

TOWN OF CHESTER
BOARD OF SELECTMEN

July 20, 2016
Minutes

PRESENT: John DeBenedetti; Arne Jonynas; Ben Whalen; Dan Cote; David Pisha

VISITORS: Julie Hance; Frank Bidwell; Carlo Kapp; Ann Kapp; Wanda Purdy; Sarah Purdy; Tom Hildreth; Sam Baltaglino; William Lindsay; Steve Copping; Carol Lind; Charler Hooker; Suzy Forlie; Jennifer Jones; Jim Seiherling; Shawn Cunningham; Brian Mosher; Deb Aldrich; Skip Lisle; David Lord; Cil Mathews; Barre Pinske; Noralee Hall

The meeting was called to order at 7:00 p.m. by John DeBenedetti.

QUARRY ROAD PUBLIC HEARING

John DeBenedetti read the Notice of Hearing.

A motion was made by Arne Jonynas to open the public hearing. Seconded by Dan Cote. The motion passed.

John DeBenedetti opened the meeting for public comment. He stated that the proposal is to discontinue approximately 800 feet at the end of Quarry Road. The requested footage would increase taxes by approximately \$20.72. In addition, the town would lose approximately \$230.00 in State Aid. However, there would be a decrease in materials and labor.

Arne Jonynas stated that there are other options that would allow the town to still maintain control. These would include reclassifying the road as a Class IV road or a trail. Suzy Forlie questioned the length of the trail. Arne Jonynas stated that it ends at the doorstep of the property owner. There is no further trail that it could connect to.

There were no other comments.

A motion was made by Ben Whalen to close the public hearing. Seconded by Arne Jonynas. The motion passed.

The hearing closed at 7:07 p.m.

It was agreed that Julie Hance will prepare draft Findings for the discontinuance.

REGULAR SELECTBOARD MEETING

The regular Selectboard meeting started at 7:09 p.m. There were no additions or deletions to the agenda.

1. APPROVE MINUTES:

July 6, 2016:

A motion was made by Dan Cote to approve the July 6, 2016 minutes of the Chester Selectboard meeting as amended. Seconded by Ben Whalen. The motion passed.

Arne Jonynas was on the minutes twice
Page 3, item 6, 2nd paragraph, correct spelling of “policy”
Add Donna Allen to the Visitor’s List and Ron Smith
Page 2, Vast Request, replace “on” with “and”

2. CITIZEN’S COMMENTS:

Barre Pinske was present to share some information about the Festival Grounds. He handed out a package of information to the Selectboard for their review. Barre Pinske provided a brief resume and history of his work. He stated that he has been trying to work with the town and does not seem to be receiving much help. Barre Pinske stated that he is looking for support from the community to help with the Big Buzz Festival.

Barre Pinske then reviewed his package of information and photographs. He explained that he had carved a heart with the teachers’ names and presented it to the Newtown School. Barre Pinske stated that Vermont is the 2nd worst in the country with regard to economics. He explained the history of his economic development loan and described his milling machine. Barre Pinske stated that he feels that Chester has cultural issues and would like to see more community mindedness.

Barre Pinske furthered his presentation by discussing a return on investment in the Arts & Culture. He stated that he would like to see the town make some form of investment. He stated that he would like to have discussion relative to the public/private sharing of money. He stated that all of his business is from tourism. He stated that he has found a location where he can run his festival for less money. He is asking for Chester to contribute in some way.

Barre Pinske stated that he is behind on his loan. He made a sizeable payment today and is hoping to catch up.

Ben Whalen questioned what is being requested. Barre Pinske stated that he is not asking for anything specific. He would like for people to help with the festivals. He stated that \$1,800 would be helpful as that is the cost to rent the field.

Steve Copping was present. He stated that he has been working in Chester for 35 years and has never asked the taxpayers for money. He has concerns about public money going towards private business.

Steve Copping stated that he has concerns regarding the Jeffrey Barn, specifically regarding fire safety. Ben Whalen stated that he would have strong confidence that the fire department would be able to protect his building.

