



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

**Monday, November 7<sup>th</sup>, 2022**

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

Selectmen 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. Finance Committee member Andy Myers was present with Water Commissioner Bob Daley, and Library Trustee Jane Sutton.

John opened the meeting at 6:00 PM, warrants, minutes, and any correspondence was signed.

- **Town Clerk:**

Terry provided the Selectboard with a handout containing all the information she received from Chris at King Information Systems about going through all town records and digitizing them. She explained that if we chose to do this, they first would send someone here for two days to go through everything and then would come back with recommendations for us. What does and does not need to be kept now and in the future and what can be destroyed. When they came to Town Hall, they saw the vault where things are currently stored and told us that should be enough space and we can use the existing shelving. Terry explained that this initial cost is \$865.00 per day for the two days and afterwards they would provide a price on the cost to do everything, they estimated once everything was digitized the cost would be between fifteen and twenty thousand dollars. Terry stated that she currently has four thousand dollars in a grant for digitizing and would like to use that and go from there.

John thought that this was a good idea and thought there may be other grant money available to accomplish this task. Jason asked if this was the same service that is used in Blandford, Terry answered yes that it was. Mary Ann commented that departments that have lots of things stored in the vault could also contribute to the cost from their expense accounts. Terry commented that CMELD stores most of their records in the vault and have stated that they would contribute to the expense.

Terry then went on to discuss her Animal Control Vehicle which was discussed at a previous meeting. The vehicle has an issue with the fuel system, and she brought it to Ford in Northampton and after they came back with a higher price the Selectboard asked if she would get another quote. Terry brought it to BTA in Huntington who gave her a quote of \$4,081.62 to have everything fixed. Jason asked the year of the vehicle, Terry answered 2013. Jason asked who owns the vehicle, Terry answered that she asked the Town Administrator in Blandford as she was under the impression that it was originally a Blandford asset, however she was told that in the Shared Police Agreement it states that Chester is in

charge of all vehicles. Don commented that he had been in touch with someone from the USDA because he was told at the last STAM Meeting that the USDA is issuing grants to cover things like vehicles. He has given Terry the information and suggested that we look into getting a new vehicle for the Police Department and retiring another cruiser to be given to Terry as a new Animal Control vehicle. John agreed that was a good idea commenting that we needed to look at other options rather than continuously spend money on an older vehicle with high mileage. Terry asked where the Board would like her to store the cruiser now until it is able to be replaced, John answered at the Town Garage with the other vehicles would be fine.

Before moving to the next item on the agenda John acknowledged Craig from White Wolf who was with us. Craig approached the Board and wanted to discuss rumors he had heard that the town may need their assistance for the winter and wanted to see everyone in person and discuss what the towns needs are. John thanked Criag for joining us and answered that we have hired a third employee for the Highway Department but that we still do not have a Superintendent and having their assistance through the winter would be extremely helpful. Craig stated that in years past they have had a truck available for us to use and could do the same equipped with a sander and a wing plow. John stated that is exactly what we are looking for and Craig stated that he would get a quote for us to the cost for the season.

- **Finance Committee:**

Andy had information about Free Cash which has been certified at \$358,000.00. Andy stated that he was disappointed to not see any of the information before it was certified which was requested by us multiple times, John agreed. Andy went on to discuss the Green Communities grant stating that we were able to get the report in on time and the next step is to complete the grant.

Andy discussed the rough draft of the tax rate that was created. There has been an increase in values in the Assessor's office of 11.4% which he thought would keep the tax rate down. Andy explained that the increase is based off sales from the past year and Mayflower will be in the Assessors office to finish everything. Andy suggested that the next Selectboard meeting we do the tax recap.

Jason asked regarding the Green Communities grant did we have enough quotes for the things that were suggested in the energy audit to spend the remaining funds available in the grant. Andy stated that they needed to look at that, but they did have two quotes for weatherization at the Fire Station and Town Hall. Jason thought that before the next round of funding becomes available that we should review the towns Master Plan and include the old elementary school, 10 Middlefield Rd., as well as the water shed, Andy agreed that made sense.

- **Special Town Meeting:**

We were unable to complete the Warrant, and have it posted with enough time for the Special Town Meeting, so the date needs to be adjusted. John had a copy of the Warrant from Mary Ann with copies of the invoices to be paid. John stated that he noticed that there was not an Article for a report from the Energy Committee. Don stated that they were unsure if that should be included or not as there is no vote necessary it is informational. John stated that was fine there should be language appropriate for an informational Article. Don stated that he had sent the draft to Town Counsel Tom Mullen and hoped to hear back from him quickly with any necessary revisions.

John then discussed some of the invoices to be paid, there was a concern that a line painting invoice for the Highway Department was not included however Jason stated that he believed that had been paid. There also was an invoice for the Prospect St. project that John commented should be administered by the Community Block Grant that it was being completed under. He stated that Mary Ann has spent a good amount of time on the Warrant and wanted her to be paid for her time. Mary Ann

stated that she had not been keeping track of the amount of time that she has spent working on the Warrant and would get back to the Board about hours spent. She commented that some of the invoices listed for Berkshire Springs were for the past two fiscal years and wondered if they should be separated by fiscal year in another Article. John stated that he did not want anymore time spent on this and that all invoices could be bundled together under one Article.

