

TOWN OF CHESTER
SELECT BOARD
July 1, 2020
Select Board Meeting Minutes

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

VISITORS: SAPA TV; Cheryl Joy Lipton; Rick Cloud; Tim Roper; Robert Nied; David Carey; Sharon Huntley; Shawn Cunningham; Melody Reed

Meeting was held via Zoom and at the Town Hall.

1. APPROVE MINUTES

A motion was made by Lee Gustafson to approve the Minutes of the June 17, 2020 Select Board meeting as written. Seconded by Jeff Holden. The motion passed.

2. CITIZEN COMMENTS/ANSWERS FROM PREVIOUS MEETING

Jeff Holden spoke about the fireworks set for July 3, 2020. The rain date could possibly be July 4, 2020. The American Legion building and parking lot will be open to members only, others will be directed to park in the field. Due to COVID-19, there will not be any vendors or food for sale like in previous years. Police Chief Rick Cloud pointed out that parking along the road is not permitted.

Robert Nied thanked Jeff Holden and the Water Department for their help with a water line break at his home. Also, he thanked the Police Department for responding to a tractor trailer that smashed into the stone wall outside his house earlier.

Tim Roper addressed the Select Board regarding the American flags along Main Street. He feels they are displayed improperly. He counted 19 flags out of order and thinks it is disrespectful. The American flag should be displayed according to Statue. The American Legion requested permission from Green Mountain Power and the town to place the flags on the poles along Main Street. Jeff Holden spoke on behalf of the American Legion. He explained part of the problem being money with each flag costing \$52. There are 50 flags that need to be replaced. He stated the American Legion had plans to fix and replace the flags, but due to COVID-19 the money is not available. They decided to put the old flags up until they could buy new ones. He is considering taking them all down until they come up with a solution.

Heather Chase said she will drive down Main Street to look at the flags. She wants this to be added to the next Agenda for further discussion. Lee Gustafson would like the American Legion to discuss the flags and take care of it. Julie Hance and Jeff Holden will work on a solution.

3. OLD BUSINESS/LAST MEETING

Public Safety Building: A special meeting is scheduled for July 15, 2020 to approve the Guaranteed Maximum Price for the building and to sign the contract. Ron Smith will be at the meeting as well. The construction will start around mid to end of July.

Pinnacle: The parking spaces have been installed at the Pinnacle. The gate was picked up and is being installed. Topsoil and grass seed will be laid down soon. The wording for the signage has been given to Marco Getto. He previously made a sign for the Pinnacle area and the new one will match it.

Conflict of Interest: Jim Carroll will be at the August 19, 2020 Select Board meeting to have a discussion relating to conflict of interest.

Town Wayfinding: The project is good to go but needs to be approved and permission must be given from board at the state. The board has not met due to COVID-19 regulations holding up the project. When the board can meet, Julie Hance plans to present the idea to them and make an argument for the language. Also, the location for the four signs planned for the Village Green is not allowed according to the law. They must be placed where the state says. Julie Hance will Email SE Group to see when a meeting will take place again.

Gravel pit: The gravel pit project is still on hold.

Leigh Dakin would like to have a study done to possibly lower the speed limits to 25 mph on Grafton Street, High Street, and River Street. She has noticed more traffic in the area speeding on these roads. Robert Nied lives at the four way stop on Grafton Street and agrees. He pointed out people speed and do not stop at the stop signs. He feels slowing the traffic down might help.

4. COVID-19 UPDATE

The town pool is open currently. The limit to only allow groups of 25 has been lifted. The pool will now allow 40 people at one time. The Town Hall is open to the public. People are being asked to follow COVID-19 guidelines. Researchers still need to have an appointment to come to the office.

Julie Hance has been discussing marketing strategies with Bob Flint and the Chamber of Commerce to help boost the local economy. Some ideas may require small financial baking. She plans to reach out to local business owners.

Arne Jonynas asked if COVID-19 effected the Public Works Department with things such as road work. Julie Hance explained nothing major has been impacted. A few minor projects have been put on hold until 2021 such as the Brookside trail bridge.

5. POLICE POLICIES & PROCEDURES REVIEW

Police Chief Rick Cloud addressed the Select Board about the Police Department's policies and procedures. The State and the Vermont League of Cities and Towns will be coming out with new policies soon. Police Chief Rick Cloud and Sargent Will Frank will revise the new policies to fit Chester, along with the help of the League. A pamphlet will be made available to the public stating these new policies. The new policies may include mandatory body cameras. Chester has dash cameras and body microphones that must be worn, which may have to be upgraded. A similar upgrade cost the State Police around \$330,000 for the new equipment.

Julie Hance had a person ask her about falsifying complaints and what an officer's rights are. Falsified complaints could bring charges against an officer. Rick Cloud explained that all complaints must be followed up on. The new policies will protect officers right to act in situations where they feel another officer is behaving unprofessional. There will be a protection clause added to the new statute for officers. Jeff Holden pointed out people can easily falsify a complaint against an officer. Complaints can be made by different people in many ways anonymously.

A community member asked Julie Hance about the police procedures and policies. People in the community do not understand how the court system works with offenders. Some towns are trying to work out ways for the Police Department to work better with the community. Rick Cloud and Julie Hance will work together to better inform the public on what governs the day to day duties of the officers and find different ways to interact with the community.

