

TOWN OF CHESTER
BOARD OF SELECTMEN

December 20, 2017
Minutes

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

VISITORS: Shawn Cunningham, Karen Horn, Richard McCormack, Tom Bock,
William Lindsay, Alice Nitka, Derek Suursoo, Alison Clarkson, Kathy
Pellett

The meeting was called to order at 6:30 p.m. by Chairman Jonynas. He then asked every one to stand for the Pledge of Allegiance.

There were no additions or deletions to the agenda

1. APPROVAL OF MINUTES:

A motion was made by Ben Whalen to approve the minutes of the December 6, 2017 Selectboard meeting. Seconded by Heather Chase. The motion passed.

2. CITIZEN'S COMMENTS:

There were no citizen's comments.

3. OLD BUSINESS:

Master Planning: David Pisha noted that the Steering Committee will be presenting to the Selectboard at a meeting in January.

EMS: David Pisha stated that the Feasibility Study is on the agenda.

Yosemite: David Pisha stated that it has been discovered that the building is significantly leaning towards the river. Mark Wesner will be looking at this issue in the spring. The windows have been boarded up and winterized. Ben Whalen questioned when the waiting period ends. David Pisha will speak with Jim Carroll. Lee Gustafson indicated that he would like to have some costs relative to moving the structure prior to spending money shoring it. Heather Chase suggested that the historic preservation committee could be a help with this.

Sunoco: David Pisha spoke with Sunoco regarding the land that is being sold by the town. Sunoco has indicated that they will grant access to the town for usage of the river frontage.

Ben Whalen stated that he would like to see a policy in place regarding the cleaning of the hydrants.

Ben Whalen stated that the fire truck is now being constructed. He also stated that the AFG Grant is nearing completion.

4. DISCUSSION WITH LEGISLATORS:

Alice Nitka stated that the bills have been submitted but there will not be discussion relative to those bills until session begins.

Arne Jonynas stated that there is a lot of concern over the education tax increase that is being discussed. Alison Clarkson stated that there has been a lot of effort made to keep taxes down. They are still researching and investigating other means. The homestead and the non-residential rates are anticipated to increase by .09 cents. Discussed ensued regarding this increase and that it is breaking the backs of Vermonters and the impact on the economy. Alice Nitka commented that this is a nationwide issue.

Alison Clarkson stated that she sits on the Economic Development Committee for the State. She indicated that the report will be presented by mid-January. This report discussed the labor issues throughout the state and how to bring more people into the work force.

Heather Chase expressed her concerns regarding the opiate crisis. Richard McCormack stated that he sits on a public concerns committee. He provided a history of the issues at hand. He further indicated that there are many things feeding this issue. Senator McCormack stated that he wants to make sure that while cracking down those that physically need the drugs get what is needed. Lee Gustafson questioned what the State is doing to strengthen the family and asked that they keep establishing healthy families in mind when creating legislation.

Dan Cote questioned the legislative members about what the town needs to focus on. Tom Bock stated that the town is doing very well and needs to keep moving in the direction that it is going. He also indicated that Chester has a tremendous recreation system which helps in growing the community. Tom Bock stated that the issue is in not knowing how federal decisions will impact locally.

Heather Chase questioned the status of the marijuana bill. This bill is still being discussed and will be voted on early in the session. Alice Nitka stated that the bill did pass, but the Governor vetoed the bill. A commission was created with a report being generated by the end of 2018. Following discussion, it was indicated that Hemp farms are already legalized. It was also indicated by Richard McCormack that driving impaired is currently illegal and the legalization laws will not change that.

Graham Kennedy stated his opinion that the Clean Water Act was adopted prior to thinking it through. He stated that the practicality and implementation of these new rules

are going to be very expensive and will not be effective when completed. Discussion ensued regarding examples of these concerns.

Alison Clarkson stated that all bills are able to be followed on the Legislative website. She also encouraged all individuals to reach out to them with questions and comments.

5. CHESTER LIBRARY UPDATE:

Kathy Pellett was present from the Whiting Library. She thanked the Board for their support of the Library. She stated that over 14,000 people have come to check out books. They are growing the number of CDs and DVDs available for checkout. The programs and children's programs are growing tremendously.

Kathy Pellett indicated that the Library has a balanced budget. This has been the first year that they have not had to draw from savings to balance their budget. Kathy Pellett presented the town with a check in the amount of \$10,000.00 which is their contribution towards the library renovations. Julie Hance explained the history of the application and renovations to the Library.

Arne Jonynas thanked the Library and employees for their contribution to the community.

6. TOWN GARAGE FEASIBILITY STUDY:

Claudio Veliz and Robert Buchan were present to provide an update on the Feasibility Study. Claudio Veliz stated that the study is substantially complete. It will be given to the printers within the next week. The Board will receive hard copies at the beginning of January.

Claudio Veliz provided his recommendation that the existing property on Depot Street will accommodate the Fire Station and Town Garage buildings separately. Ambulance can remain with the Fire Station. The Police Department should be able to remain in their current location with some renovation to the existing space. Claudio Veliz stated that an efficient design will solve most of the existing problems that currently exist.

