

TOWN OF CHESTER
SELECT BOARD
August 19, 2020
Meeting Minutes

PRESENT: Arne Jonynas; Lee Gustafson; Leigh Dakin; Julie Hance; Amie O'Brien

VISITORS: SAPATV; Ginger Roper; Ralph Falanga; Karen Ericson; Peter Hudkins;
Sharon Huntley; Ron Farrar; Cathy Hasbrouck; Fred Derosia Shawn
Cunningham

Meeting was held via Zoom and at the Town Hall.

1. APPROVE MINUTES FROM THE AUGUST 5, 2020 SELECTBOARD MEETING

The approval of the August 5, 2020 meeting minutes was postponed due to not having enough board members present.

2. CITIZEN COMMENTS/ANSWERS FROM PREVIOUS MEETING

No citizens comment.

3. OLD BUSINESS/LAST MEETING

Public safety Building: A ground breaking ceremony took place at the site and construction has started on the building.

Gravel pit: Still waiting on Act 250.

Speed limit changes: Julie Hance has been in contact with Regional Planning and Chief Rick Cloud. The speed limit study is still being discussed.

4. COVID UPDATE

The State of Vermont opened grant programs from the Cares Act. Julie Hance submitted a request to the FEMA program hoping to be reimbursed for money spent on COVID items. She will then apply for the local government program which could help pay for the sound system needed to hold meetings via Zoom and at the Town Hall. The Emergency Services employees are trying to get hazard pay from the State.

A grant is available to municipalities for land records digitization. A quote was received from Kofile to digitize the town's land records going back 40 or 50 years. This grant is first come first serve so Julie Hance will submit the application as

soon as possible. She is hoping the grant will cover 100% of the cost with the hopes of not having to match the amount awarded. A lot of the town's records have been digitized already. This may help with the application process and approval when applying for the grant.

The town has spent approximately \$4,800 on COVID related items such as a sneeze guard and PPE. Julie Hance is hoping the town will get reimbursed for the money paid out to the Highway Department employees while on furlough. Arne Jonynas asked about how the sound system will be covered by the grant. Julie Hance explained the FEMA grant will not cover the expense, but the local government program might. She is hoping the total cost is reimbursed but a portion would be helpful. Arne Jonynas would like everyone to obey COVID guidelines and encourages people to do so.

Leigh Dakin stated the town was given a letter from another person that lives on Andover Road. Julie Hance has added that to the speed limit file.

5. FLAG ORDINANCE DISCUSSION

There was a lot of discussion during Citizens Comments at previous meetings about American Flags in Chester. This has been added to the Agenda because Citizens Comments is not the appropriate place to have this conversation. Arne Jonynas spoke with Jeff Holden. He is comfortable with the board talking about the issue without him present. Arne Jonynas pointed out the Select Board did not ask for the flags on the Green to be taken down. Jeff Holden removed the flags for the American Legion after a complaint was made about their condition. He thinks the complaint was taken out of context and wished the situation were handled differently. The town gave the Legion permission to put the flags up, but the Legion is responsible for the maintenance. He thanked the American Legion for everything they do for the town.

Ron Farrar spoke for the Legion. He said they intended to buy new flags in the Spring but could not do so because of COVID. The Legion has ordered new flags and swivel flag holders to replace the old ones and will continue to maintain them. He thanked the town for supporting the club and would like future flag concerns to be directed to Legion. He does not see a need for a flag ordinance. The Legion is responsible for taking care of flags as part of their program. They take care of displaced flags when needed, put flags out on veteran's graves on Veteran's Day, and will take any flag brought to them for disposal. Fred Derosia, a past Commander of the Legion and VFW, spoke about the flags and was present to answer any questions.

Lee Gustafson suggested getting the word out to people to let them know the flags are maintained by the Legion. He mentioned possibly adding a plaque somewhere on the Green stating this. He appreciates the Legion and everything they do for the community. Leigh Dakin suggested creating a space on the website directing people to the Legion for their flag needs or concerns.

The American Legion thanked the community for the donations towards the fireworks and for their support over the years.

Julie Hance pointed out flags are mandated federally, not by the state or a municipality.

6. INTERIM ZONING ADMINISTRATOR APPOINTMENT

Michael Normyle resigned as Zoning Administrator for the Town of Chester after approximately 12 years. Cathy Hasbrouck has offered to take on the position for a short time. She will work closely with Carla Westine and Peter Hudkins until the town can work out the details of the position for a new hire.