3. OLD BUSINESS:

Economic Development: David Pisha stated that tax bills went out with a letter asking for people to participate in the Master Plan process. He stated that the town is seeing a good response. John DeBenedetti asked when Bob Fiint could attend. The Board agreed to have him at the next meeting and then quarterly.

Water/Sewer: David Pisha stated that there was a meeting with the contractors for the water project. He stated that Naomi Johnson indicated that the number of change orders has been very few and the project is coming in under budget. The town is reviewing other projects that may be eligible at the negative interest rate. John DeBenedetti questioned the status of ACT 250 permitting. David Pisha stated that the attorney has sent a letter and is following up on the expected response time.

Yosemite Fire House: David Pisha stated that this is on the agenda. He stated that the Richardson that was thought to be an heir is not an heir. David Pisha further stated that there may be an individual that has an interest. If so, the time will lengthen to get a final answer.

Entrance Signs: John DeBenedetti questioned when the dates on the signs entering Chester would be updated with the correct date. David Pisha stated that he will check on this.

Academy Building Monument: David Pisha stated that he and Julie Hance have been to the Academy Building property to review a possible location of the marker. Hugh Henry has drafted the proposed narrative for the marker.

Website: David Pisha stated that a person has been hired and the changes are expected to be rolled out at the end of July or August.

Paving: David Pisha stated that Mountain View and Kevadus Circle will be paved at the end of the water line replacement. High street and Popple Dungeon will be paved later in the summer. Coach Road is being held at this time because it may be possible to complete the Coach Road loop project with the extra water money. The paving would be performed after that.

Iron Run: Dan Cote explained that there are 650 bikes registered for the Iron Run and they are expecting another 200. The bikes will be moved from Ludlow to Chester. There will be an ice cream social, pie eating contest and 15 Quilts of Valor will be given out to military veterans. David Pisha stated that Rick Cloud is ready for the event.

4. TOWN WIDE REAPPRAISAL UPDATE:

David Pisha stated that the town did a reappraisal in 2008. The cost was approximately \$160,000. The town has received \$210,000 of state money to perform the next appraisal. The town is waiting to receive a letter from the State requiring the reappraisal. Wanda Purdy stated that she is anticipating an RFP process. Once the letter is received, there is a timeline to make a selection. She will have 150 days to provide a response. She discussed having the contracted company perform the appraisals of the exempted properties, which was done by the Listers last time. Wanda Purdy stated that she is anticipating a cost of approximately \$180,000. She will keep the Board informed as the process goes along. The actual reappraisal would likely take place in 2019.

5. RAINBOW ROCK PRESENTATION:

Lydia Mendez from the Vermont River Conservancy was present to discuss Rainbow Rock. She stated that the Dexter Family approached the River Conservancy regarding the Rainbow Rock property. She stated that the Vermont River Conservancy has agreed that Rainbow Rock does have merit to be considered for conservation. It is 1.84 acres on the Williams River across from the Henry Farm Inn. She stated that the Conservancy would like to begin the conversation as to whether or not the town would be willing to receive the parcel as a donation with a conservation easement. This would mean a reduction of approximately \$500.00 off the tax rolls. There would be no other fees incurred with the exception of the town attorney reviewing the legal documents.

Arne Jonynas stated that he feels that this needs to be taken advantage of. His concern is if the property is sold, it could easily be posted and not be available for public use. Arne Jonynas stated that the Conservation Committee would be willing to perform the maintenance. The town owns the parcel across the river which provides a second access through the ball field.

John DeBenedetti questioned how the money is raised. Lydia Mendez stated that the fundraising is different. They often apply to the Vermont Housing Conservation Board as well as other conservation organizations. They also meet with private donors. She stated that some towns set aside money to help. The property is currently surveyed. There are some site amenities that are also available for funding such as stairs. Funds are typically raised within a year.

The Selectboard agreed to have the Vermont River Conservancy move forward. They are very supportive of this project. Lydia Mendez stated that she will keep the Board updated and begin the fundraising efforts.

