

**TOWN OF CHESTER
2022 TOWN MEETING MINUTES**

Moderator William Dakin called the hybrid Informational Meeting to order at 6:00 p.m. and explained how the meeting would proceed. After reading each Article there will be an opportunity to ask questions and there will be no voting. The Pledge of Allegiance was recited. Moderator Dakin introduced the Board, Lee Gustafson, Jeff Holden, Leigh Dakin, Heather Chase and Arne Jonynas, Town Manager Julie Hance, and Town Clerk Deborah Aldrich. Moderator Dakin then read the Warning.

The Legal Voters of the TOWN OF CHESTER are hereby notified and warned to meet on Monday, February 28, 2022, at 6:00 pm., via Zoom and/or in person for a hybrid Informational Meeting on the following Articles. Voting on all Articles will be by Australian ballot on March 1, 2022, from 9:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m. at the Chester Town Hall Second Floor.

ARTICLE 1: To elect Town Officials for the ensuing year as provided by the Public Laws of Vermont.

ARTICLE 2: Shall general obligation bonds or notes of the Town of Chester in an amount not to exceed Two Hundred Eighty Thousand Dollars (\$280,000), subject to reduction from the receipt of available state and federal grants-in-aid, be issued for the purpose of providing additional funds to complete Popple Dungeon bridge, grant match on the Route 35 Construction and paving the Town Garage, Flamstead Road and Wheeler Road? Said projects and paving to be financed for a term of 7 years. *Nancy Lindsay asked where Wheeler Road is? Arne Jonynas replied off from Lovers Lane Road.*

ARTICLE 3: To see if the Town will vote to raise \$3,420,030.44 to be paid to the Chester Town Treasurer on September 15, 2022, to pay current expenses and any part of the Town's indebtedness. *Town Manager Julie Hance made a power point presentation. (Copy attached) Kathleen Giurtino asked if the skateboarder, who damaged the liner at the town pool, was ever identified. Julie Hance advised no. Tim Roper asked about the overruns on the Public Safety Building that were not included in the Bond. Julie Hance explained that early in 2021 she learned that during the planning phase that certain items would be out of contract and the town would pay for them from the budget. Tim Roper asked if it was from the contractors or someone in town administration. Julie Hance advised that it was previous administration. Steve Mancuso asked who put in a complaint about the gravel pit. Julie Hance advised that she did not know what he was talking about and to please let her know what complaint he is talking about. The Act 250 permit issues were with the State.*

Senator Alison Clarkson and Representative Tom Bock talked about work being done in the House and Senate in Montpelier.

ARTICLE 4: To see if the Town will vote to purchase the following equipment through the Capital Budget Reserve Fund: Pick-up truck for highway in the amount of \$40,000, less any trade in, to be financed for a term of 4 years beginning in 2023; A second Pick-up truck for highway in the amount of \$45,000, less any trade in, to be financed for a term of 4 years beginning in 2023; Cruiser for the police department in the amount of \$41,000, less any trade in, to be financed for a term of 4 years beginning in 2023; Mower for the Cemetery Department in the

amount of \$15,300, all as indicated on the Capital Budget Reserve Fund schedule and less any grant funds that may be received. *No discussion.*

- ARTICLE 5:** Shall the Town of Chester appropriate the sum of \$4,000 (four thousand dollars) to Meals on Wheels of Greater Springfield, Inc. for continued support and services to the citizens of the Town of Chester in accordance with 24 V.S.A. § 2691? *Leigh Dakin advised that Meals on Wheels have been serving meals for 50 years.*
- ARTICLE 6:** Shall the Town appropriate the sum of \$2500 (two thousand five hundred dollars) to support the Chester Fireworks for Independence Day, in accordance with 24 V.S.A. § 2691? *No discussion.*
- ARTICLE 7:** Shall the Town appropriate the sum of THIRTEEN THOUSAND EIGHT HUNDRED AND SEVEN DOLLARS (\$13,807) to help support the home health, maternal and child health, and hospice care provided in patients' homes and in community settings by the Visiting Nurse Association & Hospice of VT and NH, in accordance with 24 V.S.A. §2691? *No discussion.*
- ARTICLE 8:** Shall the Town appropriate the sum of THREE THOUSAND AND FORTY FOUR DOLLARS (\$3,044) to help support outpatient, mental health, and substance abuse services by the staff of Health Care and Rehabilitation Services, Inc, in accordance with 24 V.S.A. §2691? *No discussion.*
- ARTICLE 9:** Shall the Town appropriate the sum of THREE THOUSAND FORTY DOLLARS (\$3,040) to Southeastern Vermont Community Action (SEVCA) to assist Chester in responding to the emergency needs of the community and providing all available and applicable services to families and individuals in need, in accordance with 24 V.S.A. §2691? *No discussion.*
- ARTICLE 10:** Shall the Town of Chester appropriate the sum of NINE HUNDRED DOLLARS (\$900) to the Women's Freedom Center for general budget support to provide services to women and their children who are experiencing emotional, physical and/or sexual abuse and are residents of the Town, in accordance with 24 V.S.A. §2691? *No discussion.*
- ARTICLE 11:** Shall the Town raise and appropriate the sum of ONE THOUSAND TWO HUNDRED DOLLARS (\$1,200.00) for the support of Senior Solutions (formerly Council on Aging for Southeastern Vermont) for help to support seniors and their families who are trying to remain at home and not be placed in a nursing home, in accordance with 24 V.S.A. §2691? *No discussion.*
- ARTICLE 12:** Shall the Town of Chester appropriate the sum of \$2,250 (two thousand two hundred fifty dollars) for the support of the MOOver Rockingham to provide transit services to the residents of the Town of Chester, in accordance with 24 V.S.A. §2691? *No discussion.*
- ARTICLE 13:** Shall the Town of Chester appropriate the sum of \$800 (eight hundred dollars) to support Windsor County Mentors, for youth mentoring services provided to children in Windsor County, in accordance with 24 V.S.A. §2691? *Carol Theodore asked how the amounts are determined? Julie Hance advised they are*

