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TOWN OF CHESTER
SELECTBOARD MEETING

March 1, 2023, Minutes

Board Members Present: Arne Jonynas and Lee Gustafson at Town Hall; and Leigh Dakin, Heather Chase, and Ben Whalen (joined at 6:53 p.m.) via Zoom.

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

Visitors Present: Gerald Gleason and Arianna Knapp at Town Hall; and SAPA TV, via Zoom.

Call to Order

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

Agenda Item 1, Approve minutes from the February 15, 2023, Selectboard Meeting

Lee made a motion and Leigh seconded it to approve the February 15, 2023, minutes. Leigh noted on page 7, line 14 the word community should be committee. The minutes were approved, as amended.

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

Gerry Gleason of 135 Flamstead Road in Chester said in consideration of the events in Ohio with the derailment and leakage of chemicals, he wondered if they knew what traveled through Chester as far as rail cargo and chemicals. He asked if they received inspection reports from the Vermont Agency of Transportation as to their findings in town and what the response would be to a spill. Arne said they were excellent questions given there was a main rail line running right through town. Arne didn't think they knew the answers but should find them out. Gerry said the towns may go to the railroad system and demand repairs and there was a response period requirement. Julie said when they did the repairs to the rail on Route 103 in the Depot a few years ago, the rail did the work at Chester's request. Julie had spoken with the emergency services' chiefs and got some answers. As far as products traveling through town, the law does not require the rail to inform the town of what they are. She said several years ago, the rail wanted to store propane tanks in town and initially they weren't going to tell Chester what was in them, but Matt had heard it was propane and fought it and they ended up being moved out of town. Because the rail is federal, they're not required to inform Chester of the product that passes through. The guys have said there is no doubt that hazardous materials run through Chester daily. If there was a derailment, the three services would respond, and their primary focus would be containment. Hazmat response teams would arrive and take over the scene. Chester would play a role of support when the other agencies arrived. The State would respond within an hour and Chester would step down. Federal hazmat would respond within 24 hours. Lee said that was optimistic and Julie agreed. The best response is often burning because it evaporates immediately and doesn't contaminate the water supply. Gerry thought there were a lot of lessons learned from what occurred in Ohio and it was worth looking at their response and follow-up so Chester could prepare. He understood the Feds come in and oversee everything and take control but thought they should look at something preventative and getting back to the reports Vermont provides through the Vermont Transit Agency and push

1 back on the railroad to get whatever repairs are needed. Julie said she could tell him from 18 years
2 of experience that the railroad is difficult to work with. They have held up a federally funded
3 project of the Depot Street sidewalk for 4 years because they won't give her pedestrian easement
4 to cross the track. She said they could try but wanted to caution him not to get his hopes up because
5 the rail is involved. Gerry said they wield a lot of power but there are sections that support the
6 town about pushing back if they can identify the repairs via the reports. Julie agreed with him if
7 they were able to get their hands on the reports. Gerry agreed with Arne who said that especially
8 since the rail runs along the river and it would be catastrophic to the town. Arne said they should
9 know what was in the cars and it was ridiculous they didn't provide that information. Gerry thought
10 they should go to their state legislators. Heather thanked Gerry for bringing it to their attention and
11 said she would investigate. Arne and Julie said they would see what they could find out. It was a
12 great topic to raise.

13 Arne mentioned yesterday's fire in town and how devastating it was, but the community came
14 together and did what they were supposed to do. There were firefighters, mutual aid, other towns'
15 firefighters, EMS, and local businesses including MacLaomainn's, Smitty's, and Chester
16 Hardware, and private citizens working together. Nobody was hurt, although the building was a
17 loss, and it showed what people can do when they come together. Arne wanted to thank them all
18 for their work. Julie said it was a test of many things they have been preparing for at the public
19 safety building with cross-training. Julie said the initial call said a possible chimney fire and when
20 they arrived, it was a first alarm fully engulfed structure fire. The police officers were fighting the
21 fire and the ambulance personnel helped the firefighters because they were cross trained enough
22 to know how. It was one of the smoothest fires they've ever dealt with. Everyone was proud to see
23 all their hard work, citizens were stopping traffic and it was amazing.

24 Yesterday was the forum for the Selectboard candidates. It was attended by Hugh Quinn, Arianna
25 Knapp, Don Strohmeier, and Peter Hudkins. Leigh didn't think they had ever done anything like
26 that before and it was a pleasure to have the candidate forum happening in Town Hall, which was
27 well attended by almost 40 people. Arne hoped the forum could become a tradition.

