TOWN OF CHESTER

Select Board Meeting Minutes

October 5, 2026

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

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

Brian Forgue opened the meeting at 6:30 p.m. following a Special Town Meeting. The Board signed warrants and minutes and reviewed correspondence.

New Business:

- Planning Board Recommendation for new Town Positions

Liz Massa said the Planning Board would recommend appointing a Fence Viewer and a Tree Warden. Jill noted that Chip Dazelle currently serves as Tree Warden and that the Select Board serves as Fence Viewer. Brian said he would be open to changing those arrangements in the future.

- COA Replacement Oven Discussion

Keirsen Broman said she learned during a COA potato fundraiser that the oven had been disconnected because of a gas leak outside the building. She had not previously been aware of the issue. She asked for confirmation of the leak and whether the gas oven in the COA room could be replaced with an electric oven.

Nick Chiusano confirmed that there had been a gas leak and said he disconnected the oven for safety. He said a regulator and ventilation to the outside are needed. Keirsen questioned whether outside ventilation was necessary for a residential oven. Nate Bolduc said outside ventilation is needed because of the risk of grease fires. Liz said there would not be a health code issue if food were prepared elsewhere and only reheated in the COA room. She noted that preparing food in the room raised sanitation concerns because it does not have a sink.

Chris Martenson asked whether the gas line served only the oven. Nick confirmed it did.

Heather Holt asked whether the gas line had been capped and sealed. Nick confirmed that it had been.

- Approval of Selling 8 Emery Street property

Brian Forgue made a motion to approve the sale of 8 Emery Street. Jill Strong seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously, 3–0.

- Annual Review of Fire Chief Nate Bolduc

Nate requested that his annual review be held in an executive session. The Board confirmed that the review would be posted for the next Select Board meeting.

- Annual Review of Town Administrator Andrew Alward

Brian and Jill acknowledged that it had been a difficult year. Jill said it was challenging to conduct a review because Board members do not work with Andrew daily.

Brian said Andrew had worked to make town operations more professional and structured and helped the town address major challenges. He said the changes involving the payroll company and accountant had not been the right choices, but Andrew should not bear sole responsibility. Brian also encouraged Andrew to be more open and receptive when employees approach him with needs, concerns, or requests for support.

Brian praised Andrew's work ethics, ideas, and perspective, while noting concerns about his overall approach. Jill said she was concerned that some matters were being handled at Andrew's level when they should come before the Board. Chris requested more guidance as he learned about his role, including being given more background information about issues that are being brought to the Board.

Brian said the Board recognized Andrew's efforts to respond to previous feedback they had for him as well.

Old Business:

- Insurance Discussion for Consultant

Brian reminded those present that NFP had presented their services at the previous Select Board meeting and that the Board had planned to decide whether to move forward. He expressed concern about changing from HCGIT while the town did not have a permanent accountant. Chris suggested allowing the consultants to gather more information before the Board decided whether to make a change.

Heather asked whether the consultants had provided a timeline for presenting their findings. Chris said they had not, and that the timing would depend on how quickly they received the necessary data.

Town Administrator Report

- Verizon is Discontinuing Landline Services

Andrew said he had been informed that Verizon would discontinue landline service. He initially expected no impact on town operations because the town's phones use Gamut and its Verizon cell phones would not be affected.

Nate Bolduc noted that one fire station has a landline because there is no cell service at that location.

Heather said CMELD had received a letter stating that Verizon had asked the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) for permission to discontinue service as of November 30. She said the FCC had not approved the request, so the timeline remained uncertain.

Participants discussed the lack of cell service in parts of town and the potential impact on residents who rely on landlines. Comcast was mentioned as an alternative, although concerns were raised about its cost.

- Special Town Meeting

The Board discussed a possible Special Town Meeting in January to consider several bylaws. The meeting would depend on the Planning Board completing the bylaws and the required notices and public hearings.

Member's Report

Brian said nearby towns had encouraged Chester to send a letter to state legislators supporting a West Rail stop in Chester.

Public Comment

Nate Bolduc asked about the quotes provided previously for cameras at the fire stations. Brian requested that the topic be placed on the next Select Board meeting agenda for a broader discussion.

John Baldasaro asked whether there had been a change in ownership at the mill property on Middlefield Rd as there had been some work completed there recently. Terry Donovan and Andy Meyers said there was a quick claim obtained by new ownership.

Eric, a Green Communities representative, described the state grant program and encouraged the town to resume participating. He discussed projects the program had helped fund, including weatherproofing, and said the program works with PVPC to assist the town with grant applications. Andy said the program's administrative requirements had become difficult to manage without a designated person to coordinate the work. He also said the town had struggled to find grants that were relevant to Chester's needs.

Eric suggested evaluating town buildings and using the findings to support grant applications. John and Andy said building evaluations had been completed about six or seven years earlier and that the town still had the reports. Eric said those findings could support grant applications.

There was a discussion about solar power for the water treatment plant. Eric said the building would need to be electrified to qualify for solar grants through Green Communities. He also said funding could be sought to convert the building to electric systems.

Brian made a motion to adjourn. Jill seconded. Meeting adjourned at 7:56

Submitted by,

Kim Fox, Administrative Assistant — 11/10/26 Date

Approved by Select Board:

Brian Forgue, Chair — 11/9/26 Date

Jill Strong, Vice Chair

11/9/26
Date

Chris Martenson, Clerk

11/9/26
Date