

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

(413) 354-7760

TownofChester.net

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**Monday, November 18, 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 were Town Administrator Don Humason, Town Clerk Terry Donovan, Town Moderator Adam Bryant, Light Commissioners Terry Murphy and Deryck Savoy, Finance Committee member Andy Meyers, Water Commissioners Jim Zimmerman and Bob Daley, and members of the public.

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

Town Business:

- Vandalism at Emery Park

Selectman Craig Gauthier recently observed a group of kids vandalizing the shed at Emery Park. There was damage to the popcorn machine, fridge, door, other items in the shed and the electric meter to that building. The power has been shut off due to the meter damage. CMELD Manager, Diane Hall, mentioned that meter tampering is a serious offense that could be discussed with the parents of the kids vandalizing the items. Craig has informed the police department. He said it looks like about \$2500 worth of damage. John said to let the police handle, and the town will work towards getting security cameras for the park. Jessica Sakaske asked about tearing down the shed since it's not used often. Deryck Savoy said that it was provided by the Little League Commission so they should be part of that discussion beforehand if that were to happen.

- CMELD Audit Review:

Light Commissioner Deryck Savoy said they've spent a good amount of time looking for new partners to work with to cut costs; i.e. getting new companies to buy power from. Deryck said that some of the results were from uncollected funds, miscalculating the budget and unexpected equipment expenses. An audit that extensive hadn't been done for CMELD in over 12 years. Deryck said CMELD's finances are looking significantly better this year, although there may be about a \$60,000 deficit. Deryck said they are talking together to see how it will affect the rates of the payers. The power rate may go up a couple of cents but nothing major. CMELD has money put aside for tree removal and they have applied for a grant to have more funds for that. They will also not need to upgrade any equipment, and they are not planning for big expenses on equipment for at least a couple of years.

John Baldasaro said it might be helpful to do regular audits and present that to the Finance Committee to assist with budgeting and to be included in the town's annual report. Deryck said he thinks that would be reasonable. John said that the town would also work with them and help with any grants they want to apply for. Deryck said they possible new head lineman they are in the process of interviewing.

Andy Sutton asked if they could have a budget for 2025 in early January for the town to review? Deryck said they could see if that would work for them. Andy Meyers said it would be better to budget in advance and not budget while the year is ongoing.

Andy Sutton asked about their budgeting software. Diane said it is outdated but it's paid for through June and she's used to the system so she will not be changing anytime soon. Deryck asked about an actuary study – John said that most towns don't do it because there's no return on investment.

Maryann mentioned it could be worth talking to the town treasurer to learn more about that process. Andy Meyers suggested putting money aside in a fund for things like that so it will be built up over time. Deryck said MWHEC already does that for CMELD.

Diane said that she doesn't trust the Town's accounting department because they didn't catch the fire department overspending last year. John said that it was caught and was discussed with the previous fire chief numerous times. The Chief was not reappointed. Equipment was purchased that was needed but it shouldn't have been bought at that time due to budget limitations.

Maryann Pease asked Rosanne McClafin what is outstanding in electric revenue. Rosanne said there may be 10% of customers they have a hard time collecting from. Brian Forgue asked why she doesn't have confidence in the Treasurer. Diane said they are unable to get in touch with most of the accounting department. Responses aren't given and payments are not being posted. Turnovers are not being recorded.

John agreed that, if that was happening, it was unacceptable.

- Tree Lighting Friday 11/29/24

Barbara Huntoon announced that the recreation committee will be hosting the Holiday Tree lighting on Friday, November 29 at 6:30PM. There will be refreshments available in the Town Hall auditorium afterward. Flyers will be posted around town and on the Town of Chester website. Barbara asked about having a tree in the Town Hall decorated by COA. Jane Sutton said they don't have plans for that yet, but they will discuss it.

- Senior Work Off Program

Kim Fox said the assessors board is currently discussing changes to the program, but nothing is finalized. Likely there may be updates to the 2026 policy. Bob Daley asked how many participants the program allows. Kim said 10 in total. Bob asked how many participants they've gotten, and Kim said 10.

Deryck Savoy brought up an issue with the assessor valuation company, Bishop and Associates. Deryck said one of their employees came to his house for an inspection but wasn't prepared and didn't have anything on his car to indicate that he was working for the assessors. Kim said they are supposed to have paperwork for what they're looking for and magnets on their car identifying who they are.