requested amounts.

- ARTICLE 14:** Shall the Town of Chester appropriate the sum of \$400 (four hundred dollars) to Green Mountain RSVP & Volunteer Center of Windsor County to develop opportunities for people age 55 and older to positively impact the quality of life in the community of Chester through volunteer service, in accordance with 24 V.S.A. §2691? *No discussion.*
- ARTICLE 15:** Shall the Town appropriate the sum of ONE THOUSAND EIGHT HUNDRED DOLLARS (\$1,800.00) toward the support of the Community Cares Network of Chester and Andover, Inc. a non-profit organization which provides services to senior citizens, helping them to stay in their homes longer safely, in accordance with 24 V.S.A. §2691? *No discussion.*
- ARTICLE 16:** To see if the Town of Chester will appropriate the sum of THREE THOUSAND DOLLARS (\$3,000) to assist in the services of the Chester-Andover Family Center for individuals and families in need, in accordance with 24 V.S.A. §2691? *Kristine Winnicki, President of CAFS, thanked everyone for their support. 130 individuals and families were helped with food, and they had over thirty requests for financial assistance. Their workers are all 100% volunteer.*
- ARTICLE 17:** Shall the Town appropriate the sum of ONE THOUSAND FIVE HUNDRED DOLLARS (\$1,500) to Neighborhood Connections, Inc. to cover the cost of providing services in Chester in accordance with 24 V.S.A. §2691? *No discussion.*

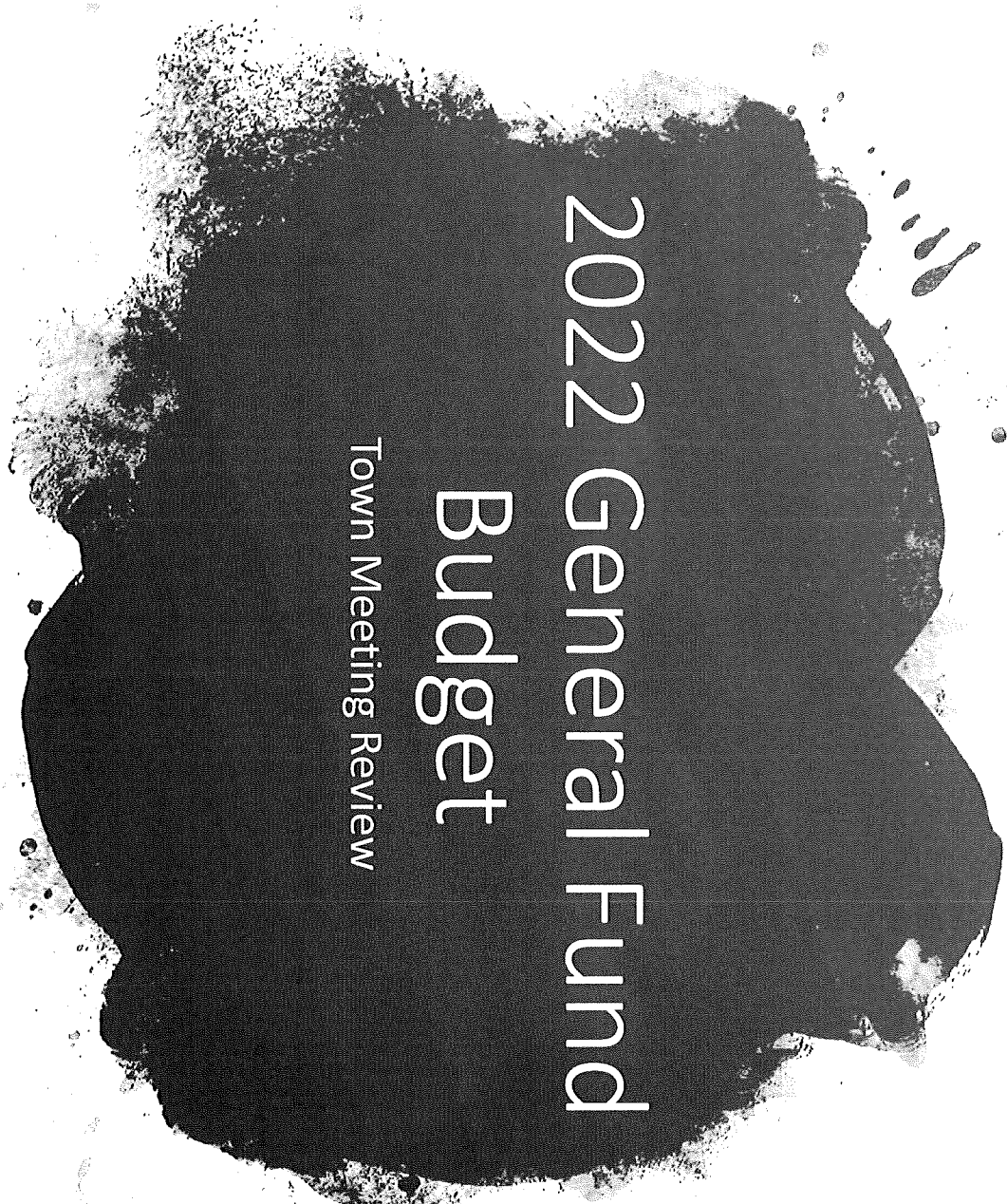
The Town Meeting was adjourned at 7:03 p.m.

