

TOWN OF CHESTER  
SELECTBOARD

November 16, 2016  
Minutes

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

VISITORS: Julie Hance; Shawn Cunningham; Frank Bidwell; Kelly Arrison; Neil  
Allen; Marilyn Mahusky; Bill Lindsay; Matt Wilson; Matt McCarthy; Dan  
Cook; Richard Cloud; Jeff Sheldon; John Knisley; Amy Mosher; Cil  
Mathews; Claudio Veliz

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

There were no additions or deletions to the agenda.

1. APPROVE MINUTES:

November 2, 2016:

A motion was made by Dan Cote to approve the minute from the November 2, 2016  
Chester Selectboard meeting. Seconded by Arne Jonynas. The motion passed.

2. CITIZEN'S COMMENTS:

Frank Bidwell stated that he would like to see the Town of Chester obtain a Purchasing  
Policy. John DeBenedetti stated that the town currently has a policy. Julie Hance will  
send him a copy.

Kelly Arrison questioned if the Selectboard is going to take action against the Zoning  
Administrator for the permit that appears to be issued incorrectly. David Pisha stated that  
he has spoken with Jim Carroll regarding this matter who has advised that he has research  
to do. He has also cautioned the Board not to prejudice themselves in case the Board has  
to serve in a quasi-judicial matter on any potential issue.

Frank Bidwell questioned the status of the Yosemite Fire House. David Pisha stated that  
Jim Carroll apologizes but he has not had time to file the necessary paperwork with the  
Court.

3. OLD BUSINESS:

VELCO: David Pisha stated that he heard from VELCO this afternoon. They will be  
pouring the concrete this week for the new tower. In addition, he heard from Verizon  
who wants to be back on the tower. He stated that the steel has been ordered and will be  
arriving soon. John DeBenedetti questioned the status of the Lease with Verizon. David

Pisha will review the status of the contract and begin any negotiations that are necessary. John DeBenedetti stated that he wants David Pisha to keep track of any legal expenses since Verizon paid them during the last negotiation.

Master Plan: David Pisha stated that the CEDC met with the consultant regarding the marketing business aspect of the master plan.

4. GENERAL FUND DEPARTMENT BUDGET REVIEW:

Police Department: David Pisha stated that the police budget is fairly stable. The Court fees have been reduced by \$10,000 on the revenue side. New items added to the budget are the finger print machine maintenance and three speed signs. Chief Cloud clarified with John DeBenedetti that for every ticket written, the town gets a small percentage. Some tickets can be waived down which is deducted from the town's portion of the ticket. The town gets approximately 30% of all tickets written. Ben Whalen questioned the number of tickets written this year. Richard Cloud stated that he will get back to him with that number.

John DeBenedetti questioned if the finger printing machine can be used for locals. Richard Cloud stated that the State Police have given the Chester PD their finger printing machine which has a value of \$35,000.00. The \$4,500 in the budget is for the insurance policy and maintenance of the equipment. The Data Master will be obtained by the first of the year which is used to test blood alcohol level. This is issued through the Department of Health. In response to Arne Jonynas, Richard Cloud clarified that every arrest needs to be finger printed. This is approximately 75 per year. This will also be allowed for locals who will not be charged. If a person lives out of town, the town could charge a fee for the service. The equipment line is up \$12,000 due to the speed signs.

Arne Jonynas questioned the revenue line of \$33,000. Richard Cloud stated that this is for special details and is shown in the payroll line, ski traffic and the traffic control line. He confirmed that money is made back for the cruiser and the incidental expenses.

Dan Cote questioned the need for the police cruiser replacement. Richard Cloud stated that the cruisers are replaced every 4 years and there are 3 cruisers. When traded in the cruiser will have 120,000 miles but has a lot of idle time. Richard Cloud stated that the town switched to Chevy which has a better warranty and retains a better trade in. The figure in the budget is the net figure and includes any trade-in.

Ben Whalen questioned status of staffing. Richard Cloud stated that we are down one employee. He stated that other towns and the State Police are offering incentives to boost recruitment. There are two candidates that are interested and already certified. Richard Cloud stated that Detective Wilson was replaced by Detective Andy Brothers.

John DeBenedetti questioned the fuel lines. David Pisha stated that there has been a downward cost of fuel.

Ben Whalen questioned the traffic stop numbers. He stated that he would also like to learn a little more about CORE and how it can be used. Richard Cloud stated that another part timer has been hired and is hoping to increase the CORE program.

Fire Department: Ben Whalen recused himself from the topic of payroll and fire truck expenses. He requested that those two items be discussed first. He will come back for the rest of the discussion.

