

TOWN OF CHESTER
BOARD OF SELECTMEN

May 6, 2020
Select Board Meeting Minutes

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

VISITORS: Shawn Cunningham; SAPA TV, Karen Ericson; Scott Blair; Jared
Gunnell; Jason Tostrup; Derek Sursoo; Garrison Smith; Ed Grossman;
John Debenedetti; Cil Mathews

Meeting was held via Zoom.

1. APPROVE MINUTES

A motion was made by Leigh Dakin to approve the minutes of the April 15, 2020 Select Board meeting as written. Seconded by Lee Gustafson. The motion passed.

2. CITIZEN COMMENTS/ANSWERS FROM PREVIOUS MEETING

Leigh Dakin thanked Julie Hance for including the memo on upcoming discussions in the packet. Karen Ericson addressed the Select Board about the sidewalk on 103 near her house at 240 Depot Street. Water flows from her basement into the street and crosses over the road. This happens as there is a pipe that is too small under the roadway. The water causes ice and snow to form in the road and on the sidewalk during the winter months. She stated that a plumber had told her that houses were built with wells in the basements purposely back when the house was constructed, possibly causing some of the water problem. Karen Ericson apologized for the water coming out of the basement into the road. The sidewalk work scheduled to be done in 2021 should address this problem. Julie Hance then explained that because of the sidewalk project, the pipe will no longer go under the road. Instead, there will be a ditch that will run down the road to the river causing the water to dump into the river, and not cross the road.

There were no other comments.

3. OLD BUSINESS/LAST MEETING

Emergency Services Building: Julie Hance explained that the bids for the dirt work were received Monday, which came in under budget. There were 8 bids received for the dirt work and five for the concrete. The next Building Committee Zoom meeting is scheduled for May 12, 2020 at 10 a.m. where Russell Construction will explain the bids further. Jeff Holden asked who will be deciding which bid will be accepted. Julie Hance replied that Russell Construction is examining the bids making sure they are up to par, then they will make a recommendation to the Building Committee. If the low bid is not chosen, the decision will fall to the Select Board. Jeff Holden has concerns about bidders low balling and missing things that are important. Lee Gustafson pointed out that the bidders for the project were pre-qualified by Russell Construction.

Gravel Project: The wetlands people, wanting some more extensive information, checked out the area. They determined that a little redesign of the pit should make it possible for the project to not interfere with the wetlands. This plan is being worked out and being sent to act 250 soon. The Town will not be extracting from the pit this year, but Julie Hance is hoping for a permit for early summer next year. Lee Gustafson asked who the consultant for the wetland's delineation was. Arne Jonynas said her name is Corina Daily and explained further the issue having to do with class 2 and 3 wetlands. The further study had to define the class of the wetlands at the site. The company Corina Daily works for is TCEVT, and their website is TCEVT.com. There is a lot of prep work to be done at the site to prepare for next spring. Taking the time to prep the site properly will make the project better.

North Street Cemetery: Hugh Henry contacted Julie Hance about painting the two doors at the North Street Cemetery. He is hoping to find out if the town would be able to do it this year. Julie Hance has a call into Erron Cary to see if the Trustees of Public Funds is going to pay for it. Arne Jonynas pointed out that they have the money for cemetery needs and the funds should probably come from them. Leigh Dakin stated that the timing for Hugh Henry's first letter was not the best, so the Board tabled the idea. She feels now is a good time to address the letter. The Board decided to ask for the money from the Trustees of Public Funds. Julie Hance will report back to the Board when she hears back from them.

Wayfinding: Julie Hance has to meet with Patrick from SE Group but is unable to at this time due to COVID-19, putting this project on hold.

4. COVID-19 UPDATE

The Public Works Department was out for two weeks, they are back now trying to catch up. The plan to start back up includes required VOSHA training. Everyone's temperatures will be taken each day and kept in a log. This is being handled by the Ambulance Department with Danny checking Public Works and Amanda handling the Town Office staff. The Police Department will be logging themselves at the beginning of their shift. Everyone has masks available following the Governor's order. The Governor has loosened things up a bit allowing the Recreation Department to resume under specific guidelines. Matt McCarthy will be incorporating things like one on one practices for kids and other creative ideas to comply with the Governor's orders. Grant programs are being discussed coming from FEMA that the town would be eligible. There could possibly be some Stimulus Infrastructure funding available to the town around June or July. Julie Hance is making a list of possible projects for this funding making the Emergency Services Building and the Highway Garage top priority.

