



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

(413) 354-7760

TownofChester.net

Monday, October 7th 2024

MEETING MINUTES

Open meeting – This meeting was held in the Chester Elementary School Gymnasium with a virtual option.

Selectboard members present were John Baldasaro, Andy Sutton and Craig Gauthier. Also present was Town Administrator Don Humason, Town Clerk Terry Donovan, Town Moderator Adam Bryant, Municipal Light Commissioner Deryck Savoy, Finance Committee member Andy Meyers and Police Chief Jen Dubiel.

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

Old Business

- CMELD Audit Review

John said the Selectboard just received the audit this morning (10/7) from Diane Hall, and Light Commissioner Deryck Savoy said he received it Friday morning (10/4). Deryck said it is the first time CMELD has gone through that extensive of an audit which included their records and inventory. He said that the results were not ideal and while there was a significant amount of money lost in 2023, there isn't anything that CMELD can't recover from. He said they will have work to do but said they are operating as essentially a non-profit with how small their profit margins are. Deryck said that it took several months for the audit to be completed, and they are optimistic about being able to change things for better results going forward.

Andy Sutton wanted to know what CMELD was showing in their accounting system as their profit or loss in the past years. Deryck said that they normally would show a 7-8% profit because they have always operated with a small margin to give people the most cost-effective rates. He said the last time he believes they had a loss was when they purchased a new light truck. Andy Sutton asked why the loss in 2023. Deryck said the reasons for the loss included underestimating pension/benefits by about \$140,000 and purchasing a new pickup truck. He said those items were hard to predict and budget for.

John said pension was understated by \$401,000, accounts receivable was overstated by \$138,000, contribution in aid of construction was overstated by \$195,000 and the total net position was decreased



John said pension was understated by \$401,000, accounts receivable was overstated by \$138,000, contribution in aid of construction was overstated by \$195,000 and the total net position was decreased by \$366,000. John asked what their recovery plan is. Deryck said that they will be looking at the spending and budgeting, they will work with the town for budgeting for benefits, and look at the rate structure to make sure it's appropriate. John asked if this changes their outlook on solvability over 5-10 years. Deryck said since they just got the audit on Friday, they don't have a specific plan yet and there are more questions he wants to ask the auditors. John asked about negotiations on purchasing power contracts. Deryck said they will be taking that into account, and they are looking into purchasing other sources of energy like hydro which would be in line to cost the same as what's being paid for power now.

Deryck asked about an issue with one of CMELD's employee's benefits. John confirmed there's been discussion with the insurance company many times with no change in response. John said they reached out to the benefit coordinator and the town may need to switch insurance providers.

Joe Simonowicz asked if since the audit was just received Friday and he's just learning about it today, if the vote needs to happen or can it be pushed until we get more information about the review. John said that this meeting was called by citizens so it needs to move forward but there will be an opportunity for discussion prior to the actual vote occurring and motions or adjustments can be made from the floor as the townspeople see fit.

Town Administrator Report

- Town Hall Custodian Position

Don Humason announced that Dave Pierce will be resigning from his position in Town Hall on November 1st after ten years. Dave does a lot of things around the town hall from regular maintenance to cleaning and is happy to train the new person. Don asked the Selectboard what they would like to post for a position: one position for the catch all jobs or if we wanted to have it split into two jobs between a repair man and cleaning services. Andy Sutton advocated to have a dedicated cleaning service and to have a separate job for a custodian. John agreed to that plan. Craig Gauthier mentioned there is a cleaning services company in town that we could look into.

- Water bills from Big Y/Berkshire Springs

The town received bills from the time the town was providing bottled water during the boil water order. Don said that they have returned empty bottles for a credit with Berkshire Springs so the amount of the bill is not finalized. Big Y sent a bill for around 29 pallets of water at cost. Don said they expect both invoices to total about \$12,000 after the bottle credit. John said whatever the final amount is could be paid with free cash or the stabilization fund. Andy Meyers said free cash is not certified yet. Patricia



Post asked if the townspeople would need to pay that bill. John and Don said no the town would pay for that.