Article Four on the Warrant is to alter the Building Inspector fines Revolving Account. The cap on the account needs to be raised to accommodate the amount of money raised from fines issued so that they can use those funds to move forward with Housing Court and the fees associated. John stated that the Article needs to be to set the cap of the Revolving Account to thirty thousand dollars and transfer the money already raised by these fines to this account up to thirty thousand. John asked Jason how much he had in outstanding fines, Jason answered over ninety thousand dollars. Mary Ann commented that any outstanding fines will be added to the tax bills that will be due in February.

- **Prospect St. Project:**

The engineers for the Prospect St. project have reached out to Don regarding a staging area for materials and equipment when everything gets started. The area they have requested to use is the parcel of land located across from the Emery St. ballfield. Don commented that this was the area closest to the project and therefore the most convenient for all involved. The Board had no problem with this, and John commented most times works out for the town as they will leave the space better than it is currently. Jason asked if there was anything they would need to sign, Don answered not yet, and he would let the engineers know.

- **Town Administrator:**

Don stated that he has spoken with Laura in the Assessor's office about the Tax Classification hearing and since there is no Selectboard meeting next week on the 14<sup>th</sup> suggested holding this at the next meeting on Monday the 21<sup>st</sup> along with the Zoning Board hearing. The Board agreed and John commented to make sure when the meeting is posted that it is posted as a Selectboard and Zoning Board meeting.

Don explained to the Board that in order for Barbara Huntoon to be paid for her time doing minutes while Jill was out on maternity leave, they needed to have a vote recorded in the minutes. Jason made the motion to compensate Barbara Huntoon for the period worked while Jill Strong was out on maternity leave, Andy seconded, all voted Aye.

Don discussed another item that will be on the agenda for the next meeting on the 21<sup>st</sup> would be to address an email received by the Board from local business owners who would like to discuss some issues, the Board was aware of this. This week on Thursday he will be meeting with Wendy who handles the town website about taking the next step up and what the costs would be. Jason asked that when meeting with her Don obtain credentials so that we have access to the website ourselves if necessary to post certain things.

- **Public Comments and Questions:**

Jason asked about the ARPA request from the Chester Elementary PTO for the playground at the school. Jill stated that she had submitted the invoice and Barbara Newton from the Accounting office had requested additional information. When the email had been received with that information from Jeanna Briggs from the PTO who made the initial request at the Selectboard meeting Jill stated she forwarded the email to Barbara asking for her to reach out to Jeanna if she needed any further information and has heard nothing since.

Jason discussed that with no Highway Superintendent there is no one who is issuing driveway permits when needed. As the Building Inspector he thought that he could fill this role temporarily, the other Board members agreed that made sense. He went on to discuss the upgrades that have been made to the Fire Station on Bromley Rd.

Andy Sutton stated that he met with Dave Christopolis from Hilltown CDC about 10 Middlefield Rd., the old Chester Elementary School, and some options for us. He also informed us that the Highway Department is still looking to purchase a hot box as discussed at previous meetings. They have been unable to get additional quotes as there does not seem to be many available other than the one they have already looked into. They would like to move forward with this purchase using the WRAP funds. The other members of the Board were fine with this.

Jason made the motion for the Highway Department to purchase a hot box priced up to forty-nine thousand dollars to be paid using the WRAP funds, Andy seconded, all voted Aye.

Andy then discussed the wages of the Highway Department since Corey Sparks was rehired as a laborer. Apparently, he was hired at a higher rate than what Paul and Chris are paid at \$23.49 per hour. John did not think at the last meeting that this was discussed that they set a rate, simply stated that he would be hired at the full-time laborers rate. Andy commented also that they have not yet received a copy of Corey's licenses. Jason stated that he thought they were all available on the Mass Gov website and we should get current copies of everyone's to have on file. John agreed stating that was the first step and then they can look at what is budgeted for laborers and make necessary corrections.

Mary Ann stated that as we are getting closer to winter weather the town needs to post to the Country Journal the roads that will be closed for the season. Jill stated that she has this list and would work on getting it sent to the Country Journal and posted to the website.

Bob asked where the bid opening would be for the Prospect St. project. John answered that since it is being orchestrated by PVPC that it would be hosted by them. Bob asked if John thought it would be offered remote, John answered that he was unsure.


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

**Meeting Adjourned 7:45 PM**

Respectfully Submitted,

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Jill Strong, Administrative Assistant

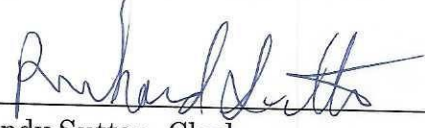
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Date Signed

  
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John Baldasaro, Chairman

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Date Signed

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Jason Forgue, Vice Chairman

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Date Signed

  
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Andy Sutton, Clerk

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Date Signed