

TOWN OF CHESTER SELECTBOARD MEETING
September 4, 2024, Minutes

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

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

Visitors Present: Lauren Fierman, Daryll Kale, Shawn Cunningham, Bill Lindsay, Caroline Morgan, Nancy Eddy, Michael Morgan, Thomas J. Steele, and Terri L. Steele at Town Hall; and Robert Nied, Matthew Gorsky, Donna McNeill-Hudkins, and SAPA TV via Zoom.

Call to Order

Chair Arne Jonynas called the meeting to order at 6:30 p.m.

Arne welcomed everyone to the meeting and the new meeting room on the first floor of Town Hall. Arne appreciated the new setup that was more comfortable and offered ready-to-go technology. Arne told those who were attending by Zoom, that they were part of the new technology in the new location, and he hoped they could hear them well.

Agenda Item 1, Vicious Dog Hearing; Reopen for the Purpose of Hearing Added Testimony and Adding Evidence

Arne noted Terri Steele had requested they reopen the hearing regarding a vicious dog, and it was up to the board if they wanted to do that and consider any information she had to offer. Arne said they had information in their packets that stated the reason Terri was unable to attend the previous hearing was she was taking care of her mom who was disabled. Tim said he saw Terri and Tom walking up the sidewalk as he was approaching Town Hall. Julie suggested they reorder the agenda and address it when they arrived at the meeting. Arne agreed.

Agenda Item 2, Approval of Minutes from the Selectboard Meeting dated August 7, 2024, and the Special Selectboard Meeting date August 9, 2024

Lee moved and Peter seconded a motion to approve the minutes from the August 7, 2024, meeting. There were no changes and Lee thanked Susan. The motion carried and the minutes were approved, as written. Peter moved to approve the minutes for August 9, 2024, and Lee seconded the motion. There were no changes and Arne thanked Susan again and said it was working out well. A vote was taken, and Tim abstained as he had been absent from the August 9th meeting. The motion carried and the minutes were approved, as written.

Agenda Item 3, Citizens Comments

There were none.

1 **Agenda Item 4, Old Business**

2
3 Report by Town Manager:

- 4
- 5 • Julie met with Jim Carroll yesterday regarding the solar field. They think the best solution
6 is to find an attorney who specializes in solar. Tim had provided the name of an attorney
7 in the Burlington area, and they would reach out to them to see if they could help. Julie
8 would update the board in the future.
9
 - 10 • They have hired a new fire chief. They had several interviews, but none worked out. They
11 took a step back and considered if they had any retired fire chiefs who could fill the
12 vacancy for 9 to 12 months and help them get reorganized and back in order and evaluate
13 things while getting the department running how they want. Scott Richardson, Retired
14 Deputy Chief of Springfield, has joined Chester and comes with extensive experience and
15 they are thrilled to have him. Most of the department already knows Scott. Starting in
16 October with the budget discussion, the board will meet him, and he will be working with
17 Julie on the Fire Department budget. Arne thought it would help with the transition and
18 Julie agreed and said that administratively, it would get the department where it needed to
19 be. Scott is willing to help for a year but isn't interested in doing it long-term. Tim said it
20 would take some of the pressure off finding someone and Julie agreed and said they
21 wanted to make sure it was the perfect fit and didn't just want to push someone in.
22
 - 23 • Municipal Energy Implementation Grant has opened, which is a 3-phase grant and Phase
24 2 had to do with energy audits and Phase 3 was implementation. This is the state's Building
25 and General Services Department who is trying to find ways to use up COVID funds and
26 this program lets municipalities apply for up to \$500,000 with no match required to
27 implement items within the energy audits. Chester had 3 energy audits done: Town Hall,
28 Library, and the Academy Building. The priority funding is for mainly insulation of
29 ceilings and walls, fuel switching, and lighting. They have plenty of projects identified in
30 the three audits that will allow them to insulate walls at Town Hall and the ceiling of the
31 second floor. Julie will provide a more formal proposal, but they would propose switching
32 out the heating system upstairs as the furnaces in Town Hall are very old. They would like
33 mini splits for the entire building, including the upstairs. For the library, they would like
34 to change out the system in the basement and do some of the insulation in the attic and
35 lighting in the basement, which currently is antiquated. It would include insulating all the
36 walls in the Academy Building and installing a heating system and they would work with
37 Historic Preservation on an advanced form of a mini split that can match with the
38 conservation easement on the building and insulate the ceiling there. For good or for bad,
39 Chester is identified as an energy hog town, which puts them at a higher priority, and they
40 are hopeful they will get the grant. Grants are due at the end of September. Arne asked if
41 they had a group or committee that would get together to determine how it would be used
42 because when you incorporate a heating system into an existing building, it may be helpful
43 to understand what they will be doing with it. Julie said there was a group of a few people,
44 and she would reassemble it, and they would have those discussions now that they had the
45 energy audits back. Tim said he was out of the loop on the use of the building and knew
46 there was a lot of space there, artifacts, and documents and wanted to know more about

