



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

(413) 354-7760

TownofChester.net

Monday, October 21, 2024

MEETING MINUTES

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 Clerk Terry Donovan, Town Moderator Adam Bryant, Water Commissioners Bob Daley and Jim Zimmerman, Assessor Clerk Kendall Bennett, Finance Committee member Andy Meyers, and members of the public.

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

Old Business

- Water Department & After-Action Update

Bob Daley said the next round of testing on November 14th should prove that town water is better than it has ever been. The water treatment plant now has 3 fully re-sanded filters, and the clear wells were drained and cleaned. The Austin Reservoir is drained, and the water commission received approval from DEP to start cleaning and removing the sediment. Prep work can start on Tuesday 10/22, and excavation will start on Wednesday 10/23. He said it make take up to three days or more. The work will be performed by Double M&T Excavation and assistance from the Fire Department. John asked about DEP concerns of getting sediment in the brook. Jim Zimmerman said that they will minimize it as much as possible.

Jim presented a letter of support DEP requires for cleaning the Austin Brook Reservoir. The letter needs signatures from the BOS, Water Commission and Fire Department. John asked if there were any comments from DEP about maintenance plans needed going forward? Jim said no but the Water Commission will be presenting an emergency reservoir maintenance plan to DEP as well. **Both the letter of support and the maintenance proposal are attached after the meeting minutes.*

Andy Sutton wanted to know what plans are going forward as the plant continues to age. Bob said they are still not getting the gallons per minute they'd like. The plant has been operating well at 77gpm but for the



last couple of months they have been registering about lower at about 55gpm. He said they did reverse flushing on one of the lines to determine if there were leaks or blockages in the pipes. Fall hydrant flushing starts on 10/22 which will hopefully help determine that. Andy Sutton asked about bringing engineers in to come up with solutions or possible new water options for townspeople. Bob Daley said they had a consultant helping with the boil water issue but have not discussed the future of the water system. He said massive grants would help. A shared well system was tested years ago but didn't move forward. Bob Daley said it could be possible to have a well above the water treatment plant which would have minimal costs. Andy Sutton offered to work with Tighe & Bond to apply for a grant that could bring in money for alternative water plans.

All three Board of Selectmen signed the Letter of Support provided by the Water Commission.

John Baldasaro brought up the issue of adjusting bills for town water customers. Bob Daley said that as a water consumer, he is grateful for bottled water that was distributed but the cost to the town for that was about \$12,000. Bob said he feels that should be enough restitution for water customers. Jim Zimmerman said his own water bill was extremely low at that time and doesn't believe there's enough payoff to make it worth it for individuals. Bob said he's worried it will be a slippery slope for water customers to ask for more compensation in the future. Andy Sutton said he does somewhat agree because bottled water was given out for free. Craig Gauthier said that there should be something else done for water customers because there is an expectation for it, and he does not believe there will be another situation like this in a long time. John said funds would come from the town's stabilization account and would need a town vote. There was discussion about half of the quarterly standard charge on the water bill during that time returned to the customers. John said no decisions are being made tonight but this plan will be reviewed further.

• **Old Elementary School**

Andy Sutton said the RFD is being worked on with PVPC. The grant money won't cover the whole project and would mean about \$5,000 would be needed from the town's funds. If the town wanted to wait until next year, it could be fully funded. John Baldasaro said since next year is only 60 days away, it's worth waiting.

Andy Sutton asked about marketing the school as a private listing and Andy Meyers said that it is free to list as a private residence. Andy Meyers said they sell to commercial buyers too but there could be a lot of restrictions on the school and specs that need to be listed. Andy Sutton said there's more to RFPs than writing them, it's about vetting the people that will be involved in the project. Rich Holtzman said he attends almost every PVPC meeting, and feels they are viable and still the best course to proceed.

Town Admin Report

- Don Humason said he's waiting for Nick Chiusano to get back to him about winterizing the school. Bob Daley confirmed the water is turned off.
- Another follow up was sent to the State Senators with no reply of when they will attend a BOS meeting.



- A thank you letter is being sent to the superintendent of Chester Elementary and Sheriff Cocchi for their help with the Special Town Meeting
- Don and Kim are going to Small Town Administrators Meeting in Southwick on 10/24.
- The bill for bottled water is currently about \$12,000 but should be less because an unused pallet of water and empty bottles are being returned for a credit.

