

TOWN OF CHESTER
SELECT BOARD
October 7, 2020
Select Board Meeting Minutes

PRESENT: Arne Jonynas; Lee Gustafson; Leigh Dakin; Julie Hance; Jeff Holden; Heather Chase; Amie O'Brien

VISITORS: SapaTV; Deborah Aldrich; Diane Ulbrich; Bob Ulbrich; Tim Roper; Karen Ericson; Shawn Cunningham; Chrissy Haskins; Susan Brown; David Carey; Carol Neff; Chris Conway; Barre Pinske; Tim Roper; Ginger Roper

Meeting was held via Zoom and at the Town Hall.

1. SCOPING STUDY PRESENTATION CHURCH STREET SIDEWALK

Christina Haskins presented the Church Street Sidewalk Scoping Study to the board. Please see the attached PDF for information. David Carey asked if the road would be worked on after the sidewalk is completed. Christina Haskins stated they will repair what was done to the road during the work. The town's portion of the project would be \$460,000, which is 20% of the total cost. The contingency of 25% would drop to about 10% after the design phase. The town can apply for more than one grant to cover the costs if they are all VTrans grants. Savings could come from the town crew constructing parts of the project such as prep work and some drainage. The project could initially be a gravel path, then paved in the future. However, this depends on the grant being used to fund the project.

This study was done to see if it is feasible to have a sidewalk on Church Street. The study has proven the sidewalk construction would work, but the town does not have the money to fund it. The board will consider this proposal at another time and has tabled the idea. Property owners on Church Street will be notified of future hearings.

2. APPROVE MINUTES FROM THE SEPTEMBER 16, 2020 SELECTBOARD MEETING AND SEPTEMBER 23, 2020 SPECIAL SELECTBOARD MEETING

A motion was made by Lee Gustafson to approve the Minutes of the September 16, 2020 Select Board meeting as written. Seconded by Leigh Dakin. The motion passed.

A motion was made by Jeff Holden to approve the Minutes of the September 23, 2020 Special Select Board meeting as written. Seconded by Leigh Dakin. The motion passed.

3. CITIZEN COMMENTS/ANSWERS FROM PREVIOUS MEETING

A letter was submitted to the Select Board from John Henry concerning speeding on Church Street. The second radar sign will be added to Church Street making it so there will be one on either end. The police have been out doing routine stops with increase presence on Church Street. A retired state police officer will be hired part time to run radar soon. Chris Conway stated he will allow the officers to park in his driveway on Church Street to run radar. A No Thru Trucks sign has been ordered and will be installed upon arrival. Ginger Roper pointed out there is increased traffic on Andover Road. Julie Hance will follow up with Rick Cloud to have him place the portable speed sign on Andover Road.

4. OLD BUSINESS

Public Safety Building: There has been increased construction at the site and walls for the foundation will be going in soon. The construction is on schedule.

Grants: The town was awarded the grant to digitize its Land Records. Also, the town was awarded the Local Reimbursement grant of \$4,000 to cover COVID related expenses. The new portable sound system will be included hoping to recoup some of that expense. The Chamber of Commerce marketing grant was awarded for digital advertising. This grant will allow 7 towns to collaborate on a marketing campaign, each receiving \$10,000. Chester will use the same video company in its own campaign saving 50% on the cost. A grant from FEMA was applied for to cover the costs to repair the remaining mile and a half of Route 35.

Jiffy Mart: Julie Hance was contacted by Jiffy Mart about the 2020 reappraisal value of the property. The new value of \$341,000 seemed a bit high to him. She explained the appraisers were not able to get into the building to give an accurate number. When this happens, they tend to guess on the higher side. Arne Jonynas would like the sign at the old Jiffy Mart to be removed.

5. ELECTION UPDATE; DEBBIE ALDRICH

Deborah Aldrich explained ballots were mailed out by the state on September 25, 2020 to registered voters in Chester. She did get some back for corrected addresses. Ballots can be mailed back, brought to the town office, or voters can come to the polls on November 3 from 9 am to 7 pm to vote in person. If people come to the polls to vote, she recommends bringing the ballot received in the mail. An Affidavit of No Ballot Cast will be required to be filled out and signed if not. She asked voters to please follow all directions well and sign the returned envelope or the ballot will not be counted. People can login to My Voter Page to check and see if their ballot has been received. Ballots will be opened and distributed through the machine on election day. Returned ballots are stored in the vault until election day.

6. TRUNK OF TREAT; USE OF COBLEIGH FIELD

Chris Meyer submitted a letter requesting the use of Cobleigh Field for Trunk or Treat on Saturday, October 24, 2020. There will be a parade first, then a bonfire. COVID guidelines will be taken seriously and masks will be required. Matt McCarthy and the Fire Department will be informed of the event.