Heather Chase says she has been reassured that Chester Police Department does not make the policies. She would like to be updated when the changes happen. There was an assessment done back in 2013 when the department was considering adding a 5th officer to the force. The study was completed by a retired police chief hired through the Vermont League of Cities and Towns. A 5th officer was hired, and it was recommended to hire a 6th. Some of what the study determined will be accomplished when the new building is finished. Heather Chase would like to review the study and see if there should be another done at some point. Arne Jonynas indicated this is not done on a regular basis but by request only. The study cost about \$3,000-\$5,000 at the time. Lee Gustafson stated the Select Board should not perform another study looking for problems when there have been none. He feels this could create unnecessary problems at this time. Julie Hance will find out if an assessment of the department would be beneficial.

Rick Cloud explained the way certain things are handled have changed in the last 10 years. Trainings are being tailored to the changing needs of society. Officers are now being held accountable when they do not follow protocol.

6. CHESTER COMMUNITY GREENHOUSE PRESENTATION

Cheryl Joy Lipton, Robert Nied, Melody Reed, and Tim Roper would like to add a greenhouse, possibly on town land, large enough to be used by the entire community. This addition would extend the growing season, increase local food production, and make Chester a more attractive place to live. The greenhouse could be used as an educational platform for the schools. Also, this would create a place to hold farmers markets and help bring the community together.

The group plans to create a Board of Directors in accordance with 501 3 C. They intend to apply for grants and create a plan on how to fund the idea. Plots will be sold to people interested in growing at the greenhouse. An opportunity for a greenhouse has been brought to their attention. A historic Lord & Burnham greenhouse in Walpole is being taken down. Cheryl Joy Lipton visited the site along with someone with knowledge of old greenhouses. This person assessed the greenhouse and said it is in good shape. The greenhouse needs a few repairs. He will give an estimate on how much it will cost to fix it.

Lee Gustafson stated he will need more information and would a plan in writing on what the group is asking for from the town. He agrees with the concept and is willing to hear more on the idea. Heather Chase liked the idea and is thankful people in the community want to add such a great asset to the area. Leigh Dakin joined the group in a discussion about the greenhouse and is excited for it to move forward.

The group is looking for more people to join in the efforts. They have created a Facebook page under the name Chester Community Greenhouse for people that want to join and get involved. Messages can be sent to the group through Facebook.

7. APPOINT TRUSTEE FOR WHITING LIBRARY; CATHY HASBROUCK

Cathy Hasbrouck presented the Select Board with a letter asking to be appointed Trustee to the Whiting Library for the remainder of the term. She will then have to run for the position at the election in March 2021.

A motion was made by Lee Gustafson to appoint Cathy Hasbrouck Trustee of the Whiting Library until March 2021. Seconded by Heather Chase. The motion passed.

8. APPROVE APPLICATION FOR CULTURAL FACILITIES GRANT; TOWN HALL SOUND SYSTEM

Julie Hance would like to apply for a grant brought to her attention by Robert Neid. The grant would improve the acoustics upstairs at the Town Hall. If enough money is awarded sound and video will be added as well. She received a quote from Atomic Sound for acoustic panels, and a quote to add sound and video. This addition would make the space more usable for activities such as musicians, movies, plays, or presentations. When the Police Department moves to the new building more space will be available downstairs. The front room could be used as a meeting room.

The total package cost is \$60,000 with the grant covering \$30,000 if approved. The money already in the Grant Fund will cover the \$30,000 not included in the grant.

Arne Jonynas asked if the floor was considered when the renovation was done. Mark Wesner told Julie Hance the only way to improve the acoustics would be to add carpet, which was decided against. Panels will be added along the ceiling and incorporated into the artwork that will hang on the walls. Robert Nied added they will be considerate of the character of the room with the design.

A motion was made by Lee Gustafson to pursue a grant in the amount of \$30,000 to improve the acoustics and add sound and video to the upstairs of the Town Hall. Seconded by Jeff Holden. The motion passed.

9. SET TAX RATE; IF RECEIVED FROM STATE

The State will set the Education Tax Rate on Friday, July 10, 2020. The Select Board will set the Town Tax Rate at a special meeting Monday, July 13, 2020 at 8:30 a.m.

Julie Hance explained the town is doing well with collections and things are holding in comparison to last year. A little more was drawn from the TAN to pay the Warrant leaving approximately \$250,000. Julie Hance and Cil Mathews have discussed ways to keep costs down. Bills will now be paid when they are due not when they are received. The budget report will be produced directly from NEMRC. The report will look different, but the hope is it will be clearer and simpler taking out room for error.

10. SIGN CEMETERY DEEDS

The Select Board signed three Cemetery Deeds.

11. NEW BUSINESS/NEXT AGENDA

Jeff Holden spoke with a boy that was riding his skateboard down the road instead of at the skate park. The boy told Jeff Holden he would use the skate park if it were in better condition. The park has become a safety issue with rotting wood and metal coming up in spots. Matt McCarthy will talk to a contractor to see what repairs can be done. Julie Hance will discuss this with Matt McCarthy and bring the idea back to the Select Board if money is needed for the repairs.

The speed limits in town will be added to the August 5, 2020 agenda. A radar sign will be going up by the high school soon where the speed limit was recently changed from 40 mph to 30 mph.

Ron Smith, the town auditor, will be at the next meeting.

12. ADJOURN

A motion was made by Jeff Holden to adjourn. Seconded by Lee Gustafson. The meeting adjourned at 7:18 p.m.

Amie O'Brien
Secretary of the Select Board

Lee Gustafson
Clerk of the Select Board