1 the proposed uses to see if there were other ideas to add. Julie said there was a working
2 group who was looking at the building and they hadn't met in a while. They were waiting
3 for the grants to filter through. The biggest hurdle to the building currently is it can only
4 be opened a couple of seasons because there is no heating system in it. The long-term goal
5 is to open it year-round and maybe make it a visitor's center for the town. The Historical
6 Society is doing a tremendous amount of work going through the material they have in the
7 building and organizing it. They desire to use a portion of the building for their displays.
8 There are conversations about the other space being used for meeting rooms or art displays
9 and there have been all kinds of discussions. Now that the energy audits have been
10 completed and they know the hurdles to overcome including access to the second floor,
11 Julie will reassemble the group to continue the discussions. Tim asked if there were
12 minutes from the meetings and Julie said it was not an official committee, but people who
13 had interest in the building and currently use it with the historical society. Arne said it was
14 a beautiful old building and would be great to see it used. Arne said part of the problem
15 was it was on the National Registry of Historic Places so if they scrape a piece of paint off
16 the wall, they must notify someone. They are meticulous about anything that happens
17 there, and they had to negotiate for a year before they were allowed to address the plaster
18 coming down. They are not an easy organization to deal with.

19
20 **Agenda Item 5, Appointments for Housing Commission; Lauren Fierman and Caroline**
21 **Morgan**

22
23 The Commission has been looking at different sites in town that may have potential for
24 development, whether town development or linking property owners with programs throughout
25 the state, such as accessory dwelling units or the old mother-in-law apartments, which they hope
26 would be long-term rentals rather than short-term. At the last meeting they met with SE Group
27 which is well underway to parallel projects and is the group that has been hired to conduct a
28 feasibility study on the 139 acres the town owns and is in the very early stages. The Commission
29 has only been together for 6 or 7 months and there is a lot to the discussion and learning about
30 funding sources and what Chester needs for housing, including senior housing. Joel Feinberg was
31 on the board from the beginning but was only able to participate by Zoom and they do a lot of
32 workshops around the table and a site visit next month so it's difficult to only participate by Zoom
33 and he felt he couldn't be as effective but will be available to them as a consultant as he has a
34 housing background. Having access to him will be very helpful and they can use him as a resource.

35
36 Caroline has attended a few of their meetings and Lauren has expressed an interest recently, so
37 they're very excited to have two qualified women join the board. Arne offered them the
38 opportunity to speak to the board about their interest.

39
40 Lauren Fierman moved to Chester in 2018 and bought a house on Main Street and has lived here
41 for the last 6 years. She has been involved in education and was working as the principal for Green
42 Mountain and retired July 1st. She is also an attorney and now that she's taken her education hat
43 off, she's looking forward to being an involved citizen of Chester in areas beyond education and
44 is excited about this opportunity. Arne said it was great to have people involved and thanked her.

