

TOWN OF CHESTER
BOARD OF SELECTMEN

December 18, 2019
Minutes

PRESENT: Arne Jonynas; Heather Chase; Lee Gustafson; Leigh Dakin; David Pisha

VISITORS: Derek Suursoo; William Lindsay; Kathy Pellett; Tom Yennerell; Karen Morris; Sharon Huntley; Rosanne Sexton; Lynn Russell; Jane Davis; Nancy Chute

There were no additions or deletions to this agenda.

1. APPROVE MINUTES:

A motion was made by Lee Gustafson to approve the minutes of the December 4 2019 Selectboard meeting. Seconded by Leigh Dakin. The motion passed.

2. CITIZEN'S COMMENTS:

Raymond Stearns stated that he has worked with Craig Jennings in past years. He wanted to confirm that a payment bond has included in the cost, which it has. He wanted to make sure that the payment bond remains. Raymond Stearns also encouraged the Board to hire a Clerk of the Works for the project. David Pisha stated that the understanding has always been that Russell Construction will serve the role of Clerk of the Works. The Board asked David Pisha to make sure that Russell Construction will be serving this role. Raymond Stearns will plan to attend the next EMS Building Committee meeting.

3. OLD BUSINESS:

Economic Development: David Pisha stated that he has met with Carol Lighthall regarding the Chamber's website. There are some changes coming in the near future.

EMS Building: David Pisha stated that he is in regular contact with Kevin Racyk about the design of the building. Another meeting of the Building Committee will be scheduled soon. Kevin Racyk has been meeting with departments to review their needs in the building. There has been some details worked out regarding the water/sewer line locations, etc.

Gravel Project: The ACT 250 application has been filed. Arne Jonynas asked David Pisha to determine the time line going forward. Heather Chase asked for an update on the costs to date and asked that it be added to the Old Business list.

Arne Jonynas questioned the status of the reappraisal. David Pisha stated that in his conversations with Wanda, numbers won't be ready until the Spring.

Arne Jonynas stated that the Town Manager search is going well. There have been 27 applications received. The committee will begin its review at tomorrow's meeting.

4. TRANSFER STATION DISCUSSION:

Christie Morris and Tom Yennerell were present from the Town of Springfield to discuss the transfer station fees. Arne Jonynas stated that the town has received some complaints about the fees and asked for clarification regarding how the fees have been determined.

Tom Yennerell handed out a spreadsheet that shows the expenses for the facility. Christie Morris stated that Springfield is facing an issue, as is the rest of the country, regarding the costs for recycling. The Town of Springfield is losing money. He explained that Chester in the past paid \$25,000 per year which has been increased to \$35,000. Christie Morris reviewed the costs associated with the transfer station. In an attempt to help offset the costs, Springfield has begun charging a sticker fee as well as a punch card system for the garbage.

Heather Chase stated that the Selectboard has no intention of duplicating services. Heather Chase stated that it would be nice to know how many people from other towns that don't contribute through taxes are using the facility. She also suggested that if the numbers show usage from other towns, perhaps the other towns should be contributing annually to the station as well. Discussion continued regarding the types of disposal that are available in the area. Christie Morris stated that the Board is looking into alternative ways of implementing the tickets going forward.

Lee Gustafson questioned if there has been a decrease in usage since the implementation of the stickers. Christie Morris noted that they have not seen any decreases to date. Lee Gustafson noted that many of the expenses have decreased and asked for explanation. Christie Morris noted that this spreadsheet is for only half the year. Lee Gustafson stated that he does not mind contributing to the expenses but does not want to contribute towards any surplus in the transfer station fund. He further stated that he would like to find a way that is more equitable for Chester.

Derek Suursoo stated that he really likes the transfer station in Springfield and feels that it is run well. He feels that losing Chester's access to the Transfer Station would be a mistake. Derek Suursoo noted as well that approximately 25% of the tickets sold in Chester were from properties outside of Chester. He is advocating that both Springfield and Chester review their data and come up with an equitable solution.

