

CHESTER BOARD OF SELECTMEN
REGULAR MEETING
WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 11, 2017
CHESTER TOWN HALL
203 MIDDLESEX AVENUE
CHESTER, CT

CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order by First Selectwoman Gister at 7:02 PM. In attendance included: First Selectwoman Gister, Selectwoman Janecek, Selectwoman Linn, and an audience of citizens, including the Chester Energy Team, Peter Harding, Pat Woome, Ed Meehan and Bill Bernhart, as well as Denny Tovey, Library Building Committee.

Lauren Gister made a motion to add to the agenda a discussion on Electric Vehicle Charging Stations under "New Business". Carolyn Linn seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

APPROVAL OF DECEMBER 28th, 2016 MINUTES

Charlene Janecek made a motion to approve the minutes from the 12/28/16 meeting, with corrections. Carolyn Linn seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Corrections:

Noise Ordinance section: Change "...would encompass the entire town/would not be zonal..." to "...and would not be limited to the Village District."

Page 3, third paragraph: remove "though not based on zones..." from the sentence.

Page 3, fourth paragraph: change "if they are interested in..." to "in favor of..."

AUDIENCE OF CITIZENS - None

NEW BUSINESS

E TEAM RECOMMENDATIONS—PURCHASE AND CONVERSION OF STREETLIGHTS

Peter Harding, Pat Woome, Ed Meehan and Bill Bernhart, members of the Chester Energy Team, updated the BOS on the process and next steps relative to the LED conversion and purchase of streetlights. (Please see 'Chester LED Street Light Conversion Project' packet attached)

Eversource will be converting all streetlights to LED over the next five years, and have already begun to do so in some surrounding towns, including Deep River. If the municipality purchases the lights and converts on their own, there are two major

benefits: 1) the Eversource rate change for LED streetlights owned by the town is vastly lower than “renting” the lights from the utility; and, 2) converting privately gives Chester more control over wattage, color and tone of the lights.

The ETeam has interviewed the three lighting contractors recommended and approved by the Connecticut Conference of Municipalities (CCM) for converting municipal streetlights to LED. The E Team recommends Tanko for the project. Tanko has the lowest cost, best customer reviews, and highest quality product. Tanko also seems to have the most experience and the most completed projects in Connecticut thus far.

The BOS discussed the parameters of the project including number of poles, the length and cost of the project, and potential savings to the Town, which is substantial.

Lauren Gister reported that the deadline to notify Eversource of Chester’s intent to purchase the lights is 4/17/17. The anticipated duration of the conversion project is 8 weeks. Tanko will be invited to a Town Meeting to review the project. Ed Meehan reported that nearby towns have already converted to LED and he suggested residents review the lighting in these towns.

The Town has budgeted \$75,000 in fiscal year 2016-2017 to purchase the streetlights; however, for the conversion project, the Town will need to borrow funds from Eversource at 0% interest with a repayment schedule of 4 years. Even with the loan payback, Chester will save money on the electric bill immediately. Over the next ten years, after accounting for the loan payback and for maintenance charges, it is estimated that Chester will save between \$200,000 and \$250,000 in streetlight electric billing.

Charlene Janecek made a motion to approve the project as outlined by the E-Team, authorize First Selectwoman Gister to sign a letter of intent with Tanko and forward same to the BOF for further action. Carolyn Linn seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

LIBRARY BUILDING COMMITTEE/NORTH QUARTER PARK REDEVELOPMENT

Denny Tovey, Library Building Committee, requested a status on the library building project.

Lauren Gister reported that current efforts for protection and improvements to Chester include the redevelopment of North Quarter Park and Library, the Main Street project, revitalization and repair of the Meeting House, Cedar Lake and watershed protection and streetlight purchase are all in some form of development and evaluation over the past few years. The Board of Selectman are working to place all of the needs and projects for Chester under a strategic umbrella in order to properly prioritize and fund these items. This will be accomplished, in part, by a “Visioning Project” to ask Chester’s residents about their vision for Chester’s future

and develop a plan to work cooperatively to accomplish those goals. The North Quarter Park Redevelopment Project, including the library, drainage correction, playground, and other items, along with other town projects, will be prioritized throughout the process. This Visioning Project will be part of Phase I of the town's Plan of Conservation and Development (POCD), which is planned to begin this spring. The First Selectman, P&Z, BOF and EDC will meet to work on the POCD. It is hoped that the Visioning portion of this effort will be substantially complete by the end of July, 2017.

The BOS discussed current and past projects and outstanding debts on same. The Board discussed the possible sources of funding for the North Quarter Park Redevelopment and Library, and agreed to approach the Town Treasurer and Board of Finance to request creative ideas for funding and information to provide the committee with some numbers to give residents some ideas about what this large project would mean to the taxpayer.

Lauren Gister stated that the name of the Committee was perhaps misleading, since it implied that the project was confined to the library building and did not encompass all of the factors that would be included. A suggestion was made to change the name of the Library Building Committee to the North Quarter Park Redevelopment and Library Committee, since it was originally two committees and the project is much larger than just a library building. The Board agreed that, prior to even requesting a vote on the issue, residents should be briefed on the results of the architectural design for the building and the scope of the project as a whole, along with the budgetary and tax ramifications. Denny Tovey suggested that the informational meeting could be scheduled as soon as March or April. Ultimately, this project will be included in the strategic plan developed through the visioning project, however Chester should do as much work as possible to keep the residents informed and to preserve the \$1,000,000 library grant awarded to the town, which, without an extension, will expire later this year. Ultimately, a town vote will decide whether or not this project moves forward.

