

TOWN OF CHESTER
Select Board Meeting Minutes

September 14, 2026

Open Meeting: The meeting was held in the Auditorium at Town Hall, with a virtual option available.

Select Board members Brian Fogue and Jill Strong were present. Town Administrator Andrew Alward, Administrative Assistant Kim Fox, and members of the public were also present.

Brian Fogue opened the meeting at 6:00 p.m. The Board signed warrants and minutes and reviewed public correspondence, including a notice from resident Ronald Ouimette regarding a delay in his Conservation Commission permit application.

New Business:

- Culvert Replacement

Chip Dazelle requested an update on the Abbott Hill and Ingell Road culvert grant. He said the grant process had begun with the prior Town Administrator and Andy Sutton and that he had not been involved. He expressed concern that Tighe & Bond had been paid but that the expense might not be reimbursed through the anticipated grant funding.

Brian said there may have been miscommunication. He located an email from Westfield Wild and Scenic about the process that did not include Andrew. Brian forwarded the email to Andrew and asked him to move the matter forward. Andrew agreed.

- Year-End Transfers

Andy Meyers said he had spoken with the accountant, who was concerned that the July 15 deadline for year-end transfers was missed. According to Andy, Massachusetts General Laws require the Select Board to approve year-end transfers by that date; otherwise, approval must occur at a Special Town Meeting. Andrew said he had emailed the Treasurer and Accountant several times about the matter but had not been told that Town Meeting approval would be required.

Brian suggested discussing a Special Town Meeting at the next Select Board meeting.



Town Administrator Report

- **Time and Attendance Policy Update**

Andrew said the Time and Attendance Policy incorrectly stated that employees earn one day of sick time for every 30 days worked. The policy should state that employees earn one hour of sick time for every 30 hours worked. Chip objected because he believed the correction would reduce employees' sick time. The group discussed employees' varying schedules and work hours and concluded that hourly accrual is the fairest method.

The group discussed practices in other towns and noted that the cited accrual rates are state minimums.

Kim said she had been hired part time but, based on the number of hours she worked each week, should have been accruing sick time and was not. She said Andrew corrected the issue and that she did not believe anyone was intentionally taking benefits away from employees.

Brian suggested changing how the Select Board reviews policies. Before approving a policy, the Board should ensure that all employees have had an opportunity to review it. He agreed that the goal is to standardize procedures, not reduce employee benefits.

- **Town Health Insurance Update**

Andrew met with MIIA to discuss using its insurance trust instead of HCGIT. Both trusts use Blue Cross Blue Shield, so employees would not need to change health insurance providers.

- **Start Annual Reviews**

Andrew noted that annual reviews began around this time last year and asked the Board to begin scheduling reviews for the full-time employees they would evaluate. Brian and Jill suggested conducting the Police Chief's review in conjunction with her contract negotiations. The Board also discussed conducting Andrew's review at the first meeting in October.

- **FY 2025 Audit Review and Initial Discussion**

Andrew said the recent audit identified the lack of publicly available and accessible Town policies and bylaws as a deficiency. He added that the auditors were pleased with the progress made on policies over the past several months.

Brian Forgue made a motion to authorize Andrew Alward to sign Tony Roselli's audit engagement letter. Jill Strong seconded the motion. The motion passed 2-0.



Members Report:

- Theater Discussion

Jill raised concerns about parking congestion during the theater season. Charles Schoonmaker and Hannah Williams said parking had improved this year with additional no-parking signs and cones, although daytime performances remained challenging. Jill suggested making extra signs or parking maps available to residents. Andy Meyers proposed removing old playground equipment from the grass field to create additional parking and suggested involving the Open Space Committee. Speaking for the committee, Bob Daley said a delay in the grant application could postpone that work.

Andrew confirmed that the Town has submitted an RFP for a Real Estate Broker who can assist with selling this and other town owned property. It is available for bids.

- School Committee Update

Brian reported that, at a recent School Committee meeting, members discussed additional state revenue received by the school. The school will need to replace its boiler and hopes to complete the replacement during the current fiscal year.

Public Comment:

Chief Bolduc asked about disposing of an old fire truck. He said all fire equipment had been removed from the vehicle and estimated that its value was less than \$10,000. Andrew confirmed he can post on the Town website and other public locations and can award to the highest offer.

Greg Harrison said he had been told that he could not have his dog with him during the town election because Terry Donovan did not consider the dog a service animal. Greg stated that the dog assists him with his PTSD. Terry said that, in her role as Animal Control Officer, she asked Greg what service the dog performs. She said that, based on information from the animal liaison at the Deputy Sheriff's Office, his responses did not meet the criteria she had been given. Greg said he had contacted the Deputy Sheriff's Office and that staff there were unaware of the matter. Brian then confirmed Terry's account that she had asked Greg the questions before the election began and concluded that his responses did not establish that the dog was a service animal. The discussion became contentious. Greg asked if he should attend the Special Town Election for his Constable duties. Brian said no, he should not attend.



Chip said he had several applicants for the Highway Laborer position and asked whether the Board preferred to interview two applicants at one meeting or schedule interviews across multiple meetings. Brian and Jill said they were open to whichever approach worked best for the applicants.

Bob Daley reported that the Water Department has received its 24th consecutive positive water quality report. Iron and manganese were not detected.

Brian Forgue made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Jill Strong seconded. Motion passed 2-0 and the meeting adjourned at 7:18 p.m.



Submitted by



Kim Fox, Administrative Assistant

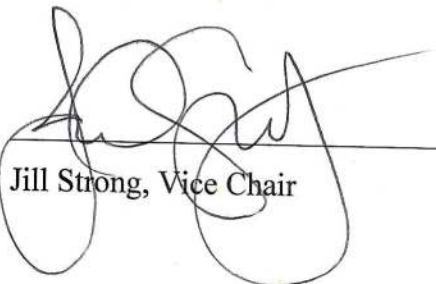
9/21/20
Date

Approved by Select Board:



Brian Fergie, Chair

9/21/20
Date



Jill Strong, Vice Chair

9/21/20
Date