Julie Hance would like to increase the hours of the Zoning Administrator from 8-9 hours a week to at least 20 hours a week. Increasing the hours of the position will allow for more enforcement of ordinances and bylaws. She has heard from people Chester is not a business friendly town because of the Zoning bylaws. Some of the bylaws are being reworked partly due to the drawn-out permit process residents and businesses must go through for approval. The Zoning Administrator needs to have experience and an understating of how to guide people through the process. She is also considering having the new hire work with the Listers and fill other needs that may arise in the office.

Cathy Hasbrouck is a vital part of the Planning Commission and Development Review Board. She is knowledgeable with the zoning process and has worked with Michael Normyle in the zoning office. Michael Normyle is willing to help when needed to make for a smooth transition.

Peter Hudkins supports the appointment of Cathy Hasbrouck as Zoning Administrator and feels she already knows the town. He will do what he can to help her while she holds the position. He stated the revised bylaws will expand the duties of the Zoning Administrator. Some bylaws will be changed to allow the Zoning Administrator to approve certain things instead of having to go through the board. This will make the process a little simpler for residents and businesses but will add more responsibility to the position.

Arne Jonynas thanked Michael Normyle for his 12 years of service. He understands it is a tough job being the face that enforces the ideas of other people.

A motion was made by Lee Gustafson to appoint Cathy Hasbrouck Zoning Administrator effective August 26, 2020. Seconded by Leigh Dakin. The motion passed

7. REQUEST FOR 2 BOARD MEMBERS TO WORK WITH TOWN MANAGER ON EMPLOYEE BENEFITS

Julie Hane is working on the employee benefit package to see what can be revised. She is comparing the town's package to other municipalities, not the private sector. The benefit package is used to attract loyal employees and helps retain them. There are many ways the package can be revised without costing the town money. She had a conversation with the employees covering some of her ideas such as sick time conversion, 30-year employee retirement benefits, and other ideas. She feels because she is an employee there is some conflict of interest when working on the benefit package. She would like two Select Board members to help do the background work before the ideas are submitted to the board.

Lee Gustafson pointed out Jeff Holden is also an employee making it a conflict of interest for him as well. He would like the board members working on this to be self-employed with employees. Heather Chase and Leigh Dakin will work with Julie Hance on the benefit package. Arne Jonynas offered to help if he has to.

8. REQUEST OF FUNDS; IMPROVED SOUND SYSTEM/ZOOM SYSTEM FOR TOWN HALL

Julie Hance received a quote from Atomic Sound for a portable sound system. She went to them because they gave the quote for the permanent sound system to be installed upstairs at the Town Hall. The portable system would solve the audio and visual issues the town has been having holding meetings in person and on Zoom. Being portable, the system could be used for other departments needs as well. The cost could be cut down if some of the old items are used. The projector and screen, microphones, and some other items the town currently owns could be taken out of the quote. Shawn Cunningham suggested the town talk with someone at the Grafton town office. Grafton has a wireless system that works well. Cathy Hasbrouck spoke about the wasted time she and Amie O'Brien have spent trying to get the equipment to work properly. The equipment the town currently has is not adequate.

Arne Jonynas would like an additional quote and more research to be done. He suggests talking to Grafton about the system they have. There might be a place in Ludlow to call for another quote. Julie Hance will get more information for the board.

9. NEW BUSINESS/NEXT AGENDA

Jim Carroll will speak at the next meeting about conflicts of interest.

The financial update and Church Street sidewalk scoping study will be discussed at the September 16, 2020 meeting.

Lee Gustafson asked where the speed limit discussion stands. Julie Hance said she has been in contact with Regional Planning and Chief Rick Cloud. They have been trying to decide where to put the equipment needed to gather data for the study.

EXECUTIVE SESSION; NEGOTIATING OF REAL ESTATE ACQUISITION

A motion was made by Lee Gustafson to enter Executive Session. Seconded by Leigh Dakin. Executive Session started at 7:02 p.m.

A motion was made by Lee Gustafson to exit Executive Session. Seconded by Leigh Dakin. Executive Session ended at 7:30 p.m.

10. ADJOURN

A motion was made by Leigh Dakin to adjourn. Seconded by Lee Gustafson. The meeting adjourned at 7:30 p.m.

Amie O'Brien
Secretary of the Select Board

Lee Gustafson
Clerk of the Select Board