A motion was made by Heather Chase to allow the use of Cobleigh Field for Trunk or Treat on Saturday, October 24, 2020. Seconded by Leigh Dakin. The motion passed.

7. GRAVEL EXTRACTION OPERATION UPDATE

The Act 250 permit was denied and is being appealed. Jim Goss is mediating with the attorney at Environmental Court to come up with an agreement for the permit's approval. Information in the denial document pertaining to discussions between the town and the school was contradictory. The discussion that took place between the Select Board and school were not considered. Jim Goss feels confident in the mediation, but if not successful, the board will have to decide on how to move forward.

8. CHESTER DEVELOPMENT FUND POLICY REVIEW

Barre Pinske approached the Select Board about the Development Fund Policy. He owns a wood carving business in town and has borrowed from the fund in the past. The money helped him purchase new equipment allowing him to grow his business. The older equipment needs to be replaced because he cannot get parts to fix it. He asked Bob Flint for a new loan from the Economic Development Fund, but the current rules of the loan fund will not allow it. He feels the policy should be revamped allowing for smaller "micro" loans with less hurdles for approval. He feels there are too many requirements and the funds are not being used as they should.

Lee Gustafson asked what Barre Pinske suggests the town do to protect the money if there are less hoops for borrowers. Barre Pinske said Bob Flint should be more involved and take on more of a roll in the matter. Arne Jonynas suggested Barre Pinske fill out the application and follow the rules of the loan fund to get approval. Barre Pinske explained he did not want to ask a bank for a loan first, which is a requirement. The policy does not allow the loan to be a primary loan and does not allow for micro loans. Also, he submitted a business plan for the first loan and does not feel he should have to again. Heather Chase stated the loan fund could be more lenient by adding micro loans. She suggests the board evaluate the entire program and assess the community's needs. She feels the board is not qualified to do this without the help of someone more experienced in the matter.

Lee Gustafson recommends assessing the options for smaller value loans, and not to eliminate the hurdles but lower the bar. Julie Hance liked the idea of a different process. She stated Bob Flint is following the rules set by the Select Board and has been vital to the

process. Bob Flint will help update the plan by giving his advice and resources. She will speak to him about it again.

9. PALMER BRIDGE LOAN

The Palmer Bridge Loan in the amount of \$96,000 was intended to be rolled into a four-year loan with payments of \$25,000 a year. The 2020 budget is 11% under budget now, which Julie Hance suggest the board use to pay off this loan. The savings would be 2.5% interest with no early payoff penalty. The risk would be that in November or December the budget may not come in under. Heather Chase pointed out there are lots of options for the surplus such as putting money into the reserve fund. Lee Gustafson asked if this was the best use of the money and does not feel there is enough information to make this decision. Julie Hance will talk to Dave Olson from People's Bank about the options available to pay off loans and get the best use out of the surplus.

10. ZONING ADMINISTRATOR POSITION

Julia Hance asked the Select Board to increase the hours of the Zoning Administrator 10 hours per week. This would increase the hours of the position to 20 hours per week and the pay approximately \$9,500 a year. The extra hours are needed to allow the Zoning Administrator to be proactive. The hours were increased by a couple of hours a few years ago but that was not enough. The position would be primarily Zoning with overflow to the Listers and front office when needed.

A motion was made by Lee Gustafson to increase the Zoning Administrators hours from 10 to 20 per week. Seconded by Jeff Holden. The motion passed.

11. CEMETERY DEED

The Select Board signed a cemetery deed.

12. NEW BUSINESS/NEXT AGENDA

The quarterly financial update, health insurance, Wayfinding plan, CDL Policy adoption, and budget discussions will be on the October 21, 2020 Agenda.

Heather Chase is appreciative of the way things are being done and feels Julie Hance is doing a good job. Julie Hance explained department heads are working from a zero-based budget which will be presented to the board by department at different meetings. By mid-December, all departments budgets will be assembled for the 2021 budget.

13. EXECUTIVE SESSION: TOWN MANAGER 6 MONTH REVIEW

A motion was made by Lee Gustafson to enter Executive Session. Seconded by Leigh Dakin. The board entered Executive Session at 7:58 p.m.

A motion was made by Leigh Dakin to exit Executive Session. Seconded by Jeff Holden. The board exited Executive Session at 8:35 p.m.

14. ADJOURN

A motion was made by Jeff Holden to adjourn. Seconded by Heather Chase. The meeting adjourned at 8:35 p.m.

Amie O'Brien
Secretary of the Select Board

Lee Gustafson
Clerk of the Select Board