



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

(413) 354-7760

TownofChester.net

Monday, February 10, 2025

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, Finance Committee member Andy Meyers, Water Commissioner Bob Daley, Police Chief Jen Dubiel and members of the public.

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

Town Business

- 2025 Town Elections & Early Voting

Town Clerk Terry Donovan said the selectmen need to vote whether to allow early voting for the town election.

John Baldasaro made a motion that there would be no early voting for the upcoming town election. Andy Sutton seconded and all voted in favor.

- Office Hours for Tax Collector & Town Clerk

Terry provided the Selectboard with her public office hours for both the Tax Collector and the Town Clerk position as follows:



- Tax Collector public hours are Mondays, Tuesdays and Wednesdays from 10am-2pm
- Town Clerk public hours are Tuesdays and Thursdays from 10am-2pm

John Baldasaro made a motion to approve these hours as submitted. Andy Sutton seconded and all voted in favor.

- Assessor Board candidate Phil Garvey

Don Humason said Phil has rescinded his interest. The position for Assessor Board member is open and details are posted on the town website.

- Review of Town Employee Health Insurance

Derek Savoy wanted to follow up about the issues full-time town employees have been experiencing with their benefits through Hampden County Group Insurance Trust. There is a lack of customer service. They will also be increasing their rates by 18% in the new FY. Derek asked if the town will be switching this year or staying with HGCIT? There was mutual agreement that there are issues with HGCIT and a desire for new insurance.

Don has been working with Sonya Kinsch, a benefits consultant, and is in the process of bringing her on as the town's benefit coordinator to facilitate benefit changes and HR related duties. The town has a contract with HGCIT and would need to notify them of cancellation and switch companies in the next two months before open enrollment in the springtime.

Derek said he would like to see a company change and John said having Sonya will be helpful. They talked about an issue where people were paying for benefits and not being covered. Don said that Sonya would monitor that and make sure payroll deductions coincide with health benefits.

Andy Meyers said the town had originally changed to HGCIT because they had a lower rate and there was a discount for new members at the time. Andy said that Gateway Schools also uses HGCIT so they may want to change as well.

John asked Derek about CMELD's budget and if it is ready for a review. Derek said they have a working copy, and they are budgeting for a new employee salary and also waiting for a rate study to be completed. John asked if they review invoices



coming in and sign for payments being sent out like the Selectboard does in BOS meetings.

Derek said that the commissioners don't review and sign the invoices. John asked if they have a quarterly expense review or anything like that? Derek said they will this year. John said CMELD lost more last year than the year before based on a report that Andy Meyers presented from the transactions that come in through the accounting system. Derek said he needed to review this information further because he was not aware of this report.

John said once a budget is set, the selectboard and CMELD should all sit together to discuss.

Bob Daley asked who was conducting the rate study. Derek said Energy New England. Bob asked if the budget will be presented to the finance committee. Derek said they will present their budget to the selectboard and can review with the finance committee as well.

- Gateway Superintendent's Update – Kristen Smidy

Kristen confirmed they use HGCIT and are unhappy with the rate increase. She said they've tried to discuss options for lower premiums, but HGCIT was not helpful.

There are two retirements coming soon for Gateway: Stephanie Fisk, Assistant Superintendent/Business Administrator and Deborah Kuhn, District Treasurer/Human Resources Manager. They are looking for candidates to replace those roles and asked if the selectboard members wanted to sit on the hiring board.

The new job description will include one day a week working with the hilltowns to make sure the school is aligned with residents, and she feels it would benefit the towns if the selectboards were involved in the hiring process.

Gateway is working on raising funds for a new roof.

They have a grant that allows them to have 5 days of preschool a week. The grant can also help fund new daycares. Kristen asked if anyone is aware of someone wanting to open one locally to let her know, and the school could help them with that.

They are working on getting driver's ed for the high school and have made good headway so far.



Andy Meyers thanked Kristen for keeping the budget to 2.5%.

Bob Daley asked if they would present their budget report to the public. Kristen said Stephanie Fisk is working on that and it will be something that will be posted.

Town Administrator Report

- Use of former Tax Collector office in the basement

Don Humason said since the tax collector's office has moved to the third floor, there is interest from both the Police department and the Board of Health to use the office.

