

TOWN OF CHESTER  
BOARD OF SELECTMEN

November 20, 2019  
Minutes

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

VISITORS: Shawn Cunningham; Sharon Huntley; Julie Hance; Scott Blair; Ron Patch;  
Leslie Blair; Vicki Thornton; Kevin Paquet; David Lewis; Wanda Purdy;  
Daniel Cook

There were no additions or deletions to this agenda.

1. EXECUTIVE SESSION:

A motion was made by Lee Gustafson to find that the public disclosure of contract negotiations with AT&T will necessarily involve communications of and relating to the specific terms of said contract, disclosure of which could 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 executive session, pursuant to 1 V.S.A. §313(a)(1)(A) for the purposes of negotiating and reviewing the terms of contracts with AT&T. I further move that the Selectboard finds that the public disclosure of the negotiations could place the town at a disadvantage. Seconded by Leigh Dakin. The motion passed.

The Board entered Executive Session at 6:32 p.m.

A motion was made by Lee Gustafson to exit Executive Session at 6:54 pm. Seconded by Leigh Dakin. The motion passed.

2. APPROVE MINUTES:

A motion was made by Lee Gustafson to approve the minutes of the October 16, 2019 Selectboard meeting. Seconded by Ben Whalen. The motion passed.

A motion was made by Leigh Dakin to approve the minutes of the October 24, 2019 Special Selectboard meeting. Seconded by Lee Gustafson. The motion passed

3. CITIZEN'S COMMENTS:

There were no citizen's comments.

4. OLD BUSINESS:

Gravel Extraction: David Pisha stated that the DRB has revisited the site to review the corrected position of the stake marking the boundary of the extraction site. The hope is that the DRB will sign the Permit soon. Jim Goss has indicated that once a favorable decision is received, the ACT 250 application will be filed.

EMS Building: David Pisha stated that the bond vote has passed. The committee has been working with Russell Construction and Kevin Racyk on the next steps. Lee Gustafson stated that there have been discussions about the construction timeline. The department heads are fine tuning the needs and the design. Lee Gustafson questioned if the Board wants the building committee to continue in their role. The Board discussed that it would be a good idea for the committee to continue as they have the intimate knowledge of the project. Russell Construction will be the Construction Manager. The town manager should be the primary contact with Russell Construction as the committee does not have spending authority. It was agreed that the committee will remain in effect.

5. HISTORICAL SOCIETY OFFER TO LOAN DISPLAY AT TOWN HALL:

Chester Historical Society has offered to loan the town some pieces from their collection to display at Town Hall. Ron Patch reviewed the items that will be loaned. A copy is attached to these minutes. Ron Patch also reviewed the history of the Rawson painting hanging downstairs in the town office, which he feels would be appropriate to be hanging upstairs. The Historical Society will pay for getting the pieces ready for display. The Historical Society has requested that the town hire someone to hang the display pieces. David Pisha stated that there should be something hung that recognizes the Historical Society for their loan of the items. The Board thanked the Historical Society for their offer and loan to the Town Hall.

6. ACADEMY BUILDING/INFORMATION BOOTH:

Arne Jonynas reminded that the town has spent money pumping the septic tank at the Information Booth. There has been discussion about using the Academy Building in connection with the Historical Society. Leigh Dakin indicated that she would like to consider using the Academy Building in place of the Information Booth. Julie Hance stated that she has obtained a quote for the plaster repair which came in at \$47,000. The Board asked David Pisha to talk with Meg Campbell about using sheetrock instead.

The Board discussed running another season at the Information Booth. Lee Gustafson asked Julie Hance about the Easement with Preservation Trust. Julie Hance will find out if there is a time limit on the Easement.

Julie Hance let the Board know about the Paul Bruhn Grant that was applied for on behalf of the Academy Building. She applied for funding for the roof replacement on the west side. The cost of the roof has been estimated at \$60,000 and the application matches \$9,000.

Lee Gustafson stated that he would like discussion about the Lease so that he understands the town's responsibility. Arne Jonynas stated that he would like this to be a separate agenda item. Harry Goodell will be representing the Historical Society at these meetings. The Lease is up March 1.

