

TOWN OF CHESTER
WATER/SEWER COMMISSIONER'S MEETING
January 15, 2020
Minutes

PRESENT: Arne Jonynas; Heather Chase; Ben Whalen; Lee Gustafson; Leigh Dakin;
David Pisha

VISITORS: Shawn Cunningham; Sharon Huntley; Julie Hance; Jeff Holden; Kirby
Putnam; Derek Suursoo; Lyza Gardner; Layla Hastings

1. APPROVE WATER BUDGET:

David Pisha noted that there were no changes to the Water Budget. Arne Jonynas questioned the use of timber sales money that goes into the Water Department. Jeff Holden stated that the money goes into his general budget to help reduce fees.

Lee Gustafson questioned the generator that is needed for the water department. Jeff Holden stated that this expense will come out of the water budget. The engineering and concrete pad will hopefully be done this year. There is potential grant funding to help with the purchase.

2. APPROVE SEWER BUDGET:

David Pisha stated that there were no changes to the Sewer Budget.

Jeff Holden stated that the Jetter trailer will save the sewer department money over the long term. They typically need to hire Hartigan which will not be needed as often when the new trailer is purchased.

3. ADJOURN:

A motion was made Lee Gustafson to adjourn. Seconded by Ben Whalen. The motion passed.

TOWN OF CHESTER
BOARD OF SELECTMEN

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David Pisha

VISITORS: Shawn Cunningham; Sharon Huntley; Julie Hance; Jeff Holden; Kirby Putnam; Derek Suursoo; Lyza Gardner; Layla Hastings

There were no additions or deletions to this agenda.

1. APPROVE MINUTES:

A motion was made by Lee Gustafson to approve the minutes of the January 8, 2020 Selectboard meeting. Seconded by Leigh Dakin. The motion passed.

Change typo under citizen's comments.

Minutes should reflect that the budget is up .06 not .6 cents.

2. CITIZEN'S COMMENTS:

There were no citizen's comments.

3. APPOINT HEALTH OFFICER:

David Pisha stated that Heather Chase has resigned as Health Officer for Chester. She has been advised by the town's attorney that there is a conflict in this position with her being on the Selectboard. The town has advertised for this position to no avail. Amanda Silva has indicated her willingness to serve as Health Officer.

Arne Jonynas questioned if she will still receive the stipend since she is a full time employee. David Pisha noted that she would receive the stipend as there are needs outside of her normal hours. During her regular hours, ambulance needs will come first. David Pisha will provide backup services when needed. Ben Whalen stated that he would support her receiving the stipend as these duties are outside of her contract with the town.

Leigh Dakin questioned the frequency of Health Officer calls. David Pisha noted that there are not many, but that they require a lot of work. The Board also discussed that Amanda Silva has gone to trainings that the State has provided.

A motion was made by Ben Whalen to appoint Amanda Silva as the Health Officer. Seconded by Lee Gustafson. The motion passed.

4. APPROVE 2020 GENERAL FUND BUDGET & CAPITAL/BOND PLAN:

David Pisha stated that the final expenses have been added to the budget. The budget is now up \$263,538.40. David Pisha stated that he has also split out the contributions to the Capital Plan by department. The Board had requested this at the last meeting.

Heather Chase asked David Pisha the status of the communication with Andover. She also asked David Pisha to review the minutes to determine the history of the increases to Andover. She would like to see what the original agreement was with Andover. The Board asked for this to be an agenda item in the future.

This budget equates to 6.5 cents on the tax rate. This is the municipal increase only. Heather Chase stated that this will be a difficult year between the increase with the town and the school budgets.

Lee Gustafson stated that the largest expense to the town is the public works department. He asked Kirby Putnam if he receives requests from taxpayers to come sand/salt or if he is doing business as usual. Kirby Putnam stated that there is both. Sometimes he does receive phone calls, but he goes and checks before he sends the department out to salt/sand. Lee Gustafson discussed the potential expectations from taxpayers to have their roads ready at all times but not wanting to pay for it. The Board discussed the needs of the public works department and that these services are critical to the operation of the town. Leigh Dakin stated that Chester has the best roads compared to many rural towns. Arne Jonynas reminded the Board that this budget is up primarily due to the weather from last year which the Board does not have control over, thereby causing a deficit situation.

Heather Chase questioned the mileage line for the Recreation Department. Arne Jonynas stated that at the last meeting the Board agreed to have Matt McCarthy keep a log for review for next year's budget.

Heather Chase questioned the railroad tax for 2020 on page 2. She also questioned the Ambulance Salary to see if it could be reduced further. Heather Chase stated that she would like to discuss the payment of fire and ambulance personnel being once a year. She feels that for cash flow she would rather see quarterly or monthly payroll. This can be discussed at a future meeting. David Pisha stated that those employees like to use the once a year paycheck to help pay end of the year expenses. Ben Whalen stated that he is recusing himself from this discussion. David Pisha stated that he will speak with Cil Mathews about showing the money earned on the reports but not actually paying out the money until the end of the year. The Board agreed.