Christie Morris also explained the punch card system. There is an effort to redesign the platform for disposing of the garbage. He also indicated that Springfield is reviewing the option for residents from outside Springfield or Chester paying a larger sticker price.

Heather Chase thanked Springfield for their efforts and encouraged both Boards to have improved communication over the upcoming months/years.

5. GENERAL FUND BUDGET & CAPITAL PLAN REVIEW:

Kathy Pellett was present to discuss the Library budget. There is a slight increase of \$3,000 in this year's budget. Kathy Pellett handed out the written narrative explaining the increase. She explained to the Board that the trustees performed a salary survey for employees and learned that the salaries offered in Chester are not competitive. This has been the cause of employee turnover these past few years. Therefore, the increase is primarily due to salary increases.

In addition, Kathy Pellett stated that there is an increase in expenses for books. The library has also hired an individual to shovel the walkways in the winter.

Kathy Pellett stated that the increase of \$3,000 is approximately a 4% increase. The library has not asked for an increase in several years. She also reminded the Board that the library cut their expenses several years ago. This increase will bring the library back to the previous budget amount.

The Selectboard thanked Kathy Pellett and library employees for their efforts.

David Pisha reviewed the General Fund Budget. He provided the Board with an updated Budget dated 12/18. He stated that the budget is currently up \$266,969.00. He indicated that the Public Works is contributing 80% of the budget increases for 2020. This is due primarily to last year's weather patterns which caused a large overtime line as well as depletion of resources. Therefore, the town has to not only purchase the annual needs, but the piles have to be replenished. David Pisha stated that there is nothing in the budget that is out of line.

Arne Jonynas stated that he is concerned that the weather patterns are going to be a new normal which is going to require excessive use of town resources.

The Board reviewed the budget page by page. Currently as it stands, the budget is up 6.5 cents.

General Fund Revenues are relatively neutral.

Administration. David Pisha reviewed the increases in the admin budget which are up \$32,000. Arne Jonynas questioned the health insurance numbers. David Pisha stated that the town will be switching back to MVP. Insurance premiums will yield a \$21,000 increase for all departments. Heather Chase stated that she does not agree that the town should be paying 100% of health insurance for employees. She believes that employees should be contributing something towards their insurance. Arne Jonynas expressed his concerns regarding health insurance as a whole. Derek Suursoo questioned what employees should be contributing. Heather Chase noted that she does not have a

solution, just a feeling that employees should be contributing something. She does not believe that health insurance should be a sacred cow. Derek Suursoo asked if there is a dollar amount that is being requested, or more of a philosophical discussion. Lee Gustafson questioned if there is a way to incentivize the departments to offset the cost of health insurance. Arne Jonynas stated that he understands the argument but stated that there needs to be a larger discussion. Lee Gustafson stated that he would like to incentivize the departments to reduce their budgets the best they can. Leigh Dakin stated that she would like to see the plans so that she has a better understanding of the plan that has been chosen. David Pisha stated that the town works with Suzanne Swanson. Together they choose a plan that is the best cost for the town. Leigh Dakin stated that she would like to see the plan that is being offered to the employees. Derek Suursoo stated that Chester is not the only government agency that pays 100% health insurance. There are other agencies and towns that pay 100% health insurance as well as dental and vision.

Lee Gustafson noted that there are several departments that have been reduced already. He is asking all other departments to figure out how to cut as well.

David Pisha discussed the part time employee. Discussion ensued regarding where to budget the payroll expense. He suggested that a line be added to Revitalization as a salary line. Heather Chase asked if there is already an individual employed by the town that could take on this work. David Pisha noted that consistency with the individual is vital so it would likely be best to have a separate part time employee. Heather Chase also questioned if there is a lifeguard that could be paid an extra 2 hours to do the watering.

David Pisha reviewed each department highlighting the increases and decreases. Derek Suursoo questioned the startup costs for the gravel project. David Pisha noted that he and Kirby Putnam have reviewed the project and its needs and feel that \$5,000 should cover startup costs. The costs of crushing and screening are in the sand and gravel lines.

David Pisha will reduce the transfer station expense to Springfield to \$35,000.

