

TOWN OF CHESTER  
15 MIDDLEFIELD ROAD  
CHESTER, MASSACHUSETTS 01011

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**Monday, February 9th, 2026**

**BOARD OF SELECTMEN  
MEETING MINUTES**

Open meeting – This meeting was held in the Town Hall Auditorium with a virtual option.

Selectboard members present were John Baldasaro, Craig Gauthier and Brian Forgue. Also present were Town Administrator Andrew Alward and Administrative Assistant Kim Fox, Terry Donovan, Diane Hall, Bob Daley, Liz Massa, Florence Bolduc, Mary Ann Pease and members of the public.

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

**Town Business**

- Interviews for Town Accountant

The screening committee conducted preliminary interviews and presented two candidates to the Selectboard.

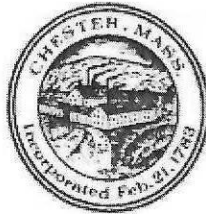
- Interviewee Brandi Page - 6:00 p.m.

Brandi said she has served as the Town Administrator for the Town of Otis for the last six years and is seeking a transition into a finance-focused role.

John Baldasaro asked about her attention to the town with a full-time position. She said that she currently works four days a week in Otis and would be available in person to Chester on Fridays, with additional remote availability during the week and evenings.

Brandi explained her municipal experience, including work in the Assessors' Office, service as a Planning Board member and as Town Clerk. She stated she has experience working with municipal budgets and enterprise funds, including those associated with municipal light departments.

Brian Forgue asked about her experience with enterprise funds like CMELD. She said that Otis also has an electric light department, so she has knowledge about how those accounts work.



Craig Gauthier asked how long she is willing to stay in the position. She said she could guarantee at least five years to Chester.

John asked if she has a contract with Otis. She confirmed she is currently under contract in Otis and is negotiating schedule flexibility to pursue additional opportunities. She stated she is not a CPA but has completed relevant coursework and is committed to continuing her professional development.

- Interviewee Margaret McClellan - 7:00 p.m.

Margaret said she is a resident of Tolland and has 27 years of municipal experience, including work in Assessors' Offices and as an accountant for multiple municipalities.

John asked how she works within free cash deadlines. Margaret said she is familiar with fee cash certification requirements and would make sure Chester meets the appropriate deadlines.

John asked how she would work with Chester while working in four other towns. She confirmed she is accustomed to working extended hours and managing responsibilities across multiple communities and would dedicate consistent time to Chester, including one regular in-person day per week and availability throughout the week. She said she understands that a lack of time has been an issue for the town and wants to create a line of open communication. She said she also has a consultant that she can delegate work to as well.

John mentioned the town has a municipal light department and they have had issues with getting information from the current accounting team. She has experience working with municipal light departments and understands their financial structure. She indicated she may reduce her workload in other municipalities and expressed willingness to commit to Chester long-term. She also stated she would coordinate with the current accounting firm prior to the start of the fiscal year to assist with transition.

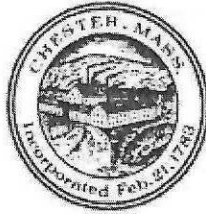
John mentioned based on her resume, she has experience in towns and shows longevity in positions and asked about her longevity with Chester. Margaret said she is looking to exit one town shortly because she is interested in serving Hampden County only. She would need to give them time to find a replacement but was looking to commit to at least five years.

- Board Discussion and Vote

The Board discussed both candidates' qualifications, availability, and experience. Concerns were raised regarding workload distribution and availability. The Board also discussed the importance of ensuring sufficient transition time from the current accounting provider, Kinshurf & Company, whose contract extends through the end of the fiscal year.

John Baldasaro and Craig Gauthier expressed support for Margaret McClellan. Brian Forgue expressed support for Brandi Page.

The Board discussed conducting a performance review after 90 days of employment.



*John Baldasaro made a motion to offer the Town Accountant position to Margaret McClellan. Craig Gauthier seconded. The motion passed (3-0).*

### **Report from Town Departments**

- Early Voting for Town Elections - Terry Donovan

Terry Donovan stated that the Board must vote whether to opt out of vote-by-mail for the upcoming Town Election. The Board of Registrars recommended opting out. Absentee voting will remain available.

