



CHESTER BOARD OF SELECTMEN
And ZONING BOARD OF APPEALS
15 MIDDLEFIELD ROAD
CHESTER, MASSACHUSETTS 01011

(413) 354-7760

TownofChester.net

CHESTER BOARD OF SELECTMEN MEETING MINUTES

MEETING: Wednesday, June 14, 2023, 5:30PM in the Selectmen's Office, Town Hall

PRESENT: Selectmen John Baldasaro and Andy Sutton.
Town Administrator Don Humason was present and taking the meeting minutes.

Chair John Baldasaro called the meeting to order at 5:30PM.

John Baldasaro stated the purpose of the meeting was to hold interviews for the position of Fire Chief.

The first candidate was Henry Fristik

John began by acknowledging that Chief Richie Small has been an excellent Fire Chief and we will be hard-pressed to find anyone who could fill his shoes. He is such a hard worker and is devoted to the people of Chester. He also did the job out of love and not for money.

The position is budgeted in FY24 for \$7,800 and is considered part-time. Andy Sutton stated he would support raising the salary in the next fiscal year.

John said he knew Henry well from his work as a Police Officer and training officer at the fire department.

John asked Henry to talk about his background and why he was interested in the position. Henry spoke of his long experience with the department and working by Chief Small's side. He said he did not go through the Firefighter Academy but would be willing to take the Chief's Training course. He said he can train anything at the department level.



Henry was asked how he would encourage more volunteers and recruits. He spoke about holding meetings at times convenient for the volunteers, including Saturdays, and offering good recruit training.

Andy asked about the training and Henry said they could take advantage of state classes and the Springfield Fire Academy.

Henry said there are 5-6 active members now but they are losing Richie and 2 others because they are aging out.

Andy asked how to recruit members.

Henry said at some point the Town may have to look at offering a stipend per call. He said he isn't a fan of offering a tax break as some towns do because many volunteers are not residents of the Town so they wouldn't get any benefit. Other families have multiple members who volunteer and only one would get the tax break.

Henry said the Commonwealth of Massachusetts rates departments and Chester is a 7 out of 10, which is pretty good. It helps with keeping homeowner insurance costs in Chester down.

He talked about how vital mutual aid with other towns is. Henry said it was very important.

John mentioned that we are looking into getting a grant to explore sharing Fire Chiefs with another town as we currently do with Police Chief.

They discussed equipment, apparatus, and facilities, and Henry said all are in need of updating. He recognizes it is very expensive. Collaboration and combining forces is the best way to go. He said he is willing to pursue grants and taking grant writing classes.

The Selectmen said they were done with their questions and asked if he had any questions for them. Henry said no and thanked them for their time.

Finance Committee Chair Andy Myers – ARPA Funds

Finance Committee Chair Andy Myers came to discuss the status of the Town's ARPA Funds. Since the next fire chief candidate had not arrived yet they spoke with Andy who passed out a chart with American Rescue Plan Act funds received and expended, thus far.

Chester received \$409,203.46 and spent \$162,779.71, leaving \$246,423.75.



\$133,000 is currently committed for projects in Town and there are other areas where we could expend the remaining funds included the Prospect Street project, blighted property demolition and cleanup, repairs and equipment for Town facilities, IT upgrades, Highway Department equipment, new signs for Town streets, and more.

\$10,000 for Littleville Fair Association

The Selectmen also agreed that \$10,000 should be expended from ARPA for the Littleville Fair Association for their project to modernize facilities at the fairgrounds which would directly benefit Chester because it would allow more events to take place there throughout the year bringing more people to Chester.

They thanked Andy for his work on the Finance Committee and he left.

Adam Cormier, second candidate for Fire Chief

Adam Cormier arrived for his interview and John welcomed him and thanked him for his interest.

Adam spoke of his background and said he had worked 8 years as Fire Captain in Huntington and also for the Hilltown Ambulance. For the past 11 years he was a Firefighter in Amherst. He spoke of his certifications and experience. He said he has worked mutual aid calls with Chester before.

John asked him about working with a volunteer department like Chester's.

Adam said he would invite and welcome recruits and try to make a good environment for volunteers.

Andy asked him about his plans for recruitment.

Adam spoke about using modern public outreach methods and social media to appeal to candidates.

He said the department can create programs for kids and the elderly to teach them fire safety.



John told him about the plans to collaborate with Blandford as we currently do with the Police Department. Adam said he supports regionalization and sees it as necessary for survival. He also believes the state should do more to encourage and assist small towns and departments.

Then they discussed facilities and equipment. Adam mentioned that the town truck barely fits in the garage at the fire station.

He said 90% of Town calls are medical. Volunteers don't like those types of calls as much as they like turning out to fight fires. He said stipends will become necessary. He spoke about Huntington which he said offers \$12,000 salary, paid quarterly.

Adam said he wanted to create a team system where we would have 1 officer and 2-3 firefighters on call each night and they would receive a stipend.

He thinks volunteers should receive pay for training. Training reduces liability. Recruits would need to pay back the Town if they left before working a certain amount of time.

He said he has written some grants before. In Amherst, he is in charge of hoses and appliances, and maintenance of trucks and equipment. Annual testing lowers costs.

When the Selectmen asked Adam if he had any questions for them he asked about the \$7,800 salary. Andy committed to fight to increase that salary in next year's budget. He said he knows we don't pay as well as some neighboring communities which makes recruitment of professional chiefs hard.

Adam thanked the Selectboard then left.

Deliberation

John, Andy, and Don discussed the position and the candidates. Both candidates had many strengths. Both had a good understanding of the Chester Fire Department and its strengths and challenges.

John and Andy both felt that all things considered, the position should go to the person who was already working within the department. They also weighted the current Fire Chief's recommendation very strongly. Richie spoke well of both men but threw his support behind Henry Fristik.



**John made the motion to hire Henry Fristik.
Andy seconded the motion.
The motion passed.**

John asked Don to notify both candidates and begin the onboarding process with Henry.

**John Baldasaro made a motion to adjourn.
Andy Sutton seconded it.
Both selectmen voted AYE.**

The meeting was adjourned at 6:50PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Donald F. Humason, Jr.
Don Humason, Town Administrator

6/20/23
Date signed

[Signature]
John Baldasaro, Chair

6/20/23
Date Signed

[Signature]
Andy Sutton

6/20/23
Date Signed