28 **Agenda Item 3, Old Business**

29 Report given by the Town Manager:

30 Lovers Lane Project

31 For almost 5 years, Green Mountain Power has been working on the project. The easement was
32 granted in 2019 and they will begin burying the power lines this spring. Town employees will be
33 meeting with Green Mountain Power tomorrow morning for a refresher about the project. There
34 is a three phase that runs to the pump house. They will change out the three phase to single phase
35 to the pump house. Green Mountain Power will help pay for some of the electrical upgrades that
36 are necessary. Steve Mancuso will be working on the town's portion of the project. Arne said all
37 the power lines in that area will be buried until they get to the Pinnacle where it stops, and the road
38 continues and then they will come up out of the ground.

39 Communications Grant

40 They applied for a communications grant to upgrade the town's communications equipment, as
41 most needs upgrading. The project will cost almost \$250,000. They got the police department
42 portion funded for about \$30,000 through a reallocation grant through Homeland Security. They
43 have redone a few things and downsized the project and are requesting an additional amount of

1 about \$100,000, which should cover the remainder of the project.

2 Memorandum of Understanding for the Garden

3 Julie has been working on the memorandum and is almost done drafting it. She was waiting for
4 their retreat, but it was cancelled because some members got COVID. Julie was going to proceed
5 to send it to the group that is in place currently. Arne asked that she let the board know what it
6 entailed. Lee wanted to see what it would include and asked to have a draft sent to them. Arne
7 suggested sending a copy of the draft and if someone had some real issues with it, they could go
8 from there. Lee agreed. Arne recalled that Lee had abstained from voting because he wanted to
9 think about it more and wondered if he had any more questions. Lee was concerned because he
10 didn't know the impact it would have on the town and taxpayers. He had been approached by some
11 constituents who had the same questions. Lee thought it was something community members
12 wanted so he wasn't against it but wanted to make sure he understood what the potential impact
13 was on the taxpayers as they moved along. Lee didn't think it would be a lot but wanted to know.
14 Arne thought it would involve minimal help now and then from the recreation or highway
15 departments. They will be doing it on their own as much as possible. Arne said they had the option
16 to address it if costs became an issue as they would still have control and oversight.

17 Music Series

18 The dates have been set and Julie provided the members with a schedule.

19 Solar Field

20 Julie heard from Greenbacker and the project manager, Ben, is out on maternity leave but expected
21 to return the following week and they will do the internal review of the appraisal, and respond.
22 Arne wondered what would happen if they came back with an exorbitant number and what the
23 next step would be until they knew the cost and the return on investment. Arne hoped it worked
24 out because he thought it would be a huge asset for the town, especially if it came in on the prices
25 from the appraisal.

26 **Agenda Item 4, Citizen Advisory Committee Policy**

27 Leigh moved and Lee seconded a motion to approve the final draft of the policy included in the
28 packet for the Citizen Advisory Committee. The deadline for candidates is March 3rd. They have
29 9 candidates, so far, for a 5-person board. Tom and Julie will not be voting members of the board,
30 as it will be a true citizens' committee. Arne thought it would work out well. A vote was taken,
31 and the motion passed. The members signed documents. Ben volunteered to stop at the Town Hall
32 and sign any documents.

33 **Agenda Item 5, Cruiser Purchase Approval**

34 In 2022 the voters approved through the capital fund, the replacement of a cruiser. The cruiser to
35 be replaced was the K-9 unit but because Rick was retiring, it didn't make sense to replace K-9
36 unit and they couldn't find a car. There is a company out of Massachusetts, McGovern Municipal,
37 who went to a dealer and bought 100 Tahoes for municipalities. They got a good deal and
38 McGovern outfits the cruiser. They thought this was the year they would switch and not get Tahoe,
39 but they seem to be the best and last a lot longer than the Fords and some of the others. Tom has
40 been talking with McGovern and their price for the cruiser is \$44,000, which is remarkable. Other
41 dealers who they have spoken with said they would never get the cruiser from them for that price,
42 and they should buy it. Springfield and Killington have both bought two of them. Chester is buying

