

TOWN OF CHESTER
BOARD OF SELECTMEN

September 6, 2017
Minutes

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

VISITORS: Stan Choiniere; Joan Choiniere; Ken Walker; Ruth Walker; Frank Bidwell; Thomas Bock; Joe Epler; William Lindsay; Anthony Cousins; Lori Quinn; Hugh Quinn; Shawn Cunningham; Julie Hance; Wanda Purdy; Jeff Ladd; Tory Denis; Cheryl Lipton; Graham Kennedy; Darcy Noble; Sylvia Dupril; Carl Gerhart; Frank Kelley; Randy Haskell; Dennis Allard; Tory Spater; Jon Hart; Scott Kendall; Doug Reitmeyer; Jeff Svec; Gary Pollard; Sue Pollard; Marylynn Wright; Deborah Savery; Gary King; Doug Somerville; Gregg Nader; Tim Roper; Nancy Chute; Ron Chute; Bill Dakin; Kelly Arrison; Claudio Veliz; Nancy Davis; Steve Davis; Rick Paterno; Mike Reeb; Jaymie Reeb; Gary Rapanotti; Suzy Forlie; Susan Ronsheim; Jay Joseph; Kevin Corliss; the Naders

The meeting was called to order at 6:33 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 Lee Gustafson to approve the minute of the August 25, 2017 Selectboard meeting. Seconded by Ben Whalen. The motion passed.

A motion was made by Heather Chase to approve the minute of the August 30, 2017 Selectboard meeting. Seconded by Lee Gustafson. The motion passed

2. CITIZEN'S COMMENTS:

MaryLynn Wright thanked the Board for replacing the back entrance.

3. OLD BUSINESS:

Master Plan: David Pisha stated that the Master Plan will be unveiled on September 27 at a special meeting. It has been presented to the Board tonight.

Water Project: David Pisha stated that he has visited the water tank site. The tank is now complete. Connection to the main line will happen soon.

Feasibility Study: David Pisha stated that Claudio Veliz is wrapping up the Feasibility Study.

Yosemite: David Pisha stated that Jim Carroll has finally received the Quit Claim Deed. The paperwork will be filed with the Court.

Mountain View: Arne Jonynas questioned the status of the Mountain View stormwater system. Julie Hance stated that the next phase is the preliminary engineering which will be applied for once funding opens up.

Rainbow Rock: The closing for Rainbow Rock took place this morning. The town is now the manager of Rainbow Rock.

4. NEW ENGLAND FORESTRY FOUNDATION:

The New England Forestry Foundation was present regarding approximately 1800 acres on Lovers Lane owned by the Tomasso Family. Bob and Peter from NEFF presented. The Power Point Presentation is attached to these minutes.

A question was raised about where the property would be accessed. NEFF does not know these answers at this time. These details would need to be worked out with the town regarding the best access point. The Tomasso family has stated that the access off of Route 103 is likely the best access.

The houses are not part of the sale. They are being separated off. There is a cabin located on the interior of the property that would be included in the purchase.

A question was raised about the property in Greentree, Vermont and the uses that are allowed there. NEFF stated that the property owners in Greentree still live on the property and manage the property. The property is well used.

Geralyn Donohue stated that the Tomasso property is in the Current Use Program. This is one layer of protection. However, the property can be removed the Current Use Program and developed.

A question was asked about whether or not property is ever sold by NEFF. Bob stated that there was one property sold to the State of Massachusetts to protect a specific wildlife species. This is very rarely done.

A question was raised about how much of the \$3.5 million have been raised. Peter stated that they are very early in the process. NEFF has just now accepted the project. They are speaking with foundations and funders to help with this property acquisition. The Tomasso family is also seeking to know the interest level of the town.

Discussion ensued regarding the use of the property and who manages and maintains it. Bob stated that off road vehicles are not allowed. However, mountain biking trails,

hiking trails, etc are uses that are allowed. Peter commented that the trails on this land are set up perfect for mountain biking. A comment was made that mountain biking is making a huge come back in this area. This has the potential to bring some money into the town.