- Letter to State Representative & Senator

Senator Mark and Nick Boldyga are currently checking their calendar to find a date that works for them to attend a BOS meeting in the next couple of weeks. John expressed frustration that they hadn't been present in the town for a long time.

The Water Commission has asked to come to the BOS meeting on 10/21. John asked that they be prepared with what their plan is for compensation to the water customers' bill.

- The amount of the PVPC bill for the Prospect Street project was finalized for \$207,242.14.

John made a motion to pay that amount, Andy Sutton seconded, and all voted in favor.

Public Comment

- Rosanne McClaflin said there was a large increase in unemployment that the town suffered from also and could explain the CMELD loss. John said it was mostly due to pension, but unemployment was also a factor.
- Someone thanked the highway department for paving the Skyline trail.
- Andy Meyers presented the Green Communities report for fuel usages for heating. Andy said this annual report is done for a yearly look and see how we are reducing our fuel uses. Andy said overall our fuel usage increased although several departments lowered their usage. 730 gallons of oil and 518 gallons of propane were used more this year than last year which cost an additional \$4,700. Key issue is heating the Highway Department's salt shed with propane. It doesn't need to be heated so that it will not be turned on this winter. He said doing that will save the town \$4000. He said the Highway garage is heated by an old kerosine tank and if it ever started to leak there would be a huge liability to the town. Andy proposed that the propane tank from the salt shed get repurposed to the highway garage immediately. John agreed to that plan.
- Andy Meyers also recommended, based on advice from the town treasurer, that we purchase tax titles software. He said it would allow the town to sell properties with tax titles which will bring in more revenue for the town, making it a good investment. The software costs are \$3,770 for the first year, then down to \$1,780 a year. Free cash will be certified in November, which could be used to purchase the software, and it should go through the tax collector budget going forward.

John made a motion to end the meeting, Andy seconded, and all voted in favor.

The meeting was called to adjourn at 6:35pm



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Respectfully Submitted

Kim Fox, Administrative Assistant

10/21/24

Date Signed

John Baldasaro, Chairman

10/21/24

Date Signed

Andy Sutton, Vice Chairman

10/21/24

Date Signed

Craig Gauthier, Clerk

10/21/24

Date Signed



CHARLES "CHIP" DAZELLE, HIGHWAY SUPERINTENDENT
CHESTER HIGHWAY DEPARTMENT
2 TOWN ROAD
CHESTER, MASSACHUSETTS 01011
(413) 354-2276 Highwaysuper@townofchester.net

***10-7-24 Selectboard Report
from the Highway Department***

- 1] Started patching Blandford Road and schedule line painting soon
- 2] Reshaping the road on Fisk Road and finish dead trees and brush removal
- 3] Water pickups is over going over everything
- 4] Paving skyline final strip that was missed hopefully Wednesday
- 5] Will be starting touch up grading on dirt roads
- 6] Opening more catch basins on East River Road still have 2 collapsed need to replace
- 7] Verizon will be moving pole on Smith Road to side
- 8] Still working on Cambell as time allows
- 9] Going thru sanders and plows for yuck season

-Charles "Chip" Dazelle,
Chester Highway Superintendent
Cell 413-393-8946



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CHESTER BOARD OF SELECTMEN MEETING AGENDA

Monday, October 7, 2024, 6:00PM, in the Chester Elementary School Gym

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:

Old Business:

-Review of CMELD Audit

New Business:

Town Administrator Don Humason report:

- Town Hall Custodian Position
- Water bills from Big Y/Berkshire Springs
- Letter to State Representative & Senator



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

Public Comments or Questions:

Next Meeting: Monday, October 21, 2024, 6PM, Town Hall Auditorium

Meeting Adjournment

Special Town Meeting to follow

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.