



TOWN OF CHESTER SELECT BOARD
15 MIDDLEFIELD ROAD
CHESTER, MASSACHUSETTS 01011

Monday, June 1st, 2026

**SELECT BOARD
MEETING MINUTES**

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

Select Board members present were Craig Gauthier, Brian Forgue, and Jill Strong. Also present were Town Administrator Andrew Alward, Administrative Assistant Kim Fox, and members of the public.

Brian Forgue opened the meeting at 6:00 p.m. Warrants, minutes, and correspondence were signed.

Report from Town Departments

- Discussion of Letter of Support for West East Rail Stop Between Albany and Springfield

Brian Forgue said that a resident had requested the Select Board's signatures on a letter of support encouraging the state to include a rail stop in Chester on the East-West Rail line. He added that he and several other residents would serve as panelists at the Western Massachusetts Transportation Advocacy Forum at Mount Holyoke College on June 12.

Brian said that he intended to sign the letter and asked whether the rest of the Board also supported doing so. Jill Strong signed in support as well.

Veronica Marr asked whether the forum at Mount Holyoke was open to the public. Brian confirmed that it was but noted that attendees must register in advance.

Bob Daley and Rich Holzman both expressed strong support for the rail stop. Bob discussed the potential value such a stop could bring to the town if the project moves forward.

Jill Strong asked whether any other towns along the proposed East-West Rail route were also seeking a stop, which could make Chester's request more difficult. Rich Holzman replied that Westfield had expressed interest at one point, but he did not believe it would make sense due to its proximity to the Springfield stop.



- Discussion of opening back up Old Abbot Hill Road

Fire Chief Nate Bolduc explained that Abbott Hill Road flooded in 1955 and has remained closed ever since. He said he would like to work toward reopening that one-mile stretch of road. He expressed concern about the response time for emergency vehicles serving Abbott Hill Road residents and stated that an additional access route would be beneficial. Nate noted that there may be an opportunity to reopen the road as a fire road through DCR.

The Select Board expressed support for moving forward to determine what the DCR process would involve. Jill Strong recommended speaking with Dave Stokes at DCR, who serves as the town's primary representative.

- Fire Department Cruise Night Request - Nate Bolduc

Nate stated that the Fire Department would like to hold a Cruise Night, described as a casual car show, on Main Street and Maple Street either monthly or every few months. He asked whether the roads could be closed for the event.

Further discussion on this request was held by the Board with no final decision being made. They expressed support but the logistics of the event would need to be reviewed further.

- Conservation Land Restriction 601 East River Road Discussion Only

Sally Loomis explained that the proposal involved 87 acres of land on East River Road near Bailey Road. She stated that, based on her 15 years of work in conservation, this was one of the strongest projects she had seen. She requested the Board's approval to place a conservation restriction on the land so that it would remain permanently undeveloped except for agricultural use. She noted that funding was available through both the landowner and a grant, and that there was a tight deadline to meet the requirements. She also explained that the land is currently enrolled in Chapter 61 and already taxed at a reduced rate, and confirmed that the conservation restriction would make that protection permanent.

She stated that the Hilltown Land Trust would be the owner of the restriction. Because the holder would be the trust, the Chester Conservation Commission would not need to be directly involved; however, approval by the Select Board was required.

She stated that the land would not be timbered and presented a map showing the boundary lines. Jill Strong asked whether the house on the property would be included in the conservation restriction. Sally said that the house and the surrounding 10 acres would not be included. She noted that the property owner still resides there and that the property will also provide public access for fishing.

Sally noted that the property includes significant frontage along the river, a private single-lane bridge, mountainside terrain, wetlands, and habitat associated with endangered species.



Craig Gauthier expressed hesitation about approving the restriction without first having the Chair of the town's Conservation Commission review it and provide guidance. Paul Waite, a member of the Conservation Commission, expressed support for the project. He stated that he was familiar with the land and did not anticipate any objections.

The Board discussed how in this matter, the Select Board serves as the approving authority, while input from the Conservation Commission is optional.

Brian Forgue made a motion to approve the Conservation Land Restriction on 601 East River Road. Jill Strong seconded the motion. The motion passed.

- Appointments to Open Space Plan Committee (Lora Wade & Paul Waite)

Brian stated that at the previous Select Board meeting, Lora Wade had requested that her appointment be rescinded. Paul Waite was present and confirmed his continued interest in serving on the committee.

Brian Forgue made a motion to appoint Paul Waite to the Open Space Plan Committee. Jill Strong seconded. All were in favor and the motion passed.

Report from Town Administrator:

- Annual Town Meeting Warrant Discussion

The Annual Town Meeting warrant was drafted, reviewed, and approved by Town Counsel. The Board reviewed the articles as presented.

Brian Forgue made a motion to approve the Annual Town Meeting warrant as written and presented. Jill Strong seconded. All were in favor and the motion passed.

- Broker RFP Review

This RFP would allow the town to hire a broker to market and sell town-owned properties.

Brian Forgue made a motion to accept the RFP as presented to engage a broker for the sale of town-owned properties.

- Update on Town activities

The Town Hall septic pump is expected to be serviced or replaced within the next week. Otherwise, town operations are running smoothly.



Public Comment

Brian asked the Board whether they would support inviting the candidates running for State Representative to attend a future Select Board meeting. Jill and Craig both agreed.

Joe Hagopian of PVPC presented a public hearing update on the Prospect Street project. He said that the grant currently has a surplus and that the Board would need to vote on how to reallocate those funds to additional construction work. Based on field estimates, he said the remaining drainage projects could be completed with the reallocated funds, whereas previously it had been expected that this work would not be addressed for several more years.

Craig asked about a culvert replacement on lower Prospect Street, noting that a resident had raised concerns about how the work was completed. Joe acknowledged that there had been issues with the design and explained that the project took place during a period of staff transition, before Chipper Dazelle became Highway Supervisor and around the same time the Town Administrator changed. He confirmed that the specific culvert had since been corrected and that the property owner was satisfied with the result. Craig expressed concern about whether projects were being completed properly and about changes in project costs.

Brian asked what action was needed at this time, given that the original budget had already been approved. Joe explained that the Board would need to vote to allow the surplus to be reallocated to other work within the grant project. He said that the request would then be submitted to the state for approval, after which work on the next phase of Prospect Street could begin and potentially allow additional work to be completed. Brian asked whether, if another design issue arose, a Select Board vote would prevent those issues from being corrected. Joe said it would not.

The Select Board decided to continue reviewing the matter at a future meeting. The public hearing will be continued to a later date.

Rich Holzman asked about the RFP for the Old Elementary School that PVPC was handling. Andrew said he has a meeting with Erica Johnson from PVPC. She had questions about some aspects of the RFP and Andrew is hopeful it will be posted shortly after their meeting.

Brian Forgue made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Jill Strong seconded. All were in favor, and the meeting adjourned at 7:23pm.



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

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TownofChester.net

Submitted by,

Kim Fox, Administrative Assistant

6/15/20

Date Signed

Selectboard:

Brian Fogue, Chair

6/15/20

Date Signed

Jill Strong, Vice Chair

6/15/20

Date Signed

Craig Gauthier

Date Signed