Peter stated that there will be an open house on the property on October 7 with a rain date of October 8. This would allow the public to come in and see the property.

The group discussed the process of selecting the uses that are allowed. Bob stated that the uses have to protect the forest. There is a balance that is needed. There would be public meetings where these decisions would be made.

It was clarified that NEFF would own the property and likely keep it in current use. A question was raised about where the money comes from and if the town has to pay for it. Peter stated that they have not contacted the town to pay for it. The money is hoping to come from private donors, foundations and partner organizations.

A question was raised about hunting and fishing on the property. Bob commented that typically hunting and fishing is allowed on their properties as long as it is responsible.

NEFF does have a history of investing back in the property through tree planting, etc. This happens as money allows. Sale of timber from harvesting does provide an income that will likely get invested back into the property. Herbicide usage is not banned and is not used. Sometimes it has to be used on invasive species. Peter stated that the Tomasso family is proud of the fact that there are no invasive species on the property.

There is no current plan to construct any new structures on the property. There is also no intention of removing the existing log cabin. Camping would be difficult to monitor at the beginning.

Arne Jonynas stated that he is very excited about this project and is very supportive of protecting this land. Heather Chase stated that she like the integration of forest management and the community.

5. ASSESSOR UPDATE:

David Pisha stated that the town manager from Windsor, Tom Marsh, is here to discuss the possibility of sharing an Assessor. Wanda Purdy is retiring this year and the voters approved the elimination of the position of lister.

Tom Marsh stated that their Assessor and Lister are both retiring this year. He stated that Windsor had some concerns about how to fill this key position and learned that Chester has the same concerns.

Tom Marsh stated that Windsor would be looking for an Assessor for approximately 25 hours. He presented the Board with a breakdown of anticipated expenses. This package

would provide a benefit package so that a knowledgeable person could be obtained. David Pisha stated that Wanda Purdy has worked for the town for many years and it will be necessary to replace her with a qualified individual. The Town of Windsor will be the employer and would contract out to Chester for the number of hours that they use. Tom Marsh stated that Chester, Connecticut uses this same process and it works well for them.

Chester would still require a part time person doing the day to day operations with the Assessor. Heather Chase stated that she is in agreement. She would like to make sure that Chester is able to participate in the hiring, evaluating and reviewing of the individual selected.

The Windsor Selectboard met last night to begin discussion. Tom Marsh stated that they have identified that they need to start advertising. It will likely take some time to find the right person. Tom Marsh stated that he anticipates the creation of a hiring committee would be needed to filter through resumes. Once selected, a contract would be drafted up to make sure that all costs and hours are outlined.

The Board agreed for the town managers to move forward with advertising. Tom Marsh stated that he would like to be interviewing by early October.

6. NEIGHBORHOOD CONCERN:

Mike Reeb was present from Chandler Road representing his family and the surrounding neighborhoods. He stated that he would like to draw the Boards attention to two safety issues: 118 Amsden Hill Road and 20 Chandler Road. Mike Reeb stated that at 118 Amsden Hill Road there are piles of tires and other items that are affecting travel along this road. It leaves one lane of travel on a curve section of the road. At 20 Chandler Road, there are piles of metal and old appliances that block the site line of Chandler Road and Route 10.

Mike Reeb suggested there is also likely an environmental impact. There are large drums of unknown material that sit on the property as well as vehicles. This again causes an additional safety concern.

Mike Reeb stated that he is requesting that the Selectboard take a closer look at these issues and these properties. He would like the Board to enforce what is existing and look into what other regulations can be adopted.

Arne Jonynas questioned what the town can do, legally, at this time. He recommended speaking with the town's attorney and see what else can be done right away. Heather Chase suggested that the Health Officer visit the property.

MaryLynn Wright stated that there are small children living in the property at 118 Amsden Hill Road. Graham Kennedy stated that he is operating a salvage business at this property. There should be a conditional use permit on file. Citizens commented on the safety issues and recited incidents where accidents almost occurred.