7. LISTERS ERRORS AND OMISSION:

Wanda Purdy stated that there has been a change to the Grand List which requires the Board to approve the change.

A motion was made by Ben Whalen to approve the Errors and Omissions presented by the Listers. Seconded by Leigh Dakin. The motion passed.

8. GIS ANNUAL MAINTENANCE AGREEMENT:

A motion was made by Lee Gustafson to sign the GIS Annual Maintenance Agreement with CIA Technologies. Seconded by Ben Whalen. The motion passed.

9. PROPOSAL TO REPAIR NORTH STREET CEMETERY TOMB:

David Pisha stated that Hugh Henry has requested that the tomb doors be repaired and repainted at the North Street Cemetery. He indicated that this could be requested from the Trustee of Public Funds as it is cemetery work. Lee Gustafson stated that he would like to see multiple quotes before going to the Trustees for money. David Pisha will do some research to find out more about the doors and their historic value, as well as seek other quotes.

10. SET SALARY SCALE FOR ASSISTANT TOWN MANAGER POSITION:

Arne Jonynas stated that beginning January 1 the Selectboard is changing the methods used to manage the town. This includes the addition of an Assistant Town Manager instead of an Executive Session.

The Board has reviewed information from VLCT on salary scales. Arne Jonynas stated that his opinion is that this position would be similar to that of the Town Manager. Lee Gustafson stated that in reviewing the job descriptions he noticed that there are many overlaps. The skill set would not be quite the same but similar to that of the Town Manager, so should be a percentage less than that of the Town Manager. Arne Jonynas discussed that this new position allows for this person to step in for the Town Manager when needed.

The range set for the Town Manager is \$60,000-\$75,000. Lee Gustafson stated that using his percentage, the range for Assistant Town Manager would be \$45,000 to \$68,000. Annual increases and reviews are determined by the Town Manager. Ben Whalen clarified that this range is the starting salary range, not a cap.

A motion was made by Ben Whalen to set the starting salary scale for the Assistant Town Manager at \$45,000 and \$68,000. Seconded by Lee Gustafson. The motion passed.

The next steps will include: The position begins on January 1, 2020. The Board will approach the candidate with a package prior to that date.

11: 2020 GENERAL FUND BUDGET:

David Pisha reviewed the General Fund Budget. The Town Manager salary and Assistant Town Manager salary will need to be adjusted. David also indicated that the town will be changing back to MVP due to the cost of Blue Cross increases which are at 23%. MVP has increased an average of 6%. He also stated that the copay line may be reduced depending on the end of the year. Julie Hance explained the phone system and its increase. Overall, General Government is showing a \$16,000 increase.

The Police Department expenses are up \$6,800. The Board discussed the Court Fees revenue line, which is showing substantially under budget. David Pisha will work with the Police Chief on setting a more realistic number.

The Fire Department is showing expenses up \$5,650.00. Foam and Equipment are the contributors towards this increase.

The Ambulance Department is showing expenses up \$2,955.00. Computer expenses and medical premiums are the primary contributors toward this increase. Dan Cook indicated that calls are down from last year.

The Public Works section is currently running a deficit of \$21,000. This is due to weather last winter and mud season. Currently, the expenses are showing an increase of \$172,448.00. A large portion of this increase is due to material purchases. The excess material that the town typically has on hand was depleted during the last winter and mud season and has to be replaced this year. Another large contributor is the payment to the Capital Plan. This is due to bond payments coming due in 2020. Ben Whalen questioned the calcium chloride usage. Dan Cook stated that the intention was to save money in this area if possible, knowing that expenses were up. Ben Whalen questioned the decrease in the sand. David Pisha indicated that the sand pile is being rebuilt this year which should allow for a decrease needed next year. He is also trusting that the town's pit will be up and running in 2020.

The Recreation Department has a slight increase in revenue. Overall, recreation is showing a \$4,700 increase. The facilities budget for recreation is up \$10,000.

Parks and Cemeteries is showing an increase of \$10,739.00 primarily due to payroll and medical insurance.

The Library department is up approximately \$3,500. Town Hall is up approximately \$2,500.00. Revitalization is up \$5,000 due to the addition of the Information Booth into

the budget. The Health Officer position has been increased to \$2,600 per year due to the responsibilities of this position.

