

TOWN OF CHESTER
SELECTBOARD

December 7, 2016
Minutes

PRESENT: John DeBenedetti; Ben Whalen; Arne Jonynas; Dan Cote; Heather Chase;
David Pisha

VISITORS: Julie Hance; Shawn Cunningham; Amy Mosher; Barre Pinske; Michael
Alon; Graham Kennedy; Debbie Aldrich; Cil Mathews; Derek Suursoo

The meeting was called to order at 7:00 p.m. by John DeBenedetti.

There were no additions or deletions to the agenda.

1. APPROVE MINUTES:

November 16, 2016:

A motion was made by Ben Whalen to approve the minute from the November 16, 2016 Chester Selectboard meeting as amended. Seconded by Arne Jonynas. The motion passed.

Page 4, paragraph 4, change to say that she was looking at regionalizing some equipment

2. CITIZEN'S COMMENTS:

Barre Pinske stated that Sheldon Anderson has asked to have fuel for snowmobiles at the Stone Hearth Inn but is not allowed to because of regulations. Barre Pinske suggested that Chester provide snowmobile fueling opportunities along the VAST Trail. He feels that this would fill a missed opportunity. Discussion ensued regarding Mr. Anderson's property and what would be required. Barre Pinske stated that he is not speaking about this one property he is suggesting that there be a separate set of regulations that apply to the VAST Trail. Michael Alon stated that businesses feel that the town has too many hurdles that businesses have to jump through. Arne Jonynas stated that this should be brought to the Planning Commission. Discussion ensued.

Barre Pinske thanked the Selectboard for appointing him to the Steering Committee. He also spoke about creating a festival grounds in Chester.

Barre Pinske spoke regarding appointments to various committees. He stated that he feels that there are people looking to get onto boards with personal agendas. He urged the Selectboard to appoint people to the boards that are looking out for the community as a whole.

Barre Pinske stated that the large trucks are parking along the road at the Jiffy Mart location and blocking the “Entrance to Chester” sign.

Michael Alon requested permission to post banners on The Green to advertise “Shop Chester” which is an event through the holidays. The shops will be staying open late on Thursday nights, until 7:00 p.m. Dan Cote stated that he made the decision to put the banners up without Selectboard approval. John DeBenedetti reminded the Board that they cannot make unilateral decisions. Michael Alon stated that this was a last minute decision and they didn’t have time to wait for the Selectboard meeting. Michael Alon stated his intention behind this initiative. Several Selectboard members expressed their okay with the sign. However, they noted that the proper process was bypassed which was inappropriate. Michael Alon stated that he is simply looking for unity among the town. Discussion ensued regarding how to proceed. Heather Chase suggested that this item be put on the next agenda. Ben Whalen stated that he would prefer that the signs be taken down. The Selectboard suggested that the signs be moved to private property and have those owners obtain permits.

Gary King praised the town and the improvements made to the recreation department. Richard Jewett stated that the Snowmobile Club will move their grooming location for the sliding hill so that the kids don’t hit the ice rink.

3. OLD BUSINESS:

Master Plan: David Pisha stated that the Steering Committee has held their first meeting. He also informed everybody that the next event will be held on Wednesday, December 14 at 5:30 at Town Hall.

Water Project: David Pisha stated that we are waiting to hear from ACT 250. All paperwork has been filed.

4. VAST TRAIL REQUEST:

A motion was made by Dan Cote to give permission for the Chester Snowmobile Club to use the following roads from November 15 until April 15. 6. Seconded by Heather Chase. The motion passed.

- After the fifth bridge on Smokeshire Road west to the new snowmobile bridge (Three Hundred yards)
- Marc’s Drive from Bonenville’s to the far end of the road
- Blue Hill Road for one hundred yards to cross the town bridge
- Ethan Allen road for one hundred yards along road to Mal-function-junction
- About two hundred feet of Nudist camp road at the intersection of Williams Road
- All of Williams Road
- The first part of Cemetery Road to the class four part by the cemetery

5. SEVCA APPOINTMENT:

A motion was made by Ben Whalen to appoint Kathy Poston to serve on the SEVCA Board as a representative of the Town of Chester to serve the current term. Seconded by Arne Jonynas. The motion passed.

John DeBenedetti stated that we should find out the term of the appointment.

6. PLANNING COMMISSION EXPANSION DISCUSSION:

Ben Whalen stated that he is in favor of leaving the Planning Commission at the current 5 member board. David Pisha stated that a 5 member board has been in effect for many years. However, Tom Bock told him that over the years, Board sizes have changed but have not worked. Arne Jonynas stated that he is comfortable with 5 members as well. He stated that one member has recently resigned and there is another term expiring in March. Heather Chase stated that since we have vacancies at this time she is in favor of leaving it to 5 members as well. However, she feels that if there is still a lot of interest in a year, then there should be discussion regarding increasing the size of the Board. Dan Cote stated that increasing the board would not be appropriate at this time due to the pending documents that are being reviewed. He feels that filling the vacancy is the most important thing right now. John DeBenedetti stated his concerns regarding large boards.

