

**Town of Chester
Selectboard’s Meeting
Wednesday, April 17, 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)
- Finalize Budget and Warrant
- Chairman’s Announcements
- Potential Non-Public Sessions
- Adjournment

1.1 Call to Order

Chairman Myette called the special 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
- Justine Celentano, Tax Collector/ Town Clerk
- Victor Chouinard
- Marianne Duffy, Finance Officer
- Phil Gladu, Fire Chief / EMD
- Corinna Reishus, Recreation Director

and other persons unknown to the Recording Secretary.

1.3 Pledge of Allegiance

Chairman Myette led the attendees in the Pledge of Allegiance.

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1.4 Chairman’s Additions or Deletions

None

1.5 Public Comment

Chairman Myette mentioned a letter was sent to the Board to be a part of the record for the public hearings.

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

II. Appointments

None

III. New Business

3.1 Budget Review

Chairman Myette stated the reason for calling this meeting is to decide where the Selectboard’s budget will be on the warrant. The Selectboard sent an increase of roughly 6% over last year to the Budget Committee. The Budget Committee focused on a 5% increase and on Monday slashed it even further to a 4.05% increase.

Town Administrator Doda mentioned the Board can legally utilize the unassigned fund balance as offsetting revenue. Selectman Landau suggested lowering the hired equipment and legal lines to one dollar and offset it with the unassigned fund balance. Selectman Trask suggested letting the voters cut the budget and see what services will be cut with those cuts. Chairman Myette would like to keep the 6% before the warrant article that if passed would decrease it to 5%.

Selectman Trask suggested a decrease in the maintenance budget, with the Maintenance Director leaving during fiscal year 24-25. Selectwoman Theokas feels the Budget Committees 4.8% increase over LY is unreasonable. Selectman Landau feels it is not smart to go to Town Meeting with two budgets, but the Budget Committees budget will cut services in town. Chairman Myette suggested the Board determine what they need for a budget and if the target is 5%, we can make the cuts.

The Board decided to take out \$60K from the budget. \$30K each from legal and maintenance full time.

Selectwoman Theokas motioned to move forward with the budget. Selectman Landau seconded the motion.

Ms. Duffy inquired if the Board would be hiring a full-time person to replace the full-time employee that will be leaving. The Board decided to take the funds from the part-time line.

Chief Gladu asked if the Board had discussed the additions he had requested in the Fire Department budget. Chairman Myette feels the annual testing should be increased back to the \$9K. The Board discussed the full-time line and increased it to the original request in hopes of finding someone. It was decided to leave the on-call line as is. Chief Gladu pointed out they are only 4 months into the new system and that might not be enough funding. Selectman Landau stated services may need to be cut if the budget is too tight.

101 Selectman Landau suggested the snowplow line for the Transfer Station be cut to one dollar. Someone
102 was hired that can run the equipment and the highway department can help if needed. Selectwoman
103 Theokas recognizes the transfer station is over staffed. Residents get their trash into their vehicles;
104 they can also get it out. Chairman Myette has heard great things about the Transfer Station from
105 residents in town.

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107 Ms. Celentano mentioned this is her first budget and the Budget Committee cut \$10K from the Town
108 Clerk/Tax Collector assistant salary line without a conversation with her. If the \$10K is cut from her
109 budget there will be service implications. Ms. Celentano explained the assistant is not her personal
110 assistant, she is a certified municipal agent. She covers the counter while Ms. Celentano does the work
111 required of her by RSA. Selectman Landau reminded Ms. Celentano this is a bottom-line budget.
112 Chairman Myette stated the Department Heads should have had discussions with the Budget
113 Committee.

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115 Town Administrator Doda wanted to confirm the 6.15% budget was without utilizing the unassigned
116 fund balance. They discussed the use of the unassigned fund balance. If the Board decides to utilize
117 the unassigned fund balance, they will need to make an amendment on the floor.

