

**Town of Chester
Selectboard’s Meeting
Thursday, April 11, 2024
Municipal Complex
Approved Minutes**

I. Preliminaries

Call the Meeting to Order
Roll Call
Pledge of Allegiance
Chairman’s Additions or Deletions
Public Comment (10 minutes)
PACT Appointment
Fire Department Budget Cuts Revisited
Review Budget and Warrant
Consent Agenda
Chairman’s Announcements
Roundtable
TA Report
Action Items
Potential Non-Public Sessions
Adjournment

1.1 Call to Order

Chairman Myette called the meeting of the Chester Selectboard to order at 6:00pm.

1.2 Roll Call

Selectboard Present:

Chuck Myette
Stephen Landau
Dana Theokas
Dick Trask

Selectboard Absent:
Steve Couture

Town Administrator Debra Doda

Members of the Public Present at various times:

Aaron Berube, Police Chief
Joe Castricone
Phil Gladu, Fire Chief / EMD
Karl Knudsen
Rich LaBlanc
David LaVita

Nancy Myette

and other persons unknown to the Recording Secretary.

1.3 Pledge of Allegiance

Chairman Myette led the attendees in the Pledge of Allegiance.

1.4 Chairman’s Additions or Deletions

Selectman Landau asked for the fields to be added, discussions will be during roundtable.

1.5 Public Comment

Mr. LeBlanc, 605 Fremont Road, pointed out the roads in town are falling apart. Former Road Agent Oleson was always trying but never had enough funding. Mr. LeBlanc pointed out the school is allowed to keep a certain percentage of the excess funding each year, maybe the excess money from the school can be returned to the town to fund roadwork. Selectwoman Theokas mentioned the voters in town voted to allow the school to keep those funds.

Mr. LeBlanc feels that putting a shim course on some roads will be the best value for the town. A section of Fremont Road was previously shimmed, and it has lasted many years. SOR Piper believes that section of was actually reclaimed, not shimmed.

As no other Members of the Public wished to be heard, Public Comment was closed at 6:03pm.

II. Appointments

2.1 PACT Appointment

Mr. Knudsen mentioned Mr. Grimm and Mr. Castricone have been discussing his return to the committee for about six months.

Mr. Castricone said he has been helping out since early spring and will be setting everything up for Town Meeting. There is a lot of new equipment to learn in the studio. Charman Myette is glad to see Mr. Castricone helping out again in the studio. Selectman Trask welcomed him back.

Selectman Landau motioned to appoint Joe Castricone to the PACT Committee with a term to expire May 31, 2027. Selectman Trask seconded the motion. A roll call vote was taken Myette – aye, Trask– aye, Theokas –aye, Couture –absent, Landau – aye. With four in favor, the motion passed.

2.1 Fire Department Budget Cuts Revisited

Chief Gladu had supplied the justification for his budget and would like the Board to reconsider the cuts they made to the on-call, annual testing, and full-time salary lines.

Chief Gladu has implemented a program and the number of on call members responding is improving. During the storm, they had thirty calls for the two days and had a total of eight people responding.

They were able to cover three calls simultaneously. Chairman Myette pointed out the budget committee is asking for additional cuts, and it would be hard to justify increasing the budget. Selectman Landau congratulated Chief Gladu on the negotiations for the new pumper. Chief Gladu was able to find a pumper and negotiate the price. The cost will be \$639,190.00 and the town has the funding available in the Fire Department Apparatus Capital Reserve Fund.

Selectman Landau motioned to approve the purchase of the Fire Department pumper.

A warrant article is needed since the residents will need to vote for the expenditure from the Fire Department Apparatus Capital Reserve Fund. Chief Gladu is working on setting up a show and tell of the pumper before Town Meeting.

Selectman Landau amended the motion.

Selectman Landau motioned to approve the purchase of the pumper contingent upon the approval at Town Meeting, thanked Chief Gladu, and have the show and tell of the pumper at Town Meeting. Selectman Trask seconded the motion. A roll call vote was taken Myette – aye, Trask – aye, Theokas – aye, Couture – absent, Landau – aye. With four in favor, the motion passed.

Chief Gladu mentioned the refurbishment of the Quint is on the CIP in a few years.

III. New Business

3.1 Budget Review

Chairman Myette mentioned at this point the Selectboard and Budget Committee have two different budgets. Selectman Trask advised the Budget Committee is looking for the Town to have no higher than a 5% increase. Selectman Landau pointed out the budget can be dropped further but the Town will not be able to provide the services the residents are asking for. Selectman Landau commended the Recreation Department; the pickleball program has been successful and the players donated the funds to have the lines painted on the floor in the MPR.

