



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

(413) 354-7760

TownofChester.net

Monday, March 11, 2024

Open meeting—This meeting was held in the Chester Town Hall Auditorium with a virtual option.

Selectboard members present, John Baldasaro, Brian Fogue, and Andy Sutton. Also present Terry Donovan, Andy Myers, Rich Holzman, Bob Daley, Mary Ann Pease, Don Humason, Craig Gauthier, Ro and Heath Mc Claflin, Henry Fristik, Annette Lamountain, Lyle Snide, Jess Sakaske, Kendall Bennett, Jess Slatcher, Jane Sutton, Liz Massa, Nick Chuisano, Laura Wade, and Craig Boyer.

John Baldasaro opened the meeting at 6:00pm. Warrants, minutes and all correspondence were signed.

- **Bob Daley , Water Commissioners Bid Opening**

GAC EPA Filter Grant started at \$50,000 and grant has now increased to \$230,000.00

This bid is for replacement of the carbon filters, 15 companies requested the proposal only one has returned a bid. Bid came back with \$185,000 or \$273,000 depends on how you read the bid. Lyle will contact the bidder and clarify and accept if it is for \$185,000.

The commissioners also want extra sand and are working to find someone to remove/break compaction level and replace sand.

- **Fire Dept. update-**

Money owed to Huntington for our 5% of the grant. Where to get it from.

Andy Myers suggested ARPA , reserve fund or STM.

John made a motion to pay the \$4325.64 bill from ARPA funds, Andy Sutton seconded, all in favor.

Chief Fristik stated he only has \$800.00 left in his expense budget. Will be out of money by the end of the month

John asked for dollar amount of expenses. Henry will provide

Also the brakes on Tanker 1 need to be fixed, air brake leaking.

There is a tree at 80 rte. 20 leaning near wires and Jess Slatchers house. Who is responsible for removing that. Us or Mass Dot. Chip will check into.

- **BOH – Liz Massa –**

Shed at transfer station needs a broken window replaced and the other window to be reinstalled as it is leaking. Liz presented a bid of \$900.00. Both Andy Sutton and John B felt that was too expensive.

Liz will get more quotes and Rich Holzman will check with Hilltown Structures where the shed came from and see if they can help. Revisit at next BOS meeting.



- **Assessors Clerk- Kendall Bennett**

Property on Abbott Hill Rd in question. Road was abandoned in 1967 however it was never updated in assessors office to make it non-developable land. Now it is a land locked parcel and the owner has been paying taxes on it as a developable property. Wanted to bring it to the BOS attention. Would she be able to do an abatement for the 3 years ? . No abatements are yearly only.

John suggested contacting legal for advice. Would have to finish discussion at next Executive session.

Town Administrator Report

- Charlie from BOH wanted to know about waiving fees on 1 Crane Rd. John said the deal they had made in the beginning of holding fines until property sold was what he wants to stick to. Andy Sutton and Brian Forgue agreed.

-DOR DLS -ENR grant, Ira (PVPC) and Eric met with Sean Cronin about grant. Extending grant until Sept 15. Wants letter to Sean from BOS and Water Dept that we approve of the provisions of no more money spent on equipment and money to be spent by Sept 15. Problem is sharing the OIT will not have the money spent by Sept 15. Just started sharing OIT. Andy Myers suggests holding off on the letter for a couple months, try to use the money, find shared projects. Maybe then they will give an extension and they can have a shared operator for a year.

-the Reminder printed a article regarding Eversource s proposal to purchase CMELD. The question process will be online on website in a couple of days.

-Old School use survey is out. Online and to be mailed. Survey on what townspeople want to do with the old school.

Andy Sutton and Don received a grant to do the survey and compile results and give costs estimates for top 2-3 uses. Meeting scheduled for March 27 at 6:00pm for questions. Will also hold public hearing, results should be done by June 30th.

- Comcast cable contract renewal John said to pull the copy of the existing contract, make appt with Ellen from Comcast to meet in Executive session with the BOS. John wants Wi-Fi at Littleville Fair to be added to the contract, and possibly upgraded services at Town Hall and Fire Station.

-MA DOT meeting about Main St Bridge. Chip and Don attended vis Zoom, bridge was on the list for repair in 2026-2028 now on the list for complete replacement in 2030

- **Andy Sutton**

Trout Unlimited is looking to replace a culvert on Kennebec road, will they ask first? John said yes they will.

- Questioning the CMELD/Eversource process, why taking so long? What are next steps? John responded that to get the questions together for next meeting on March 25th, invite CMELD . At that meeting set the date for a Public Hearing with ES, CMELD, Energy Committee, and residents. The meeting will be posted in CJ, Pennysaver, Westfield News, anywhere we can to get the information out. Any negotiations will be conducted in Executive session.

- **Brian Forgue**

Wants to know what Don found out about the raised insurance rates. Don responded he contacted STAMM and everyone said the same thing, rates with MIIA went up quite a bit. Rates have



increased from other insurance companies too. It was discussed to look into other insurance companies, look at liability only and self-insurance. Question if replacement cost correct/ Request reevaluation, Don did request MIIA will not do.

