they are required to keep forever. She commented that not asking them and taking them to do their choosing without anyone's knowledge was extremely unprofessional and should not be allowed. John asked where the records were located, Rosanne explained that they were against the back wall in the basement where the COA and Police Department are located. Terry commented that she was told by the COA Director Ann Daley some time ago that whenever she needs a tote for storage, she chose one and shredded the files inside, Terry stated that she explained to her that she was not to do that and records that did not belong to the COA should not be touched without permission. Kiersen explained that she was hired by Ann in November and was asked to shred things from the totes so that she could have the totes to use for the donation cards received by the COA. She was told by Ann that she had permission to do this and followed the direction of the Director. Jason asked what was happening with the records that were in the hall, Terry explained this was part of the records clean up she was working on with King Information systems and everything that was in the hall had been moved

from other locations, the vault was currently still full. She stated that CMELD would be taking responsibility for their own records, and they would not be included in the vault when King Information comes to finish this project. John asked if she had determined yet how much of the records we would be able to dispose of, Terry answered not yet. John asked Don if he would please make a clear reminder to all departments that no one is to touch records that do not belong to them, Don answered yes that he would.

- **Town Administrative Assistant job posting:**

Jason stated that he posted the position to the town website, John asked if everyone agreed that was fine for now or should it be posted in other locations. Jason answered the web posting he thought was fine as there already seemed to be some interest.

- **Licensing Board car and liquor licenses:**

Don stated that we had received liquor license applications from all expected with the exception of Carms and the Chester Common Table but he hand delivered their applications to them. He was told that those along with anyone applying for a used car license needed to go through Mary Ann to verify no one owed any money in taxes. Mary Ann commented that typically she receives a list in January of all applicants but that did not happen this year. Jason stated that also typically a liquor license should require an inspection from himself as Building Inspector as well as the Fire Chief if he chose.

John stated that he needed to abstain from the vote as one of the motor vehicle licenses is for his brother. He also commented that the application should be amended to include the inspections from the Building Inspector and Fire Chief.

Jason made the motion to approve all licenses for used car dealer and liquor licenses, Andy seconded, all voted Aye.

- **Town Administrator:**

Don stated that Gateway has already cancelled school tomorrow with the coming snowstorm and therefore Town Hall would be closed tomorrow. He stated that there is currently a vacancy on the Planning Board that needs to be filled and there has been some interest. Jason asked if the person had given a letter of interest to Don, he answered that he had received an email that he forwarded to the Board a few weeks ago. Liz who is also on the Planning Board asked who the applicant was, Don answered it was Jonathon Glionna who is on the Finance Committee. Liz stated that they have been busy but need to have the position filled as currently there are an even number of members. The vacancy has been posted to the town website and someone also attended a Planning Board meeting and gave them a letter of interest. Jason stated that the vacancy would be appointed by the Selectboard and they as well as Planning Board should be aware of all candidates so all can help to make a decision.

Don stated that there was an applicant for the dirt road liaison position who would be working on the MVP grant with Blandford and Middlefield. The applicant is Meredyth Babcock who works for Westfield Wild and Scenic and has a previous relationship with the town. Andy commented that she seemed to have a lot of knowledge and was fine with hiring her. Don stated that they had another meeting for the grant on Wednesday this week at 10:00 AM.

Jason made the motion to hire Meredyth Babcock as the dirt road liaison for the MVP grant subject to receiving funds for the position from the grant, Andy seconded, all voted Aye.

John stated that the Board was scheduled to have an Executive Session with Highway tomorrow afternoon that they would be rescheduling. Jill commented that if they made a decision about a new date that she would be working at the garage tomorrow and could deliver the letter announcing the

new date and time. The Board agreed to reschedule the Executive Session to Thursday, March 2nd, 2023 at 2:30 PM.

Jason stated that Wednesday this week would be the budget meeting for Gateway. They should have the final census numbers and hoped that Chester would not get hit as much as some of the other towns. Jason told everyone that the Governor released the budget on Friday last week and had not had a chance to review it yet as to what it does for rural funding. He stated that the meeting would also be virtual and invited everyone to attend.

Jason told us that he received a new heating system proposal from Diane the new Manager of CMELD. He explained that there are two systems in the garage and CMELD's has not worked in several years. The proposal also included switching to propane including a new tank. Rosanne asked what the desire to replace a working system was as the side for the Highway Department was working fine. Andy stated that the unit is undersized for the building and is constantly running. John agreed that if it isn't broken then we have no need to fix it at this time as it has been reliable. Jason also agreed and wondered what the desire to switch to propane was as well. He asked if the utilities including heat were bills that were spilt with CMELD. Rosanne answered that she did not do the warrant for the CMELD office however that is how it always used to be. Jill stated that she had not seen any bills for heat for the garage in the few weeks that she has taken care of their warrant.

John wanted to schedule a performance review for Don Humason as he has not had one since being hired in the fall. John stated that it would be an Executive Session and could schedule it after the next regular meeting, Don agreed that was fine.