Arne Jonynas asked if the State has decided how school taxes were going to work. Julie Hance stated that nothing has been changed yet, but she plans to make payments to the school. She has been advised to not drag the payments out, crossing tax years. The Town will stretch the payment from December to June, the school must be paid in June. Arne Jonynas mentioned the reserve fund and what would happen if there was a surplus. The surplus must be returned to the taxpayers unless used on Public Works. He would like to look into establishing the fund now so the money would be available for next year. Julie Hance explained that the voters agreed to start a fund, but they have not agreed on how it will be funded. She will investigate this further and possibly include it on next year's Warning for Town Meeting.

5. REQUEST TO PLACE MEMORIAL BENCH NEAR THE TOMB

Suzy Forlie passed away recently. She was a well-known citizen in Chester. The Board received a request from Chester Townscape to place a memorial bench in her name near the tomb. Jeff Holden stated that the Townscape plans to reuse left over curbing for the project. He feels the place chosen for the bench is in a good location. Leigh Dakin pointed out that Suzy Forlie's family has been in Chester for six generations and she has volunteered a lot for different organizations. This is something that Leigh Dakin would like to have done and mentions that donations are being accepted to cover the costs. Arne Jonynas said that the Willis' are donating to the project and Scott Wunderly is involved in the landscaping. He wanted to be sure that the project would not interfere with the Master Plan for the Green and Village Center. He feels it fits right in and the bench would be a good addition.

A motion was made by Leigh Dakin to accept the plans to place a bench near the tomb in Suzy Forlie's name. Seconded by Jeff Holden. The motion passed.

6. REQUEST TO PLACE PICNIC TABLES ON THE GREEN

Jason Tostrup and Scott Blair submitted a request to add picnic tables for outside dining on the Green. Jason Tostrup stated that the picnic tables would help with the reopening process when it comes time. They have measured off spacing for four or five tables keeping social distancing in mind. Signage could be placed around stating usage for the tables, social distancing, and garbage disposal. Arne Jonynas asked if this would just be until the Order is over. Jason Tostrup stated that allowing for outdoor dining would help pivot the dining experience, which might be temporary. Lee Gustafson is in support of the idea on a temporary basis allowing the businesses on the Green to use the tables. He would like something in writing from Jason Tostrup and Scott Blair explaining the process further.

Jason Tostrup and Scott Blair have already started a draft on what the rules would be and who would maintain the tables if approved. Arne Jonynas asked if the other businesses located on the Green have had any input yet. Jason Tostrup stated that Scott Blair may have already talked to some but not all, as of yet. Heather Chase agrees with Lee Gustafson and would like to have the idea approved for the year to see how it goes and is worried about trash being left all over the green. Leigh Dakin would like more information and is concerned about who will maintain the tables and points out that the Green is a small space. Karen Ericson said that the tables might interfere with the Fall Festival but also stated that it will probably be cancelled for this year. The Select Board would like more details with the number of tables etc. and wants to be sure it fits in with the Master Plan's use of the Green. They would like to support this idea with more information. Leigh Dakin asked for a copy of the Town Plan, which she is going to obtain from the town's website. Jason Tostrup thanked the Select Board and will formalize plans as soon as possible. Arne Jonynas thanked Jason Tostrup, Chrys Meyer, and Scott Blair for their work with Chester Helping Hands.

7. ADOPT LOCAL EMERGENCY OPERATIONS PLAN

Arne Jonynas stated adopting the Local Emergency Operations Plan is a yearly filing with the state. Julie Hance stated that this must be approved to get funding from Vermont Emergency Management and FEMA. There were no major changes.

A motion was made by Lee Gustafson to adopt the Local Emergency Operations Plan. Seconded by Lee Dakin. Lee Gustafson pointed out that on the first page at the top Matthew Wilson's name should be changed to the correct spelling. The motion passed.

8. ADOPT TOWN PLAN

Minor changes have been made to add the business names back into the Town Plan.

A motion was made by Lee Gustafson to adopt the Town Plan. Seconded by Heather Chase. Lee Gustafson asked if typos and formatting would be cleaned up, the answer was yes. Leigh Dakin thanked the group that worked on it. The Plan has been worked through for a year and a half. Julie Hance requests everyone on the Select Board to stop at Town Hall to sign the Town Plan. The motion passed.

