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**TOWN OF CHESTER
SELECT BOARD MEETING
November 6, 2024 Minutes**

Board Members Present: Lee Gustafson, Arne Jonynas, Arianna Knapp, Tim Roper, and Peter Hudkins at Town Hall.

Staff Present: Julie Hance, Town Manager, at Town Hall; and Susan Bailey, Recording Secretary, via Zoom.

Visitors Present: Preston Bristow, Hugh Quinn, Lori Quinn, Derek Suursoo, and Amy Mosher at Town Hall; and SAPA TV, Chester Telegraph, Rick Green, Cathy Hasbrouck, Brian Mosher, and Evan Parks via Zoom.

Call to Order

Chair Arne Jonynas called the meeting to order with the Pledge of Allegiance, welcomed everyone, and asked them to sign the sign-in sheet.

Agenda Item 1, Additions or Deletions to the Agenda

There were none.

Agenda Item 2 Approval of Minutes from the Selectboard Meeting dated October 16, 2024, and Special Selectboard Meeting dated October 24, 2024

Lee moved and Arianna seconded a motion to approve the October 16, 2024 minutes. Lee noted that Noah McGuinness and Noah Allen were both listed under visitors present and that it should only be Noah McGuinness in attendance, as they were the same person, and he had changed his Zoom identity from Allen to McGuinness during the meeting. The motion carried and minutes were approved, as amended.

Lee moved and Arianna seconded a motion to approve October 24, 2024, minutes. There were no changes and the minutes were approved, as written.

Agenda Item 3, Citizen's Comments

There were none.

Agenda Item 4, Old Business

Report by Town Manager:

Class 4 Roads

Julie had included VLCT's model policy for Class 4 roads in their packets for the members to start reviewing.

1 FEMA

2 Money is starting to flow, and they are beginning to receive larger reimbursement amounts. The
3 President approved 90% reimbursement. The reimbursement doesn't change from 75% to 90%
4 until FEMA receives the final documents and signs off. When it happens, Chester will receive
5 catch-up reimbursements. There will be a 10% match, and the state will fund 7 ½%.
6

7 Upstairs at Town Hall

8 Arne noted Upstairs at Town Hall would be hosting the Vermont Symphony Orchestra on Sunday
9 and admission is only a voluntary donation. Arne anticipated a great show, and Steve hung curtains
10 in the back, and it looked better. They received a great donation of curtains from Arianna that
11 would help with sound. Arne said the last show was fantastic and the acoustics seem to be getting
12 better. There is no cost to attend the event on Sunday.
13

14 **Agenda Item 5, Discussion Re: Unified Development Bylaw Amendment**

15
16 At the recent hearing, they were tasked with where they wanted to go. The Planning Commission
17 was present to help with how they wanted to approach the rural districts. Arne said if they could
18 have a consensus, it would help the process move along quicker. There had been pushbacks with
19 the density zoning. Their packet included letters, mainly from Smokeshire, which were against
20 density zoning. Arne read through some of the letters and understood the concern but thought some
21 people didn't understand how density zoning worked. Arne was curious how the other members
22 felt about the changes and wondered if they would embrace the density zoning. Lee thought it was
23 discussed at the last meeting and wasn't sure why they were bringing it up again. Lee understood
24 a lot of work had gone into it and appreciated the Commission's work, but he wasn't ready to sign
25 off on it. The statement about some people being against it because they don't understand
26 concerned Lee because it meant if they understood it, they would approve it. Lee said he
27 understood it but didn't approve of it and wanted to state that. Lee was happy to revisit in a couple
28 of years if there was a need for this bylaw change. Arne understood and said it wasn't to make
29 changes but when discussed at the last meeting, it was late, and they weren't sure how they wanted
30 to present it to the Commission. Arne agreed that the consensus seemed like it was against adding
31 the density zoning, but they needed to decide whether they wanted to go back to the way they were
32 and not have any changes or if they should embrace the conditional use changes in that area. There
33 were also questions about the 2-acre zoning in the Trebo Road and Route 10 area. Arne said they
34 still had to work out details to give the Planning Commission guidance. Arianna wanted to add
35 that in addition to the letters received, she had two lengthy discussions with Mattson residents
36 about the concept and explained it and got the same response as in the letters so it didn't seem like
37 they should do it right now. Arianna had been open to it but leaning against it and based on her
38 conversations with residents, she agreed with Lee that it wasn't the right time. Arianna thought the
39 conditional uses brought them into 2024 and made a lot of sense. Arianna didn't feel they should
40 bring density-based zoning to the two rural districts but thought the conditional uses looked great.
41 Arne asked if they wanted to embrace all the changes, except the density part and it would go back
42 to the acreage it was. Arianna agreed with respect to the two rural districts. Arne questioned if it
43 was 2 acres on Route 10 and had been 3 acres. Hugh said, as it related to the proposed changes in
44 the Route 10 / Trebo area, the lot size reduction was a byproduct of the reality of what that part of
45 town looked like. Driving down Route 10 and up Trebo, they would notice the lot sizes weren't
46 that big so they considered what the land uses should look like in that part of town. Hugh noted