A true copy.


Deborah J. Aldrich, Town Clerk

William E. Dakin, Jr, Moderator

Arunas Jonynas, Selectboard Chair



2022 General Fund Budget

Town Meeting Review

COVID ACTIONS

- 2021 was a tough year in many respects with COVID continuing to bring several hurdles
- With dramatically rising costs, all departments continued to review current practices
- Department spending was reduced to only what was necessary, putting off some items until the future
- The Town quickly developed internal policies to limit the spread of COVID throughout town departments
- To date, there has been no outbreak amongst town employees
- Town Hall and all municipal buildings are now open to full working capacity and open to the public

General Government

- The Town Office remained open and in full operation during this past year, providing its many services to the community.
- With a grant from the CARES Act, the Town Clerk's Office was able to digitize 40 years of land records, allowing Title Searches to be completed online
- Additional funding is being applied for this year with the intent to digitize all remaining land records
- Val has been joined by Cathy Hasbrouck in the Lister's office. They are working hard to stay on top of all assessing for the town as well as processing land use and homestead filings
- The grand list is now available online by parcel through the town's website.
- The town has continued its contract with NEMRC to assist with other lister functions needed throughout the year.

General Government Cont.

- The Planning/Zoning office has seen some changes this year.
- The Town has hired Preston Bristow as the new Zoning Administrator/Town Planner
- Preston comes to us with a long history in planning throughout the State of Vermont.
- Understanding the need for enforcement related issues throughout town, the Selectboard increased the ZA/Town Planner position to full time.
- Preston is working diligently to mitigate several of the junk yards in town, utilizing his professional knowledge to assist the Planning Commission in their work on the UDB changes and will be assisting with grant writing and economic development initiatives.

General Government Cont.

- The Development Review Board continues to work diligently in their permitting of Conditional Uses, Subdivisions and Variances.
- The Planning Commission continues to work very hard on the revisions to the Unified Development Bylaws. This is a very difficult task that requires a lot of time and attention to detail. Conversations are often difficult and the work is tedious, but the result is so important to the future of the town.



Public Safety

- The new Public Safety Building is completed with just a few punch list items being worked out. Fire, Police and Ambulance are completely operational in their new space
- Fire, Police and Ambulance are working on some community events to be held in the new building this summer.
- Policing in the country has changed dramatically in the past few years. Chester PD is doing its part to ensure that they are properly trained in areas such as Use of Force as well as Fair and Impartial Policing. Additional training was received in 2021 with more to come in 2022.
- The PD budget is showing a decrease this year due to paying cash for the 2021 cruiser. In reality, the PD budget is showing an increase of approximately \$10,000.
- Increase is primarily due to the external Assessment to be completed in 2022
- Capital expenses for the Police Department are reflected in the PD budget as contributions to the Capital Plan. This expense is for a cruiser purchase.