Matt Wilson stated that the salary line will stay at \$67,500 with no increase needed. Calls are up 12% but salary is just about the same. He stated that there have been less multi-day events this year which keeps the salary down. Fire Fighters get paid once per year at the end of the year. The bulk of the payroll will be paid out next year. As of now with no other calls, the payroll line will be \$2,000 less. Dan Cote questioned the delay in paying firefighters. Matt Wilson stated that this is something that the fire fighters prefer.

John DeBenedetti questioned the fire truck length. Matt Wilson stated that the truck will not need to be custom designed for size. David Pisha will follow up with Andover to make sure that they are in agreement with the increase in their contribution. The foam line has been increased due to the cost of the foam. Matt Wilson explained the use of the foam.

Dan Cote questioned service fees and why there are not any fees for service. Matt Wilson stated that he believes that Vermont Statute does not allow service fees with the exception of Hazmat and Forest Fires. The law has recently changed decreasing the amount the town can bill for forest fires as well. Matt Wilson also stated that there has been push back from the community when this suggestion has been made since taxes pay for the equipment. Matt Wilson also stated that the insurance companies can be billed for the use of the foam. Dan Cote requested that Matt Wilson and David Pisha research if the charge of a simple service fee is allowed. Dan Cook clarified that he is not allowed to bill for the ambulance if there is no transport.

The Board discussed the billing of Hazmat and the addition of a hazmat line in the budget. Matt Wilson stated that in some cases, if the material used and the time spent is minor, he does allow the materials to just be replaced instead of billed. The extra money received from the tanker rollover on Route 11 was used to purchase hazmat equipment which has never been accounted for in the budget. The line is being added so that there are funds available to purchase equipment and materials if needed.

Dan Cote questioned if there are facilities in Chester that require greater equipment than what Chester has. Matt Wilson stated that due to design of buildings today and the rules regarding how to fight a fire, it would be nice to have a ladder truck someday. Ladders cannot just go on roofs anymore because of design. Other towns are being called in to help fight chimney fires. Matt Wilson stated that when the time comes, he would suggest looking at a good used vehicle since it would not be used very often.

Arne Jonynas questioned the trucks that we currently have. We have 2 frontline Class A engines, utility truck, tanker truck, and rescue truck. The engine is what is needed for replacement. The cost of the new engine is \$570,000 and does not include the trade in. Matt Wilson discussed the brand of truck that he would get which is a mid-grade quality truck. David Pisha stated that the revised bond plan does not reflect the correct cost. This will be discussed at a future meeting.

Ben Whalen questioned the utilities line item which is unexpended. Matt Wilson stated that he would like to upgrade the utilities that we have mostly for the benefit of the mutual aid that covers at the town garage.

Dan Cote questioned the \$20,000 that is being paid to the water department. John DeBenedetti explained that this is for the hydrant maintenance. It was explained that the water users pay all of the water but the entire town gets the benefit of the fire department.

Heather Chase stated that she has concerns that a small town is paying for a lot of large equipment. She would like to research the concept of a regional fire department. David Pisha stated that there are benefits in the way of ISO ratings and that regionalizing is very complex. Matt Wilson stated that he understands the financial concerns, but he has concerns regarding public safety and response times. Matt Wilson explained that our ISO rating is improving and we will be reevaluated again once the water project is completed.

Dan Cote questioned if the engine could be replaced with an engine/ladder truck. Matt Wilson stated that he would rather not do that at this time. The cost of a ladder truck is \$1.5 million and it will not fit into our existing building. Dan Cote stated that the Fire Department limits what businesses can come to town and he wants our department to be supreme. Discussion ensued regarding how we respond to large structure fires.

#### Ambulance:

John DeBenedetti questioned the increase in salary and equipment. Dan Cook stated that the salary is increased due to the full time position added last year. The general salary is decreased by \$22,000 with a new administrative assistant salary added in the amount of \$34,000. Supplies have gone up primarily due to medication cost increase. The billing/office expense has increased due to the increase in the billing program. In addition, Dan Cook stated that there are 6 new people coming through the EMT program which is an improvement. The Board discussed the overtime of the Admin Assistant. Dan Cook stated that she is also on the evening rotation and because she is an employee she cannot be paid a stipend, she has to be paid overtime. The Board discussed the potential of combining positions.

Dan Cook stated that the system is running much better with the new position. The training line is for the training of the ambulance personnel.

Frank Bidwell questioned if the salary line includes everything. The board noted that this is just salary. He also questioned the life of the defibrulators. Dan Cook stated that they are about 1 year.

Recreation:

Matt McCarthy discussed the activities of the recreation department. The pool was completely redone, basketball courts resurfaced with new nets, new ice rink, new fencing around Cobleigh Field.

John DeBenedetti questioned the overage of pool maintenance. Matt McCarthy stated that while redoing the pool, they determined that the lines needed to be changed. He suggested that the line item of \$3,000 stay the same.