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

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121 **Selectwoman Theokas motioned to move forward with the budget as revised and take \$80K from**
122 **the unassigned fund balance. Selectman Landau seconded the motion. A roll call vote was taken**
123 **Myette – aye, Trask– nay, Theokas –aye, Couture –absent, Landau – aye. With three in favor, the**
124 **motion passed with Couture absent.**

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126 Town Administrator Doda worked with Chairman Myette on the order for the warrant articles. The
127 Land Use Change Tax warrant article will need to have a public hearing, and it has been noticed for
128 the May 2nd Selectboard meeting.

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130 The Board will vote to move the warrant articles forward.

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132 Article #9 – Repurposing of Mosquito Abatement Expendable Trust Fund was moved forward
133 unanimously.

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135 Article #10 – Legal Costs ETF was moved forward unanimously. If the article fails, the interest will
136 need to be transferred out.

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138 Article #11 – Repurposing of 300th Anniversary Celebration CRF was moved forward unanimously.

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140 Article #12 – Repurposing of Commemorative Monument CRF was moved forward unanimously.

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142 Article #13 - Petition – SB2 must stay on the ballot as it was petitioned. Chairman Myette,
143 Selectwoman Theokas, and Selectman Landau are opposed, and Selectman Trask abstained.

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145 Article #14 – Municipal CIP CRF Funding was moved forward unanimously.

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147 Article #15 – Municipal CIP CRF Spending was moved forward with Chairman Myette, Selectwoman
148 Theokas, and Selectman Landau in the affirmative, and Selectman Trask opposed. Selectman Trask
149 suggested taking \$50K from the hired equipment line in the budget if this warrant article passes.

150 Town Administrator Doda reminded the Board there are other pieces of equipment rented for the
151 Highway Department.

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153 Article #16 – Operating Budget was moved forward.
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155 Article #17 – Town Revaluation CRF Funding was moved forward with Chairman Myette,
156 Selectwoman Theokas, and Selectman Trask in the affirmative with Selectman Landau opposed.

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158 Article #18 – Town Master Plan CRF Funding was moved forward unanimously.
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160 Article #19 - Winter Road Maintenance ETF Funding was moved forward unanimously.
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162 Article #20 – Emergency Contingency Fund was moved forward unanimously. If this is not needed
163 during the fiscal year it will go back into the general fund.

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165 Article #21 – Establishment and Funding of Vested Vacation Benefit ETF was moved forward
166 unanimously.

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168 Article #22 – Municipal Complex Roof Replacement was moved forward unanimously with the
169 understanding this number is only a section of the roof not the entire roof.

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171 Article #23 – Highway CIP CRF Funding was moved forward unanimously.
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173 Article #24 – Highway CIP CRF Spending was moved forward unanimously.
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175 Article #25 – Fire Department Apparatus CRF Funding was moved forward unanimously.
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177 Article #26 – Fire Department Apparatus CRF Spending was moved forward unanimously.
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179 Article #27 – Municipal Improvement CRF Funding was moved forward unanimously.
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181 Article #28 – PACT Fund SRF Spending was moved forward unanimously.
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183 Article #29 – Wason Pond Causeway Bridge is being sponsored by a matching grant and funds from
184 the Conservation Commission. The Board decided not to go forward with this warrant article. Town
185 Administrator Doda mentioned there will need to be a public hearing to accept the donation.
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187 Article #30 – Conservation Easements was moved forward unanimously.
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189 Article #31 – Complete Road Discontinuance was moved forward with Chairman Myette,
190 Selectwoman Theokas, and Selectman Landau in the affirmative with Selectman Trask opposed.
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192 Article #32 – Solar Array was moved forward with Chairman Myette and Selectwoman Theokas in
193 the affirmative, Selectman Landau abstained, and Selectman Trask opposed.
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195 Article #33 – Post Office Lease was moved forward with Chairman Myette, Selectwoman Theokas,
196 and Selectman Landau in the affirmative, and Selectman Trask opposed.
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249 ***Selectman Trask moved to adjourn the meeting. Selectwoman Theokas seconded the motion. A***
250 ***roll call vote was taken Myette - aye, Trask- aye, Theokas -aye, Couture -absent, Landau - aye.***
251 ***With four in favor, the motion passed with Couture absent.***

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253 The meeting was adjourned at 8:14 PM.

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255 Respectfully submitted,

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257 Janis A. Jalbert
258 Recording Secretary