Tom Hildreth asked the boundary of the 1.84 acres. The boundary abuts Green Mountain Turnpike. It is immediately between the Green Mountain Turnpike and the Williams River. He expressed concerns regarding the steep vertical bank which does not provide safe access. Tom Hildreth stated that after Irene there may be some rehabilitation costs that need to be spent.

6. GRAFTON WIND PROJECT UPDATE:

There were several people present from Grafton to discuss the Grafton Wind Project. Carol Lind stated that the Grafton woodlands Group and the Friends of Windham are being represented tonight.

Carol Lind stated that this project is for an industrial wind project. They are trying to inform themselves and the surrounding communities of the magnitude of this project. She explained the company and their history. The project would utilize 5000 acres in Grafton and Windham. There are 8 towers in Grafton and 20 in Windham being proposed. The towers are 500 feet tall each. Carol Lind stated that there are 200 residents that are less than 1.25 miles from this site. The sites will require huge quantities of concrete which will cause extreme erosion. They discussed the health implications due to noise and strobing lights. They feel that this will change the ridgeline and have a negative impact on tourism.

Carol Lind stated that Chester will be impacted by the trucks transporting the windmill parts from the north. There will also be a large number of cement trucks. It will take approximately 1.5 years to get them all to the site. These structures are so large that roads are required to be reconstructed and telephone poles heightened. This is the largest project in Vermont with the tallest towers in Vermont.

Carol Lind stated that all decisions are made by the public service board in Montpelier. To date, all projects have been approved.

Carol Lind stated that her group is requesting towns to have an article on their ballot in March telling the public service board that citizens don't want these wind towers. In addition, they are asking that people be mindful of the election in November.

John DeBenedetti questioned the timeline for the project approval. Carol Lind stated that she is unsure at this time. The company is requesting negotiation and both towns are refusing at this time. John DeBenedetti also stated that the State of Vermont owns both Route 103 and Route 11 so the town does not have authority over permitting. Discussion ensued regarding contacting Representatives and Senators.

Ben Whalen stated his frustration that this is more of a passionate viewpoint from one group. He would like to see all viewpoints presented. Carol Lind stated that the Grafton Selectboard is divided at this time. The viewpoints are that the towns are being offered money and there are some who feel that the Green Energy component is important. She urged the Chester Selectboard to perform their own research and form their own opinion.

Dan Cote asked if research has been done on the farms in the mid-west and the farms in Maine. Carol Lind noted that the farms in the mid-west distribute noise differently. They have done research on the farms in Maine. Dan Cote stated that he has worked with wind farms as a safety consultant. He has concerns regarding economic impact and environment. He would like to make his decisions based on facts and this information has given a good start.

Tom Hildreth asked if Grafton or Windham are on the grid and how the power is going to be connected. Carol Lind responded that they will attach to the VELCO power lines.

Frank Bidwell stated that his concern would be regarding the roads and the potential of road width increase and its impact on the Village. It was recommended to contact the State since it is their highway.

7. NEMRC PROPOSAL TO CHANGE ACCOUNTING SOFTWARE:

John DeBenedetti stated that a memorandum has been prepared describing the proposal to change the town's accounting software from Quickbooks to NEMRC. NEMRC has agreed to split the cost between 2 years. John DeBenedetti stated that this change is a recommendation of the Auditor.

Cil Mathews and Debbie Aldrich presented the proposal. Debbie Aldrich stated that the memo explains the change from cash to accrual. The training would be paid for in 2016 and the modules would be paid for in 2017. David Pisha stated that the training is a pay as you go. It was confirmed that it is possible to have this ready for January.

A motion was made by Ben Whalen to authorize the change from Quickbooks to NEMRC and purchase the NEMRC funding accounting software. Seconded by Dan Cote. The motion passed.