Public Comments:

Andy Meyers said the assessor's consultant said there hasn't been any new growth in town. Andy has been reviewing if that's correct. Kendall Bennett said there is new growth in town. There were about 60 properties with past building permits that were reviewed and are being updated into the system this week.

Andy Meyers said the accountant asked about a \$15,000 deficiency in the Highway Department's salary which may need to be rectified with free cash. He said it was caught late so funds are not able to be transferred from another Highway account.

Fire Chief Nate Bolduc said he is looking into insurance programs that will allow the fire department to keep members on the department that are over 65 years old, specifically for Henry Fristik. John Baldasaro said they would agree with that if it's cheaper or even comparable to the current insurance company the town uses.

John made a motion to start an executive session which would start at the close of the BOS meeting.

John voted, Andy Sutton seconded, and all voted in favor. Meeting adjourned at 7:05pm



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Respectfully Submitted

Kim Fox, Administrative Assistant

11/4/24
Date Signed

John Baldasaro, Chairman

11/4/24
Date Signed

Andy Sutton, Vice Chairman

11/4/24
Date Signed

Craig Gauthier, Clerk

11/4/24
Date Signed



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CHESTER SELECTBOARD MEETING AGENDA

Monday, October 21, 2024, 6:00PM, in the Town Hall Auditorium

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:

-Water Department Update and After-Action Review
-Old Elementary School Re-use RFP

Water Commissioners
Andy Sutton

Old Business:

New Business:

Town Administrator Don Humason report:

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

Public Comments or Questions:



Executive Session: The Chester Select Board will vote to go into Executive Session G.L.c.30A Section 21. (a) A public body may meet in executive session only for the following purposes: (1) To discuss the reputation, character, physical condition or mental health, rather than professional competence, of an individual, or to discuss the discipline or dismissal of, or complaints or charges brought against, a public officer, employee, staff member or individual.

The meeting will end at the conclusion of the Executive Session and not reconvene in open session.

Next Meeting: Monday, November 4, 2024, 6PM

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.



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

***10-21-24 Selectboard Report
from the Highway Department***

- 1] Still patching Blandford Road and will get Skyline also
- 2] Fisk road done new culverts, and some trees removed all done
- 3] Skyline final strip paved, Will work on last section next year
- 4] Dirt roads have been touched up on grading for winter
- 5] Had vac truck open catch basins on Skyline that have been plugged for years
- 6] Getting set up Maynard hill tree removal from Eversource At no cost to the town
- 7] Still going through equipment for winter
- 8] Scheduled line painting within 2 weeks only a few roads full town next year
- 9] Guardrails that were hit on old state road by bridge should be fixed by this meeting

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

Water used for water emergency July-September 2024

Source		Pallets	Cases
Big Y		29 of 24 packs	2,232
Big Y	Donated	2 pallets 24 packs	144
Big Y		11 of 1 gal Jugs	
Big Y	Donated	2 Pallets 1 Gal jugs	
Berkshire Springs		4 Pallets of 3 gal jugs for retail	231 jugs

Premium Waters Pittsfield mass 2 Donated 144 cases 10 OZ bottles

Classic pizza donated a large pizza

Big Y		\$8,918.17
Berkshire springs	around	\$4,415.85
		\$13,334.02
Minus returns	231 @ \$7.00	- \$1,617.00
		\$11,717.20

Plus the other pallet Still in talks with Berkshire springs



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October 21, 2024

We, the undersigned Officials of the Town of Chester, offer this Letter of Support for the Austin Brook Reservoir Emergency Maintenance proposal, outlined by the Chester Water Commission.

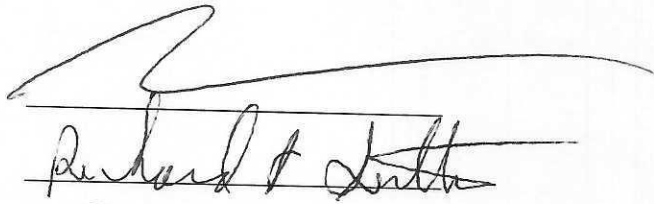
Due to sedimentation, Austin Brook Reservoir is practically unusable.

We agree a State of Emergency exists with regard to no back-up supply for drinking water and an 111-year-old water works, with compromised water flow from Horn Pond. This fragile connection eliminates our normal ability to access that 30ac unlimited supply.

Currently, our fire hydrant system is limited to the amount of treated drinking water stored in the clear well, which would be rapidly exhausted in event of a serious structure fire.

