

TOWN OF CHESTER
BOARD OF SELECTMEN

July 18, 2018
Minutes

PRESENT: Arne Jonynas; Dan Cote; Lee Gustafson; Ben Whalen; David Pisha

VISITORS: Shawn Cunningham; Julie Hance; Wanda Purdy; Bill Lindsay; Nancy Lindsay; Naomi Johnson; Lyza Gardner; Lillian Willis; David Willis; Frank Bidwell; Cathy Hasbrouck; Michele Bargfrede; Joe Epler; Carrie King; Gary King; Dan Wilcox

The meeting was called to order at 6:30 p.m. by Chairman Jonynas.

Lee Gustafson stated that they would like to approve the minutes from June 18 since all members were present to approve.

Arne Jonynas stated that he would like to delete the Town Manager Review from the agenda since the full board is not present.

1. APPROVAL OF MINUTES:

A motion was made by Lee Gustafson to approve the minutes of the July 3, 2018 Selectboard Meeting. Seconded by Ben Whalen. The motion passed.

A motion was made by Lee Gustafson to approve the minutes of the July 18, 2018 Selectboard meeting. Seconded by Dan Cote. The motion passed.

2. CITIZEN'S COMMENTS:

There were no citizen's comments.

3. OLD BUSINESS:

Implementation Committee: David Pisha stated that the committee continues to meet. The pocket park is being worked out with a plan to plant a few trees, benches, low lying bushes. There is also the potential of a stone chess table. There are future plans for the opposite of the river. Boundaries are being worked out at this time.

Water project: David Pisha stated that the water project is substantially complete. Punchlist items are being completed on Friday. The inspection for the electrical component to the project will be reviewed in the next month.

Arne Jonynas questioned the status of the Sprint contract. David Pisha commented that Jim Carroll is reviewing the Contract and communicating with Sprint about the contract.

Arne Jonynas questioned the status of the stormwater system in Mountain View which was discussed some time ago. David Pisha stated that there are steps that need to be taken and that this will be on the next agenda.

4. UPDATE WHEELS IN THE FIELD:

David Pisha stated that he has spoken with the business owners and Lee Whiting regarding the Porsche car locations. It was agreed that the cars will be moved to the Academy building lawn and outback on the cemetery expansion land. Ron Patch had agreed but indicated that he needed to present to his entire Board. The Selectboard agreed to this location as well.

5. LIBRARY OPERATIONS:

Lyza Gardner was present from the Whiting Library Board of Trustees. She provided an update of events at the library. She also stated that they are updating their website. They are in the middle of the fundraising cycle and have a goal of \$18,000. She further stated that donations can now be made online.

Lyza Gardner stated that attendance at children's events is going well. The Lego club will begin at the beginning of the school year. There are events on Fridays and Wednesday as well. She stated that the adult events are showing low attendance. She identified the events that are available at the library which are on the library's website.

David Pisha suggested that Lyza Gardner get a hold of Amie O'Brien at town hall to connect the two websites.

David Pisha stated that the library is always looking for Legos to be donated to the Lego Club.

6. LOCAL CONCERNS MEETING:

Naomi Johnson was present to conduct the Local Concerns Meeting on behalf of the sidewalk project. She stated that the purpose of tonight's meeting is to give a general overview of the project and to gather public input.

The project is a little over 2500 feet, beginning at Town Hall and ending at the bridge before Bargefrede Road. This project will include pedestrian lighting and a green strip. The project is funded by VTrans which requires a 3 phase process. Tonight is the first step. Naomi Johnson explained that they will also meet with property owners personally. There will also be an invitation to a group meeting with owners on both sides of the road.

Naomi Johnson explained that the intersection with Coach/First Avenue/Depot Street will be reviewed as well as the intersection with Depot and Maple.

Arne Jonynas questioned the lighting. Naomi Johnson indicated that the lights are pedestrian scale, approximately 100 feet apart and underneath power lines. He also expressed concerns about the wires that are on the poles now and if some of these could be removed during this project. Naomi Johnson stated that she will discuss this with the utility companies.