1 their proposal in that area of town included uses that would no longer be allowed: extraction
2 operations, heavy construction trades, sawmills, wood processing, animal kennels, animal hospital,
3 and plant nursery. Today those uses are allowed in R-120, and they don't feel they're appropriate
4 on the smaller lots in those parts of town and that was what drove the remapping. Hugh said that
5 currently on Route 10, two-thirds of the lots are smaller than 3 acres. Hugh said Trebo only had
6 43% that were smaller than 3 acres. The reality on the ground in those areas wasn't highly
7 consistent with a 3-acre rural zone. Lee questioned if it was just the south end of Trebo and Hugh
8 clarified on the map where it had changed. Although the current minimum lot size is 3 acres, about
9 60% were not 3 acres. Arianna wondered if any of those homeowners had approached Hugh
10 indicating their lots were too small and most of the concerns revolved around things they wanted
11 to do with their lots that they weren't able to because of dimensional standards. Lowering the
12 setbacks helps people get around these issues, such as building a garage or shed. Preston said they
13 were called pre-existing non-conforming lots. Zoning was adopted around 1976, so most of the
14 lots existed before zoning. Preston said the lots were legal and could still be used for everything
15 allowed in that district. Arne wondered if it could help other lots that were bigger, and someone
16 wanted to subdivide. Preston said in those two zones they were considering changes, there might
17 be someone who could create a lot but on the other hand, it was being zoned for uses more
18 consistent with residential. Lee asked if the objective was 3 acres, but because there were a lot of
19 2-acre lots, they were going to make it 2 acres instead of 3 acres for new lots and didn't see the
20 logic behind it. Tim hadn't heard that. Lee said they wanted to make Route 10 two acres because
21 that's what most of the lots were. Hugh said they didn't feel heavy construction trades, sawmills,
22 wood processing, and extraction operations were appropriate, and they were all allowed in R-120
23 and didn't fit with what that part of town was. Zoning was about what you could do and what your
24 dimension standards were. Hugh said the conversation shouldn't be about dimensional standards
25 and lot sizes alone but include uses. Lee asked if they would limit the uses to lots that were less
26 than 3 acres and Hugh said it would apply to any size lot. Arianna asked if purple was a new zone.
27 Some of it is and some isn't. Hugh thought some of it was R-40 and purple was largely already
28 adopted, and they were asking to extend it. Lee said there was a sawmill on Trebo and couldn't
29 tell if it was part of the purple but was told no, that it was farther up. Arne said part of the discussion
30 was to promote more housing and places to build and felt that every time they come to a
31 requirement, they are working against it by keeping larger lot sizes as opposed to 2 acres. Arne
32 said they had discussed keeping housing in the center but thought it was to the town's advantage
33 to make it easier to put housing in other places. The fact that they were removing conditional uses
34 that weren't residential, Arne thought could help the area maintain a residential character. Julie
35 asked about gravel extraction and Hugh said it was still allowed in yellow and green areas on the
36 map. Peter said where housing has been discussed for the town's lot, gravel extraction would not
37 be allowed. Hugh said they discussed it and felt it made sense for it to be purple but if it turned out
38 the property wasn't suitable for housing, it could be changed. Julie said they need places in town
39 where they can extract gravel which was in the yellow and green. Tim recalled the discussion was
40 around creating the housing and if it wasn't practical, zoning could be revisited, and it could be
41 changed back. Arne said because of Irene and the other storms, gravel had been put on the back
42 burner because they had a stockpile because of the damage and Julie agreed and said gravel was
43 absolutely necessary for 98 miles of dirt road. Peter said earth processing and extraction was
44 crossed out in Rural 5 and 10 and Hugh said they were a conditional use in R-5 and R-8. Peter said
45 they couldn't crush. Hugh read the definition of extraction operations, which included crushing,
46 screening, and temporary storage of materials, so crushing was allowed. Arne said it was under

