

1 **TOWN OF CHESTER**
2 **SELECTBOARD MEETING**
3 **February 1, 2023, Minutes**

4 **Board Members Present:** Arne Jonynas, Ben Whalen, Lee Gustafson, at Town Hall; and Leigh
5 Dakin via Zoom. Absent: Heather Chase.

6 **Staff Present:** Julie Hance, Town Manager, at Town Hall; and Susan Bailey, Recording Secretary
7 via Zoom.

8 **Visitors Present:** William Lindsay and The Vermont Journal at Town Hall; and SAPA TV, Joy
9 Slaughter, Carrie Roy King, Chester Telegraph, Tim Roper via Zoom.

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11 **Call to Order**

12
13 Chair Arne Jonynas called the meeting to order at 6:30 p.m. with the pledge of allegiance. He
14 welcomed everyone to the meeting.

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16 **Agenda Item 1, Approve minutes from the January 18, 2023, Selectboard Meeting**

17 Lee made a motion and Leigh seconded it to approve the January 18, 2023, minutes. Lee noted on
18 line 8 of the first page that the name Ermerson should be Emerson. Lee thought it was funny on
19 line 25, page 4 and line 34 or page 3 that Arne was flushing things out, given he was a plumber. A
20 vote was taken, and the minutes were approved, as amended.

21 **Agenda Item 2, Citizens' Comments/Answers from Previous Meeting**

22 Arne asked if there were any comments and there were none.

23 **Agenda Item 3, Old Business**

24 Report given by the Town Manager:

25 Trail Signage:

26 The signage for Brookside would be put up and the official opening will take place at the Winter
27 Carnival. The Chester Conservation Group will conduct a guided nighttime snowshoe hike. Julie
28 said they would do their best to have the signs in place.

29 Canal Street Survey:

30 The packets included communication from the surveyor and one of the abutters. There was
31 disagreement in the surveys and it was a bit of both sides are right. Julie felt it wasn't a decision
32 she should make but rather a board decision as far as what they want to do. She said it wasn't
33 usable land for the town. Gary Rapanotti's thought was he didn't know how much fighting they
34 should do over it so it may just be coming up with an agreement of a mutual point and Mr. Aldridge
35 had expressed the same. At the next meeting, they would do a site visit at 5:00 p.m. so the members
36 could see it and Gary could show them on the ground what is happening and then follow it up with
37 a discussion and the board can decide what the next steps should be.

38 Arne mentioned the note about Community Gardens, and they had just heard back from their
39 attorney, and they would be meeting next Tuesday and would have some more discussion.

1 **Agenda Item 4, Sign Loan Documents for WW Asset Management Plan**

2 Arne asked for a motion for the Vermont State Revolving Fund for a loan amount of \$78,000. Julie
3 said once the project is completed, half the loan amount will be forgiven leaving a balance to be
4 paid back of \$39,000. They could discuss then whether to borrow it, as there is a healthy reserve
5 fund in sewer. Ben moved and Lee seconded a motion to sign the document as written. A vote was
6 taken, and the motion passed unanimously. Arne said this would help for future grants and other
7 things they apply for knowing what they had. Leigh noted she could not come to Town Hall to
8 sign. Julie said they had enough members present to sign the documents.

9 **Agenda Item 5, Sign Bond Documents for Paving and Capital Purchases**

10 Lee moved to sign the declaration of official intent to reimburse expenditures for proceeds of
11 indebtedness and Leigh seconded the motion. The bond was for \$457,000 and was for the purchase
12 of an ambulance and dump truck. The motion passed unanimously.

13 The next was the resolution for funds to complete the construction of Route 35 and culvert
14 replacement on Green Mountain Turnpike and paving of Andover Road with an aggregate
15 estimated cost of \$420,000. Lee moved they approve the resolution certificate in the amount of
16 \$420,000 and Ben seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

17 Julie said there were two bonds because one was for paving and the other was for capital purchases
18 and interest rates were good. If when May comes the rates are still good, she would use bonds but
19 if commercial interest rates were better, she would go that route.

20 **Agenda Item 6, Solar Field Appraisal**

21 The appraisal numbers were positive, and Julie said the next step would be to present it to
22 Greenbacker as the value reached by the independent appraiser. She expected that they would
23 come back with something. She would put Jim on notice they may be coming and the potential
24 legal pieces in connection with this, including that there are two other offtakers of this same site.
25 They would need to do a financial analysis to determine if it would be better to be a landlord or
26 better to use 100% of the power themselves. The immediate next step is to get it to Greenbacker
27 because the appraisal was less than half of what their number was, which was \$2.4 million. The
28 appraisal was for \$1.1 million and the original amount on the document was around \$900,000.
29 Julie noted the independent appraisal was more in keeping with the original amount. Ben asked if
30 there were any time constraints. Julie said they restarted the process due to the difficulty of getting
31 an appraiser, so they still had time. Arne thought it would be interesting to see how it all worked
32 regarding the finances. Some of the old information talked about 90% service provider and they
33 benefit 10%, so if they became the service provider would they get the whole 100% plus the 90%
34 from the offtakers since they were responsible and would be the owners. Arne said one of the
35 original calculations had a savings of \$70,000 or \$80,000 for Chester offtaking around 30% or
36 35%. They would get 10% of the benefit from it, which was \$7,000 or \$8,000. Arne thought if
37 they owned it, it would be \$70,000 or \$80,000 on their end for the one offtake and the remaining
38 90% of that 60% left would be quite a bit of change. Arne wondered if the attorneys would know
39 about the net metering involved. Julie said they would start with the attorneys and may bring in
40 the CPAs, if needed. Lee agreed with having CPAs look at it in addition to the attorneys because
41 of the complexity of it and the rules. Arne thought on its face, it may be a good opportunity. St.
42 Johnsbury Academy and the Town of Pittsford are the two offtakers, with St. Johnsbury being the
43 bigger one. Julie said they both have the same contract as Chester so Jim would need to review

