



**MEETING MINUTES of the JOINT MEETING of the
CHESTER BOARD OF SELECTMEN and WATER COMMISSION**

15 MIDDLEFIELD ROAD

CHESTER, MASSACHUSETTS 01011

(413) 354-7760

TownofChester.net

Monday, August 5, 2024

MEETING MINUTES

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

People in attendance:

Selectboard members present were John Baldasaro (by phone), Andy Sutton and Craig Gauthier. Also present was Town Administrator Don Humason taking the minutes, Water Commissioners Bob Daley, Jim Zimmerman and Frank Pero, Highway Superintendent and EMD Chip Dazelle, Annette and Terry Murphy, Tom Bean, Nick Chiusano of the Board of Health, Mike Stapleton, Zhana Levitsky, Mary Ann Pease, Melissa McAuliffe, a reporter from the Country Journal, and others by Zoom.

Water Commission Chair Bob Daley opened the meeting promptly at 3:30pm.

Update from the Water Commission:

Bob started the meeting by saying the big question was when will DEP say that Chester water is ok to drink? He said they just didn't know yet. There had been no new word from DEP.



He reported some good news. He said that Carbon Activated had finished replacing new sand and GAC in Filter #1 at the Water Treatment Plant. Filter #2 was scheduled for 9/1/24 but may be expedited.

He said the Water Commission intends to meet again when all this is over to hold an After-Action Review meeting and review everything that occurred and was done.

He stated the goal will be to look to the future of the Chester water system.

Bob stated when this crisis hit, they realized the need to switch to Horn Pond in Becket as their primary water source instead of using the Austin Brook Reservoir.

He said they went to Horn Pond and cleaned the screens of the wet well. Its capacity used to be 170 GPM but is down to 50 gallons per minute.

Mass Rural Water has been assisting them. A diver went into the pond to look at the intake. There are some problems with those pipes.

Frank Pero asked when it had been cleaned last and Bob stated he did not know.

Andy Sutton asked about the chlorine levels at the treatment plant and why they were wrong.

Bob said it appeared there was a difference between what the computer was reporting in chlorine levels and what the actual levels were. SCADA says we are in violation, but the on-site plant operator says we are not.



Jim Zimmerman said that DEP was concerned that Chester's chlorine contact time with the drinking water was not long enough to kill the "bad bugs" in the water.

Andy asked why the operator didn't have the same information as the computer and Jim said there is a time lag not addressed by the computer system. Andy then asked if the Water Department had an Emergency Response Plan to which Bob replied yes they did. Bob said they have tried to enlist MEMA to help. Chester lacks the technological capabilities to do robocalls to notify residents.

Melissa McAuliffe asked about the Emergency Response Plan and whether it had levels of severity. She said over-communication can be as bad as no communication at all.

Chip Dazelle asked how the water tests were going and if the results had been provided to DEP? Jim said the Water Commission is not receiving technical assistance or help from DEP. They did speak with Andrew Kelly, the Section Chief of the Drinking Water Program in the Bureau of Water Resources at DEP.

Chip suggested reaching out to Senator Paul Mark and Representative Nick Boldyga, Congressman Neal, and other legislators for help if the DEP wasn't responding quickly enough.

Bob said we have one primary water treatment operator, Jim Gobeille. One operator just resigned. And there is a second operator named Isaiah Solitario.

Frank Pero asked if we had switched back to Horn Pond from Austin Brook yet.



Bob said yes. One problem is that DEP has not allowed Chester to drain and clean the Austin Brook Reservoir like they used to so there is a lot of sediment in there. Bob says we have to keep pressing them.

Chip raised the issue of drinking water distribution at the Fire Station and said we lack the volunteers needed to provide water full-time.

Bob praised Chip for his help with storing and moving the filter sand and GAC and for the water distribution efforts. He thanked Craig Gauthier too for all he has done to organize the water distribution efforts for water system customers. Sara DaSilva, Lori Fieldstad, and Andy Sutton offered to volunteer to hand out water.

Bob said he and Tom Bean have been very busy out in the field and up at the treatment plant. A question was asked about the source of water in Chester and why it was surface water rather than wells like in some towns.

Bob answered with some information about the history of the federal Environmental Planning Agency and the Clean Water Act and the Chester water system. He said multiple test wells were drilled all over town at the time but ground water was ruled out. They selected the surface water option and built a water treatment plant to treat that surface water, as required by law.

He said ARPA funds have been used in recent years to make fixes and improvements to the system but noted it is expensive and they have a small customer base of around 250 households on the system



Bob again spoke about the need for a meeting to “look over the horizon” at what the future of Chester water may need to be. He suggested the current system may be unsustainable and other solutions should be looked at such as: shared water systems, collaboration with other towns, selling the water system to a private operator that could own and operate the water treatment and distribution system. These are some of the options.

Frank Pero brought up the story that had been circulating about an old mine that was now filled with water that some people say could become a public water source. Bats were mentioned and bat guano in the water. Plus, the law requires that any public drinking water source be needed to be treated. That was a similar story to the Becket Spring in the Town of Becket had been forced to close off to the public.

John Baldasaro spoke and said this water issue was very concerning to the Board of Selectmen and they had been hearing from the residents of town. He urged the Water Commission to make resolving the DEP Boil Water Order a priority.

John asked that Don reach out to the elected officials and get their help with DEP. Bob said he recommended holding off because he expected to hear from DEP tomorrow. Don said he would speak with Rep. Boldyga and Sen. Marks to bring them up to speed on the issue.

Melissa McAuliffe appointment to Recreation Committee:

John made a motion to appoint Melissa McAuliffe to the Recreation Committee.

Andy Sutton seconded it. The motion passed unanimously.



Water Commission Minutes approval:

Bob Daley made a motion to approve the April 25 Water Commission meeting minutes.

Jim Zimmerman seconded it. The motion passed unanimously.

Adjournment:

Andy Sutton made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Craig seconded it. The motion passed.

The meeting was adjourned at 4:30PM



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and
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**CHESTER BOARD OF SELECTMEN
& WATER COMMISSION MEETING**

Monday, August 5, 2024, 3:30PM, in the Town Hall Selectboard Office

*This meeting will be held as a hybrid meeting, but it is at the Select Board's discretion to allow participation for those attending remotely.
-Meeting minutes and warrants may be signed.*

Report from Town Departments/Town Business:

-Update from Water Commissioners on Chester water issues and discussion of DEP letter

Old Business:

New Business:

Anything that should come before the Selectboard that was unanticipated within the 48 hours of posting:

Public Comments or Questions:



Meeting Adjournment

This meeting is being held in person at the location provided on this notice. Members of the public are welcome to attend this in-person meeting.

Please note that while an option for remote attendance and or participation is being provided as a courtesy to the public the meeting/hearing will not be suspended or terminated if technological problems interrupt the virtual broadcast, unless otherwise required by law.

Members of the public with particular interest in any specific item on this agenda should make plans for in-person vs. virtual attendance accordingly.

Town of Chester, Massachusetts is inviting you to a scheduled Zoom meeting.

Topic: Joint Chester Selectboard and Water Commissioner Meeting

Time: Aug 5, 2024 03:30 PM Eastern Time (US and Canada)

Join Zoom Meeting

<https://us06web.zoom.us/j/81070387502?pwd=oELauLmDYPCcg5HBxfp3LJn6yaE9fO.1>

Meeting ID: 810 7038 7502 Passcode: 866957

One tap mobile

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