We believe immediate action is urgently needed to provide health and safety options to our residents.

Chester Selectboard



Chester Water Commission



Chester Fire Chief



Chester...The Gem of the Valley

Chester is an Equal Opportunity Employer

Good morning, Daizha & Mike,

On behalf of Chester Water Dept, PWS #1059000 and Chester Fire Dept, and per your recommendation, please find our proposal to conduct routine maintenance of Austin Brook Reservoir.

Rationale:

The reservoir has not been cleaned in at least twelve years and has copious sediments built up, rendering it unusable as either a back-up drinking water supply or in support of firefighting. Our sole supply from Horn Pond is fragile and compromised by unknown factors...i.e. obstruction or leak. It is our belief that a State of Emergency exists, requiring immediate action to provide a viable back-up drinking water source option.

Currently our ability to combat a serious fire is severely compromised, as CFD could only use our drinking water in the clear well.... not sufficient to fight a house fire. Current drought conditions eliminate the river as a back-up option and the fragility of our Horn Pond connection prevents us using that source for fire suppression, as we normally would.

Proposal:

Beginning no sooner than October 22, 2024 and ending no later than November 22, 2024, our contractor will perform removal of sediment above the Austin Brook Dam while mitigating sediment from entering downstream, by strategically installing temporary 'hay swales' above the Dam during excavation. Further to protecting the downstream below the Dam, we will install temporary 'swale fencing' as a barrier between spent sediment and Austin Brook. Current conditions on the ground are ideal for immediate action...ie sediment has de-watered for a month, no forecast next week, as well as warmer air temps. Our experienced contractor is ready and willing to meet Daizha on-site Monday, October 21, to review.

Sent as an email from Bob Daley, Water Commissioner, dated 10/22/24.

Transcribed by Kim Fox, Administrative Assistant to Board of Selectmen.



To: Massachusetts Clean Energy Center Staff Evaluating 40101D Grant Proposals

Re: Support for Chester Municipal Electric Light Department (CMELD)/MMWEC vegetation management program to improve reliability in town

The Chester Municipal Electric Light Department (CMELD), through a partnership with Massachusetts Municipal Wholesale Electric Company (MMWEC), intends to submit what I believe is a unique, beneficial project which would eliminate a major electric reliability issue. The project would improve reliability in an area especially susceptible to outages while aligning with the goals of the 2008 Global Warming Solutions Act (GWSA) and subsequent legislation. As the Commonwealth seeks to electrify all areas of our economy, this will place significant strain on our electric utilities. Finding innovative ways to mitigate this will benefit CMELD and other small, consumer-owned public power utility customers within the Commonwealth.

The proposed project will consist of vegetation management along Bromley Road in Chester, Mass., in the far eastern side of the Chester Municipal Electric Light Department (CMELD) distribution system. As a rural electric distribution system, located in the Berkshire hills of Western Massachusetts, CMELD is subject to severe weather events, and strong winter storms. Most recently, a winter storm in March 2023 left over three feet of snow in the area and significant portions of the CMELD distribution damaged due to falling tree limbs and dead trees.

CMELD is one of the smallest electric utilities in the Commonwealth. Due to an expansive service territory of over 37 square miles and small customer base of 700, CMELD has the lowest number of customers per square mile in the Commonwealth. Because of this, CMELD customers pay a disproportionate share of their electric bill towards maintenance and operation of the CMELD system, vegetation and other operations and maintenance programs when compared to other customers in the territories of larger investor-owned utilities.

In addition to improved reliability, the project supports the clean energy transition by ensuring the reliable deliverability of electricity for the customers of CMELD. As the Commonwealth seeks to transition to net zero carbon emissions by 2050, ensuring reliable electrical service will be critical as this will not only keep the lights on but heat our homes and provide for clean transportation. Multi-day duration outages in response to extreme weather has the potential to significantly impact the lives of the residents of Chester as well as many rural communities in Hamden and Berkshire counties. As more of the residential space is electrified, a power outage could leave residents without heat, water or electricity to power their (electric) vehicles. By proactively targeting vegetation management, CMELD is trying to ensure their system maintains a high level of reliability now and into the future.

I support this proposal from the CMELD/MMWEC project team, as it improves reliability now while preparing for our carbon-free future. I request your strong consideration for this application.

Sincerely,

State Representative
3rd Hampden

State Senator
Berkshire, Hampden, Franklin, & Hampshire District