1 conditional use so it could avoid the current issues they were having with some quarries. Peter
2 thought conservation should be taken out of the title. Peter said Smokeshire was one of the cheapest
3 recreational areas and on a hot day, cars are parked, and people are swimming, so it was treated as
4 a conservation area, and works well the way it is, and the town and a lot of people get use from it.
5 Arianna confirmed that Peter wanted to keep it the way it was. Hugh noted they already agreed to
6 stay away from density zoning. Arne said they were on board with it and just had to work out the
7 details. Arne thought making it more restrictive may cause people to lose value. Peter said a lot of
8 it was already in current use so taking a lot out of there, unless it was a family member, was costly.
9 Arne noted it was possible. Arianna clarified they were going to leave the zoning definitions in
10 those districts but adjust the conditional uses. Arianna asked Peter if the name change was one of
11 the two districts which was Conservation/Recreation, and he wanted it to stay Rural. Arianna asked
12 if there was a reason not to keep it Conservation and Hugh was happy to change the name but
13 noted it was Rural and not Residential in the name of the zone. Peter thought if they removed
14 Conservation from the name, it was only a matter of time before it got developed more. Arianna
15 asked what it would do to the dark green part and Peter said they didn't have a current map. Peter
16 questioned if it had been 3-acre zoning since the 70s and Preston didn't know if it went back to
17 the 70s. Arne said they seemed okay on the acres and the uses but just not the name. Preston said
18 they would take their advice and come back with something they hoped would pass.

19
20 Arne wanted to hold off on public comments unless they had something new. Derek Suursoo
21 wanted clarity on the conditional uses and confirmed that cottage courts were struck. Amy Mosher
22 asked if conditional uses went to the Development Review Board and they didn't have to approve
23 requests. Tim understood that if the applicant met all the conditions, the DRB couldn't deny their
24 application. Peter said they could keep adding conditions until they broke the bank. Arne thought
25 they would have to be reasonable about the conditions or they would be inviting a lawsuit. The
26 person who suggested it to Peter was a mall developer who suggested adding things until the
27 project was too expensive to do. Arne said that was not appropriate zoning and the goal of the
28 Planning Commission was not to defeat a project with expenses. Peter said it would need to be
29 worked with the character of the neighborhood. Arne agreed with the changes, acreage, the name
30 being changed if that's what they wanted and was okay keeping Trebo and Route 10, as proposed,
31 because it reflected more of what was there. Arianna wanted to know how many new home sites
32 could be created for Trebo and Route 10, with the changes presented. Hugh said on Route 10, there
33 were 78 landowners and with this change, an additional 6 would be able to subdivide. Today it
34 was 19 who could subdivide and with the proposed change, it would go to 25. On Trebo, it would
35 go from 16 to 20. Arianna said the proposed change would allow potential.

36
37 Amy Mosher questioned the purple line on the map which didn't follow property lines, and some
38 lots were in two zones. She didn't think it was thought out well. Preston said when they create
39 zones, they try as much as possible to follow property lines but in a zone parallel to the road, it
40 would mean the part of the property that is yellow is 3 acres, and the part that is purple is still 2
41 acres, and the bylaw says a subdivision that straddles a boundary line goes with the more restrictive
42 one.

