

TOWN OF CHESTER
BOARD OF SELECTMEN

January 8, 2020
Minutes

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

VISITORS: Shawn Cunningham; Cynthia Prairie; Lynn Russell; Dan Cook; Matt Wilson; William Lindsay; Matt McCarthy; Kirby Putnam; Jeff Sheldon; Jeff Holden; Richard Cloud; Nancy Chute; Robert Neid; Mary Bittner; Tory Spater; Julie Hance; Graham Kennedy

There were no additions or deletions to this agenda.

1. APPROVE MINUTES:

A motion was made by Lee Gustafson to approve the minutes as amended of the December 18, 2019 Selectboard meeting. Seconded by Leigh Dakin. The motion passed.

Kristi Morris' name should be corrected throughout the document.

2. CITIZEN'S COMMENTS:

Jeff Holden stated that he has been a lifelong resident of Chester and has worked for the town for 30 years. He stated that he is aware that there have been question about the employees' health insurance. He stated that town employees are on-call 24/7 and give a lot to their job and the community. He also stated that employees are very careful with the use of their health insurance and are not spending unnecessarily. Arne Jonynas stated that the Board agrees with these comments and that there is not a change being made today. He is hopeful that should there be a change in the future, there would be a discussion with the employees prior to any changes.

Jeff Holden stated that when reviewing the budget, there is not a contribution line from Fire Department to the Capital Plan as it does in the Public Works and Water/Sewer budgeta. This should be added for clarity. Arne Jonynas stated that he does agree with these comments.

Lynn Russell was present from Chester Townscape to discuss their contributions to the community. She stated that a new garden was placed at the Information Booth as well as around the gazebo on The Green. She stated that Chester Townscape is present to ask for help in watering the bridge boxes around town. There has been discussion with David Pisha and Julie Hance as well as Kirby Putnam and Jeff Sheldon. Chester Townscape is asking for help for approximately 2 hours a day with help watering just the bridge boxes. They are requesting money be placed in the budget for this item.

Leigh Dakin questioned if David Pisha had a chance to talk with the Recreation Director about use of their part time help for this purpose. She also suggested that the Interact Club may be able to help with this. Matt McCarthy stated that he will work with David Pisha on some ideas. Tory Spater reminded that there has to be consistency with the watering of the 28 bridge boxes which takes about 2 hours a day.

3. OLD BUSINESS:

EMS Building: David Pisha stated that he and Lee Gustafson will be having a conference call with Craig Russell on Friday. There is a DRB Public Hearing scheduled for January 27 for permitting. They will also be working with Scott Wunderle on plantings around the building. Jeff Holden stated that there is a marble sign for the EMS building in storage at the Sewer Plant building.

Gravel Extraction: David Pisha stated that a letter was received from ACT 250 this afternoon requesting additional information from Jim Goss. He will talk with the attorney tomorrow morning.

Arne Jonynas questioned if anybody has been found to hang the pictures at Town Hall.

4. GENERAL FUND BUDGET:

Arne Jonynas stated that the budget is currently up approximately \$241,000. David Pisha stated that the copay lines have been reduced slightly and \$3,000 has been added to the library as approved at the last meeting.

David Pisha stated that he has spoken with Ron Smith who confirmed that the town is able to recognize tax revenue collected in the first 2 months of 2020. Therefore, he added \$75,000 to the budget revenue lines.

General Government: Administration expenses are up \$24,000 overall. These include election expenses, computer and telephone services. Arne Jonynas questioned the total health insurance costs spent in 2019. The listers budget is relatively flat.

Planning/Zoning is down due to reduced hours. Insurance is down due to a \$20,000 credit received from worker's compensation. General Government is down \$41,000 overall.

Public Safety: Police are showing an increase in revenue. Court fees have been increased due to an increase in collections. Expenses are showing a decrease, which includes a decrease in payroll due to a change over in personnel.

Fire is relatively flat. Revenues are neutral. Expenses overall are up \$5,600. Arne Jonynas stated that he would like to see the fire departments contribution to the Bond Plan/Capital Plan. This will give a better picture of what it costs to run the Fire Department. This should also be done for police as well. David Pisha stated that

expenses are shown on the Capital Plan. He stated that water/sewer and public works are shown this way because they are funds that have to be accounted for separately. David Pisha also stated that any department that services the entire community is covered by the General Fund, not individually. Lee Gustafson questioned if it would be easier or more difficult for the taxpayer to follow. David Pisha stated that it is easily accomplished. Arne Jonynas stated that he believes it would give a clearer picture to the taxpayer. The Board agreed to have David Pisha show the change in the Capital Plan so that they can see what the change would look like.

Ambulance is flat in revenue. Expenses are down slightly, such as payroll and related expenses. David Pisha stated that there will start to be increases in ambulance maintenance due to the age of the ambulance which is 6 years old. Arne Jonynas questioned how many years the town would keep the ambulance. Dan Cook noted that typically 10 years is the longest in order to receive a fair trade-in. He noted that the next ambulance purchase will cost less due to the design of the new building. He will be able to order a standard 4-wheel drive vehicle. It will not require a conversion kit.

