

TOWN OF CHESTER  
SELECT BOARD  
November 4, 2020  
Select Board Meeting Minutes

PRESENT: Arne Jonynas; Lee Gustafson; Leigh Dakin; Heather Chase; Julie Hance; Jeff Holden; Amie O'Brien

VISITORS: SapaTV; Dan Cook; Rick Cloud; Marilyn Mahusky; Shawn Cunningham; Matt Wilson; Colleen Garvey; Ralph Falanga; Amanda Silva; Scott Kilgus; Leslie Thorsen; Lori Quinn

***Meeting was held via Zoom and at the Town Hall.***

1. APPROVE MINUTES FROM OCTOBER 21, 2020 SELECT BOARD MEETING

A motion was made by Lee Gustafson to approve the Minutes of the October 21, 2020 Select Board meeting as written. Seconded by Leigh Dakin. The motion passed.

2. CITIZEN COMMENTS/ANSWERS FROM PREVIOUS MEETING

No citizens comment.

3. OLD BUSINESS

Public Safety Building: The concrete walls are being prepped for the steel frame. The steel frame will go up next week and the steel structure will be up sometime late November.

Speed Study: The cold nights cause the speed strips to freeze and break. The one located on River Street broke due to this. The portable sign has been put on Andover Road and is located just before Potash Brook Road. The sign lasts about 3 or 4 days then quits. Data has been collected from the sign for a 3 day period with another 2 to 4 days needed.

Act 250 Gravel Pit: Negotiations between Jim Goss and the Act 250 Natural Resources Board have begun. They will be a meeting November 5, 2020.

Hall Road: Work will begin late spring/early summer of 2021.

#### 4. POLICING POLICIES UPDATE

The State of Vermont is in the process of updating the Policing Policies for all departments around the State. A Use of Force policy was brought before the Governor, which he did not adopt or veto. This policy is on hold until some of the language can be worked through with the Police Chiefs Association. An Internal Affairs policy is being worked on at the State level as well. A trifold flier and Burlington's complaint form will be used to create a new form for the Chester Police Department. The new form drafted to suit Chester and trifold flier will be ready for use mid-November and will be available on the website. The new method for handling complaints against the Police Chief requires the process to be handled at the state level. A complaint against an officer is handled in house by a committee that will ensure state law is followed during the process. All police officer complaints are documented through the State and will follow an officer throughout their career. Other aspects of the policy will be reviewed in the future. The Vermont League of Cities and Town's is involved in keeping the town up to date on the new and changing policies.

Chief Rick Cloud spoke about some of the State's proposed changes to the policies. Such as concerns over the wording in the Use of Force Policy restricting what an officer can do during an altercation. He stated morale around the department has been pretty good. Finding new officers gets harder and harder. Surrounding towns are having trouble as well; Springfield is down 6-7 officers, Ludlow is looking for 1, and Bellows Falls is searching for 3 or 4.

Jeff Holden is concerned the town's proposed complaint process does not include recourse for town personnel falsely accused of wrongdoing. With complaints now being filed anonymously, anyone can initiate an investigation on an officer. There is no protection for officers when people make false claims. The complaint process will make it so the truth will come out. In the court of law, you have the right to face your accuser. Chief Rick Cloud pointed if the complaint makes it to a committee this information will come out during the hearing process. Julie Hance will talk with Jim Carroll about adding language for recourse to benefit the officer being accused. Heather Chase would like to expedite this because the process the department uses now has not been efficient. The documents will be modified to fit Chester and the changes will be brought back to the Select Board for adoption.

Marilyn Mahusky spoke about the department needing to be transparent and continue to improve. She has resources and information to share with the Select Board for their next meeting, which she will forward to Julie Hance to distribute.

Leslie Thorsen stated the town needs to have clear policies and procedures for officers to follow. Some complaints are not brought to the counsel because they do not rise to the level of misdemeanor or felony. Officers need to be held accountable for their actions. Unprofessional misconduct and a complaint are two different things. She would like the policies and procedures to be more specific to a situation. Arne Jonynas pointed out these are general guidelines for the department to follow and it would be impossible to sit down and create a procedure for every situation. He said the town is trying to do the right thing

taking steps in the right direction. The Select Board will take her comments into consideration and he thanked Leslie Thorson for her input.

5. 2021 GENERAL FUND BUDGET; FIRE, AMBULANCE, POLICE, COMMUNICATIONS

The State Police will no longer dispatch for small towns for free. The expected cost of this services for 2021 is \$14,766 and will more than double every year. Springfield is not interested because they would need to hire more staff to cover the added workload. Chief Rick Cloud asked Hartford for a cost for 2022 since they already dispatch for Fire and Ambulance and has not heard back. Heather Chase would like to get a hold of Tom Bock to find out if the town has a say in the matter. As taxpayers, the State Police should offer this service for free. If a town cannot afford this service, the state should step in and help. Julie Hance will reach out to Tom Bock.

Julie Hance received an email from AT&T stating the town is paying the business rate for their services. There is a municipal rate available to the town which could drop the cost.