45
46 Caroline Morgan moved with her husband to Chester in 2021 and built a house on Flamstead Road,

1 partly because they couldn't find any housing already built and has been interested in the whole
2 process of housing challenges in Vermont and in Chester. She works on Lincoln Street in
3 Springfield with a program that's fairly new and is basically a nursing home divergent program.
4 They place people with complex needs into private homes. She's in a lot of homes and does a lot
5 of inspections and has attended a few meetings and is very interested in the process and wants to
6 participate more. Arne thanked her for joining the community. He mentioned that the state wants
7 24,000 units so Chester could chip into it a little. Affordability has been an issue since COVID and
8 it's tough for people who work locally to afford housing in town. Arne entertained a motion to
9 approve Lauren Fierman and Caroline Morgan to the Housing Commission. Tim moved and Lee
10 seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously. Arne and Peter thanked Lauren and
11 Caroline.

12
13 **Agenda Item 1, Vicious Dog Hearing; Reopen for the Purpose of Hearing Added Testimony**
14 **and Adding Evidence**
15

16 Arne said since the hearing had been closed, they had to decide, as a board, if they would reopen it
17 and take more evidence. They understood why the Steeles couldn't attend the hearing but had to
18 decide if they wanted to reopen the hearing. Tim said he was not at the first hearing. Peter asked if
19 there was more information and Julie said they had more things that could be entered into the record.
20 Peter moved and Lee seconded a motion to reopen the hearing. Arne agreed because the Steeles
21 didn't have a chance to speak at the hearing and because of the step recommended, they deserved
22 a chance to speak. The motion carried unanimously, and the hearing was reopened.

23
24 (The hearing reopened at 6:53 p.m.)
25

26 Arne swore in Terri Steele to give testimony. Arne read the letter from Terri Steele explaining why
27 she didn't attend the meeting and requesting the hearing be reopened. Arne entertained a motion
28 to enter it into the record as Exhibit "E." Lee moved and Peter seconded the motion. The motion
29 carried unanimously. Arne noted the original complaint did not include the Town Health Officer
30 bite report form listing Karen Orchitt as the victim and entertained a motion to enter it into
31 evidence as Exhibit "F." Lee moved and Peter seconded the motion. The motion carried. Arne said
32 they had recently received a stack of complaints which ranged over the course of the last year.
33 They had just received them and hadn't had the opportunity to go through them. Lee moved to
34 enter the stack of complaints as Exhibit "G" and Peter seconded the motion. The motion carried
35 unanimously.

36
37 Terri had been working with the Humane Society and called Chris, the owner of the Green
38 Mountain K-9 rehabilitation and training center in Swanzey, New Hampshire, about whether the
39 dog can be rehabilitated. The dog is only 2 years old and was on a run that day. She was at
40 Dartmouth with her mom and Tom and that's why he was hooked up outside. She knew he had
41 problems with this woman before. They've never known him to have any other problems. The dog
42 is having a rough time at the Humane Society and it wasn't fair to him. Terri couldn't get to the
43 library, but she had a bunch of emails from people who knew the dog that she wanted to send to
44 Julie. Chris from Green Mountain was willing to evaluate the dog at Springfield Humane Society
45 but they have kennel cough so the evaluation can't be done for two weeks. Chris is going to contact
46 Springfield Humane Society if the town was okay with it, to possibly move the dog. They work

1 closely with the Animal Sanctuary in Laconia which is a long-term rehabilitation center. Terri
2 couldn't see him being euthanized. Arne asked if there were any questions from the board
3 members. Tim asked Terri if the rehabilitation service was volunteer or paid and it was paid. She
4 said the evaluation will cost \$150. Tim asked what the evaluation would entail, and she said it was
5 just behavioral to see if their dog had anything wrong with his brain. Tim asked if he was accepted
6 into Laconia if it was paid or volunteer and Terri said it was on a voluntary basis and they would
7 take the dog. Lee asked what Terri's goal was and she said she would love to take him back home
8 but didn't know that was an option because of her neighbor and she wanted to be a peaceful
9 neighbor and do what was best for the dog. Arne said they had a lot of information and quite a few
10 other complaints than the original one and the dog had been quite a problem for the whole
11 neighborhood. Terri asked if they would be able to see the complaints and Julie said absolutely.
12 Terri would send Julie her emails. Tim asked if the Humane Society was charging the town, and
13 they were. Julie said the town would receive a bill and they would attempt to collect from the dog
14 owner. The town gets a reduced rate which is based on how long the dog will be there. Julie spoke
15 with the Humane Society today who said they have not been able to let the dog out of the kennel
16 because he's been very aggressive, growling, and they're fearful of being bitten. He's in a double
17 kennel so he doesn't have to come out to be fed. Julie didn't know how long they would keep the
18 dog. Kennel cough would create an issue because nobody can go there. Julie confirmed with Terri
19 that the dog given to the police is Bo, the subject dog. Terri will provide proof of rabies
20 vaccination. Arne asked if there was a 10-day limit on the judgment and if they needed to extend
21 it. Arne said they would deliberate privately to decide what action to take. Terri wanted the K-9
22 association to evaluate him. Arne stressed their concern was public safety and there had been lots
23 of incidents and understood it was a difficult decision to put anyone's pet down. Arne asked if any
24 other members of the public wanted to present information and there were none. Arne asked if any
25 board members did, and Peter confirmed it was 2 weeks before the dog could be evaluated due to
26 the kennel cough. The dog had been there 5 days. Tim noted it was 19 days before the dog could
27 be evaluated and the town would be responsible for the bill. Julie agreed.

