



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

(413) 354-7760

TownofChester.net

Monday, August 25, 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 Administrator Andrew Alward and Don Humason, Town Clerk Terry Donovan, Finance Committee Chair Brian Forgue, Assessors' Board member Andy Meyers, and members of the public.

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

Town Business

• 2024 Audit Review

Tony Roselli from Roselli, Clark & Associates was available via Zoom. They performed a traditional and federal audit for the first time for the town in a long time. A governance report is required and there are no scope limitations. There are outstanding Real Estate taxes dated back to 1987. Balances that old are problematic to assign liens to those balances if they haven't been already. Tony suggested having those balances abated. John Baldasaro said the Department of Revenue has given the town a hard time in the past clearing old taxes and Tony said it is something he will bring up at their next meeting with the DOR. Janice Boucher, who was present via Zoom said she's seen this in a lot of small and would love to hear any resolutions that Tony finds.

Tony said any motor vehicle taxes that are older than ten years old, the collector can request the assessors to have those taxes abated and there is no approval process needed from the DOR. There are also overpayments in the collector's office to be reconciled. They could be meant to pay for old taxes and are not posted there.



A cyber security and fraud review was completed with no issues uncovered.

The Treasurer had some small discrepancies in balances and those will be corrected. Tony mentioned having employee policies formalized in writing.

John asked if Roselli, Clark & Associates had finished the CMELD audit? Tony said it is still in process.

The town has a good solvency rate at 30% which is above target of 15% and puts the town in good financial standing.

A point of opportunity is a lack of written policies for federal grant awards for the town. Don Humason said that PVPC manages many grants for the town and will check if they have a written policy the town could adopt.

- Update on HCGIT Health Insurance and Proposed Changes to Town's Plan

Sonya Kinch said even with HCGIT's late rate increase, their cost is still about the same or a little less than other insurances. She said she feels they are poorly managed trust and having this very late and significant increase proves that. Berkshire County insurance may be a company to consider in the future. Sonya confirmed that Don has notified all the benefited employees that will be affected by the change on August 13th.

Sonya has made updates to the employee handbook, including the previously approved vote on increasing full time hours to 30+ hours a week. Sonya mentioned a change to employees' insurance coverage effective dates. Employees hired after the 1st of the month will have insurance coverage effectively the 1st of the following month. Sonya also mentioned an opportunity to have employees pay for their remaining month of health insurance coverage out of their last paycheck if they leave before the end of the month.

John asked about the overlap transition with the payroll company PrimePay. Sonya said the delay has been caused due to trying to gather employee information needed for PrimePay. Universal Payroll was unable to provide that information to the Town. Sonya said they are now waiting for only a handful of employee information to complete the process. She said there will be credits given back to the town from PrimePay for the months billed were services have not been provided.

- Selectman Andy Sutton's Resignation effective August 29, 2025

Andy and Jane Sutton will be moving to Maine. John thanked both for their efforts on the boards and work they've done for the town over the years. John asked Terry Donovan what the process for a special election would be. Terry said the process takes 64 days from the day they decide to



have a special election. If they decided today, the earliest election would be on Saturday, 11/1. John asked for an additional week and confirmed that Saturday, 11/8 would work best.

John made a motion to hold a special election on 11/8 for a new selectboard member. Andy Sutton seconded and all were in favor.

- Request Water Commission give update on Horn Pond Diver Work

This agenda item was tabled as there were no Water Commissioners present at the meeting.

- Emery Park Halloween Event One Day Liquor License

Craig Gauthier is in the process of applying for a one-day liquor license. Craig said is planning to have a containment area where alcohol will need to be consumed. He said he wouldn't be charging alcohol but would accept donations from residents. John asked if insurance would be needed and said there would need to be a police officer checking IDs. Liz Massa said Jessica Sakaske had a lot of questions about how this would work. Craig said he will reach out to her. John said he doesn't think it's a bad idea but there will be a lot of things that need to be figured out. There was discussion about having an outside vendor serve and provide alcohol instead. John said to have this put on the next BOS meeting to talk about the progress and Craig will contact Jessica to go over more things.