Claudio Veliz stated that it has been noted within the study that any further design should involve the employees within the departments.

Robert Buchan revisited the wetlands permitting issue. He indicated that the State has issued their permit. It has been preliminarily determined that there is a wetland on the property. Approximately 4,000 square feet is within this area. When the project is being designed, a wetlands permit will be required. In the interim, the wetlands division has requested that the sand pile be moved. However, she did not indicate exactly what needs to be done and when.

Robert Buchan indicated that the classification of wetlands depends on whether or not there is water in the area. Most of this water is reaching this area because of roof runoff, pavement runoff and drainage. This contribution can be minimized during the planning of the structures.

Lee Gustafson questioned the buffer location. Discussion ensued regarding the sand pile. The pile does not need to be moved out of the buffer area, but needs to not slide into the water. Claudio Veliz suggested that during the design phase, the sand pile could be moved to the rear of the property which is not impacted by the buffer. David Pisha stated that he has spoken with the Wetlands Division. They were very happy to hear that the town does not put an additive into their sand. However, the sand still cannot encroach into the water.

Ben Whalen questioned if the town can still operate out of these buildings while the new buildings are being constructed. Claudio Veliz stated that this will have to be worked out during the design phase.

Claudio Veliz stated that the final hard copy will be submitted to the town in January.

7. TOWN HALL RENOVATIONS:

Julie Hance explained the application for the renovations to the Town Hall building. The estimated total is \$408,300.00. Julie Hance and David Pisha indicated that there are items that can be removed from the list at this time. They requested that the board approve \$350,000.00. There is a grant potential of up to 35%. David Pisha indicated that the payoff would be approximately \$36,000 per year over 8 years but could be financed over 9 or 10 years to make the payment smaller.

Dan Cote made a motion to approve an application to USDA in the amount of \$408,300.00. Seconded by Ben Whalen. The motion passed.

Julie Hance thanked the Historic Preservation Committee for their efforts in pulling together the items that needed to be addressed.

8. GENERAL FUND BUDGET REVIEW:

David Pisha stated that the budget has not changed significantly from the last version. General fund Surplus is \$98,769.19 with a public works \$81,218.00 surplus. Taxes up by \$126,000.00. Due to the accrual method of accounting, collection of delinquent taxes are not currently shown. The modified accrual system allows the town to include delinquent collections up to 2 months into the new year. David Pisha also indicated that there is a warrant to be run tomorrow as well as a tax sale scheduled in the end of the year.

David Pisha stated that Ron Smith also discussed the potential of changing fiscal years. This would improve cash flow and eliminate the need to borrow. This would require a 6

month municipal only tax. David Pisha discussed ways to reach this 6 months. The Board agreed to continue this discussion at some point in the future.

David Pisha reviewed the budget increase. He noted that there is a \$60,000 increase just in the revitalization line. In addition, there is an increase in the planning/zoning budget of \$28,000. In addition, SRDC has been included in the budget instead of as a voted article.

It was discussed that .03 cents will equate to \$60.00 per year on a \$200,000 assessment. Discussion ensued regarding the relationship between the municipal and education taxes.

Derek Suursoo stated that he would rather see the town garage and fire department built before the historic buildings are renovated.

Dan Cote requested that the budget have page numbers. He also asked that the term "Selectmen" be changed to "Selectboard" within the budget.

Lee Gustafson reminded the Board that the health costs need to be combined for HIPA rules.

9. WATER & SEWER BUDGET REVIEW:

David Pisha stated that the water/sewer budgets are very similar to past years. He indicated that the water fund is starting to build reserve as we approach the repayment requirement. David Pisha suggested that the sewer base rate be reviewed for a potential one time increase.

It was requested that a date and page numbers be added to the water/sewer budgets.

10. CAPITAL & BOND PLAN REVIEW:

David Pisha reviewed the capital and bond plans.

Dan Cote questioned how the bond plan affects the homeowner. David Pisha explained that the transfer from the General Fund is being maintained so that there are not spikes within the budget. The Bond Plan needs to be managed within a range. David Pisha explained the history of the Capital Plan and the new creation of the Bond Plan.

Lee Gustafson suggested that the construction of the new town garage and fire department be added into the bond plan with some form of an estimate. It was agreed that this number should be added after the design phase.

Graham Kennedy stated that there have been concerns raised by citizens regarding how vehicle rotation is done. He explained that there is documentation supporting the process that is used should people wish to talk with him.

11. NEW BUSINESS:

Ben Whalen mentioned the passing of Sgt. Mark Phelps and commented how he will be missed. Lee Gustafson suggested that a memorial be done in honor of Sgt. Phelps.

Heather Chase stated that she would like to have the opiate epidemic discussed at a future meeting. She would like to know if there is something that can be done.

Heather Chase stated that she would like to discuss the auditors' recommendation of achieving a reserve.

It was agreed to leave the next meeting for January 3, 2018.

12. ADJOURN:

A motion was made by Lee Gustafson to adjourn. Seconded by Ben Whalen. The motion passed. The meeting adjourned at 9:14 p.m.

Julie Hance
Secretary of the Select Board

Ben Whalen
Clerk of the Select Board