Public Safety

- The Fire Department responded to 248 calls in 2021; Details can be seen on page 41 of the Town Report
- The Fire Department budget is down from 2021.
- There are no additional capital purchases for the Fire Department in 2022. Items previously purchased through the Bond Plan are included within the Fire Department Budget as their contribution to these plans.



Public Safety

- Dan Cook resigned from Chester Ambulance after 30 years of service. Thank you Dan for all you have contributed to CAS
- Amanda Silva has been promoted to the position of Ambulance Chief
- Chester Ambulance responded to 478 calls in 2021; for details please see page 44 of the Town Report
- The Ambulance Department budget is up slightly due to an increase in training
- There are currently 9 individuals enrolled in an EMT certification class held in the new PSB
- All Public Safety departments were the recipients of PPE grants and support through various COVID programs.

Public Works

- The Highway Department has had a very busy year.
- Delays in obtaining construction materials brought about many challenges with completing projects timely.
- The Highway budget saw a deficit in 2021 due to rising construction costs. However, due to the healthy highway surplus from 2020, the department still recognizes a highway surplus. A highway surplus has to stay with the Highway Department per State Statute.
- Highway expenses are increased in 2022 due to the increased contribution to the Capital and Bond Plans.

Public Works Cont.

- Renovations to the Highway Garage have begun and are estimated to be completed in early spring.
- We are anticipating cost overruns on this project due to increases in material cost as well as the addition of new heating Modines in the building
- Highway began the installation of the bridge at the Brookside Trail. Work is expected to be completed in the spring.
- The town has finally obtained its ACT 250 permit.
- The land was cleared and a road installed. Excavation will begin in the summer of 2022.
- The Highway Budget is recognizing a small benefit at this time until the full extent of the pit is known.

Recreation

- The Recreation Department budget is showing a slight increase in 2022 due to basic cost of living increases
- Rec's contribution to the Bond Plan has been included in their budget as well
- The pool liner needed significant repairs in 2021 due to damage caused by a skateboard. In addition, the pump system saw some improvements with more to come in 2022
- 2022 will see improvements to the Skateboard park as well as the Tennis Courts

Facilities

- There is a Facilities section of the budget that breaks down Library, Town Hall, Recreation, Historic Buildings and the new Public Safety Building
- Library Budget is showing an increase to provide a stipend to the FT employees for Health Insurance
- Town Hall budget is flat but does include renovations to main floor now that PD has relocated to the new building. Offices are being reconfigured so that a small conference room can be created downstairs.
- Recreation Budget includes funds for screening one boundary at the Pinnacle, as well as repairs to the Skate Park through a grant and improvements to the tennis court

Facilities Cont.

- Revitalization budget shows a slight decrease.
- Historic Facilities line includes repairs to plaster ceiling at Academy Building, match for replacement of West Slope to roof & work at Yosemite
- The 2022 budget proposes the addition of a Facilities Director for the town. With the number of buildings and lands the town owns, this is a needed position. This individual will create a maintenance plan for all buildings thereby allowing us to be more proactive. In addition, this position will assist all departments on seasonal maintenance

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Deficit

- The General Fund is ending with a deficit, in the amount of \$147,033
- Contributors to Deficit include increased costs during COVID and cost overruns on Public Safety Building
- 2020 Audited Fund Balance \$585,709
- We are proposing that the deficit fall through to the fund balance since that is one of its purposes
- Fund Balance less deficit = \$438,675 unaudited remaining FB

Capital Plan/Bond Plan

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- This plan shows the current and 2022 proposed debt repayment schedule
 - Capital purchases being proposed in 2022 are 2 new pickup trucks for highway and a new cruiser, all financed over 4 years.
 - In addition, a new mower for cemetery with no financing necessary
 - It has been determined that a new dump truck will not be needed in 2022 allowing the town to skip a rotation
 - A \$280,000 bond is being proposed for paving town garage & wheeler Road; additional funds for Popple Dungeon & repairs to Route 35

ARPA FUNDS

- The Town of Chester will be receiving approximately \$900,000 in funds from the American Recovery Plan. \$450,000 was received in 2021 with the rest coming in Spring 2022.
- Discussion has begun regarding best uses for the funds
- Desire is to have funds used in a manner that reaches the most taxpayers and is the best use of the community as a whole
- More discussions coming in the future

Water & Sewer Departments

Water & Sewer Departments are not budgets voted on at town meeting

However, they critical part of the town's infrastructure

Both departments have a positive growing fund balance to be used for upcoming projects

Secondary Well is being evaluated with improvements to the existing well

Upgrades to the Sewer Plant will begin to be considered in 2022

Summary

- The 2022 Budget reflects an increase of \$77,000 or 2%
- A minimal increase considering the increased cost of operation during COVID
- This budget was developed balancing the needs of the town with the impact to the taxpayers
- Asking for voter support of this budget