28
29 Lee moved and Peter seconded a motion to adjourn the hearing. The motion carried unanimously.

30
31 (The hearing was adjourned at 7:07 p.m.)

32
33 Julie told Terri she would email her when there was a decision from the board and that she
34 absolutely needed proof of rabies vaccination. Arne told Terri the deliberation would be in private.
35 Arne said a motion would be in public, but it may or may not happen depending on the deliberation.

36
37 **Agenda Item 6, Approve Request to Cater; Blonde N Boozy**

38
39 Arne noted the name was interesting. Julie said they just needed a motion to approve. The location
40 of the catering was 397 Peck Road, Chester, VT from 4:30 p.m. to 10:30 p.m. with approximately
41 100 people. Tim moved and Lee seconded a motion to approve the request. Arne asked if Peck
42 Road was a residential neighborhood, and it was. Julie said the police were okay with it. The motion
43 carried unanimously.

44
45 **Agenda Item 7, Sign Cemetery Deed**

46
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1 Arne said it was a deed for Karen and Susan _____. The members signed the deed.

2
3 **Agenda Item 5, Adjourn**

4
5 Lee moved and Tim seconded a motion to adjourn. The motion carried and the meeting was
6 adjourned at 7:10 p.m.

7
8 **WATER/SEWER COMMISSIONER'S MEETING AGENDA**
9 **September 4, 2024**

10
11 **Call to Order**

12
13 Chair Arne Jonynas called the meeting to order at 7:12 p.m.

14
15 **Agenda Item 1, Citizen's Comments**

16
17 There were no comments.

18
19 **Agenda Item 2, Sign Loan Documents for Next Phase of Force Main and First Ave. Pump**
20 **Station**

21
22 Julie said it was for the final design and the amount was \$194,100, which was close to 10% of the
23 project. A motion was needed to authorize the Chair to sign the loan agreement in the amount of
24 \$194,100. Lee moved and Peter seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously. Arne
25 signed the loan agreement.

26
27 The next item was the resolution certificate for general obligation from the Vermont Clean Water
28 State Revolving Fund. Everyone was required to sign. Lee moved and Peter second a motion to
29 approve and sign the resolution certificate regarding the project. The motion carried unanimously.
30 Julie noted there was 0% interest and they had five years to pay it. The members signed.

31
32 Lee moved and Peter seconded a motion to approve and sign The United States of America, State
33 of Vermont, Town of Chester General Obligation Note in the amount of \$194,100. The motion
34 carried unanimously, and the members signed.

35
36 Arne asked when the project would happen, and Julie said they hoped to do it in 2025. It will
37 depend on if they can get the Hazard Mitigation Grant that would 100% fund the force main and
38 pump station, which would put them at the end of 2025. If it's simply through a loan fund, they
39 could do it sooner. Arne said it would be one less headache and it pops leaks which results in the
40 road being torn up. Julie said they are having issues on First Avenue because of the force main.

41
42 **Agenda Item 3, Adjourn**

43
44 Lee moved and Tim seconded a motion to adjourn. The motion carried and the meeting was
45 adjourned at 7:17 p.m.