1 those and the possibility of reissuing contracts if Chester purchases the solar field. Green Lantern
2 built it and then it immediately changed hands to Greenbacker. Julie said they were connected.
3 This would be a separate purchase.

4 Bill Lindsay asked if they owned sufficient land so that they could expand the field if they wanted
5 and also wondered what the current depreciation was. He asked if someone could check into that.
6 He thought if they could expand the field, they would receive greater revenue. He noted that
7 people were reluctant to accept solar in the beginning, but it was accepted now. Lee thought there
8 was sufficient property to expand but would need to look at the floodplains to see if that was an
9 issue. With respect to the depreciation, Lee thought it probably had already been taken. Lee thought
10 depreciation was a good question for someone who knows a lot more than he does about it.

11 Tim Roper said the solar array was built with a Certificate of Public Good issued by the Public
12 Service Department to interconnect that amount of solar to the grid. He said he didn't think they
13 could expand the array but could add another and they would need to go to the Public Service
14 Commission to get a Certificate of Public Good and an agreement with Green Mountain Power to
15 interconnect that.

16 Arne said the conversation began back in 2014 when it was first presented by Green Lantern and
17 agreed with Bill that there was skepticism in the beginning about doing the project and that it was
18 now generally more accepted.

19 Lee thought that the appraiser did a great job with the documentation and presenting everything.
20 Arne agreed. Lee noted the nice pictures.

21 **Agenda Item 7, New Business/Next Agenda**

22 Julie said there would be a site visit, weather permitting.

23 Presentation regarding the Police Advisory Committee.

24 A grant will open after Town Meeting that will do energy assessments free of charge for municipal
25 buildings. They would like to do the Academy Building and the library. A grant will then follow
26 the energy assessment for up to \$500,000 per building in a municipality to make the energy
27 improvements. It would be a great way to get some things accomplished at both buildings. Even
28 though the Academy Building isn't open all the time, Julie thought they could make the argument
29 that they were getting to that. The Academy Building has received several grants for historic
30 preservation, so it is in the system. Arne asked if it would help to have a vision or idea for the use
31 of the building before applying for grants. Julie said the grant would open in May so it would give
32 them enough time to establish a group because they can say within the application they have a
33 reuse committee that's been formed and doing the planning to reopen it as a visitors' center or
34 whatever they decide. She wanted to get the energy assessment and thought they could make the
35 case it was a good building for that. She didn't anticipate the improvements costing \$500,000 but
36 easily \$50,000 to \$80,000. If they needed to choose between the two buildings, they would do the
37 Academy Building and then do the library through the capital plan. Arne noted the Academy
38 Building was a sound shell as the roof and windows had been done.

39 Lee wanted to express his appreciation for the public service personnel and departments. They had
40 a meeting of the Chester Business Coalition on Monday, and all the Department Heads were
41 present. It was a great discussion and presentation by the three leaders of those groups and Lee
42 heard many comments afterward about how fortunate Chester is to have those departments
43 working together to protect the citizens of Chester. He wanted to thank those men and women for

1 what they do. There were discussions about how fortunate Chester is to have a group of dedicated
2 personnel, volunteers, and otherwise. Leigh thanked Lee for his comments and appreciated hearing
3 that. Julie knew from their perspective having the new building provided by the taxpayers was a
4 big incentive and has rejuvenated them and has added new members to different things and pride
5 in the new building and they are thankful to the taxpayers for it and are merging back to a public
6 safety division like it used to be. Lee agreed the building was the catalyst that got them back where
7 they are and appreciated the taxpayers' willingness to fund it.

8 **Agenda Item 8, Executive Session; Town Manager Review**

9 Lee moved and Ben seconded to go into executive session to conduct the yearly town manager
10 review. A vote was taken, and it passed unanimously, and they entered executive session at 7:01
11 p.m.

12 (Executive Session)

13 Ben moved and Lee seconded a motion to leave the executive session. The motion passed
14 unanimously, and the executive session ended at 7:25 p.m.

15 **Agenda Item 12, Adjourn**

16 Ben moved and Lee seconded to adjourn the regular meeting. A vote was taken, and the motion
17 passed unanimously, and the meeting was adjourned at 7:26 p.m.