9. FINANCIAL UPDATE

The financial update has a new General Fund Balance Sheet. Julie Hance stated that at the June 6, 2020 meeting Ron Smith will do a tutorial for the Select Board on how to read it, which will be reviewed quarterly. The Balance Sheet shows the account balances as of March 31, 2020. There are large negative numbers because the town has not billed taxes for 2020. The Due to/Due from line is less showing that departments have not been spending as much as last year. The General Fund balance comes from the Balance Sheet. The large negative number of \$733,000 is an accumulation of all town funds. The number is large because the town has not billed 2020 taxes yet. This is why the town needs a Tax Anticipation Note (TAN). The negative numbers on the Balance Sheet will show positive after money from 2020 taxes starts coming in. The TAN covers expenses and has been taken out already in the amount of \$750,000. The LOC TAN loan is shown on the statement with the first draw being in April. The next financial update report will show the draw. Lee Gustafson asked what the rate was for the loan and Julie Hance stated she believes it is 2 ¼ percent but she will look into it. The Department heads are trying to hold off on major spending until we start collecting tax money because we do not want to have to get a second TAN. The interest on the TAN is paid on what the town draws, not the entire note. Amounts due from other funds is down and the town is maintaining cash flow while postponing major projects.

The town will still be producing water/sewer bills and assessing penalty and interest when late. People can call if they are having a hard time paying to work out a plan to pay and have the penalty and interest waived. Jeff Holden said that people are misunderstanding the towns plan to forgive penalty and interest if they are in a tough spot. Arne Jonynas stated that it is not a forgiveness of what is owed, and the town will not forgive the entire bill. The bills still need to be paid and they will accrue if they have not. Leigh Dakin mentioned putting the information on the website and letting people know about the options available

to them. Heather Chase stated that she hopes people are paying their bills if they can and points out that the Town is hurting just like everyone else.

Revenue for the first quarter held steady. Julie Hance will not be holding a Tax Sale in the Spring. There will be a Tax Sale done next Spring to catch up, anticipating that more payment arrangement will be set up this year. Heather Chase would like to advertise that people can make payments throughout the year allowing people to start paying early. The Town has saved nearly \$14,000 in payroll from furloughed employees. Workers comp is now broken out by department because it is higher for some departments than others. Co-insurance is being lumped back together because there are departments with only one employee violating HIPPA laws. An Emergency Services Building department has been added which includes \$6,300 added for landscaping.

The anticipated savings for the 2020 budget include paying the schools monthly by having them paid in full in June 2021, instead of December 2020. The new cruiser for the Police Department is \$11,000 less than was budgeted. The Backhoe for the Highway Department was \$40,000 less than was budgeted. The paving bid went out and is expected to come in under budget. The dump truck is going to have a black body. This will save money on painting it blue, yet the cab will still be blue. Kirby will search for other prices and options for brands of trucks. The rearranging of the office staff will save the town over \$100,000.

Selecting project spending priorities will be important this year. Department heads are already looking at things that can change going forward. A zero-based budget forces the Board to consider what items are included in each line and find ways for money to be saved. Unemployment insurance should be looked at, possibly having the town establish its own program. The maintenance for town equipment costs a lot of money. The town may perhaps consider having a mechanic on staff. The Police Department spends \$8,000 to install lights on the cruisers, which could be done in house by a mechanic. If the town had its own mechanic, the purchase of extended warranties may not be needed. The Analysis of the costs of adding this position should be carried out. Julie Hance is going to be looking at the Insurance packages available to the town with Suzanne Swanson. She will be looking at benefits package, seeing where the package could be changed to benefit the employees the most. Possibly offer incentives to 30 year employees ready to retire but can't because they aren't eligible for Medicare. The Water Fund and Sewer Fund Balance Sheet will be reviewed quarterly. Heather Chase commented that she is happy to see that not much has changed for the first quarter.