1 2022's cruiser and having it outfitted through McGovern. 2023 is the year they are off. Looking
2 forward to 2024, to get a cruiser fully outfitted takes 6 months. They would like to buy 2024's
3 cruiser now. Out of 100 cruisers McGovern's bought, there are only 23 left. They would finance
4 through them because their interest rates are comparable to the bank, and it would be easier, and
5 payments wouldn't start until 2024. It would go through the voters and capital plan process, like
6 always. If they wait, they may not get one and it will cost more. The cruiser that's being replaced
7 is starting to need repairs. Julie wanted to get the consensus of the board since it's not a budgeted
8 expense but by the time they pay the bill, it will be. The town needs to sell the cruisers outright
9 and not trade them in. They have been given an estimate of resale value of \$20,000 to \$25,000 per
10 cruiser for the current cruisers which would pay for one of the cruisers. The board gave Julie
11 permission to get the 2024 cruiser and saw it as the fiscally responsible thing to do.

12 **Agenda Item 6, Use of ARPA Funds for Dugouts**

13 They have been using the ARPA funds mostly for one-time capital projects. This was another
14 situation where the dugouts aren't safe anymore. They were built on cinderblocks so there's quite
15 a bit of damage and deterioration and one of them will not be used this spring as it's unsafe. The
16 other three are not in the best shape either. Record Concrete would pour concrete foundations and
17 walls and Springfield Fence would do the fencing. Steve, and John Wright would do the
18 construction and organizing. It's one of the things that was removed from the budget this year as
19 a potential for ARPA funding. They had been there a long time and were 30 or 40 years old.
20 Because the Facilities Director is a contractor, most of the work can be done in-house. Arne
21 thought with all the things the director has done, he has more than paid for his salary.

22 The proposed expenses for 2023 include the final payment for the Emergency Services and
23 Highway Building of \$105,000. Julie thought the surplus in the capital fund is likely larger than
24 she thinks but wanted the auditor to verify, so those expenses may not need to come out of ARPA
25 and can come out of the capital fund, including the ambulance cot cost of \$48,000. The ARPA
26 funds started at \$903,000 and the balance is currently at \$516,000.

27 Lee moved and Ben seconded the motion to use \$22,000 out of the ARPA funds for construction
28 of the four dugouts. A vote was taken, and the motion passed. Construction will start as soon as
29 the concrete can be poured.

30 **Agenda Item 7, Sign Loan Documents for Lead Line Inventory**

31 The project is to figure out where, if any, are lead lines in town. It would not only be an inventory
32 of the pipes but where they lead to giving them a map of the complete system. Once the project is
33 done and the costs are submitted, it's 100% reimbursable so it's zero dollars to the town. They
34 only need to sign loan documents so if they don't finish the project, they are responsible for the
35 money.

36 Heather moved and Lee seconded a motion to agree to the loan agreement with the Vermont State
37 Revolving Fund for Loan RF3-494-1.0 for \$73,560 and to authorize the Chair to sign the
38 document. A vote was taken, and the motion passed.

39 Heather moved and Leigh seconded a motion to the General Obligation Note for \$73,560. All
40 members would sign the note. Heather told Julie she would come in and sign the note. A vote was
41 taken, and the motion carried.

42 Lee moved and Leigh seconded a motion to sign the Resolution and Certificate General Obligation
43 with the Vermont Drinking Water State Revolving Fund for the same amount as the other two. A

1 vote was taken, and the motion carried. The board signed the documents.

2 **Agenda Item 8, Health Officer Appointment**

3 Arne noted that Amanda Silva had left the position, and he thanked her for her time and the work
4 she had done for Chester. Michael Randzio is the Ambulance Coordinator. Julie said they had
5 removed the Health Officer stipend and made it part of the position so the board needed to appoint
6 him as the Health Officer. Lee moved to authorize the Chair to sign the Health Officer
7 Recommendation Form and Heather seconded the motion. Arne mentioned it was more cross-
8 training, as Michael was rolling out hoses at yesterday's fire and helps with the ambulance
9 department and was now the Health Officer. A vote was taken, and the motion passed.

10 **Agenda Item 9, Liquor Licenses**

11 Julie noted the State has switched to a completely digital system. Now, they receive the report
12 which is emailed to the Town Clerk and The Selectboard makes motions to approve them. After
13 they're approved, Debbie must go online and indicate it was approved by the Selectboard and
14 they're good to go. The entertainment permit is still in-house and must be signed but the liquor
15 license itself only needed a motion to approve.

16 Heather asked if she should make a motion to approve all and Arne indicated that needed to be
17 done separately by vendor.