43
44 Lee said it sounded like they had given the Planning Commission what they were looking for to
45 make the next revision. Hugh summarized he was hearing the consensus direction from the Select
46 Board was not to pursue density-based zoning and revert to 5-acre zoning in the green and 3-acre

1 zoning in the yellow and change the name for the green zone to something they all agreed on and
2 leave the rest of the proposed changes. The members agreed with Hugh's summation and said they
3 appreciated all their work. Arne said it was a learning experience, and they never would satisfy
4 everyone and thought they had done a good job. Hugh said there was a saying that said to be clear,
5 was to be kind and he appreciated the board being clear. Preston noted the American Planning
6 Association estimated there were 60,000 zoning ordinances in the U.S., and they were in a big
7 project of using AI to homogenize them.
8

9 **Agenda Item 6, Draft Budget Review – Administration, Zoning & Assessing Departments**

10
11 Arne said the packet included the 2025 budget and asked Julie to explain. Julie said it included:
12 Administration which is the Town Manager, Select Board, and front office staff; Zoning; and
13 Assessment. Julie said all the town finances run through one person for the most part. Laurie does
14 all the accounts payable, receivables, payroll, and the investment piece, which is a lot, and the
15 auditors said they get a lot for the town from one person and accounting principles are becoming
16 more rigid. They had discussed when Cil retired about having a part-time person. They would like
17 someone part-time, maybe some who just takes over payroll. They don't want to outsource payroll
18 because they're kind of small for that. The budget includes money for adding that part-time
19 position and is in administration under payroll. The other administration expense is line 110-15-
20 23, for equipment. In 2024, they budgeted 27,000 which was a bad number. The stagger of the 5-
21 year contract for the recording system in the front office wasn't captured last year. The \$39,000
22 includes the 4th-year stagger. Julie said instead of increasing it all in one year, it's over 5 years.
23 Lee asked what the recording system did, and Julie said it was documents, and they must be
24 recorded by statute using a system. Julie said that GovOS had gobbled up some of the smaller
25 systems and that's who they currently contract with. At the end of the five years, they would go
26 out to bid. The cost was in line with what other towns pay. Julie said for Zoning and the Listers,
27 Hugh was now full-time, and the budget reflected that cost being split between both departments
28 50/50. Listers increased because they would have more hours in 2025 getting ready for the
29 reappraisal. Julie said she was waiting for workers' compensation and property liability insurance
30 quotes which aren't usually received until late November or early December. Tim noted that health
31 insurance was substantial under Listers and wondered why. Julie said there were no full-time
32 employees last year but now they have one. Peter noted the listers were over 65 so they had
33 Medicare coverage. Julie said one thing that helped was she learned other towns that have water
34 and sewer departments owned and run by municipalities, the departments are billed a percentage
35 for administration. Other municipalities average 12% to 15% of the revenue range. Julie used 10%
36 as a starting point. Arianna wondered who was paying the \$82,000 and it was the Water and Sewer
37 Department. Arne said there used to be a hydrant fee that the Water Department paid the town,
38 and it stopped because it didn't make sense. Wearing his Water and Sewer Department hat, Arne
39 didn't think it was a good idea. Arne said the town would look totally different if there wasn't a
40 water and sewer department and thought the town was benefitting. For \$82,000, Arne wondered if
41 they should pay the town and if they could hire someone to do it for less. Julie said it would make
42 negotiations for projects complex. Arianna thought regardless of what the number was, for those
43 who don't have water and sewer, they must take care of their septic and well and the town doesn't
44 pay for it. Arianna thought there was an appetite for the administrative costs being levied to those
45 users. Arne said when they start doing the water and sewer grant project coming up, \$82,000 would
46 be well worth it. Peter thought it would cost \$250,000 to put another water and sewer

