



**TOWN OF CHESTER
BOARD OF SELECTMEN & ZONING BOARD OF APPEALS
15 MIDDLEFIELD ROAD
CHESTER, MASSACHUSETTS 01011**

(413) 354-7760

TownofChester.net

CHESTER SELECTBOARD MEETING MINUTES

Monday, June 29th, 2026

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

Select Board members present were Brian Forgue, and Jill Strong. Also present were Town Administrator Andrew Alward 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:

- Time Off Discussion Request

Chip Dazelle explained his request to have two weeks of vacation paid out, noting the work he has done for the Town, including securing grants and responding to job-related needs at all hours. He said he was unable to take a lot of vacation time off during the year due to losing a member of the department and that position still being open. Andrew Alward stated that approving the request would set a poor precedent, would not be beneficial for the budget, and would not be consistent with long-standing Town policy. Brian Forgue asked whether taking one day off per week, or a similar arrangement, would be workable. Chip stated that it would not and that only a payout would meet his needs.

Brian Forgue made a motion to pay out two weeks of vacation time to Chip. Jill Strong seconded the motion. Jill abstained, and Brian voted aye. The motion passed 1-0-1.



- Senior Work Off Repeal

Terry Donovan said that the way the Town had been administering the Senior Work-Off Program was not in compliance with state law and that administering the program in the required manner would be difficult from an administrative perspective. Maryann Pease said that many of the current participants may not be able or willing to continue under the proposed changes. Bob Daley noted that this matter is also on Blandford Select Board's agenda that evening and suggested reviewing how Blandford plans to handle the issue. Brian and Jill agreed and tabled the matter until the next meeting.

- Special Election Discussion

Terry said that the Town would not be able to manage the Special Town Election and the State Primary Election on the same day. It would be too complicated to stay in compliance as state elections are very restricted and regulated. She proposed holding the Special Election on Saturday, September 19th.

Brian Forgue made a motion to approve Saturday, September 19th for a Special Election, and Jill Strong seconded the motion. The motion passed 2-0.

- Conservation Committee Appointment

The Board asked Greg Harrison why he was interested in serving on the Conservation Committee. He said that he has a love for nature and an interest in protecting it. He also mentioned that four-wheelers have been driving through his property and other neighboring private properties, causing damage to land and wildlife. The Board then asked Lora Wade whether she could still fulfill the role considering the Commission's inactivity over the past six months. She stated that the matter was personal and that she would not discuss it in open session but confirmed that she would be able to attend meetings and fulfill the commitment. Greg said that if Lora is able to serve, he would step down in deference to her.

Brian Forgue made a motion to appoint Lora Wade to the Conservation Committee. Jill Strong seconded. The motion passed 2-0.

- Cultural Council (Carol Hepworth or Karen Marchetto-Kaminski)

Terry said the intent is to appoint both individuals as there are two positions available on the Cultural Council.



Brian made a motion to appoint both Carol Hepworth and Karen Marchetto-Kaminski to the Cultural Council. Jill seconded. The motion passed 2-0.

- COA Director (Keirsen Broman or Tammy Meranda)

The Board asked Keirsen why she would like to remain the Director of the Council on Aging. She stated that she tries to help as many seniors as possible and provides one-on-one assistance to seniors. She said she has even shoveled driveways for seniors and helped them in many other ways. Brian then asked Tammy, who participated by phone, why she wanted the position. Tammy stated that she wanted to expand interdepartmental coordination for events and activities and create more opportunities for young children and seniors to interact. She also said that seniors have told her they do not feel welcome at the Senior Center. Brian allowed Keirsen to respond. Keirsen said she tries to work with all seniors and is open to working with the library or any other department on events.

Brian Forgue made a motion to appoint Kiersen Broman as the COA Director. Jill Strong seconded. The motion passed 2-0.

- Public Hearing Prospect Street

Joe Hagopian from PVPC discussed a recent amendment to this project and explained that they would attempt to complete the work originally planned for Phase 4, using Phase 3 funds. The discussion was received positively by the Board.

Report from Town Administrator:

- School RFP Update and Discussion

Andrew updated the Board on a meeting he had with the town's attorney, and Erica Johnson alongside another representative from PVPC. He said that Erica recommended the town hire a title examiner to review the deeds and titles for the land included in the RFP to ensure the town has clear authority to dispose of it. Andrew said given the length of time the process has taken, they may want to consider selling the property outside of the RFP process, similar to other town-owned properties intended to be sold.



- Tighe & Bond Blandford Road Project Contract Review and Discussion

Andrew said the contract would need to be signed by the Board to start the work on Blandford Road. The Board reviewed, approved and signed the contract as written.

- SBA Towers Contract Amendment Review Update

Andrew informed the Board that after being reviewed by the Town's attorney, the proposed amendment was not in the town's best interest to sign as presented. He stated that the Board should open negotiations and review all points in the contract. The Board agreed. Rich Holzman asked to be included in the discussions, noting that the Planning Board had an interest in the matter because the cell tower work required Planning Board approval.

- Update on Town activities

Andrew stated that he had met with representatives from Whip City Fiber, which could provide an alternative to Comcast in Town. With the Board's permission, representatives could attend the next meeting to discuss the matter further. The Board agreed.

Public Comment:

Craig Gauthier said that the Select Board is responsible for running the town and should not rely solely on the Town Administrator to do so. He also said that the Town Administrator should report to the Board on all town activities.

Richard Holzman agreed that the Board should have the Town Administrator report to them on Town matters on a weekly or monthly basis. He also stated that the Board should listen to the Town Administrator's input and consider that information when making decisions.

Brian Forgue made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Jill Strong seconded. The motion passed 2-0. The meeting adjourned at 8:45pm.



Submitted by

Kim Fox, Administrative Assistant

8/13/26

Date

Approved by Select Board:

Brian Fogue, Chair

8/10/26

Date

Jill Strong, Vice Chair

8/10/26

Date