10. LIBRARY REQUEST FOR HEALTH BENEFITS

The Whiting Library sent a request to the Select Board asking for money to help two employees pay for their health insurance. Julie Hance explained there are two employees at the library that are working over 28 hours. Library employees are not town employees, so they are subject to different policies. The town or library would not be able to pay the employees premiums on their behalf, but money could be added to their pay. The town could increase the amount of money given to the library and then the library would pay the employees. Another option could be the town could pay a portion of the costs as well as the library. Ed Grossman thanked the Select Board for their continued support of the library. He explained to the board the reason behind asking for the money. He has seen 3 youth and child librarians in a short amount of time. The Library Board of Trustees was unaware that Sharon Tanzer would be retiring this year while considering the budget. While interviewing possible candidates to fill the position their main concern was what the benefits package had to offer. Ed Grossman says that this is an urgent matter due to the open enrollment window which was extended until May 15, 2020.

Leigh Dakin stated that Valley Health Connection is open to meet with clients and help them work through the different health insurance options. She feels that the library employees should explore what is available to them through Health Connect, possibly getting assistance from Vermont. Ed Grossman stated that the library employees are town employees, but their personnel and benefits are not the same. He has salary information from 2003 and says that the Librarian pay has not increased since then. Julie Hance pointed out that library employees are not town employees. The town paid for a study and has a legal document stating that they are not town employees.

The Select Board would like clarification of where the money would come from. There are two options including overspending the line on how much the town gives the library or taking the money from somewhere in the budget already allocated to the library. Julie Hance points out that the money could come from 2020 Architectural Service line item and the Library Expense line item, where nothing was used in 2019. Lee Gustafson feels that the town is not in a position right now to provide the library with additional money. Julie Hance has agreed to meet with Ed Grossman to discuss the situation further. The Library Trustees have a meeting scheduled for Monday and he would like to have the information to present to them at that time. The Select Board has agreed to resolve this as soon as possible.

11. AUTHORIZE SINGLE SIGNOR FOR TOWN WARRANTS

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Select Board considered authorizing a single signor for Town Warrants for approval. Jeff Holden is concerned about approving this and states that everyone on the board should be reviewing the Warrants. He is hoping the first meeting in June could be at the town hall, getting things back to normal. Arne Jonynas says that following the Governor's Orders will be best when considering when to hold meetings at the Town Hall again. The Warrants are presented to the Select Board at each meeting, which is two times a month. The board members decided to have each member stop and sign when they can and has tabled the decision.

12. APPROVE FIRST CLASS LIQUOR LICENSE: PSVT, LLC

A motion was made by Lee Gustafson to approve the First Class Liquor License for PSVT, LLC. Seconded by Leigh Dakin. The motion passed.

13. APPROVE SECOND CLASS LIQUOR LICENSES:

MEDITRINA WINE & CHEESE

A motion was made by Heather Chase to approve the Second Class Liquor License for Meditrina Wine & Cheese. Seconded by Lee Gustafson. The motion passed.

SMITTY'S CHESTER MARKET, INC. (FORMERLY LISAI'S MARKET)

Garrett Smith attended the meeting. He will be the owner of Smitty's Chester Market, formerly Lisia's Market, very soon. Leigh Dakin recused herself from signing the license noting a conflict of interest.

A motion was made by Heather Chase to approve the Second Class Liquor License for Smitty's Chester Market, Inc. Seconded by Lee Gustafson. The motion passed.

14. APPROVE THIRD CLASS LIQUOR LICENSE: PSVT, LLC

A motion was made by Lee Gustafson to approve the Third Class Liquor License for PSVT, LLC. Seconded by Jeff Holden. The motion passed.

15. APPROVE OUTSIDE CONSUMPTION PERMIT: PSVT, LLC

A motion was made by Lee Gustafson to approve the Outside Consumption Permit for PSVT, LLC. Seconded by Jeff Holden. The motion passed.

16. NEW BUSINESS/NEXT AGENDA

Jeff Holden spoke about the Legion holding the Fourth of July Celebration. They are still planning on having fireworks and some concessions, but some vendors have canceled their plans to attend. He will keep the Select Board informed as to what the Legion decides to do moving forward.

Scott Wunderly will be present at the next meeting with plans for the landscaping at the Emergency Services Building. A business plan for the gravel pit will possibly be ready for review at the first meeting in June.

17. ADJOURN

A motion was made by Leigh Dakin to adjourn. Seconded by Lee Gustafson. The meeting adjourned at 8:38 p.m.

Amie O'Brien
Secretary of the Select Board

Lee Gustafson
Clerk of the Select Board