



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

(413) 354-7760

TownofChester.net

Monday, July 14, 2025

MEETING MINUTES

Open meeting – This meeting was held in the Council on Aging room with a virtual option.

Selectboard members present were John Baldasaro, Andy Sutton and Craig Gauthier. Also present was Town Clerk Terry Donovan, Town Administrator Don Humason, COA Director Keirsen Broman, Finance Committee Chair Brian Forgue, and members of the public.

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

Reports from Town Departments/Town Business

- Board of Health Concerns about Open Town Constable Role

Liz said this was brought up at the last BOH meeting. Their concern is the Town Constable would serve notices and with no one appointed they're not sure how to proceed. John Baldasaro said any role that a constable does, a police officer can do, and the town has had a police officer cover that role in the past. Liz said that is fine.

- 171 Prospect Street, Condemned Home Needs Urgent Attention

Liz said this property has been abandoned since 2023. There are difficulties selling the property because the cost of repairing and bringing the property up to code is so much higher than the overall value. Previously someone had purchased it and began making renovations without permits and the building inspector got involved. The BOH continues to try and get a receiver but there hasn't been any luck and there is no response from the owner. John asked what the tax status of the house is currently. Terry Donovan said she does not know. Rich Holzman said that if the house goes up for auction, it does need to be disclosed that the property was condemned.



- List of Properties in Tax Title and Current Status Requested

Liz said the BOH was receiving quarterly reports about which properties are in tax title and their status. Terry said that town treasurer Sara Hunter handles properties in tax title and Terry has been trying to connect with her since February but hasn't been able to.

- Additional Board Appointments

Terry Donovan presented the following appointments to the board:

- COA Board – Linda Koske
- Assessors' Board – Andy Meyers

John Baldasaro made a motion to have the above parties appointed to the respective boards. Andy Sutton seconded and all voted in favor.

- Select Board Discussion about Town Administrator Interviews and Positions

John said there were interviews last week and he is still considering both candidates. Andy Sutton said that he felt Andrew Alward would be the better option of the two. Craig Gauthier agreed that Andrew had more real-world experience in government.

John asked Don Humason what his thoughts were on this. Don said it's too late to ask his thoughts on the matter. Don said when this was first brought up, he said he was not ready or interested in leaving but the board went ahead with the process anyway. John said that Don's three-year commitment is ending in September. Don said he was willing to commit to longer than that, but it seems that there is some issue with that now that the board hasn't disclosed to him.

John asked if Don would be willing to work with the new town administrator to train him. Don said that he had said that before, but at this point he would really have to think about it based on the way this has transpired. Don said when he started the job, he didn't get the training he felt like is needed and that made it a tough beginning for him. He said that Chester historically isn't very good at transitions. Andy said that when Don started, the previous Town Administrator had already left and wasn't available to train him. Andy said the select board offered him assistance that he didn't follow up on. Don said that is true but the select board was busy with their own lives and other jobs. John said that he agreed with Don that it can be hard to start a job without proper transition and encouraged Don to think about staying on to train the new person.



John said the job is a lot different than it is on paper and is one of the hardest jobs in town. John said he is surprised that there are candidates of this quality with the salary set as it is, this early on. He does think both candidates are good, and Andrew may be a little more qualified.

John asked the board when they would like the new person to start. Andy said 8/4. Craig said he thought that maybe 8/20 would be better. John believes that waiting until 9/1 might be appropriate if Don is willing to stay. Andy said that he is worried about an overlap and feels like it could be toxic to the transition based on things that have been said in the past. John said he doesn't think that would be a problem and feels it's important to have some transition period. Craig said he thinks a month transition is appropriate. Andy said he thinks two weeks would suffice. Don mentioned the difference between when he started versus now is Kim Fox in the administrative assistant role. He said she has worked in multiple offices and is aware of a lot of things going along in the administrator's office. He said that she doesn't know everything specific to the town admin job but could help fill in some gaps. John said there is no perfect transition. He asked Don what he had coming up for projects in the next couple of months. Don said there isn't anything major coming up like an ATM or STM. He said the end of fiscal year finances have been finished and he can't see anything specifically major coming. John agreed that having Kim in the office could fill in the gap there. He said training could start in a couple of weeks and can see from there. John asked again about a start date. Andy said 8/1, John said 9/1. Craig said 8/18. The final decision was 8/25 to fall in line with a BOS meeting.