Derek Suursoo questioned if the Assistant Town Manager's salary should be included under the Selectboard section and broken out.

David Pisha stated that the Bond Plan has changed slightly. The Plan shows 2023 as the peak year. This change is because the repayment of the EMS Building has been pushed out until 2024. Lee Gustafson questioned the police contribution to the Capital Plan. David Pisha stated that there is no contribution from Police in 2020 because the cruiser will be purchased with a 4 year loan beginning in 2021.

Heather Chase questioned if the Revitalization Budget includes the seasonal employee to help with watering the flowers. David Pisha stated that he has added a line of \$6,000 for

groundskeeping. The Board discussed this potential position. It was agreed to have David work with Townscape to come up with some potential creative ideas to accomplish the watering without hitting the budget.

A motion was made by Ben Whalen to approve the budget in the amount of \$3,351,125.26. Seconded by Lee Gustafson. The motion passed.

5. REVIEW TOWN WARNING:

Julie Hance explained that there are some articles that are in italics. These are because the request for funds has not yet been received. These will be finalized on Friday.

Arne Jonynas read Articles 1-8 for the Board's review. The Board will meet at 5:15 on Friday to sign the final Warning.

6. REVIEW ACADEMY LEASE:

The Lease for the Academy Building is due to expire on March 1. The Board agreed that the Historical Society should still have use of the building. However, the length of time should be shortened and there should be allowance for other organizations to use portions of the building as well. Lee Gustafson also noted that there are no real teeth to this Lease for enforcement purposes. The Board agreed that the language should change relative to use of the parking and right of way as well as their requirement to maintain the property when they have no real revenue source. Arne Jonynas suggested that the maintenance of the building itself is the town's responsibility.

Heather Chase stated that there needs to be discussion about how the Historical Society wants to use the building going forward for the next 5 – 10 years. The Board also agreed that the Selectboard needs to discuss their vision for the property as well. Leigh Dakin would like to understand the intentions of the Historical Society's memorabilia. Ben Whalen stated that the materials that the Historical Society owns are not property of the town.

Lyza Gardner stated that her concern is the limited access to the building by taxpayers. Primarily access to the grounds itself. Heather Chase also expanded the thought that the building could have other uses in addition to the Historical Society.

Julie Hance explained that the only remaining exterior item is the replacement of the west roof. The next step is to determine the use of the building and then obtain an assessment for the interior renovations that will be needed.

The Board discussed not renewing the Lease in March. Instead they would prefer to go without a Lease until a new one is worked through. Julie Hance will speak with the town Attorney about the risks of no lease for an interim period of time. The Board will discuss this at their first meeting in February and will invite the Historical Society to the meeting.

7. NEW BUSINESS/NEXT AGENDA:

The next agenda will include the Academy Lease;

Lee Gustafson questioned the employee review process and department head review process. David Pisha responded that reviews are done annually. There is sometimes input from fellow employees.

David Pisha stated that January 21 at 3:00 is the annual Trustee of Public Funds meeting

The Board discussed the review of the Financial Policy and Personnel Policy. Julie Hance explained that they are on her list for this year. She explained that they both need major upgrade and revisions which are requiring substantial time.

8. EXECUTIVE SESSION; ACT 250 ATTORNEY UPDATE:

A motion was made by Lee Gustafson to find that the public disclosure of attorney/client communication regarding the ACT 250 application for the municipal gravel project will necessarily involve communications of and relating to the specific terms of said application, disclosure of which could place the Town of Chester at a substantial disadvantage. Seconded by Ben Whalen. The motion passed.

A motion was made by Lee Gustafson to enter executive session, pursuant to 1 V.S.A. §313(a)(1)(A) for the purposes of review communication with the town's attorney relating to the ACT 250 application for the municipal gravel project. I further move that the Selectboard finds that the public disclosure of the discussions could place the town at a disadvantage. Seconded by Heather Chase. The motion passed.

Derek Suursoo stated that there is a Board member, Heather Chase, who was opposed to a previous extraction operation on the subject property. He is concerned that she is attending discussions and executive sessions relative to the town's current project. Heather Chase stated that she is fully in support of this project. She feels that she has experience that she can contribute to the process. Discussion ensued. Arne Jonynas stated that he has received pushback from the community. Heather Chase stated that she has not heard direct communication about this subject. She indicated that she will consider the statements that have been made but will not make a decision on this tonight.

A motion was made by Lee Gustafson to exit Executive Session at 9:20 p.m. Seconded by Ben Whalen. The motion passed

9. ADJOURN:

A motion was made by Heather Chase to adjourn. Seconded by Lee Gustafson. The motion passed. The meeting adjourned at 9:21 p.m.

Julie Hance
Secretary of the Select Board

Ben Whalen
Clerk of the Selectboard