MIIA Annual Risk Review on March 19th at 1:30

Brian attended the open house at Gateway that went well.

2.76% increase in budget for Chester, Andy Myers called that reasonable.

- **Andy Myers**

Saturday March 30th 10-12 will be the Finance Committee Meeting, Andy says it is going well but this year's budget will be a challenge.

John made a motion to Adjourn, Brian seconded. Meeting adjourned 7:45pm



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15 MIDDLEFIELD RD.
CHESTER MA 01011

Respectfully Submitted

Terry Donovan

Terry Donovan, Administrative Assistant

3/13/24
Date Signed

John Baldasaro

John Baldasaro, Chairman

3/25/24
Date Signed

Andy Sutton

Andy Sutton, Vice Chairman

Date Signed

Brian Forgue

Brian Forgue, Clerk

3/25/24
Date Signed



(<https://www.thereminder.com/>)

MARCH 7 2024

Chester weighing sale of town's electric utility to Eversource

March 6, 2024 | Dennis Hohenberger
(mailto:)

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Twitter ([http://twitter.com/home?status=Chester weighing sale of town's electric utility to Eversource](http://twitter.com/home?status=Chester%20weighing%20sale%20of%20town%E2%80%99s%20electric%20utility%20to%20Eversource))

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CHESTER — Back in November 2023, Eversource Energy offered to buy the electric utility assets of the Chester Municipal Electric Light Department, and as the town recently made the details of the deal public, the buzz around the potential deal has only increased.

Paul Renaud, a vice president at Eversource, proposed the acquisition to Andy Myers of the Chester Energy Committee. If the town agrees, what is currently a small, municipally owned utility would become part of Eversource, a publicly traded company that serves about 4 million electric and natural gas customers in Massachusetts, Connecticut and New Hampshire.

The proposed purchase price of \$203,985 is based on an evaluation of CMELD's financial statements from 2021, including the net balance of the utility plant, depreciation, and contributions for construction. The deal would also provide the town of Chester \$1,674,184, combining the purchase price and existing funds.

Eversource's acquisition is expected to increase Chester's annual property tax income by about \$30,000 to \$40,000, as a for-profit utility would have to pay taxes on its assets.

If approved by residents via Town Meeting vote, all residential and general service electric accounts currently managed by CMELD would be transferred to Eversource, which may lead to changes in pricing for Chester's residents.

Town Administrator Donald Humason Jr. said the potential sale "has been an extremely hot topic ever since it came up." He said town officials are committed to being transparent as they weigh the pros and cons.

"We're really at the earliest phase of the process," Humason said. He said Chester residents "will be included in everything we do."

Humason said CMELD and Eversource plan to host a public hearing to solicit feedback from ratepayers and residents. He acknowledged that many in the community have a strong attachment to CMELD.

"Chester Electric, small as it is, has a good reputation [that] a lot of people in town are fiercely protective of," Humason said, but there's curiosity about what Eversource might offer. He continued, "Wouldn't it be nice if we can look at what the other guy offers?"

According to Humason, selling the town-owned utility would require affirmative votes at two separate Town Meetings, "and if it doesn't pass the first time, it doesn't get a second chance."

Eversource has committed to offering jobs to CMELD's line workers, ensuring a smooth transition. In addition to Town Meeting, the acquisition would require approvals from the Chester Board of Selectmen and the Massachusetts Department of Public Utilities. Eversource has highlighted its experience in similar acquisitions and regulatory processes.

The company plans to invest in Chester's energy infrastructure to improve service reliability and safety, citing its financial strength and operational record. Operations in Chester would be run from an existing Eversource office in Hadley, which is open 24 hours a day, with additional resources available from Pittsfield or Springfield as needed.

The offer includes constructing more distribution facilities for better service reliability and introducing energy efficiency programs for Chester residents. It aims to integrate Chester into its network, which includes all of Chester's bordering towns, benefiting from economies of scale in operations and maintenance, technological advancement and customer service.

The company will conduct further analysis to determine the potential impact on rates for Chester residents.

The Chester Energy Committee will evaluate Eversource's proposal, considering the long-term impact on service quality, rates, and local control over energy infrastructure. The committee's role includes negotiating terms and engaging with the community for feedback.

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Twitter ([http://twitter.com/home?status=Chester weighing sale of town's electric utility to Eversource+ CHESTER — Back in November 2023, Eversource Energy offered to](http://twitter.com/home?status=Chester%20weighing%20sale%20of%20town%E2%80%99s%20electric%20utility%20to%20Eversource+CHESTER+Back%20in%20November%202023%2C%20Eversource%20Energy%20offered%20to%20buy%20the%20electric%20utility%20assets%20of%20the%20Chester%20Municipal%20Electric%20Light%20Department%2C%20and%20as%20the%20town%20recently%20made%20the%20details%20of%20the%20deal%20public%2C%20the%20buzz%20around%20the%20potential%20deal%20has%20only%20increased))

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