

TOWN OF CHESTER
BOARD OF SELECTMEN

February 13, 2019
Minutes

PRESENT: Arne Jonynas; Heather Chase; Dan Cote; Ben Whalen; Lee Gustafson;
David Pisha

VISITORS: Shawn Cunningham; Jeff Holden; John Holme; Barre Pinske

The meeting was called to order at 6:30 p.m. by Chairman Jonynas.

WATER & SEWER COMMISSIONERS MEETING

1. CITIZEN'S COMMENTS:

There were no citizen's comments.

2. SET WATER RATE:

A motion was made by Dan Cote to increase the equivalent unit rate for water to \$60.00. Seconded by Ben Whalen. The motion passed.

David Pisha stated that this increase brings the town very close to the 1% median household income threshold. If another increase is needed, it will be minor.

3. ADJOURN:

A motion was made by Lee Gustafson to Adjourn. Seconded by Dan Cote. The motion passed.

SPECIAL SELECTBOARD MEETING

The meeting started at 6:35 p.m. There were no additions or deletions to the agenda.

1. APPROVE MINUTES:

A motion was made by Ben Whalen to approve the minutes of the January 16, 2018 Selectboard meeting. Seconded by Lee Gustafson. The motion passed.

A motion was made by Lee Gustafson to approve the minutes for the January 18, 2018 Selectboard meeting as amended. Seconded by Heather Chase. The motion passed.

Lee Gustafson noted that his name was not listed as those present.

2. CITIZEN'S COMMENTS:

Fred Greenwell thanked Dan Cote for his years of service. He stated that Dan Cote had mentioned 3 years ago that the rate of property values had decreased by 50% while the abutting towns were only down 8%. Mr. Greenwell also mentioned concerns about the current budget and projects that are scheduled to take place in the upcoming years. He continued to discuss concerns relative to the market value of properties and the reassessment process. Mr. Greenwell questioned if the property values following the assessments will be determined by the professional reappraisal firm or if they will be established by Wanda Purdy. He then questioned the qualifications of Wanda Purdy as a Lister. Mr. Greenwell further stated that Dan Cote called out the Board regarding budget creep and Board complacency.

Frank Bidwell stated that he has asked questions in the past regarding the capital expenses for the town. He stated that the response given to him has always been "that it works for Chester". He further stated that there is no proof that the current system works.

Barre Pinske questioned the donations to the Yosemite Fire House and if those donations are controlled by the town. Arne Jonynas noted that the building is town owned. The Board asked David Pisha to find out how the donations are being tracked. Heather Chase confirmed that there were donations made to the Historical Society for the Yosemite Fire House. Lee Gustafson noted that there may have been donations of material items made in the past as well.

Frank Bidwell stated that the Historic Preservation Committee has not taken any financial contributions at this time. They are waiting to become a 501(c)(3). He further stated that there is approximately \$2,900 left with the Historical Society.

Barre Pinske stated that he is a member of the Planning Commission who is currently working on the Town Plan as well as the Zoning Regulations. He stated that they have reached out to the schools for updated information but are not hearing back from them. David Pisha stated that he will call them.

Barre Pinske stated that the Planning Commission is also having a lot of discussion relative to environmental issues. He stated that the town has 678 acres of town owned forest. After doing the math, Chester is 3x the amount needed to be carbon neutral. Barre Pinske stated that it might be helpful for the town to have an environmental policy that can guide the Planning Commission. He stated that the Planning Commission meetings are getting bogged down in these discussions and expressed his frustration.

3. DEB BAKER; WATER ISSUE:

Deb Baker stated that she owns property on River Street. She stated that there was meter work done at her house by the Chester Water Department. She indicated that they did not turn off the water before they began the work, thereby causing flooding in her kitchen. She showed photographs to the Selectboard.

Deb Baker stated that ServPro came and did an assessment of the damage. She stated that she was instructed to contact her insurance company but feels that the town is at fault and should cover the damages. Deb Baker stated that she has spoken with the insurance company and they are awaiting guidance from the town. David Pisha stated that he has spoken with VLCT. They are not in agreement to assign blame to any individual. However, they are in agreement to pay the claim and David Pisha gave them the authority to do so.