The budget for the Fire Department has a new line item for Workers Comp. A line item for the Capital Transfer will be added later as well. Matt Wilson stated his budget for the Fire Department usually has an increase of 3% each year. He tries to have about \$5,000 included for unexpected things. The Engine company helps raise money to help the department pay for items. The rescue truck has cost a lot in maintenance the past few years. Money has been added to the budget for preliminary maintenance to vehicles. Procedures have changed due to COVID increasing purchases of regulators for masks with P100 filters. The total 2021 budget for the Fire Department is expected to be \$185,000. Matt Wilson explained the Capital Transfer will be down this year from the last two years. The air pack replacement plan is finished this year. The air packs will need to be replaced again in four years. The replacements will be spaced out making the cost more manageable. He budgeted the full amount for foam. The department has been billing insurance companies for reimbursement of foam used at fires. Insurance companies only pay a portion of the cost or nothing at all.

Heather Chase stated the worksheet of what has been approved for the 2020 budget would be helpful. Julie Hance explained that is not how it is done with a zero-based budget. The Select Board will need to choose which way they prefer moving forward. The total budget will be presented to the board after the review of each department in December and will include the 2020 budget at that time.

Calls for the ambulance are down 45-50 calls for 2020 due to COVID. People are nervous about going to the hospital fearing they will catch the illness. The Ambulance Department is having trouble getting supplies, which is also increasing in price. Heather Chase asked if the department could buy supplies in bulk and split the cost with other towns. Dan Cook replied the laws have changed and departments cannot bulk order. If they do, they are considered a distributor. Also, distributors are not receiving the bulk deals from the manufacturers to pass onto clients. Chester Ambulance now buys items through the hospital because they can

buy less at one time. The ambulance service cannot get new products because distributors allocate products to the departments which have ordered these supplies in the past. A Uniform line has been added to the budget in the amount of \$1,500, which has been taken out of the Equipment line. The Equipment line will be increased and used for radios and tactical gear needed for mass shootings. The tactical gear training courses have been canceled due to COVID. The VLCT grant may help pay for this needed equipment.

The Police Department budget includes a line item for Workers Comp. The budget for overtime has been minimized hoping for more parttime work. The fingerprint machine is getting old and will cost about \$10,000 for a new one. This has not been added to the budget. Heather Chase pointed out the auditors suggested to start a reserve fund for unanticipated spending. Computer programs and other items will be needed when the departments move to the new building.

6. APPROVE EXPENSE FOR ACOUSTIC PANELS FOR TOWN HALL

The equipment for the portable sound system will be in next week. There is money in the budget this year to add the acoustic panels. Atomic Sound will do all the work at the same time. The panels will be added to the ceiling and will hang flush with the wall. The Historical Society donated some items to hang on the walls which can be incorporated into the design of the panels. Arne Jonynas asked if there is a guarantee that the panels will be affective. Julie Hance will ask Atomic Sound and get examples of their work for the Select Board to see.

A motion was made by Heather Chase to allow Julie Hance to purchase acoustic panels from Atomic Sound for upstairs of Town Hall in the amount of \$12,000 coming for the Historic Facility budget. Seconded by Leigh Dakin. The motion passed.

7. CDL POLICY ADOPTION

Julie Hance met with Wade Masure from VLCT to discuss the new guidance surrounding CDL policies. The town has not been following every part of the old or current policies for CDL drivers. The state is randomly auditing CDL procedures and towns are getting fined for not following them. There are state and federal regulations that were used to draft a policy specific to Chester. Jim Carroll has reviewed the policy. CDL drivers will be subject to DMV background checks and random drug tests. The drug test results will be reported to the state through a new clearinghouse. The policy has the steps to follow if a drug test comes back positive.

A motion was made by Jeff Holden to adopt the Drug and Alcohol CDL Policy. Seconded by Leigh Dakin. The motion passed.

8. WAYFINDING PLAN; SIGNAGE COLOR SELECTION

The Master Plan Implementation Committee has chosen two colors for the signage that will be added throughout town. The committee is presenting these colors to the Selectboard. The green is used for state signs around town and might blend in. The blue will be a contrast and make Chester stand out. The Select Board decided on the blue.

A motion was made by Heather Chase to use the Newberry Port Blue for the Wayfinding Signage. Seconded by Lee Gustafson. The motion passed.

9. SIGN CEMETERY DEED

The Select Board signed a cemetery deed.

10. NEW BUSINESS/NEXT AGENDA

The Parks and Rec budget, Police Policy adoption, Reserve Fund Policy, and maybe the Wayfinding plan will be on the next Agenda.

Jeff Holden would like something done about the trucks parking on the road near the new Jiffy Mart. He is worried the drainage pipes or wastewater pipes will be damaged. Trucks drivers ignore the No Parking signs located along the roadside and park there anyway. The town crew has cleaned up that space in the past, but the trucks keep ruining it. That area is part of the state highway. Mark Pickering will be asked to put a curb or retaining wall there to prevent trucks from parking in that spot.

The Lister is working with NEMRC to figure out the value of the old Jiffy Mart. Julie Hance will ask about the removal of the old sign still located at the site. The new dentist office and vet clinic will both be opening the first of the year.

11. ADJOURN

A motion was made by Jeff Holden to adjourn. Seconded by Lee Gustafson. The meeting adjourned at 8:25 p.m.

Amie O'Brien  
Secretary of the Select Board

Lee Gustafson  
Clerk of the Select Board