Lee Gustafson questioned the overall budget increase number. David Pisha stated that this number is not really known until we get closer to the end of the year. The Board discussed that the overall budget is up approximately \$400,000 which does not include the surplus. Lee Gustafson questioned the increase from the 2019 budget to the 2020 budget.

The Capital Plan was reviewed. The police will need a cruiser in 2020. The Board also requested that David Pisha send out the summary page to the budget. Leigh Dakin questioned the Route 35 line, which was clarified that another \$60,000 will be added for 2020.

The Bond Plan was reviewed. David Pisha explained that 2021 will start the repayment of the EMS Building. The year 2023 will be the height of the payments in the Bond Plan. After 2023, the payments will begin to decrease.

Lee Gustafson asked that the totals of all budgets combined be added to the bottom of the budget.

## 12. MARIJUANA LEGISLATION DISCUSSION:

The Board had general discussion relative to the town's approach to the marijuana legislation. There are several bills heading into the legislature. Arne Jonynas was disappointed to see that the town's portion of the revenue will be very small, compared to what the rest of the country is doing. Arne Jonynas also indicated that he does not believe that the town has much to say about what happens.

Lee Gustafson indicated that he would like to have more of a philosophical discussion about the legislation. He feels that, as the leaders of the community, he wants the town's rules to reflect the town's values. Lee Gustafson indicated that there are impacts when recreational uses are allowed into a community, such as impact on the police departments. Since the town's revenue is so small, he would like to understand the cost of the potential negative impacts. Lee Gustafson stated that there are other towns in the State that have disallowed sales of marijuana in their towns.

Arne Jonynas stated that he would prefer to use the method of education, not banning the products. He also stated that he does not want to include CBD oil in the discussion as it is a separate issue. His primary concern is that the towns have no say in the legislation that is being discussed. Arne Jonynas indicated that this is the time to make sure that the State legislators know the town's position. Lee Gustafson stated that he would like to be more proactive with the State and not wait for them to tell the town's what they can do.

Lee Gustafson stated that he does not just want to view tax implications, he wants to consider more the impacts to the community at large and individually. Leigh Dakin

stated that she feels that we are too early in the discussion. At this time, sales of marijuana is not legal. The Board continued discussion. Lee Gustafson stated that his ultimate goal is to send a message to the Legislature about what the “town” wants regarding this legislature.

Arne Jonynas encouraged citizens to talk to Board members regarding their opinions relative to this topic.

Chief Cloud stated that the State of Vermont has rushed into this, even though they were warned by Colorado not to hurry. Unfortunately, they did not wait for studies to be completed prior to moving forward. He indicated that there will be additional costs to the town because there is no roadside testing. The only way to test is a blood test which is roughly \$1,000 per test.

The Board agreed that there needs to be discussion relative to recreational marijuana. The discussion of CBD Oil and Hemp should be separate.

Scott Blair questioned the definition of dispensary relative to Lee’s discussion. Lee Gustafson stated that he would suggest that dispensing recreational marijuana.

David Lewis is a local hemp farmer. He stated that he is against a large dispensary in the area. However, small farming is purposeful and contributes to the economy. He feels that a restriction on the entire town is not realistic. He invited Lee Gustafson and other board members to come to some of the educational meetings at the Pie Shop.

13. NEW BUSINESS/NEXT AGENDA:

The budget will be on the next agenda.

David Pisha stated that the “insider” website has indicated that Chester is the best small town in Vermont. Lee Gustafson suggested that this article be linked on the town’s website.

David Pisha stated that he received a phone call this afternoon from Tony Cairns, owner of Champlain Oil. He informed David that he would like to discuss a donation of the old Jiffy Mart to the town. The Board agreed that they would like to hear more details.

The Health Officer position should be advertised. The Board would like David Pisha to continue working towards filling this position.

The Board asked David Pisha to find out the status of the Sunoco renovations.

14. ADJOURN:

A motion was made by Lee Gustafson to adjourn. Seconded by Ben Whalen. The motion passed. The meeting adjourned at 9:42 p.m.

Julie Hance  
Secretary of the Select Board

Ben Whalen  
Clerk of the Selectboard