Arne Jonynas stated that he is familiar with this property. He discussed the process that the town employees went through to shut off the water and stated that the meter was frozen, which caused the issue. Arne Jonynas reminded Ms. Baker that the recommendation she received from a plumber 5 years ago needs to be followed relative to the location of her meter.

Jeff Holden showed the Board the freeze plate that was on the back of the meter which was cracked. He stated that the purpose of the freeze plate is to protect the meter. Jeff Holden stated that from the position of the meter, he could not see the crack, but he could feel the cold air from the under the meter. Jeff Holden also stated that he has been operating the curb stop correctly for the past 4 years. He had no idea that the valve did not turn internally when he shut off the water. In addition, he turned the water on inside the house and there was not water coming from the faucets. He assumed the water was off. When they were trying to remove the meter, it broke apart. Jeff Holden also stated that they could not access the shut off valve because of its location. They had to cut apart part of the cabinets in order to access the shut off. If it had been accessible, there would have been minimal damage. Jeff Holden also read the section of the Water Policy relative to the protection of meters and their placement in the building.

Arne Jonynas stated that he is sorry that this happened. However, he does not feel that it is the fault of the town or the landowner and is glad to hear that the insurance will cover.

4. PUBLIC HEARING; SIDEWALK PROJECT:

This agenda item has been moved to the next meeting.

5. USE OF TOWN PROPERTY FOR MOVIE:

David Pisha introduced Chris Bayon who was calling from New York. He explained that they are filming a movie that requires snow and exterior shots. The movie is called, "The Truth About Santa Claus" which casts several comedians.

The premise of the film is about a guy who is afraid to have kids. He wakes up one morning and everyone he sees is a child. Chris Bayon is hoping to use several areas of the town as well as the children from the Elementary School. They are hoping to involve as many kids as they can. David Pisha had indicated that he has spoken with the Elementary School who is interested in participating.

Chris Bayon stated that they are hoping to shoot March 7-11, 2019. He is anticipating that any shots using the kids or in the town center would only take about 5 hours. He stated that they are flexible in the days they use. David Pisha stated that they do want to use fire trucks and police cruisers in the film as well. The Board did ask that the name of Chester be advertised well in the film. He also stated that he has spoken with the school which is getting the paperwork together.

Arne Jonynas stated that the consensus of the Board is to proceed. He told Chris Bayon to work directly with David Pisha to organize what is needed. Heather Chase asked that Chris Bayon let the town know when the movie airs. Chris Bayon stated that it will show on Netflix when it is released.

A motion was made by Ben Whalen to authorize David Pisha to work with Chris Bayon on the upcoming movie. Seconded by Heather Chase. The motion passed.

6. TOWN PLAN ADOPTION;

Arne Jonynas stated that the Planning Commission has been working on the Town Plan. The Selectboard is required to hold 2 public hearing. He stated that in the past the Board has started with the first public hearing. The Board then discusses the revisions in several following meetings. After the final meeting, the Board will hold the second public hearing.

Arne Jonynas stated that he and Julie Hance felt that the 2nd meeting in March would be best to begin the review. Heather Chase and Ben Whalen both indicated that they will not be at that meeting. The Board agreed to hold the first public hearing on April 3, 2019.

7. POPPLE DUNGEON;

Arne Jonynas reviewed the Popple Dungeon project. He stated that the bridge is coming in at \$855,000 leaving the town short approximately \$100,000. Arne Jonynas stated that in speaking with Julie Hance, she did not feel that it was necessary to increase the bond but do a loan instead if the money is needed. There are areas in the process where money could be saved. Julie Hance had also recommended that the project not be bid until the winter of 2019/2020.

The Board discussed the possibility of a culvert instead of a bridge. It was discussed that a culvert has many issues that make it ineffective for this site. The Board agreed to proceed with construction of a bridge. Ben Whalen questioned the cost of a single lane bridge. Arne Jonynas questioned if the single lane would be allowed in this location. Lee Gustafson also questioned if the bridge could be moved downstream 100 feet which he felt would decrease the cost of the construction as well.