The Board discussed the need to fix the issue and look into how to proceed. It was agreed that David Pisha and Michael Normyle will do some research on things that can be done. It was also agreed that David Pisha will contact the High School principal to make sure that buses are not dropping kids off on this property. David Pisha will also contact the health officer. The Board also agreed that they will look into pursuing a salvage yard ordinance. David Pisha will also check to see if there are attorneys that specialize in this area. Also to investigate if there is anything immediate that can be done about the material in the roadway.

Michael Normyle stated that he has been working with some State agencies to help clean up some other properties in town. However, there is only one individual that covers the entire State of Vermont. He indicated that the State has encouraged the use of the term of “salvage yard” instead of “junk”. It would be helpful for the town to adopt a “salvage ordinance”.

Michael Normyle stated that he has started the process for these properties. Letters with photographs have been sent to the property at Chandler Road. He stated that photographs have been taken of the Amsden Hill Road property and this process is beginning. Michael Normyle stated that he was cautioned to make sure that arguments are based on safety and environmental issues, not on property values and views.

Michael Normyle suggested that the Selectboard stipulate no safety issues or no environmental issues. There would need to be standards set. In addition, there is consideration that could be given to governing salvage yards and allowing them so that they could be controlled.

7. MASTER PLAN PRESENTATION:

Scott Wunderle was present from the Steering Committee. He stated that this process has been ongoing for about a year. SE Group was hired to work with the town’s Steering Committee.

Scott Wunderle stated that the Steering Committee has now completed their task. There will be a formal presentation on September 27. There will also be presentations at Newsbank and the American Legion.

The Board thanked Scott and the Steering Committee for their service.

8. ADOPTION OF DELINQUENT TAX POLICY:

David Pisha stated that the Delinquent Tax Policy was old and needed to be updated. This policy is complete rewrite of the existing policy. He stated that the biggest change is in the structure of the penalty and interest. This new structure allows a grace period for those that may have issues paying on time.

David Pisha explained that the area of delinquent tax collection has been tightened up. This new policy will also help in that area.

A motion was made by Ben Whalen to adopt the Delinquent Tax Collection Policy dated September 6, 2017. Seconded by Lee Gustafson. The motion passed.

9. ASSISTANCE TO FIREFIGHTERS GRANT:

Ben Whalen stated that Assistance to Firefighter's Grant is a federally funded grant. The Yosemite Engine Company is willing to hire a grant writer to write the grant. The grant will need to be submitted and managed by the town. The 10% match would also need to be provided by the town. The cost of a new pumper truck is approximately \$300,000.00.

The Town of Chester currently has a tanker that is 30 years old. There is a need for it to be replaced in the near future. Julie Hance expressed her support of hiring the grant writer. The grant writer would work with the town on the writing.

A motion was made by Lee Gustafson to approve the Yosemite Engine Company hiring a grant writer on behalf of the town as discussed. Seconded by Heather Chase. The motion passed. Ben Whalen recused himself from this vote.

10. VLCT ANNUAL BUSINESS MEETING DELEGATE:

David Pisha stated that this is part of Town Fair. This form is for the nomination of a delegate from the town to vote on policies and Board of Directors.

It was agreed that Julie Hance will provide copies of the policies that will be discussed for the next meeting. The Board will select a delegate at that time.

11. NEW BUSINESS/NEXT AGENDA:

Lee Gustafson stated that he would like an update on the Feasibility Study. He would also like to see a Table of Contents.

Lee Gustafson would like to have an update from another department at the next meeting if it fits.

Ben Whalen stated that the American Legion is having a 9/11 event at 5:00 p.m.

The Selectboard signed a Cemetery Deed.

12. EXECUTIVE SESSION:

A motion was made by Heather Chase to enter Executive Session to discuss the annual review of the Town Manager. Seconded by Ben Whalen. The motion passed. The Board entered Executive Session at 9:21 p.m.

A motion was made by _____ to exit Executive Session. Seconded by _____. The motion passed. The Board exited Executive Session at 8:44 p.m.

13. ADJOURN:

A motion was made by _____ to adjourn. Seconded by _____. The motion passed. The meeting adjourned at 8:45 p.m.

Julie Hance
Secretary of the Select Board

Heather Chase
Clerk of the Select Board