Chairman Myette pointed out the Town is in a good position. The Town is debt free, collects on a timely basis, and has a healthy unassigned fund balance which can and has been used to lower taxes. He would like to look at what is really needed and not just make cuts to the budgets.

Selectwoman Theokas asked where the funds for the repairs to Lane Road came from. Town Administrator Doda stated those funds came from the Unassigned Fund Balance with DRA approval.

The Board discussed the employees’ salaries with the longevity and COLA adjustment. The Budget Committee has asked for a reduction in the COLA. Last year was the first COLA adjustment for the employees. Selectman Trask mentioned the longevity will help in the future to get the employees back on track. Selectman Landau is not in favor of changing the employees raises. There are other areas in the budget that can be cut. One example is the Transfer Station snow plowing, the town owns a machine that can be used for snow removal and if the storm is too big, we can close for the day. Another line to cut is the street lighting.

The Budget Committee is meeting on Monday with their final proposed budget. The Selectboard will hold another meeting on Wednesday night to finalize their budget. The public hearing is on Thursday.

Chief Berube asked for the revised budget to be sent to the Department Heads, so they know where the cuts were made.

The Board discussed the warrant articles and whether to move forward with them.

Selectwoman Theokas asked for a reduction of \$250K from taxation in #beta one - Highway CIP CRF Funding. A few numbers were thrown out and the Board settled on \$1,403,798.00 with a tax impact of \$1.90.

With the reduction in funding the Board questioned if all the work could be done. Town Administrator Doda replied yes. Selectman Landau suggested Dump Road be removed. Selectwoman Theokas is in favor of removing even though they have a proposal by a donor that would save the town money. SOR Piper is in favor of keeping Dump Road. This deal is not going to get any better, and it will be the town’s engineer overseeing the project and done to the town’s standards. The final decision was to keep the warrant article as is.

Selectman Trask suggested lowering the amount to \$150K for #delta one Fire Department Apparatus CRF Fund considering the town has the funding needed for the pumper purchase. The Selectboard agreed with the change.

Town Administrator Doda mentioned the addition of \$5K in the Fire Department Apparatus Spending Warrant for equipment transfer.

Winter Road Maintenance ETF Funding can be amended on the floor at Town Meeting if not all \$105K is needed.

The line in the budget for legal is \$60K which the Town uses every year. The suggestion was to take \$30K from the budget and fund the rest from the Legal Costs Expendable Trust Fund. The Selectboard will need to be agents to expend. Selectman Trask asked for the cap to be removed. If this warrant article passes the Board will take \$10K from the legal line in the budget.

Chairman Myette explained #iota one – Establishment and Funding of Bridge Repair and Replacement CRF is to help fund the repair costs for the red listed bridges in town. Selectwoman Theokas pointed out many of the warrant articles are being funded from the unassigned fund balance. She suggested prioritizing the warrants.

Article #iota two – Establishment and Funding of Contingency Fund will be used for emergencies in the Town. Selectwoman Theokas asked if there was a definition of an emergency. There is not, however there will need to be a public hearing prior to utilizing the fund. If nothing is expended from the account that fiscal year, it will go back into the unassigned fund balance.

Selectman Trask asked for the one-time brokerage fee to be added to the article for the Post Office Lease Warrant Article.

The Board discussed the need to speak to the petitioned warrant articles for hand counting at the elections. If these are passed, the Town needs to know this will increase the budget.

Article #upsilon – Conservation Easements was condensed to one article with approval from Mr. Chouinard, Chairman of the Conservation Commission.

Selectman Trask suggested Chairman Myette and Town Administrator Doda renumber the articles for Wednesday night’s meeting.

Chief Berube asked where the Selectboard feels the budget is going. Chairman Myette advised there are two budgets at this point. Chief Berube pointed out the increase for the COLA and longevity were morale builders for the employees in town. If you look at the town’s top three departments, all of them have openings. The departments are trying to retain the employees they have and attract qualified candidates.

Chief Berube suggested utilizing more funding from his special detail account to purchase the cruiser for the Police Department in order to keep the COLA at 4% like they had motioned. Selectman Trask stated this would not help with the budget. Chairman Myette thanked Chief Berube for the suggestion. He pointed out the number being thrown is a five percent increase. It is a bottom-line budget; the board will look at where they think they might be able to cut but in actuality some of the budget lines might be overspent in departments. That will be the operating problem for each of the departments going forward if these major reductions being asked for are passed.