18 Heather moved and Lee seconded a motion for Sandri for Second Class and Tobacco. A vote was
19 taken, and the motion passed.

20 Lee moved and Leigh seconded a motion for MacLaomainn's for First Class and Third-Class
21 liquor license. A vote was taken, and the motion passed.

22 Lee moved and Leigh seconded a motion for Jiffy Mart for Second Class and Tobacco license.
23 The motion carried.

24 Lee moved and Leigh seconded the motion for an entertainment license for MacLaomainn's
25 between the hours of 11:30 a.m. and 11:59 p.m. They were the same hours as they had been and
26 there hadn't been any issues. A vote was taken, and the motion carried.

27 **Agenda Item 10, New Business/Next Agenda**

28 Arne noted it was Ben Whalen's and Leigh Dakin's last meeting. Arne thanked them for himself
29 and the Town for the time and commitment they had put into the town and the job they had done
30 and recognized that it is what makes the town work having citizen volunteers doing what they do.
31 He knew they both had done so much for the town and that it was so appreciated. Leigh was the
32 first female member of the Selectboard back in the 1980's. Leigh said it's been an honor for her
33 and thanked everyone who had supported her. Arne thanked Ben for what he's done for the fire
34 department, Yosemite, and the town and it was appreciated. Heather and Lee echoed Arne's
35 sentiments. Ben appreciated their comments and said in 10 years when life slows down a bit, he
36 may return.

37 The next meeting will be after the Town meeting has taken place so their reorganization and annual
38 appointments will happen, but most of the meeting will be for interviews for the Citizens Advisory
39 Committee. Julie will reach out to the new board members once they are elected. Julie will give
40 the new members information so they can prepare for the committee interviews. She said they
41 would also receive the policy that was just adopted, and the conflict-of-interest policy. Julie would

1 provide the same for all board members.

2 Arne was approached about having a high school student representative attend meetings not in a
3 voting capacity but in an observation capacity. He asked if it was something the board would
4 consider, and they could take them up to the high school to see what their take was. Leigh agreed
5 and said for several years they have had a student on the school board as a non-voting member and
6 she thought there may be someone who would be very interested in joining as a highschooler and
7 learning more about what they do as a board. Arne asked for it to not be on the next agenda but
8 the following meeting. Heather said they may be the future governor.

9 Arne said another thing that had come up due to the candidate forum was about sitting on two
10 boards. Julie said they did a policy, which was part of the conflict-of-interest policy, several years
11 ago. There can be one member that can serve on multiple boards. They had two people on DRB
12 that were also on the Planning Commission and one that was on all three at one time. One person
13 can be on the Planning and Selectboard. Arne wondered if they should revisit it. It didn't make
14 sense for him to think people should be on the Planning and Selectboard. The more people they
15 include in local government and have involved the better. Lee asked if that would include
16 commissions because Arianna Knapp was on the Local Cannabis Control Commission. Julie said
17 if the person who oversees policy in the town could review the policy, they could have a discussion.
18 Ben said there are also commissions they have board members on, such as the Cannabis
19 Commission. Heather suggested they review it. Arne said they will review it and have a discussion.
20 Julie said Preston Bristow knows how to write policy which is a huge help.

21 Julie said the VLCT is rolling out a new municipal access portal so after the Town Meeting, the
22 Town Clerk will update VLCT with contact information for members. The members will be sent
23 an email and given login credentials. Municipalities pay an annual fee to be members of VLCT.
24 Their website is not locked in any way so even non-paying members have access. A lot of the
25 access is legal opinions and they're getting nervous about liability. If the Selectboard wants to do
26 training, it can be done through the VLCT and the bill automatically comes to the town. Board
27 members will have direct access, including for questions they may not want to go through the
28 Town Manager for. Arne asked if it would change information for the public and Julie said that
29 would remain, but this would be another level for board members, including legal access and
30 training.

31 **Agenda Item 11, Executive Session; Town Manager Review**

32 Leigh made a motion and Lee seconded it to go into executive session to continue the yearly town
33 manager review. A vote was taken, and it passed unanimously, and they entered executive session
34 at 7:33 p.m.

35 (Executive Session)

36 Ben moved and Heather seconded a motion to leave the executive session. The motion passed, and
37 the executive session ended at 7:42 p.m.

38 **Agenda Item 12, Adjourn**

39 Ben moved and Heather seconded a motion to adjourn the meeting. A vote was taken, and the
40 meeting was adjourned at 7:42 p.m.