Terry Donovan said when it was originally discussed, it was promised to the Chief.

John asked Jen Dubiel what she would use it for. Jen said she would make it her office and have more room for storage in the police department.

Bob Daley asked for the selectmen to take some time to hear from all town departments before making any decisions. He said there are a lot of committees that don't have space for things, and it would be nice for them to have an office in Town Hall. Bob also mentioned that the treasurer's office is the biggest office, and it is rarely used. John said that maybe that office could be shared since the treasurer is only there one day a week.

Rich Holzman mentioned that there are a lot of issues with having spaces for meetings and would like to see an open space. Nick Chiusano suggested tearing down the wall between the BOH office and the treasurer's office to make it an even bigger space.

John said that they will consider options before making any decisions.

- State Representative Boldyga & Senator Mark Stanton Hall Event. Will be February 11th starting at 5pm at Stanton Hall
- On the February 24th BOS meeting, the following will take place:
 - A Zoom meeting with the Blandford Selectboard about Shared Police Agreement & Extending Chief Dubiel's Contract
 - An update from the Finance Committee. Their first meeting will be in the COA room on February 13th, weather permitting.

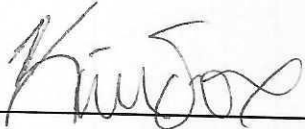


- There is a candidate from Middlefield for the custodian position and Don will be meeting him on Friday to vet him.
- Chester on Track will be on Saturday, May 17th.
- Nate Bolduc said that there are other towns who utilize a tax break for volunteer firefighters. Nate has been working on a list of criteria and wants to implement that in Chester to encourage more participation in meetings.
- Don Humason said he will communicate with the town council about it for further guidance.
- There was a discussion about a special town meeting happening on March 10th at 6:30PM. There are a lot of little items requested from multiple departments. If all items are not ready by the time the agenda needs to be posted, it might be moved to 3/24 or would be a second one.

John Baldasaro made a motion to adjourn the meeting and go into an executive session. Andy Sutton seconded, and all voted in favor. Meeting adjourned at 6:39PM.



Respectfully Submitted,



Kim Fox, Administrative Assistant

2/24/25


Date Signed



John Baldasaro, Chairman

2/24/25

Date Signed



Andy Sutton, Vice Chairman

Date Signed



Craig Gauthier, Clerk

2/24/25

Date Signed

02/05/2025

To: Chester Selectboard

Here are my posted Public office hours

Tax Collector-- Mon, Tues, Wed. 10-2

Town Clerk—Tues 10-2 Thur 10-12

Yes, there is on overlap of hours, but I feel that since I am in the building I can't say no to someone if they need something from either office.

I also come in earlier most days and do not leave to 3 and I work Thursday and Friday and usually one day on the weekend.

As we all know each position takes more or less hours a week depending on the time of the year. I feel I am doing ample hours to get the jobs done.

Thank You

Terry Donovan

Chester On Track

Saturday, May 17, 2025 ~ 9AM to 4PM ~ Rain or Shine

OFF ROUTE 20, CHESTER, MA

Encompassing downtown Chester and
the grounds of the *Chester Railway Museum*



Photo by Aiden Thayer

- PARADE AT 10 AM
- TRAIN SHOW
- DUCK RACE
- CCC CAMP RE-ENACTORS
- PIONEER VALLEY LIVE STEAMERS
- 26th CONTINENTAL REGIMENT, REVOLUTIONARY WAR
- STEAM AND GAS ENGINES
- A SERIES OF STONE RR BRIDGES
- ANTIQUE FIRE ENGINE
- LIBRARY MINERAL COLLECTION TOURS
- CHESTER HISTORICAL SOCIETY
- CRAFT FAIR
- WILD AND SCENIC WESTFIELD RIVER
- 1920'S FREIGHT CARS & CABOOSE
- LIBRARY BOOK & BAKE SALE
- CLASSIC CARS, CORVETTES, MODEL T'S
- SPECIAL POSTAL CANCELLATION
- MUSIC, FOOD, AND MORE!
- GRANITE SAW AND POLISHING WORKS
- HILLTOWN HOME SHOW

The Chester Foundation reserves the right to change the program without notice.

413 ~ 354 ~ 7878

chesterrailwaystation.org

On Facebook at
Chester Railway Station



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