8. FINANCIAL UPDATE:

General Fund: David Pisha stated that revenues into the General Fund are up \$89,000. Expenses are down \$70,000. He stated that the finances are better than last year by \$159,000. David Pisha stated that the budget review shows us ahead by \$150,000 over last year. Expenses are up due to a transfer into Capital made earlier this year. The Balance Sheet shows that total assets are down. The Due from Sewer is down \$51,000 because sewer is now paying back its loan. The Tax Anticipation Note is down \$95,000 which shows less borrowing. The Profit & Loss shows the town close to budget. Taxes are slightly ahead in revenue. Most departments are slightly up. David Pisha noted that the Land Use money came in. John DeBenedetti questioned the paving reimbursement. John DeBenedetti also questioned the Andover payments. He noted that the administration expense for the auditor is up which is due to a single audit requirement. John DeBenedetti questioned line 01-431-69, street lights and noted that the town has expended 62% already and questioned if the town is budgeting enough? David Pisha stated that he will look into this.

Water: David Pisha reported that revenues are up \$5,000 due to delinquent collections. He stated that bottom line expenses are up due to contracted services. Rate increase will be at the next meeting.

Sewer: David Pisha reported that revenues are up due to delinquent collections. He stated that revenues are down compared to last year because of lower BOD fines. Expenses are higher due to interest on bonds. However, we are still showing a profit on the bottom line. David Pisha

stated that budget to actual shows fees are down from budget. Payroll benefits are higher than budgeted probably due to timing. Expenses are below budget. John DeBenedetti questioned that line 04-411-76 - utilities are 80% of budget. Cil Mathews noted that the solar farm fits into this. The Selectboard reviewed the solar farm numbers.

John DeBenedetti questioned the Balance Sheet and the balances. Ron Smith had suggested Fund Balance policies for all accounts. David Pisha stated that sewer would be okay to direct to a reserve fund. Water rates still need to be increased to cover the bonds. David Pisha stated that the policy for the general fund will need to be changed to reflect what the board wants verses history. Discussion ensued.

Delinquencies: David Pisha stated that \$18,000 was collected during the month. This is down from last year at this time. Water/sewer collections are up but it is expected that more will be received this month. David Pisha and Julie Hance are beginning discussions regarding changing the method of collection.

Ambulance: David Pisha stated that the new employee in the ambulance department is allowing response to all calls in Chester as well as increased response time. Dan Cote stated that he would like to see these numbers graphed and charted so that we can see a trend.

Minor Funds: John DeBenedetti questioned the towns' contribution to the 250th Celebration. John DeBenedetti requested that the name of line 06-101-12 be changed from CEDC to CDF. David Pisha noted that the CDF fund is up. Dan Cote stated that this would be a time to be openminded and think about how this money could be used in the community and possibly to help Mr. Pinske's request. The Board discussed this and the policy that has been established.

Shawn Cunningham requested that copies of the financials be available at meetings.

9. YOSEMITE UPDATE:

It was noted that this was done during Old Business.

10. NEW BUSINESS/NEXT AGENDA:

Arne Jonynas requested discussion relative to the Jeffery Barn. David Pisha suggested a professional building assessment.

Ben Whalen stated that the Chester 250th committee is having a debriefing meeting tomorrow night. He would like an update from them at their next meeting.

John DeBenedetti stated that he would like the Open Meeting Law Presentation held on a different night than a regular meeting. He would like to include other towns in the meeting and to share the cost.

It was agreed that the next meeting will include the Public Service Awards, water rates, Bob Flint, SE Group contract, Conflict of Interest Policy.

It was also requested that David Pisha Investigate the wind farm application for future agenda.

11. EXECUTIVE SESSION:

A motion was made by Ben Whalen to enter into executive session for the purpose of performing the annual review of the town manager. Seconded by Arne Jonynas. The motion passed. The board entered Executive Session at 9:59 p.m.

A motion was made by Dan Cote to exit Executive Session at 10:36. Seconded by Ben Whalen. The motion passed. There was no action taken.

12. ADJOURN:

A motion was made by Dan Cote to adjourn. Seconded by Ben Whalen. The motion passed. The meeting adjourned at 10:37 p.m.

Julie Hance
Secretary of the Select Board

Heather Chase
Clerk of the Select Board

The SAPA-TV recording of this meeting is hereby made a part of the permanent minute record of this meeting.