



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

(413) 354-7760

TownofChester.net

---

**Monday, August 26, 2024**

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

Selectboard members present were John Baldasaro, Andy Sutton and Craig Gauthier. Also present was Town Administrator Don Humason, Town Moderator Adam Bryant, Jim Zimmerman and Frank Pero of the water commission, Deryck Savoy and Terry Murphy of the Electric Light Commission, Diane Hall from CMELD, Nick Chiusano and Liz Massa of the Board of Health and Chip Dazelle from the Highway Department.

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

- **Update from the Water Commission**

Jim Zimmerman represented the Water Commission with the following update on work happening at the water treatment plant:



- All 3 filters have been successfully re-sanded. Filters #1 and #2 were replaced completely with new sand added and filter #3 was not replaced but had 18” of new sand added to it. John Baldasaro mentioned we should have 10-15 years of good filtration because of this maintenance.
- The Water Commission has been in touch with Underwater Solutions to get a date on cleaning the clear well. Chester is at the top of their list of priorities.
- At this point, the tank, which holds 130,000 gallons of water, needs to be completely flushed out but there is only a limited amount of flushing that can be done at a time due to the amount of people using the water and without a back flushing system.
- There was a discussion about replacing the pipe that goes out to Horn Pond from the treatment plant. Once that is replaced, the flow will be a little faster to help with flushing the system overall.
- DEP requires two clean tests done over 48 hours to rescind the boil water order. However, the tests cannot be done until the level of turbidity is under .3 for two days in a row. There is hope that cleaning the clear water tank will help with the turbidity and the tests can be done.

John Baldasaro opened the floor for public discussion on this issue where the following occurred:

- There was discussion about water sanitizing grants and asked if those could be considered in effort to get the treatment facility in better shape? Mandy also asked if we could find discounts on water through



the Commissioner of Springfield. John Baldasaro said that the Springfield Water Commissioner isn't responsible for all water commissions, and DEP is the decider of lifting the boil water order.

- There was discussion about trucks that drive up Johnson Hill Rd. to fill up with spring water and a question was posed about using that water for the town instead. Chip Dazelle mentioned they did look at the tanker option early on but because of the summer heat and no circulation for the water in the truck, that option was ruled out quickly. There was also discussion about what minerals may or may not be in the water and long-term issues with PVC piping in homes due to the condition of the town water. Adam Bryant was also mentioned using charcoal filters on resident showerheads for those that are concerned about showering on the town water.
- There was a discussion about changing the hours for water distribution to make it easier for volunteers and people picking up water after work hours. There was discussion about handing out water during transfer station hours. Craig Gauthier oversees sign-ups and said he is open to making changes. He said they could use more volunteers.
- There was discussion about shared water facilities between Chester and Blandford due to an article posted by the Republican during the meeting and Jim confirmed that is about personnel only. There are multiple water operators that work for Chester, Blandford and Huntington. John Baldasaro mentioned there is always a need for



more employees and internships through Gateway for departments like the Highway Department have been successful for retention.

- There was a question from Mandy about the Board of Health's involvement and why there isn't more information being provided by them or more assistance with getting the boil water order rescinded. Liz Massa from the BOH confirmed their job was to serve papers notifying the townspeople of the boil water order and that was done properly. A heated discussion ensued, and Adam Bryant, the town moderator, called for order.
- There was discussion about paying water bills while this boil water order is in effect. John Baldasaro advocated for looking into adjusting or prorating the water bills and that is something that will be reviewed. Frank Pero stated he would look into writing water bills off townspeople's real estate taxes.
- It was widely requested that the water commission provide daily updates going forward for the town to be kept informed of the status of the water. There was agreement that the 8/23 update posted online had the most information provided so far and there was agreement that even if there weren't major updates, the town would still like to hear something daily about where we are in the process. As updates are provided to Don Humason, they will be posted on the townofchester.net website.

- **Old Mill Property on Middlefield Road**



Health Agent Charlie Kaniecki of the Board of Health presented the old grinding factory as possibly abandoned and wanted to discuss proceeding with trying to get the ownership of the property back to the town for demolition. There was discussion about how the building was sold years ago to a business that has since dissolved. Construction was started on the building but then stopped and there is currently no active building permit. The building is marginally secure though we do not know what items may be in or around the building and who holds responsibility for it. The Board of Health wanted to inform the town council about their concerns revolving around the building and John suggested reaching out to Jason Forgue, the building inspector.

Maryann Pease mentioned there are back taxes owed on the building but that the town's treasurer has been in touch with a group that is paying those off and they are claiming the building is not abandoned. Many townspeople mentioned that they saw a group of photographers entering the building the week prior and were confirmed to have had permission by someone who owns the building.

- **Fire Department Outstanding Bills**

There is a balance of outstanding bills at the Fire Department of a few thousand dollars. There are ARPA funds available and the Fire Department requested about \$800 of those funds be allocated to the outstanding bills.

*John made a motion to approve this, Andy seconded, and all voted in favor.*



- **1 Crane Rd Property**

There was discussion about liens listed on this property. The matter was brought to Housing Court and a judge's ruling ordered the liens be removed or the town would face fines.

*John made a motion to have the liens removed. Andy seconded. The motion passed unanimously.*

- **CMELD/Eversource Update**

Diane Hall from CMELD stated she had Eversource staff in her office reviewing financial documents. She said the auditor has not given her the CMELD audit yet. She's still answering some follow up questions Eversource had. Diane said there are some financial reports pending that are delaying some of her answers. John asked that any updates be shared with the selectmen to then share with the townspeople.

Beth Lansing presented a petition of 232 registered voters calling for a special town meeting about the issue. John confirmed there will be a special town meeting scheduled within 45 days from when the petition is certified.

John mentioned concerns are how CMELD would handle construction projects, emergencies or other big expenses if we are unable to get grants. Mass Save has been defunded but there will be other grants and programs available.

Deryck Savoy from the Light Commission mentioned there is support for interconnection systems between towns and John said if that were something that would work that would be encouraged.



- **Public Comment**

Andy Sutton brought up that he is looking for someone to write an RFP for the abandoned school. He has been quoted about \$15,000 for that job and PVPC has not responded due to a conflict of interest. Rich Holzman of the planning board said he can put a word in to get a response back from PVPC. Andy suggested writing our own RFP with our attorney's review and submitting it ourselves.

*John called a motion to end the meeting, Andy seconded, and all voted in favor. The meeting adjourned at 8:02pm.*



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

(413) 354-7760

TownofChester.net

Respectfully Submitted,

Kim Fox, Administrative Assistant

9/9/24

Date Signed

John Baldasaro, Chairman

9/9/24

Date Signed

Andy Sutton, Vice Chairman

9/9/24

Date Signed

Craig Gauthier, Clerk

9/9/24

Date Signed