IV. Consent Agenda

4.1 Veterans Credit & 4.3 Elderly Exemptions

Selectman Landau pointed out a discrepancy in one of the documents. This document will be removed.

Selectman Trask motioned to approve the Veterans’ Credit and Elderly Exemptions requests. Selectman Landau seconded the motion. A roll call vote was taken Myette – aye, Trask– aye, Theokas –aye, Couture –absent, Landau –aye. With four in favor, the motion passed.

4.2 Minutes March 7, 14, 21, 2024

Selectman Trask motioned to approve the minutes of March 7 & 14, 2024. Selectwoman Theokas seconded the motion. A roll call vote was taken Myette – aye, Trask– aye, Theokas –aye, Couture –absent, Landau – abstained. With three in favor, the motion passed.

Selectman Trask motioned to approve the minutes of March 21, 2024. Selectwoman Theokas seconded the motion. A roll call vote was taken Myette – aye, Trask– aye, Theokas –abstained, Couture –absent, Landau – abstained. With two in favor, the motion passed.

4.5 Intent to Excavate

Chairman Myette stated this is for the Garabedian property; they excavated 66,000 cubic yards and are asking for another 100,000 cubic yards this year. Chairman Myette stated the 100,000 yards is the numbers that were put forward to the Planning Board not to exceed.

Selectman Trask motioned to approve the Intent to excavate. Selectwoman Theokas seconded the motion. A roll call vote was taken Myette – abstained, Trask– aye, Theokas –aye, Couture – absent, Landau –aye. With three in favor, the motion passed.

4.4 Disabled Credit

Selectman Landau motioned to approve the Disabled Credit request. Selectwoman Theokas seconded the motion. A roll call vote was taken Myette – aye, Trask– aye, Theokas –aye, Couture –absent, Landau –aye. With four in favor, the motion passed.

V. Selectmen’s Business

5.1 Chairman’s Announcements

Chairman Myette announced the following meetings:

Monday, April 15th, 2024 @ 7pm Budget Committee – Main Meeting Room

Monday, April 15th, 2024 @ 7pm Spring Hill Farm – Rangeway Meeting Room

Tuesday April 16th, 2024 @6pm Solar Working Group – Rangeway Meeting Room

Tuesday April 16th, 2024 @7pm ZBA Meeting – Main Meeting Room

Wednesday, April 17th, 2024 @ 6pm School Board – Chester Academy

Wednesday, April 17th, 2024 @ 6pm Selectboard – Main Meeting Room

Thursday, April 18th, 2024 @6pm Selectboard (Budget, Warrant, SB2 Public Hearing at 6:30pm)
– Main Meeting Room

Chairman Myette announced the following events:

Saturday, April 13th from 9am – 12pm The Annual Rabies Clinic will be held Rain or Shine at the Town Hall. Please contact Ark Animal Homecare for an appointment and to pay in advance.

5.2 Roundtable

Selectman Landau pointed out the flooding issue on Nichols field is still an issue. Selectman Landau has been working on the funding for the project. The baseball/ softball league and Booster Club have agreed to make donations. Selectman Landau is waiting for word from the School Board if they are also willing to help fund the project. Selectman Landau is hopeful there will be no expenditure from the town. Selectman Trask asked if there were available impact fees. There is about \$1,500.00 available in impact fees and those will be used for the project.

Chairman Myette reiterated the Town knows there is a drainage problem on the upper field. The Board had previously approved funding for a project on the fields; Chairman Myette asked if that work been done. Selectman Landau does not believe that work has started. Chairman Myette inquired if the two projects can be done simultaneously. Selectwoman Theokas and Selectman Landau explained the project, and where the water would drain.

Selectman Trask suggests a motion to approve the fields to be fixed. Selectwoman Theokas clarified they would be accepting the donation from Chester baseball and softball for \$4500.00 and a donation from the booster club, impact fees from Recreation. They are just waiting for the donation amount from the School Board. Chairman Myette asked if the Town would be supplementing the remainder

of the project with funding from the town. The board agreed it would be supplemented with town funds.

Chairman Myette stated all the permits need to be in place prior to any work being done.