The salary line in Recreation should be double checked. The increase is showing 6%. David Pisha will review this. The Board also discussed the mileage line for the recreation director. The board asked that Matt begin keeping a log in January to determine if the \$4,000 is an accurate figure. The facilities repair line shows an increase of \$7,500 due to some improvements to the pool house and resurfacing the tennis courts. The Board questioned if these are necessities this year. Leigh Dakin questioned the individual lines for tennis courts, etc and what those include. The Board asked that Matt McCarthy be at the next meeting.

Derek Suursoo questioned the work for the cemetery doors. David Pisha stated that the budget does not reflect the North Street Cemetery doors. This would be requested from the Trustee of Public Funds.

Lee Gustafson questioned the supplies line in the town hall budget. David Pisha noted that the cleaning is now being done in-house which may be causing this line to be

increased. David Pisha will look into this. Also, Leigh Dakin questioned the increase in facility maintenance for town hall and what this includes.

David Pisha stated that there is not much change in the Capital Plan. This plan shows the dump truck and cruiser being financed over 5 years. David Pisha stated that in 2025, the trucks would be back onto a purchase outright system as is currently taking place. Years 2023 and 2024 are the hump years.

Heather Chase questioned the ramifications of not purchasing a dump truck or cruiser this year. The Board discussed the risks that may come with this scenario. David Pisha stated that the issue will be the decrease in trade-in value. David Pisha will investigate what happened the last time this was done several years ago.

David Pisha stated that he spoke with Andover. They are requesting the status of any increases in these departments. Heather Chase questioned the history of the overall plan. She remembered that there was some discussion in the past about a percentage increase each year. David Pisha will look into this history. The Board agreed to an increase of \$1,000 for fire and \$250.00 for ambulance. David Pisha stated that he will also invite them to the next meeting should they want to come.

Heather Chase stated that she would like to see the ambulance and fire contributions to the Capital Plan referenced somewhere in the budget. It would provide a better picture of true department costs.

David Pisha stated that he spoke with the auditor about the donation policy. Ron Smith stated that the direction should come from Paul Giuliani, bond counsel. The advice from Paul Giuliani is to obtain a Memorandum of Understanding with Yosemite and the Fire Department as to the items that can be donated. Also, the use of the building should be included. Heather Chase indicated that she would like the Engine Company to come before the Board when they are looking to donate items to the town. Paul Giuliani had agreed with this in his conversation with David as well. Heather Chase stated that she agrees with the Memorandum of Understanding but would also like to see a simple policy drafted. David Pisha will speak with Jim Carroll and/or Paul Giuliani.

Discussion also ensued regarding any operating expenses for the building in 2020. David Pisha will speak with Kevin Racyk.

6. SIGN CERTIFICATE OF BOND COMPLETION:

The Selectboard signed the Bond Completion form for the 2019 bond.

7. SIGN LETTER TO VERMONT FURNITURE:

The Selectboard signed a letter to Vermont Furniture Hardwoods thanking them for their contribution.

8. MUNICIPAL GLEBE LANDS:

Arne Jonynas explained that the legislature passed a law in 2017 giving towns until January 1, 2020 to determine if it chooses to retain its Glebe Lands. Jim Carroll has suggested that the town motion to retain the lands until such time as the town has reviewed the status of all its leased lands.

A motion was made by Heather Chase to affirmatively retain ownership of all perpetual lease lands within the Town of Chester pursuant to 24 VSA §2409(b)(1). Seconded by Leigh Dakin. The motion passed.

Leigh Dakin suggested that a committee be formed to do this research.

9. NEW BUSINESS/NEXT AGENDA:

The Board signed a Cemetery Deed.

The budget will be on the next agenda.

The Town Plan should be on the next agenda. The historical society lease should also be on the agenda if there is room.

The Board set their next meeting for January 8, 2020.

10. ADJOURN:

A motion was made by Lee Gustafson to adjourn. Seconded by Leigh Dakin. The motion passed. The meeting adjourned.

Julie Hance
Secretary of the Select Board

Ben Whalen
Clerk of the Selectboard