1 administration in place and \$82,000 was a deal. Arianna said there were fewer than 250 users and
2 Julie said it was 800. Lee said it was \$102 per user a year. Arianna said some people would feel it
3 and some wouldn't. Lee wondered if it would impact making new development in town and
4 whether they lived in town and used water and sewer. Lee said town is where they wanted housing
5 to go and if they had more users, it would spread the cost out but wondered if it would be a
6 dealbreaker for someone considering town for their home or business or if it would just be the cost
7 of business and if that's where they wanted to go as a town to encourage development. Tim asked
8 if they passed the \$82,000 administration costs onto the water and sewer users, what savings it
9 would mean for the taxpayers and wondered if it was worth it. Arne thought it was a fair idea.
10 Julie said water and sewer departments take a lot of time and it was a philosophical discussion
11 whether administrative expenses cover all the town but billing them to Water and Sewer was
12 something she had just learned about this year. Tim was concerned about the timing given the
13 recent rise in rates, especially since they aren't incurring additional expenses. Lee said the money
14 would come from somewhere and agreed with Tim that the timing wasn't right but said it was a
15 good idea. Tim echoed Arne's point about water and sewer making the town better and benefiting
16 everyone. They suggested incrementally adding it to the water and sewer bills. Arne, as a water
17 and sewer user, was glad they were having the discussion. Peter thought they should leave it in for
18 now and then decide before finalizing the budget, if they need to consider it again. Arianna thought
19 it was important to start acknowledging the need given the expected upgrade in the water and
20 sewer and development they wanted to bring to town. Arianna doubted the entire amount would
21 make it through the whole budget process. Lee said if they removed the \$82,000, they would see
22 the true increase. Julie agreed. They decided to remove it for the time being.

23
24 Arne asked about the equipment in the budget. Julie said the recording system was the rented
25 computer system and software. Property transactions are recorded in the system and the documents
26 must be scanned and digitized. Tim added that the viewer system was fantastic.

27

28 **Agenda Item 7, Discussion Re: Use of Remaining ARPA Funds**

29

30 Arne said the funds must be allocated by the end of December, but Julie said she preferred the end
31 of November because the report was due at the end of December. Julie hoped they would decide
32 by the next board meeting. The amount was roughly \$157,000. Julie said a couple ideas came to
33 mind based on when they had the ARPA community meeting when the first received the money.
34 The solar field and community center had come up. She wondered if the best thing to do was to
35 report they were using it for an ambulance which has already been purchased through the capital
36 plan so it would make sense to help reduce the \$350,000 bond for the ambulance and it freed up
37 other money for the capital fund for down the road. This would allow them to park the funds, and
38 they would be allocated. Julie said solar is a revenue generator, so it can pay for itself. Renewable
39 energy projects have very low interest rates so they could get good funding. The Land and Water
40 Conservation Grant Fund has opened, and they could apply for funds for the pool house. Julie
41 wondered if they should fix the pool house or tear it down and make a bigger one. Tim noted it
42 had been there forever. Steve and Matt had discussed their needs and wants for the building. It
43 may be able to be used for winter activities, if upgraded. Julie said the grant has a 50% match, so
44 they could get a \$500,000 building for only \$250,000. The members thought allocating the ARPA
45 funds for the ambulance or solar was a good move. Julie gave the good news that they had
46 underspent this year's bond by about \$90,000 because the paving bills came in way less than

1 expected and they were able to do all the culvert repair. They must draw the whole bond because
2 they don't get the freedom to only pay back what they've borrowed so they will draw the \$90,000
3 that will go into the bond plan for 2025. Peter hoped they didn't have another flood. Julie added
4 they were allowing them to be reimbursed for 5% of Julie's time so the flood is at \$2.5 million so
5 it would be 5% of that and Julie just needs to document her time.