John wanted to address an issue that he was informed of by Mike Morrissey a property owner on Middlefield Road who came before the Board last year to discuss acquiring an electrical permit. Mike received a letter from our Board of Health agent explaining a list of things he needed to do on his property. Liz stated that was part of letters that went out regarding a new sanitary code that goes into effect on April 1st. John stated that the concerns from Mike were that he did not think he should be subject to this as the structure he has on his property is not a "habitable structure." Jason stated that he did not think that these letters were going out before they had their meeting because he has lingering questions. Liz stated that the letter came from Charlie who is their state Board of Health agent and he explained that any structure is subject to this new code and needs to go through the checklist. Jason's concern is that they have been diligent about not allowing these type of structures to be deemed as habitable and this letter is giving the owners an avenue to actually live there after they have been quite strict about making people aware this was not allowed. Nick stated that this did not come from Chester this was a state code change, Liz commented that they are on the agenda in a couple weeks to discuss this more thoroughly. Nick stated that if the resident can prove that he is not living there that there would be no problem however when Jon Vanheynigen did the electrical inspection for that property, he told the Board of Health that it was clear someone was staying there. John stated that was different than what he understood and in that case it was up to the Board of Health to take care of.

Jason asked about a gas and diesel bill breakdown proposal that he received and had questions about. The consumption of gas for the Highway Department seemed high, Rosanne said she could print them out a usage report which she left the meeting momentarily to retrieve. John stated that each individual has their own key fob to access the pumps and the calibration problems they had in the past had been fixed last year and should have no issues. Officer Frank Murphy clarified that each person who uses the pumps has their own key fob and each vehicle has their own fob so they can know who is using the pumps and what vehicle they are using it for, he asked if there were cameras at the garage looking

at the pumps to prevent any issues. John answered no but it was something that we were looking into and asked Don to put it on the next agenda.

- **Public Comments or Questions:**

Andy Myers had a few things to discuss, first there are some bills that are from the previous fiscal year that will need to be taken care of through a Special Town Meeting. Andy provided a printout of the information that he had been discussing with Janice Boucher from Eric Kinsherf's office. The bills can be taken care of by allocating free cash, there are also a few accounts currently in deficit that will need attention. One in particular is the Highway Department Administrative Assistant salary account which Andy and Janice suggested to take the necessary amount from the general Highway salary account to cover this position until the end of this fiscal year. The Highway salary budget is currently in excess because we do not have a Highway Superintendent or Foreman. There was a question of elevator expenses as well as some cost for 10 Middlefield Road. Jill stated that she would look at the warrant history for all expenses from Associated Elevator this fiscal year and commented that the insurance from 10 Middlefield Road while being used by the Theatre over the summer should have been covered by them and wondered if we ever received payment for this. John agreed and stated that we needed to look at that for this coming year.

Another item Andy mentioned that should be added to the Special Town Meeting warrant was to discuss something requested by the energy committee. There are fifty-seven households in Chester that are on Eversource rather than CMELD and we can request a municipal aggregation similar to what is done in Huntington which would help to lower the cost for these customers.

Andy let us know that the Highlands Footpath group is interested in purchasing land for parking for the Gobble Mountain trails on Middlefield Road. The parcel is 1.82 acres and is currently owned by the Twinning family who have been contacted and are agreeable to selling the parcel for the assessed value. They wanted it brought to the towns attention to ensure there would be no issues with creating a parking area as long as the sale goes through. John stated that would be great as people park there when they are hiking already and that they should also discuss this with the Planning Board to view zoning regulations as well as CMELD. John also asked about the other parcel that has been previously discussed and was voted on at the last Annual Town Meeting, Andy informed him that all is still a go and there has been a hold up with the survey of the parcel due to weather restrictions. Andy stated that as soon as they have the appraisal, they will be making the town an offer.

Andy reminded everyone that on Saturday March 11th the Finance Committee will be hosting the all-day budget meeting. Each department should see Don for the schedule for the meeting to pick a time slot. John asked if this would also be offered remote, Andy answered no it would be in person only. Andy stated that CMELD was currently looking into budgeting their own accounting office which would be a win for the town and lower our costs. Jason asked if they would separate everything payroll etc. Andy thought yes some things would be still be necessary to be combined, insurance and the like but most would be separated.

Bob let us know that another successful movie night was hosted last week and hoped that these would continue. He also let us know that this week would be week number three of the apprentice program for the Water Department being organized by Gateway. Chester, Huntington, Blandford, Russell, and Westfield are all involved in this, and Don will be attending a meeting this week to discuss any interest in other municipal work with the students. Bob thanked the Board for their continued support of the Water Department and they are currently working on switching the water source, an engineering study which will help to change dosing, as well as a plan for hydrant flushing. John thanked

the Water Commissioners for a job well done and the great progress that has been made. Before moving on he also reminded everyone of the meet and greet that will take place Saturday at the train station with Senator Paul Mark and invited everyone to attend.

Rosanne discussed the fuel report and explained that she had the fuel percentage broken down by department usage for gas and diesel and explained that the other expense that Jason was given was a breakdown of the software expense which is based on an annual fee. John asked if she could provide the Board with a break down of individual fobs, Rosanne answered yes that she could.