- Water Department Update

Bob Daley said Austin Brook Reservoir has been excavated and there were about 80 truckloads of sediment taken out and the removal of bio film in the clear wells is being scheduled.

There is a statewide drought, and the burn ban has been extended along with restricted outdoor water use in Chester. GPS data is being captured daily for the Asset Management Plan grant. They are also continuing to identify customers with lead-service lines but they're having trouble getting in touch with all water customers.

Diane Hall said she would put it in the Watts News for customers to have their phone numbers updated with CMELD and Water.

Bob said they are working towards scheduling another diver to come in to look at the pipe at Horn Pond.

Craig Gauthier asked if the outgoing pressure problem could be the pump? Bob said no, that it is gravity fed.

Craig brought up asking for Bob's resignation at a previous meeting. Jim Zimmerman said there would need to be a recall vote since Bob is an elected official.

Barbara Huntoon asked why he is asking for his resignation. Craig said there was a heated incident at the water treatment plant between himself and Bob.

#### Town Administrator's Report:

- Vote on Winter Road Closures

Don Humason presented portions of Kinnebrook Rd, Smith Rd and Round Hill to be closed for the winter season beginning November 15<sup>th</sup> until April 15<sup>th</sup>.

***John voted in favor, Andy seconded, and all voted in favor of closing these portions of town roads for the winter.***

- 2006 Ford COA Van

The Council on Aging van has been unused and parked at the highway garage for the last couple of years. The current town surplus property disposal policy says that anything valued between \$1,000 and \$10,000 would need a bidding process and an auction. Don requested that we follow the state 30B law of not needing a bidding or auction process unless the property is valued over \$10,000. All of the selectmen were in favor of having a policy revision for review.

- Update on Insurance Benefits

Don has been working with Sonya Kinch to start working towards a more formal partnership with her. She's been a benefits consultant for the town for a long time. She has HR experience and has ideas about payroll, insurance and other things that could benefit the town. Don said she could help resolve the health insurance issues.

- Don will be attending the highway supervisors' meeting with Chip Dazelle on November 19<sup>th</sup>.



- There will be a Finance Committee meeting on November 26<sup>th</sup> at 9:30 followed by a staff meeting.

Public Comments:

- Veronica Marr asked about the old elementary school. The selectmen confirmed they are working with Pioneer Valley Planning Commission to create a Request For Proposals which should be finalized in January. Once it is completed, they will look for offers from prospective buyers to hear their plans and, if accepted, they will be presented to the town to vote on the options available. Most likely there will not be anything to vote on until the middle of 2025.
- Brian Fogue mentioned that the school committee met last week, and they approved to have the Hilltown Community Health Center host a socializing event for kids and parents to gather at Chester Elementary school for group play.
- Rosanne McClaflin asked about having a town wide tag sale when town hall is ready to dispose of items and make them available to the public. She said town residents could also have a tag sale on the same day without paying the permit fee and it could be a good way to bring people to town.

***John Baldasaro made a motion to adjourn the BOS meeting. Andy Sutton seconded, and all voted in favor. The Board of Selectmen meeting adjourned at 7:26pm.***

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Respectfully Submitted,

Kim Fox, Administrative Assistant

Date Signed

  
John Baldasaro, Chairman

12/2/24  
Date Signed

  
Andy Sutton, Vice Chairman

12-2-24  
Date Signed

  
Craig Gauthier, Clerk

12/2/24  
Date Signed



CHARLES "CHIP" DAZELLE, HIGHWAY SUPERINTENDENT  
CHESTER HIGHWAY DEPARTMENT  
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***11-18-24 Selectboard Report  
from the Highway Department***

- 1] Maynard hill tree removal from Eversource (At no cost to the town) has started
- 2] Still Getting equipment for winter sanders ready new chain on Poly-cast spreader
- 3] Blowing leaves on dirt road ditches
- 4] Finished a couple driveway aprons from paving this summer
- 5] Opened ditch at intersection of Ingel and Abbott.

Getting together with Con-comm about Johnson hill edges washing out all set to fix

- 6] Went with Craig to see damage at ball field gave him plywood to seal doors

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