Selectman Trask motioned to approve the repairs to the town fields up to \$10K utilizing donations from Chester baseball and softball, booster club and school board, Recreation impact fees, and the remainder to be supplemented by the Town. Selectwoman Theokas seconded the motion. A roll call vote was taken Myette – aye, Trask– aye, Theokas –aye, Couture –absent, Landau –aye. With four in favor, the motion passed.

Selectman Landau mentioned Maintenance Director Cavanaugh has been receiving quotes for the roofs. Chairman Myette pointed out discrepancies with some the bids that have been received.

Selectman Trask is exploring a grant for a generator utilizing the hoop building as the matching funds.

Selectman Trask asked the Board if he could put together a five-person exploratory committee to start looking into the space needs for the Highway Department.

Selectman Trask motioned to for a space needs committee for the highway department. Selectman Landau seconded the motion. A roll call vote was taken Myette – aye, Trask– aye, Theokas –nay, Couture –absent, Landau –aye. With three in favor, the motion passed.

Selectwoman Theokas asked if the Board just wanted to isolate it to the Highway Department, she believes we should have a strategic land plan. Chairman Myette mentioned there has been a strategic land protection plan committee for many years, but it was dissolved about three years ago. Chairman Myette feels there should also be a committee for 84 Chester Street. Selectwoman Theokas would like to wait to form other committees after the Town elections.

Selectwoman Theokas is working with Mr. Bellemore for a moose grant to help with the repairs to the headstones in the cemeteries.

Chairman Myette mentioned the seniors have two trips planned. One will be on Mount Washington, and the other will be to Fosters for lunch.

5.3 Town Administrator’s Report
Nothing to report.

5.4 Action Items
Nothing to report.

5.5 Non-Public Session(s)

Chairman Myette announced non-public sessions on reputation.

Selectman Trask motioned to go into non-public session pursuant to 91-A:3(II) (c) reputation. Selectman Landau seconded the motion. A roll call vote was taken Myette – aye, Trask– aye, Theokas –aye, Couture –absent, Landau –aye. With four in favor, the motion passed with Couture absent.

The meeting was closed to the public at 9:30PM. Mr. Bourcier remained in the meeting room.

Mr. Bourcier departed the meeting room at 10:11 PM.

Selectman Trask motioned to come out of non-public session. Selectman Landau seconded the motion. A roll call vote was taken Myette – aye, Trask– aye, Theokas –aye, Couture –absent, Landau – aye. With four in favor, the motion passed with Couture absent.

The meeting was reopened to the public at 10:47 PM.

Selectman Trask motioned to seal the minutes of the first non-public session, on Property. Selectman Landau seconded the motion. A roll call vote was taken Myette – aye, Trask– aye, Theokas –aye, Couture –absent, Landau – aye. With four in favor, the motion passed with Couture absent.

Selectman Trask motioned to seal the minutes of the second non-public session, on Reputation. Selectman Landau seconded the motion. A roll call vote was taken Myette – aye, Trask– aye, Theokas –aye, Couture –absent, Landau – aye. With four in favor, the motion passed with Couture absent.

Selectman Trask motioned to seal the minutes of the third non-public session, on Reputation. Selectman Landau seconded the motion. A roll call vote was taken Myette – aye, Trask– aye, Theokas –aye, Couture –absent, Landau – aye. With four in favor, the motion passed with Couture absent.

Selectman Trask motioned to seal the minutes of the fourth non-public session, on Reputation. Selectman Landau seconded the motion. A roll call vote was taken Myette – aye, Trask– aye, Theokas –aye, Couture –absent, Landau – aye. With four in favor, the motion passed with Couture absent.

Selectman Trask motioned to seal the minutes of the fifth non-public session, on Public Employees. Selectman Landau seconded the motion. A roll call vote was taken Myette – aye, Trask– aye, Theokas –aye, Couture –absent, Landau – aye. With four in favor, the motion passed with Couture absent.

Selectman Trask motioned to seal the minutes of the sixth non-public session, on Reputation. Selectman Landau seconded the motion. A roll call vote was taken Myette – aye, Trask– aye, Theokas –aye, Couture –absent, Landau – aye. With four in favor, the motion passed with Couture absent.

VI. Adjournment

Selectman Trask moved to adjourn the meeting. Selectman Landau seconded the motion. A roll call vote was taken Myette – aye, Trask– aye, Theokas –aye, Couture –absent, Landau – aye. With four in favor, the motion passed with Couture absent.

The meeting was adjourned at 10:52 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

398 Janis A. Jalbert
399 Recording Secretary