The Board discussed the programs that the recreation department runs. Matt McCarthy stated that his goal has been that these programs support themselves. John DeBenedetti stated that he wants to make sure that the revenues are budgeted correctly. He questioned the weight room line item. Matt McCarthy explained the use of the weight room. The Board also questioned the winter carnival. Matt stated that he did not spend \$4,654.06 on the winter carnival. Cil Mathews explained that \$3,000 was used for the 250<sup>th</sup> celebration. There is also extra money added for potential fireworks.

Cemetery:

There are no significant changes to the cemetery budget with the exception of salary increase. Trees are being budgeted at \$8,000.00. Jeff Sheldon stated that the increase in fees has been sufficient and are in line with surrounding communities.

Ben Whalen asked if there is summer help needed. Jeff Sheldon stated that right now there is not a need. David Pisha also explained that both employees also work for the public works department in the winter. There are no other purchases anticipated for 2017.

Dan Cote stated that he is noticing some trends within the budget. He noted the % salary compared to % operations for the police department is 72% of operations; the fire department is 48% of operations; ambulance is 74%; cemetery is 68% and recreation is 77%. David Pisha stated that we are a service organization and cannot be replaced by technology and has a huge people component.

5. CONFLICT OF INTEREST POLICY REVIEW AND DISCUSSION:

John DeBenedetti stated that there are two additional drafts of language for the Conflict of Interest Policy. Ben Whalen stated that he would prefer the language denoting prohibition except when there is nobody else. Arne Jonynas stated that he feels that this language strongly discourages dual participation. Heather Chase stated that she feels that this language does not reflect what was discussed at the previous meeting. Ben Whalen disagreed and stated that this language accomplishes what he intended.

John DeBenedetti stated that he is fine with 5b which but still has issues with 5c. He stated that this policy was originally crafted to prevent conflict. He would like to stay with the original language which did not allow any overlap on any boards. He feels that

it resolves any question of transparency. Arne Jonynas agreed that is his preference as well, but in the spirit of compromise he would be willing to go with 3 month advertising before appointing. Arne Jonynas agreed that just because someone is applying for a position does not mean that they need to be appointed.

Kelly Arrison stated that he feels that the policy addresses all of the primary issues. He stated that he prefers the last offer and would prefer not to waste the 3 months and appoint acceptable candidates right away.

Frank Bidwell stated that he has concerns regarding prohibition for any overlap.

Amy Mosher stated that she supports the version handed out this evening. She feels that not having overlap goes against the statute. John DeBenedetti stated that he understand that the statute allows it. However, this policy was discussed in an effort to prevent conflict. Amy Mosher feels that the policy manages conflict if it arises and she does not think the town should discourage involvement. Ben Whalen stated that policies are written to avoid misinterpretation. He feels that the ordinance in the packet prevents this. Heather Chase stated that she feels that the policy is intended to manage conflict when it arises. Heather Chase stated that she would agree with either of the 2 new policies.

Dan Cote questioned the purchasing policy. This is a separate policy that will be reviewed after the budget.

A motion was made by Ben Whalen to adopt the conflict of interest policy included in the Selectboard packet that reads as follows: A Selectboard member shall be prohibited from serving as a member on either the Planning Commission or Development Review Board. This prohibition does not include Selectboard membership on any committee or subcommittee of the foregoing public bodies. 5(c): A public officer shall be prohibited from serving as a member simultaneously on the Planning Commission and Development Review Board. However, if after reasonable efforts the Selectboard is unable to fill vacancies on either the Planning Commission or Development Review Board that exist for more than 3 months the Selectboard may appoint a member of the Planning Commissioner to serve as a member to the Development Review Board and vice versa. Nothing in Article 5C shall prohibit a Planning Commission member from serving as a member on any committee or subcommittee of the Development Review Board and vice versa. Seconded by Arne Jonynas. Following discussion, the motion passed.

6. NEW BUSINESS FOR NEXT AGENDA:

Heather Chase stated that she would like to review the purchasing policy after the budget review.

Dan Cote stated that he would like the Board to discuss the potential increase in the number of Planning Commission members.

The Snowmobile Club has a request for use of roads. Also, SEVCA has requested a board appointment.

Kelly Arrison requested that the zoning permit be added to the agenda as well as the attorney's opinion. David Pisha will speak with Jim Carroll and will hopefully be able to clarify the matter. Heather Chase stated that she would like for Jim Carroll to explain why this cannot be discussed at this time. David Pisha will find out the boundaries with regard to what he can say and not say.

The time line for the adoption of the budget will be provided at the next meeting. The Board will also review the Administration budget, Public Works, Library, and Capital/Bond plan. The 2<sup>nd</sup> meeting in December will be the water/sewer budgets.

7. ADJOURN:

A motion was made by Heather Chase to adjourn. Seconded by Dan Cote. The motion passed. The meeting adjourned at 9:31 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.