6 7 **Agenda Item 8, Review Personnel Policy** 8

9 Julie had provided the board with a version of the policy and noted that select board was two
10 words. Chester Telegraph noted they approved of two words for select board. Peter, who had been
11 through many personnel policies, thought the policy was solid. Tim noted his wife had been in HR
12 throughout her career and he had seen a lot of policies and agreed with Peter. Arne questioned the
13 residency requirement stating that residency must be established within 40 days of hire. There was
14 a discussion that it wasn't residency but 30 minutes travel time. Tim and Lee questioned page 48
15 regarding firearms in your personal vehicle. Arne questioned using social media during work. It
16 can be checked periodically on your work computer when you're on break, which is different than
17 using a personal cell phone. Arianna said it was realistic and enforceable, and the others agreed.
18 Most members thought they should use Indigenous Peoples' Day rather than Columbus Day as
19 that was what the State adopted. Julie would make the two changes and asked if they were okay
20 with signing it. The members signed the policy.

21 22 **Agenda Item 9, New Business/Next Agenda** 23

24 Peter asked about Logan offering them money and Julie said it did not require a select board
25 signature, so she returned it today. There was money from the Back Roads Program and this year
26 they included money for inventory and Chester was \$18,000 with a \$3,000 match but they can use
27 in-kind funds, so Kirby's time would apply. Julie said it would give them a better inventory of the
28 hydrological segments which are required to be improved.

29
30 Arne asked Peter if he wanted to have a segment every so often to update them on TAC. Peter said
31 the biggest update was Logan wanted to meet once in December, and they were going to meet
32 about the airport. Money was out there, and they were jumping through the hoops for Regional
33 Planning. Arne clarified that he didn't mean now but in general. Peter said that's why he was
34 asking about Logan offering money.

35
36 Julie will update them on the grants at the next meeting, including water and sewer. They have
37 gotten projects through FEMA which are subject to a 10% match.

38
39 Julie said their new attorney for the solar field is putting together what he estimates his hours will
40 be, so they have an idea.

41
42 Tim wanted an update on the canopy tree project at a future meeting. Arianna said there was an
43 email coming soon.

1 **Agenda Item 10, Adjourn**

2
3 Arianna moved to adjourn, and Peter seconded the motion. The motion carried, and the meeting
4 was adjourned at 8:15 p.m.

5
6 **WATER/SEWER COMMISSIONERS MEETING AGENDA**

7 **November 6, 2024**

8 Following Select Board Meeting

9
10 **Agenda Item 1, Citizens' Comments**

11 There were none.

12
13
14 **Agenda Item 2, Sign Loan Documents: Engineering for WWTF Upgrades**

15
16 Julie said it was the usual three and included a loan agreement for \$85,000, subsidized 50%. Lee
17 moved to authorize the Chair of the Select Board, Arne Jonynas, to sign the Vermont State
18 Revolving Fund Loan RF1-377-1.0 in the loan amount of \$85,000 and Arianna seconded the
19 motion. The motion carried unanimously, and Arne signed the documents.

20
21 The second document was the General Obligation Note for \$85,000 that all the members needed
22 to sign. Lee moved and Tim seconded a motion which carried unanimously. The members signed
23 the Note.

24
25 Arne said the last document was the Resolution and Certificate for the General Obligation from
26 the Vermont Clean Water State Revolving Fund. A motion was made by Lee and seconded by
27 Arianna. The motion carried unanimously, and the members signed.

28
29 **Agenda Item 3, Set Water Rate**

30
31 The water base rate would go from \$73 to \$75 and consumption from \$2.75 to \$3.00 quarterly.
32 Arne noted the increases hadn't been drastic at any given time. Arianna moved and Tim seconded
33 the motion. A vote was taken and the motion passed unanimously.

34
35 **Agenda Item 4, Set Sewer Rate**

36
37 The sewer base rate would increase from \$110 to \$112 and consumption from \$5.25 to \$5.50. It
38 was noted there were a few customers who only were on water and not sewer. Peter moved, and
39 Tim seconded a motion for the increase in the rates. The motion carried unanimously.

40
41 **Agenda Item 5, Adjourn**

42
43 Peter moved to adjourn, and Arianna seconded the motion. The motion carried, and the meeting
44 was adjourned at 8:25 p.m.