Frank Bidwell asked about the bridge on Depot Street by Bargefrede Road and the poor condition of the sidewalk. Naomi Johnson mentioned that the project scope ends just prior to the bridge but if there is additional funding, this could be looked at.

Carrie King asked if there was other landscaping being considered. Naomi Johnson indicated that as of now, there is nothing specific. There are likely to be plantings reviewed during the design process. Naomi Johnson further mentioned that the Canopy Plan will be reviewed during this design phase as well.

Dan Wilcox questioned if there was a need for private land to be used. Naomi Johnson indicated that the entire project is currently in town right of way. The surveyor will be confirming boundaries prior to design.

Gary King questioned the lack of delineation between sidewalk and road around Lisai's Market and the train station. Naomi Johnson indicated that this will be part of the project. There will be discussion with VTrans and the rail. The results of this conversation will be reported back at a community meeting.

Michele Bargefrede questioned if the sidewalk past Bargefrede Road will be done. Julie Hance explained that there is a sidewalk inventory that is being reviewed annually. The remaining section of sidewalk along Depot Street will be looked at in the future.

Bill Lindsay questioned the width of the sidewalk. Naomi Johnson indicated that the sidewalk will be 5 feet wide with a 6" curbing.

Cathy Hasbrouck questioned the pedestrian access across Depot/Maple intersection and its lack of safety. Naomi Johnson indicated that they are reviewing the potential of a T-intersection. Ben Whalen expressed concerns about a T-intersection and having to make a 90 degree turn.

Gary King asked that this project also include the other layers and initiatives that have already been started. He also questioned if the speed limit could be reviewed as well as signage about truck brakes, etc. He asked that the project be reviewed on a broader level to encompass other aspects as well. Naomi Johnson stated that indeed other plans such as the Canopy Plan will be reviewed as well.

Gary King questioned how property owners will be notified. Naomi Johnson indicated that property owners will receive letters notifying them of individual and group meetings.

7. YOSEMITE UPDATE:

Lillian Willis indicated that the Historic Preservation Committee has been seeking input from the community about potential uses of the Yosemite Fire House for some time. She stated that she is hearing positive comments from the community. New members have joined, donations of memorabilia are being donated and flooring has been donated. Lillian Willis asked if any Board members have heard any ideas from the community. Arne Jonynas stated that he has heard positive comments about the building being restored. Dan Cote stated that he has heard positive comments as well.

Lillian Willis stated that the Chester Telegraph has put up a poll requesting feedback. She stated that as of now, the poll is showing 60% in favor of the fire museum.

Lillian Willis asked the Board to consider reaching a decision soon so that planning can begin. David Pisha suggested that a decision be made at the August 1 meeting. Dan Cote agreed that the Board should vote in the near future. Arne Jonynas stated that there will be a financial discussion that has to be had around budget time. The Board discussed ways to display and the potential of a curator in the future. Dan Cote stated that he wants to vote on a vision.

Lillian Willis stated that there are individuals who are willing to donate if it becomes a museum.

Arne Jonynas asked Lillian Willis to prepare a simple vision to present at the August 1 meeting. Hopefully the Board will vote at that time.

Nancy Lindsay stated her opinion that the Jeffrey Barn is in far worse condition than the Yosemite Fire House. Lillian Willis stated that they are awaiting an Assessment by Historic Preservation for the Jeffrey Barn.

Gary King questioned if there has been any consideration given to moving the structure. He suggested that the building could be moved to the new fire station site. Lillian Willis stated that the State's historic architect has indicated that the town loses funding potential if the structure is moved. The parking issues will have to be dealt with.

8. TOMASSO PROPERTY DISCUSSION

Arne Jonynas provided a history of the Tomasso property acquisition with New England Forestry Foundation.

David Pisha stated that the Tomasso property is still on the market for \$3.75 million. He indicated that there are several organizations that are available to the town to help with financing the land. In addition, there are private funding opportunities available that need to be researched. He also stated that there is approximately \$2.8 million available in timber sales. David Pisha questioned if the Board is interested in pursuing investigating potential acquisition.