John made a motion to make an offer to Andrew Alward at the current posted salary to start on 8/25. Andy seconded and all voted in favor.

John thanked Don for his time and performance in the role.

- Update on Animal Control Car Disposal

Craig said that he had been looking for offers on the vehicle and he had a \$600 offer from a person in town. John and Don both said he will need to have two more bids before choosing one. Craig said he will request more quotes.

- Reactivate the Reverse 911 System for Emergencies

Fire Chief Nate Bolduc was not present for this portion of the meeting, but this service was something that the town had before. The police department was covering the expense, which was a lot on the department and the service was used infrequently enough at the time that it was decided to get rid of the service. There were also concerns about how often it was used for non-emergency in the past and whether it became annoyance to residents. Diane Hall said this was



brought up in a town staff meeting and Highway, CMELD and Police were willing to split the bill, but one person would need to manage the program itself. John asked if she wanted to take that on and she said no. Chris Martensen asked if they were calls or push notifications. Don said they are text messages or calls if the resident provides a landline number. John said they would need to discuss the parameters of what it is used for, who can send messages and who would pay for it.

Town Administrator Report

- Wood-waste Landfill Update

Don said that Brian Kraus maintains the property for the elementary school but doesn't do the full landfill upkeep. Don got a quote from him for \$3,600 to clear the overgrowth, repair the fence and other clean up. John said we will need two other quotes. Don said he will get a quote from Limited Budget and Sam Mazzaferro at West Branch.

The town hall custodian has said that he has other full-time jobs lined up and is ready to move on. Two candidates have put in resumes. One is a previous cleaner and the other has experience with HVACs. Don said last time he interviewed candidates in his office with Craig and Dave Pierce. John said that it is fine if they want to do it that way again.

Public Comments

John brought up the issue of a new payroll company debiting funds from CMELD's account without Diane seeing an invoice. Don said the town is currently in a payroll company transition at the recommendation of Sonya Kinch, the Town's new Benefits Consultant, and it seems to be taking longer than they thought. Diane said CMELD was not included in the process to move forward with a new payroll company. They did not agree to the negotiations and feel like this cost is way more than what Universal Payroll is charging. John asked why Diane hasn't been given a breakdown? Don said he has been trying to connect with Sonya Kinch to have it explained and to know what the invoices are for. John said that it's understandable why Diane is frustrated, and they will look into it and get it handled.

Diane said the grant for CMELD cutting trees on Bromley Rd has been received and will be starting the work in August. She said they can reapply for this grant every year.



Lora Wade asked Nate about replying to her email about trees or ordnances. Nate said he didn't know how her email applied to him. She said that he should be involved as fire services. He said they only respond to calls of trees down over wires.

Jim Zimmerman gave the board a year end finance transfer document to sign on behalf of the Water Department.

Craig said he is working on setting up a meeting with Brianna from DEP about the wood-waste landfill just to make sure the town follows what they want to do.

Andy Meyers said they looked at the shed on Chester Hill and there was a clean-up and landscaping that needed to be done. He said they had to take the meeting board down where meeting notices were posted. Andy said that maybe having it at the fire station is a better place but wanted to let the board know. John said they understood.

John Baldasaro made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Andy Sutton seconded and all were in favor. The meeting adjourned at 6:55pm



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Respectfully Submitted,

Kim Fox, Administrative Assistant

7/28/25

Date Signed

John Baldasaro, Chairman

7/28/25

Date Signed

Andy Sutton, Vice Chairman

7/28/25

Date Signed

Craig Gauthier, Clerk

7/28/25

Date Signed