Heather Chase stated that she is in agreement with moving bidding to the end of the year. She stated that she wants a written EMS plan from fire and ambulance as well as documented discussion with Windham.

The Board agreed that they will proceed with spread footings, road closure and an EMS plan. Heather Chase stated that she also wants to make sure that there is proper notification to landowners regarding the road closure.

8. EMS BUILDING DECISION:

David Pisha stated that he has called the references for Russell Construction. The responses he received were all positive with comments such as; always on time in completion, on budget, very communicative, best project managers, etc. One company noted that they don't bid anymore, they just use Russell Construction.

Arne Jonynas stated that the project went through a bid process several years ago and the town had decided to proceed with Russell Construction services. He stated that the Board needs to make a decision regarding either proceeding with Russell Construction or starting over and going out to bid.

Heather Chase stated that she does not feel that the town followed a proper process. She feels that 10 years ago was too long ago and the town should have gone through a qualifications process. She further stated that she feels that her opinion has been minimized during this process. Heather Chase stated that she is in agreement that the town needs the building but is disappointed by the process that has been followed. She also commented that she has been told there will be a lot of money saved by using Russell Construction. However, she has never seen figures showing that there is a savings.

Lee Gustafson stated that the EMS committee picked up a project that had been put on a shelf for a while. He did not feel that this was a new project. He stated that a qualifications process was used originally and very little had changed. The Board continued discussion.

Arne Jonynas stated that if the Board agrees to continue with Russell Construction, they will review the Contract under Executive Session later in the meeting.

Shawn Cunningham stated that the town contracted to have a Feasibility Study performed and then didn't follow the recommendation. The Board discussed the Feasibility Study and the issues that had developed following the findings. Lee Gustafson stated that there was information gathered from the Feasibility Study that was used.

The consensus of the Board was to proceed with Russell Construction. Heather Chase abstained from the decision.

9. TAX SALE BIDDING:

Arne Jonynas stated that the property located on Amsden Hill Road is coming up for Tax Sale next week. This property was one of the properties that came up during the Junk Yard Ordinance discussion.

David Pisha questioned if the Board wanted to bid on this property if no one else bids on the property. The purpose would be to clean up the property and then sell it. Arne Jonynas stated that if the town acquired the property, it would be required to pay to the school their portion of the taxes.

Lee Gustafson expressed his concerns about the barrels that are present on the site and the potential pollution exposure. He further suggested that the town inquire about any State funding to help with the cleanup.

The Board agreed that they will not bid on the property at this time.

10. NEW BUSINESS/NEXT AGENDA:

People's Bank will present at the next meeting.

Arne Jonynas stated that he would like Old Business added back to the agenda.

Ben Whalen stated that he has had individuals come to him regarding the High School entrance and traffic calming. Specifically, there was mention of lights. Arne Jonynas stated that he is aware there is a speed issue at that location. He felt that the town should speak with the State to see if the speed limit could be lowered. David will follow up on this.

Heather Chase mentioned that there is an Executive Session that she would like to keep track of which she has spoken with Arne Jonynas and David Pisha about.

11. EXECUTIVE SESSION: EMS Design Contract

A motion was made by Lee Gustafson to find premature general public knowledge of contract negotiations with Russell Construction regarding the 50% design of the proposed EMS Building would place the Town of Chester at a substantial disadvantage in any further negotiations. Seconded by Ben Whalen. The motion passed.

A motion was made by Lee Gustafson to enter into executive session, pursuant to 1 V.S.A. §313(a) for the purposes of discussing contract negotiations with Russell Construction regarding the terms of a 50% design of the proposed EMS building. Seconded by Ben Whalen. The motion passed.

The Board entered Executive Session at 8:45 p.m.

A motion was made by _____ to exit Executive Session at _____ p.m. Seconded by _____ . The motion passed.

12. ADJOURN:

A motion was made by _____ to adjourn. Seconded by _____. The motion passed. The meeting adjourned at _____ p.m.

Julie Hance
Secretary of the Select Board

Ben Whalen
Clerk of the Selectboard