# TOWN OF CHESTER

## Select Board Meeting Minutes

**October 19, 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:**

- 8 Emery Street Right of Way

Liz Massa said the Hilltown Hikers purchased a parcel on Emery Street where the Granite Saw sheds were formerly located. She raised concerns about access to repair a water line that runs through the adjoining town-owned property at 8 Emery Street. Brian said the town-owned parcel was on the list of properties that could be sold and was voted to sell at a previous meeting. Liz asked whether change of ownership could affect access to the water line.

Nick Chiusano suggested donating the town-owned parcel to the nonprofit organization to increase the abutting property. He said 8 Emery St on its own is too small to develop or accommodate a septic tank and would primarily benefit an adjoining property owner by enlarging an existing lot.

Jason Forgue suggested considering an easement so the property owner could use it to access the water line.

***Brian Forgue made a motion to add a permanent 15-foot easement to the deed for 8 Emery Street. Jill Strong seconded the motion, and Chris Martenson voted in favor. The motion passed unanimously 3–0.***

- Proposed Fence By-Law

Liz discussed the Planning Board's proposed fence bylaw amendments. Some of the verbiage including that fences over 7 feet in height would require a building permit. The proposed maximum fence height would be 8 feet, and taller fences would require a special permit. There are also requirements for the structural quality of fencing.

Janis Sanner said she had previously brought concerns to the Board about her neighbor's fence and asked whether the proposed amendments addressed fence quality. Brian said the proposal does address that concern and noted that the lack of such language in the existing bylaw had made enforcement difficult.

Janis said the structural requirement did not address a fence's appearance. She felt the bylaw should include appearance guidelines to address concerns of adjoining property owners.

Liz said the Planning Board had discussed fence appearance but noted that appearance is subjective and difficult to restrict. She said a property owner's artistic choices would need to be accepted as long as the fence was properly installed.

John Orlak asked about preventive maintenance and fence repairs. It was confirmed that property owners are responsible for maintaining and repairing fences on their property.

***Brian Forgue made a motion to approve the Fence Bylaw amendments as presented to be introduced to town residents in a Public Hearing, prior to being voted on in a Town Meeting. Jill Strong seconded the motion, and Chris Martenson voted in favor. The motion passed unanimously 3-0.***

- Event Permits Discussion

Liz said the Planning Board had received inquiries about weddings held for profit on properties in town. The discussion did not concern private weddings held on an owner's property.

Liz said Jason had suggested a Special Event Permit to address these situations on a case-by-case basis. She had found an example used by Chesterfield. The proposed process would apply to parcels outside the business zoning district and would require approval from the Police, Fire, and Highway Departments, the Board of Health, the Building Inspector, and the Select Board.

Brian asked whether a separate permit would be required for each event on the property. Liz said the Planning Board would need to work out those details. Options discussed included an annual permit, a limit on the number of events per year, and restrictions on the months when events could be held.

Jason emphasized the need to inspect barns and other enclosed structures being used for events to gauge appropriate lighting, signs, and fire extinguishers. Traffic concerns were also raised. Participants discussed whether an ordinance would be easier and quicker to put in place than a new bylaw.

Brian asked how neighbors would be notified. Liz said a permit request would be presented to the Planning Board at a public meeting and listed on the agenda. She said the proposed process would not require newspaper notices for two consecutive weeks, making the process easier for those applying.

It was confirmed that the proposed process would not apply to businesses in properties already zoned for business in town.

John Orlack expressed concern about the effect on his quality of life if a neighboring property hosted such events.

Lee Myers asked how much time each department would need to review an application. There was agreement that review timeframes would be included in the permit instructions for applicants to be aware of.

It was confirmed that this proposal is still in the early stages and all these matters would need to be discussed further.

**Old Business:**

- Security Cameras for Town Buildings

Brian noted the town's accounting issues and uncertainty about available free cash. He asked whether cameras could be installed in one or two buildings at a time and whether lower-cost options, such as Ring cameras, could be considered. Nate Bolduc expressed concerns about the quality of Ring cameras and mentioned the cost of replacing stolen equipment. Kim Fox said the stolen equipment had been covered by the town's insurance.

Brian recommended postponing the discussion to a future meeting due to the time of night and having other agenda items to get through.

Heather Holt asked about cloud backups without a monthly subscription. Nick said he used similar cameras with 30-day storage.

Participants discussed using funds from the IT upgrades budget to purchase a lower-cost camera. Andy Meyers said an IT grant opportunity was expected in January and suggested that the town consider applying.

Participants discussed procurement requirements and whether the Chief Procurement Officer (CPO) would need to approve a camera purchase regardless of a Town Meeting vote or funding source. Andrew Alward explained that Town Meeting could approve purchasing cameras, while the CPO would select the vendor and arrange the contract. The Select Board would then review and approve the contract terms.

Participants recognized the need to consider upgrade costs while also addressing the safety of town buildings, equipment, and employees.

- Verizon is Discontinuing Landline Services Update

Andrew presented a letter he had sent to Verizon expressing the Town's opposition to the discontinuation of landline service in town. Select Board members agreed to send individual letters reinforcing the Town's opposition.

**Town Administrator Report**

- Conservation Commission Members

Andrew said a third Conservation Commission member was needed to ensure a quorum for votes. Anyone interested in serving may submit an appointment application through the Town Clerk's office and can be submitted from the website directly.

- Needed Communications

Andrew raised concern about lack of responses to his requests for advice from the Select Board and asked whether there was anything he could to communicate more clearly when action was needed. Chris asked that emails or subject lines clearly indication when a response or further review is needed.

- HCGIT Update from Recent Meeting

Andrew reported that, at a recent Hampshire County Group Insurance Trust meeting, the group stated they are $29,000 over budget for the year to date.

- Westfield Whip City Fiber Tour Dates Discussion

Andrew discussed finding potental dates for the Select Board to tour the facility. The prior meeting had been rescheduled due to the accountant resigning.

**Members' Reports**

None

**Public Comment**

John Baldasaro said unpaid electric bills had been discussed at the last CMELD meeting. He asked about a $100,000 loan to the town from CMELD and whether it reflected financial difficulties for the town. He did confirm that the loan has already been paid back to CMELD. Andrew said the loan was related to cash flow issues from waiting for the state to send reimbursement of Chapter 90 funding.

John asked about progress in addressing overdue bills. Andrew said work was moving forward, but a backlog remained. The interim accountant was reviewing invoices to identify duplicates and invoices that could not be paid. Andrew also said he planned to interview an accountant who worked in another town and that a company was available as another option. He also mentioned interviewing applicants for an administrative assistant who would also be an assistant to the accountant.

Jason asked how an accounting assistant position would be funded. Kim clarified that the position was her existing Administrative Assistant role with newly structured responsibilities, not a new position. She said she had been stepping back from that role because she was working in other departments.

***Brian made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Jill Strong seconded and Chris Martenson voted in favor. Motion passed unanimously 3-0. Meeting adjourned at 8:40pm.***

**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