David Pisha reviewed a report prepared for Regional Planning which addresses recreation needs regionally. The report stresses the economic benefits of a large forest to a community and the region.

Arne Jonynas stated that this would be a huge asset for the community if this could be acquired. He stated that there is a lot to research before the town purchased land like this. He also disclosed that he is a member of the Chester Conservation Committee.

Julie Hance explained that she has applied for a grant in the amount of \$20,000 that could be used to hire Northern Forest Center to conduct a community assessment for Chester. This would include an appraisal, updating the timber inventory and community outreach.

Ben Whalen stated that he has reservations about the land acquisition but is not opposed to doing some research. Arne Jonynas agreed that he is okay with researching.

Ben Whalen stated his concerns that there would be a perception that the town is just looking to spend money. Arne Jonynas agreed and stated clearly that the town is simply researching and wants to gather community input and involvement.

Lee Gustafson stated that there needs to be a philosophical discussion about where the Board wants to proceed as a community. He stated that there needs to be better marketing and an improved presence. He suggested that this be brought back to the visioning process and compared with the goals that were established during that process. Arne Jonynas stated that he would like to take the approach of investing in our community.

Gary King questioned if there are other agencies that can assist the town in this process. This process would identify those partners, two of which have already come forward.

Julie Hance explained the financial part of the grant. The town will be spending \$5,000 to do this research. Dan Cote stated that he would like to wait for a whole board. He expressed hesitation because there are many visions for the community held by different people. He explained that he has a vision for the water supply in this town. Dan Cote continued to explain that he wants to make sure that the emphasis is going towards the priority visions. Arne Jonynas stated that this is a vision that is presented now. He stated that spending \$5,000 on this process is valuable. Bill Lindsay stated that this information would be needed if the town is to vote on acquiring the property.

A motion was made Ben Whalen to spend \$5,000 to begin working on the Tomasso property research. Seconded by Lee Gustafson. The motion passed.

9. FINANCIAL UPDATES:

Budget to budget. David Pisha stated that the reports cover the past 6 months. Revenue is down due to lower delinquent tax collections this year verses last year. Expenses are

up primarily due to public works and the historic facilities. The public works increase is due to the winter. The historic facilities line is increased because this line has been added to the budget where it wasn't there before. The Fire Department is down \$50,000 in revenue because last year there was a hazmat payment that is not received this year.

Expenses to Budget comparison shows that expenses are down. Overall the town is operating close to where it has been.

David Pisha stated that Lee Gustafson had asked for a break down of tax rates over the past several years. David Pisha presented a graph showing that there was a tax increase in 2008 but the rate has graduated off to a slight increase over the past several years.

Arne Jonynas questioned why revenue is not booked for the tower rent. David Pisha stated that he will check with the bookkeeper.

Arne Jonynas questioned the timber sales going into the water department. Julie Hance will research the history of the land to determine how the water department acquired the land.

David Pisha stated that water revenue is up \$51,000 due to the timber sales. There is also a jump in fee collection because of the gradual increase in rates. Expenses are lower primarily because the contract services line is down. Lee Gustafson asked that future projects be carried separately so that it does not skew the budget data.

Sewer revenue and expenses are flat. The department is operating well.

Cil prepared a report of the small funds for the Board's review. The Board discussed the upcoming reappraisal which will become effective 2020. Lee Gustafson questioned the Public Safety Fund as well as the EMS Building Fund. Ben Whalen explained that one was established by the voters, the other was fundraising money.

10. NEW BUSINESS:

The Board discussed that the Yosemite Fire House, David Pisha's Review, the next steps for Stormwater and the DRB interviews will be on the next agenda.

11. EXECUTIVE SESSION; ANNUAL REVIEW OF TOWN MANAGER:

This item was moved to the next meeting awaiting a full board.

12. ADJOURN:

A motion was made by Lee Gustafson to adjourn. Seconded by Dan Cote. The motion passed. The meeting adjourned at 8:19 p.m.

Julie Hance
Secretary of the Select Board

Ben Whalen
Clerk of the Selectboard