*The Selectboard conducted a roll call vote and agreed to opt out of vote-by-mail for the May Town Election.*

- Selectmen's Budget Review and Discussion

Andrew Alward presented a revised Selectboard budget proposal with expanded line items to improve expense tracking and reduce reliance on general Town Hall expense accounts. The overall Selectboard budget reflects a decrease while improving expense transparency. Andrew explained the Employee Development and Training line item would support professional development, training, and related expenses.

Discussion occurred regarding the Town Administrator salary. John recommended a 3% cost-of-living adjustment and an additional 2% raise. Brian and Craig agreed.

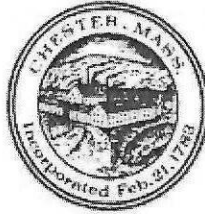
John recommended increasing Selectboard stipends to \$5,000 per member. He said that it makes it a little more comparable to other towns and feels there is more to the job than what the compensation allows for. He said he has wanted to make this request in his last year for a while, and this is his last year on the board. He said that in the future, the longer that stipend stays low, the harder it will be to find willing people for the position and willing to do it well.

Brian suggested considering a smaller increase and reviewing the full budget before making a decision.

- Gateway Little League Use of Emery Field

Brittany Paris, President of the youth athletic association, stated their organization is looking to use Emery Field beginning Spring season of 2027 due to losing their current field. She said they would cover all of the expenses to get the softball field up to regulation and would get approval from the board before any work happens.

The Board agreed to allow Gateway Little League use of Emery field.



- Transfer Station Plowing

There was discussion regarding winter maintenance and plowing conditions at the transfer station. Safety concerns were raised regarding snow and ice conditions. There was discussion about changing the gate system to open both in and outward to make plowing easier. John Baldasaro requested Craig Gauthier coordinate with the Highway Department and the Town Administrator to review conditions and develop a maintenance plan for next year.

- Streets & Sidewalks By-Law

Andrew presented a draft Streets and Sidewalks Bylaw addressing winter parking, sidewalk maintenance, and related responsibilities. The Board reviewed the draft and agreed to consider adoption following completion of revisions. Brian asked how enforceable snow removal of the sidewalks would be and expressed concern about elderly residents. John said there used to be a contractor to do the town sidewalks. It could be something to consider going forward.

### **Report from Town Administrator**

Andrew presented the following set of policies for town employees:

- Separation of Employment Policy

*John Baldasaro made a motion to accept the Separation of Employment Policy as written. Brian Forgue seconded and the motion passed.*

- Hiring Procedure Policy

*John Baldasaro made a motion to accept the Hiring Procedure Policy as written. Brian Forgue seconded and the motion passed.*

- Town Property Policy

*John Baldasaro made a motion to accept the Town Property Policy as written. Brian Forgue seconded and the motion passed.*

- Workplace Violence Policy

*John Baldasaro made a motion to accept the Workplace Violence Policy as written. Brian Forgue seconded and the motion passed.*

- Employee Policy Review & Acceptance Acknowledgment

*John Baldasaro made a motion to accept the Employee Policy Review & Acceptance Acknowledgment as written. Brian Forgue seconded and the motion passed.*



- Update on Town activities

Andrew reported that the Valentine's Day Dance sponsored by the Recreation Committee was cancelled due to lack of ticket sales.

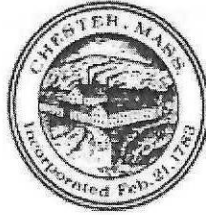
### **Public Comment**

Brian acknowledged the passing of R. Duane Pease and recognized his more than 20 years of service as a selectboard member.

Brian also mentioned the school committee will be discussing the budget at their next meeting.

Nate Bolduc mentioned a potential purchase of a used pickup truck for the Fire Department using free cash. The Board stated this would require approval at a Special Town Meeting. The Town Administrator was asked to prepare a warrant article for consideration with completed bylaws being included as well.

Meeting adjourned at 7:45pm



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

(413) 354-7760

TownofChester.net

Kim Fox, Administrative Assistant

2/25/26

Date Signed

Selectboard:

John Baldasaro

Date Signed

Craig Gauthier

2/25/26

Date Signed

Brian Forgue

2/25/26

Date Signed