- Update on RFD process for Old Elementary School

Andy Sutton said the process is still ongoing and they are waiting for more information from Eric Weiss at PVPC. The committee has given all the information about the building they wanted included. Jason Forgue asked if the RFP intent is to sell? Andy said yes.

- Update on Assessors' Department

Andy Myers confirmed this is the last week Kendall Bennett will be in the Assessors' office. They have hired a new clerk, Emily Walker, who starts on 8/28 and will have one day of training with Kendall before she leaves. Andy said he has been active in the department since joining the board recently. He wanted to advise the board there is a very new assessing department and Kim Fox will be assisting with some of the training. Andy said they are looking at values of homes. Andy mentioned they are processing abatements every week but there are a lot of steps to the process. He said they are also working on getting more property inspections done with Bishop and Associates. He mentioned he is concerned about Chester land values being significantly than neighboring towns. Andy said there are a lot of opportunities for the software in the Assessors' office and would like to look into systems other than Tyler. Jason asked if they use Permit Eyes in the Assessors' office? He said it's a great tool to find out what kind of work is being done for significant value changes. Andy said he is learning how to use it.



Town Administrator Report:

- Introduction to Andrew Alward, the new Town Administrator. Orientation started with Don and Kim in the office today. Don plans to take Andrew around to town buildings this week to get him familiar with the layout of town. John thanked Don for all his efforts over the years with Chester.
- Tae Kwon Do begin Tuesday, 9/2/25, 4:30pm in Auditorium

The Chester Theater Company has moved out all of their items and Tae Kwon Do will be back on Tuesdays and Thursdays from 4:30pm – 6pm. BOS meetings will be back in the auditorium starting 9/8/25.

- Changes to Opioid Settlement Reporting

The town receives over \$7,000 which goes into the general fund. The state is now requiring a report showing how this settlement money is being spent. Don asked the Selectboard if they wanted to continue receiving the funds and do a report on them. John said it would be worth continuing to have the funds come in depending on how extensive the report is. Jason said Gateway Regional School may have some suggestions of how to use the funds as well.

- Discussion of M.G.L. c. 138, § 12D – Trade-In Option for Wine & Malt License

Kim said the Alcohol and Beverage Control Commission sent details about new state legislation which allows businesses with Wine & Malt licenses the option to trade in for an all-liquor license. Kim said while this is state regulated, the Selectboard would need to vote for it to be adopted in town. She said no businesses have requested this at this time.

John made a motion to adopt M.G.L. c. 138, § 12D for the town of Chester. Andy Sutton seconded and all were in favor.

Public Comments

Andy Sutton said the grant for the bridge on Abbott Hill Road was denied. He said there was a lot of competition, and the state believed the funds were better spent elsewhere. Andy said they can reapply next year, and John agreed it is worth reapplying.

Craig said there are issues with the security cameras in Emery Park. It's unknown why they are no longer working, and Craig has not yet been able to connect with Mike McCormick, who installed them.



Brian Forgue said our town stabilization account is good but expressed concern that major unexpected costs could create significant expenses.

Don mentioned there was an unexpected cost for the CDBG portion of the audit, which was \$5,000. John said he believes that PVPC would take on that cost as part of the grant administration fees.

Andy Meyers brought up the ongoing issue with properties in tax title. Andy said he feels like the town treasurer, Sara Hunter needs to come to the town to meet with the new Town Administrator and the Tax Collector to discuss what is in tax title.

Rich Holzman raised concerns about the Main Street bridge. He wants to know what the town can do to get higher up on the list for the state to repair. John said they have been able to move up on the state list but there are still a lot of higher-priority projects before Chester.

John Baldasaro made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 7:28pm. Andy Sutton seconded and all voted in favor.



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Respectfully Submitted,

Kim Fox, Administrative Assistant

Date Signed



John Baldasaro, Chairman



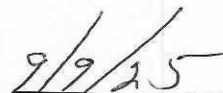
Date Signed

Andy Sutton, Vice Chairman

Date Signed



Craig Gauthier, Clerk



Date Signed