Mary Ann had a few things to address, she stated that she has been receiving mail in the mail slot in her door that is past date and asked if anyone knew where this was coming from. She asked that if any of the Departments receive mail that is for her it be delivered in a timely manner as some of these are payments. She also asked the Board and Don if there were plans to replace the town hall custodian, she has been asked by a few people that they heard he was being let go and wanted to know from them if this was true. The Board and Don all answered that he was not being replaced nor had his retirement come up to any of them. Kiersen stated that she knew that a person had been hired by the COA Director to clean the COA and the bathrooms because it was felt that Dave was not doing an adequate job to the Director's standards. John stated that Don should address this and thanked Mary Ann for bringing this forward commenting that no one in the building besides them has the authority to hire anyone.

Liz brought up that the Transfer Station is looking for alternate attendants, she stated that they have had to close a few days this year because of missing people and they can not be open for safety reasons with only one person on the property. John asked how many they were looking for, she answered anyone and that it would be nice to have a list of people to be able to call in the event of someone being unavailable. Don asked what the minimum age to work there was, she answered that it was eighteen again for safety reasons.

Liz also stated that this year in September her and Dave would be hosting another Chester Village historic tour. She stated that last year it was a big success with over one hundred and fifty people coming that were from out of town. This will also be sponsored as a Housatonic Heritage event which means that they will create and print a brochure for us which is great for awareness, she commented that last year all of the restaurants were filled for the day and hoped to do the same this year. John commented that he hoped all the B&Bs were registered in time for this.

Nick asked what the status was on funding for the demos that will be happening in town, the Route 20 house as well as another on Emery Street. Jason answered that this was another thing that could be addressed at the Special Town Meeting, they need to have more money placed in the revolving account. He stated that most of the money in the account had been used for legal fees associated with these properties and they can now take action but do not have the funds available. Nick asked if the cap set on the account could be lifted, Jason answered that would still need a vote at a Special Town Meeting. Liz stated that the Board of Health has been receiving angry phone calls about these properties and asked Jason if there was a timeline that she could share with people. He answered that they were trying to organize the meeting for March and as long as it is voted to approve the necessary funds to be moved they can begin the process. Mary Ann asked if Liz was receiving these calls to the Board of Health office or her home phone, Liz answered the calls were coming to the office. Mary Ann commented that she has received calls at home regarding town issues and that no one should be handing out anyone's personal phone number for town related issues.

The Board discussed possible dates to host the Special Town Meeting stating that the regular Selectboard meetings were scheduled for March 13th and the 27th. John suggested hosting the Special

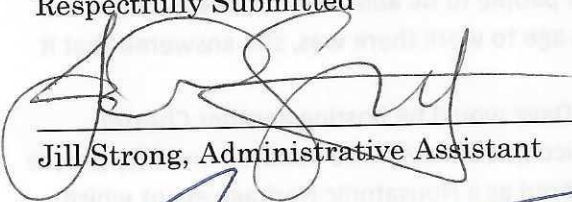
Town Meeting on the 27th, with the regular Selectboard meeting starting at 6:00 PM and the Special Town Meeting starting at 6:30 PM, all agreed. Don stated that he would need some help putting the warrant together and asked what the notification time was for the meeting. Terry answered that it needed to be posted fourteen days in advance. John commented that the handout from Andy provided some language for a few of the articles. Mary Ann commented that someone would also need to reach out to the Moderator to make sure that she was available.

Before closing Terry reminded everyone that King Information would be in the Town Hall to start the records project on March 20th and still needed help in removing everything from the vault. John stated that they would help to coordinate this with the Highway Department after the storms this week. Terry also stated that there was a leak in the ceiling in her office and asked if the guy who had looked at the roof a few weeks ago could be contacted, Andy stated that he would reach out to him tomorrow. Rosanne asked the Board if there was any issue if she had Kiersen open the COA for her tonight so that she could retrieve any CMELD records that were still in there, the Board answered they had no problem with this.

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

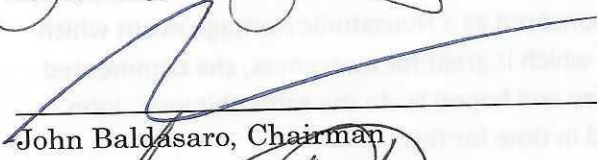
Meeting Adjourned 7:29 PM

Respectfully Submitted



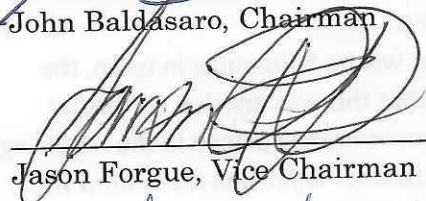
Jill Strong, Administrative Assistant

3/22/23
Date Signed



John Baldasaro, Chairman

3/07/23
Date Signed



Jason Fogue, Vice Chairman

3/27/23
Date Signed



Andy Sutton, Clerk

Date Signed