Public Works: Public Works was hurt this past year by the weather and the need to replenish sand and gravel piles that were depleted. This put the public works department in a deficit situation for 2019. Had the weather been more cooperative, the department would have been relatively flat. The sand that was purchased is what is needed to cover this year. There was also discussion about the weather patterns and that smaller rainstorms cause more use of the towns' resources. Payroll is down, insurance is increased, extraction startup costs have been added, bridges have been increased, and a truck replacement payment all contribute towards an increase in expenses.

Solid Waste: Solid Waste is showing a \$5,000 decrease.

Recreation: Revenues are up due to an increase in program fees. Expenses are showing an increase in winter carnival, computer expenses plus some minor increases. Julie Hance explained that the town has converted to a managed care program for computers. The payroll line is showing a larger increase because the budget for 2019 is not correct. In addition, the Board discussed Matt McCarthy keeping a log for 2020 to see if \$4,000 is sufficient. The facility line is showing an increase of \$450.00. Matt McCarthy stated that the resurfacing of the tennis court has been removed from the budget. He feels that it can wait for another year.

Parks and Cemeteries: Revenues have not changed. Expenses are down slightly due to a decrease in payroll and a small increase in insurance.

Library: There is a \$6,500 increase due mostly to their request for an increase in contribution of \$3,000.00. Revitalization is also up \$6,000 due to the Information Booth and Miscellaneous Expenses. The Revitalization money is being earmarked for the Academy Building plaster and work at Yosemite.

Other expenses: Other expenses have increased due to an increase in Health Officer salary. An ad was run in the local papers but there has been no response.

David Pisha stated that he and Julie Hance will continue to review the budget to determine if there are further cuts. The budget is up .06 cents.

Capital Plan: There is a \$350,000 transfer to the capital plan. However, the budget is showing a \$360,000 transfer. This change will lessen the tax increase by \$10,000. David Pisha also explained that the dump truck and police cruiser will still be purchased this year but will be financed via loans to help moderate expenses through 2023. Palmer Bridge is also included as a loan payment over 4 years.

Bond Plan: The only change to the Bond Plan is the inclusion of the EMS Building and renovations to the Town Garage. In 2023, there will begin a decrease in the Bond Plan due to the payoff of multiple bonds. The EMS Building is interest only payments for the first 3 years.

Julie Hance stated that the budget will need to be set by January 17.

5. TOWN PLAN REVIEW:

The Board reviewed Chapter 10 of the new Town Plan which is Economic Development.

The existing programs and assets section should be updated. This should include other annual events such as Wheels on the Field and Winter Carnival. Also, the Green Mountain Festival Series references should be removed as they no longer are an entity. Lee Gustafson stated this should not be an inclusive list. Maybe adding “including but not limited to” prior to the list. David Pisha stated that the Plan should not indicate that they are town sponsored events, but that the town supports the sponsors of these events. It should be stated that the town stands ready to help support events that come to town.

Lee Gustafson stated that a citizen mentioned that the Town Plan does not reference the railroad. He questioned if there should be more discussion in the Plan about the railroad.

Leigh Dakin stated that the tables on pages 3 and 4 reference a 2013 date. She questioned if this information can be updated. David Pisha stated that there is a State of Vermont survey that indicated that Chester is one of the only Vermont towns that has been designated as a growing town.

Bill Dakin indicated that the Town Plan will be referenced in ACT 250 permitting applications. They have real significance in state level permitting for land use. Robert Neid stated that the local zoning regulations have to be consistent with the existing Town Plan. This is another point of its significance.

Cynthia Prairie stated that she would like to include news organizations as an economic driver for the town. She provided the Board with a letter which is attached to these

minutes. Arne Jonynas thanked the Chester Telegraph for their service to the community and the area. The Board agreed to forward this letter to the Planning Commission for their inclusion.

Page 1: The Board suggested that the date in the first paragraph be removed since it is outdated at this time. Also, paragraph 1(b), Hardware Store should be removed.

The Plan does talk about the high speed internet. There should be a goal or policy to promote businesses that require this high speed internet. Also, that brick and mortar is not the only thing to be incentivized. Most businesses take advantage of the high speed internet with their online sales.

Page 6, Master Plan language should be updated to show what has been done since the Master Plan was created. Items such as the Depot Street sidewalk improvements, signage designs, pocket park, Brookside Trail, Church Street sidewalk scoping study.

David Pisha also stated that the new Emergency Services Building has been approved and should be mentioned. Also, the improvements to the water project should be included. These are infrastructure improvements that directly impacted economic development. While they are referenced in other sections of the Plan, it should be referenced back to in this chapter as well.

Bill Dakin discussed what the town plan is supposed to accomplish and its overall goal. The Board and audience discussed several things that the Town Plan is supposed to achieve, such as a vision for the future of its town.

There should be discussion relative to quality of life, not just business promotion. Chester is a town where individuals can live, work and play all in one place. The premise of marketing for Chester is to bring in new residents who will live in town, work in town and have their kids in Chester schools.

6. NEW BUSINESS/NEXT AGENDA:

The Academy Building Lease, Town Warning and Budget will be on the next agenda.

7. 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