7. BUDGET TIMELINE:

A timeline for the budget was provided to the Selectboard. The budget needs to be set by January 4, 2017. The Warning needs to be approved on January 18, 2017 and signed on January 20, 2017.

8. GENERAL FUND DEPARTMENT BUDGET REVIEW:

Public Works: David Pisha stated that the budget in sand, salt and gravel has been reduced because there is already an existing stock pile. There is a mower transfer into the capital plan. Also there is a \$45,000 sidewalk repair line that would be transferred into capital to fill the shortfall on the sidewalk project. Diesel/Gasoline has been reduced. The amount of the transfer station line has been increased by \$5,000. The dump truck, loader lease payment, pickup truck, excavator payment and sidewalk payment are all included in the capital plan. The bond plan shows the addition of a tractor/leaf blower that will accomplish road side mowing and leaf blowing of the new ditches. John DeBenedetti questioned the paving line which is actually a transfer into the capital plan. The sidewalk line is a transfer into the capital plan as well to cover sidewalks. David Pisha explained the transfers into the capital plan.

John DeBenedetti questioned the price of the tractor. Graham Kennedy stated that the tractor will include the leaf blower and the road side mower. He stated that the Clean

Water Act is requiring that all ditches be stone lined. They can no longer be cleaned out with the graders, the leaves will have to be blown out. He stated that in past years there have been issues with road siding mowing. The new tractor would solve both of these issues. Graham Kennedy discussed the needs of the mower and the lack of contractors to do the work. Ben Whalen questioned the need for the 2nd grader. Graham Kennedy stated that the graders are needed most during mud season. If you get rid of the 2nd grader, we will need to rent one.

Derek Suursoo expressed his concerns regarding the debt load that the town is carrying. He also stated that he would like to see the entire debt load for the town in one chart. David Pisha reviewed the chart to provide clarification. Heather Chase stated that she would like to see the recommended debt ratio and combined numbers of total debt.

Derek Suursoo stated that he lives on a back road. The drainage for the ditching is a big deal. He also stated that the lack of roadside mowing is a safety issue.

General Government: David Pisha stated that Land Use Revenues have increased. Administration is looking for an expanded position. A memo has been provided. The Lister budget remains stable. Planning/Zoning is up slightly. Insurance is up at this time. However there are more people covered in this number than in previous years. If no changes, the costs would actually have gone down. David Pisha explained to Dan Cote that the town currently pays 100% of the health insurance. He also explained that there are 23 towns in Vermont that offer this package. Discussion ensued regarding this insurance package and the pros and cons of changing the existing coverage plan. Derek Suursoo gave his opinion that the health insurance coverage should remain. He also stated that when you reduce the amount of the coverage you are only affecting the individual property owner very slightly. Discussed continued.

John DeBenedetti discussed the workers compensation package and its increase, as well as the property/casualty insurance number. The Selectboard discussed this increase. Cil Mathews noted that this increase is primarily due to the Fire Department which is our highest risk department and their wages have doubled. Cil Mathews noted that the property/casualty insurance has increased due to increased rates, accidents and replacing equipment.

Legal fees were increased in administration from \$10,000 to \$20,000. Discussion ensued regarding these legal fees and the history of overspending the budget.

Ben Whalen questioned the increase in hours for the Administration Department. Discussed ensued regarding the need for the full time position. It was agreed that the full time position is needed. It was also agreed that the full time ambulance position could also be used to help fill in for additional projects or additional coverage.

John DeBenedetti questioned the increase in the Planning/Zoning Department. The legal fees have been increased due to spending trends. David Pisha explained that he would like to add more hours to allow Cathy Hasbrouck time to help Michael Normyle so that

he is freed up for enforcement. John DeBenedetti asked if SAPA requested funds. David Pisha said that he spoke with SAPA and he is waiting for their request.

Michael Normyle stated that he will also be freed up to help with coordinating the planning aspect of the town. This will help prevent enforcement issues in the future.

John DeBenedetti questioned if there has been any feedback on the Andover increase. David will make another call to Andover.

9. NEW BUSINESS FOR NEXT AGENDA:

It was agreed that the Library Budget, Grant Fund, Minor Funds, Water and Sewer budgets will be reviewed at the next meeting. John DeBenedetti stated that he would like to see one consolidated sheet showing all debt for all departments. He would also like to see a projection for all departments.

It was agreed that the Planning Commission appointment would take place at the January 4 meeting. Julie Hance will advertise again. She will also find out whether or not these interviews are allowed in executive session.

10. ADJOURN:

A motion was made by Dan Cote to adjourn. Seconded by Arne Jonynas. The motion passed. The meeting adjourned at 9:40 p.m.

Julie Hance
Secretary of the Select Board

Heather Chase
Clerk of the Select Board

The SAPA-TV recording of this meeting is hereby made a part of the permanent minute record of this meeting.