TAX COLLECTOR SUSPENSE LIST

The board discussed the Tax Collector's 2017 suspense list based on bills that have been unable to be collected from the 2015 Grand List. It should be noted that all accounts put on suspense may still be collected (the town did collect some of them last year).

Charlene made a motion to approve the Tax Collector's suggested Suspense List, and forward it to the BOF for approval. Carolyn Linn seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

WINTER CARNIVAL

Lauren Gister reported that a letter to the State requesting permission to close Route 148 during the Winter Carnivale has been prepared.

In the past, the town has covered the costs of police associated with the Winter Carnivale through the Police Overtime Budget. These costs have generally been between \$1500 and \$2500. Carolyn Linn reported that the estimated police costs for the event this year are approximately \$10,000.

The BOS discussed the amount of police coverage necessary for the event. James Schaefer, Fire Department, explained that the size of the event has increased, and officers are needed not only for the road the event is located on, but also to direct traffic to detours at other intersections. He also stated that as the event has grown in size, safety is an issue, as parking on the road has become a hazard and makes it impossible for emergency vehicles to access areas of town.

Policing needs and the costs for the event will be discussed further with the State Police and in coordination with Essex and Deep River, who may have some constables available to assist. The large increase in the estimated cost is due to fewer constables being available (therefore more troopers needed at higher cost) and more protective policies required by the State Police due to recent world events. In the meantime, Lauren will forward to the State the request for road closure.

APPOINTMENTS TO BOARDS AND COMMISSIONS

The form required for nominations to Boards and Commissions will include a section assuring the Board of Selectmen that an individual is registered to vote prior to being appointed to a Board/Commission. This is a longstanding requirement however several volunteers have been unable to be appointed because they were not voters.

Currently, there are 5 vacancies on the Cedar Lake Advisory Committee.

Lauren Gister made a motion to appoint the following individuals to the Cedar Lake Advisory Committee: Christine Darnell (Inland Wetland Rep.), term to expire 7/1/17, Rick Holloway (Conservation Rep.), term to expire 7/1/17, Christopher Hayward (member at large), term to expire 7/1/17, Nancy Byrne (member at large), term to expire 7/1/18. Camp Hazen will be sending a representative as well. Charlene Janecek seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

The Committee has a meeting scheduled on January 30, 2017.

ADJUSTMENTS TO TERMS FOR BOARDS, COMMISSIONS, AND COMMITTEES

APPOINTED VS. ELECTED OFFICIALS

The board discusses 'Statutory Information About Elected and Appointed Officials. (sheet attached).

The statutes require that certain positions/seats MUST be elected, but some may be changed by ordinance. (See attachment). Many individuals do not have time or the desire to run for positions; when this happens, the position simply defaults back to

appointing whoever was already in the “seat” after the election, or the “seat” remains empty.

The protocol for changing a “seat” from elected to appointed was discussed. Lauren reported that while not required, any such changes should go before a Town Meeting so that residents can be updated/informed on any potential changes. Additionally, the Connecticut State Statutes allow for the Selectmen positions to be two years or four years, with or without a Town Charter. Currently, the Board of Selectmen are the only elected town officials who serve a four year term; all others are either four or six year terms. None of the current Selectwomen feel that this is an appropriate topic to broach during an election year, as it may appear to be self serving, however it seems that having a longer term of office may allow for more continuity of knowledge and also be less disruptive to ongoing projects such as construction or revitalization of buildings.

Charlene Janecek commented that ballots are costly and it is difficult to get individuals to run for office. The Board agrees that it may be more effective if some positions could be appointed vs. elected.

POLICE ISSUES; SALARY, PRIVATE DUTY BILL PAYING, FILLING OF VACANT CONSTABLE POSITION

The board discusses the open constable position and ways in which to fill the two shifts per week it requires. An announcement to fill this position will be posted next week.

There is also discussion on invoicing for private events. Currently, the town bills \$55 per hour, plus \$10 per hour for a police car. This amount is not enough to cover the required costs to the town. Peter Evankow and Lauren Gister suggested raising the price to \$75 per hour, plus \$12 per hour for a car.

The board also discusses the lack of a pay scale or step program for Constables.

REVISED MEETING HOUSE RENTAL FORM WITH DEPOSIT

The revised Meeting House rental form, including a \$150 deposit for the use of lights and sound equipment has been finalized.

ELECTRIC VEHICLE CHARGING STATIONS

The E team suggested that an electric vehicle charging station be included as part of the Main Street Project. Pat Woomer reported that funds may be available as part of the VW settlement for an electric car charging station in the municipal parking lot on Water Street. Charlene Janecek made a motion to authorize the Energy Team to apply for the federal funding for electric car charging stations. Carolyn Linn seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

SELECTWOMAN'S REPORTS

Charlene Janecek reported that the Merchant's Association briefly discussed a 'selfie station' with wifi.

Carolyn Linn reported that to draw attention to their establishments, several Main Street merchants have requested that a new sign, "Shops and Galleries" be installed on the north side of Main Street. The sign would include an arrow. This sign is included in the Main Street Project; however, the merchants would request that it be placed sooner. This item will be discussed further at a future BOS meeting.

The BOS discussed the potential opening where Ceramica is currently located, but nothing has been finalized. The board also discussed the future of the location that previously housed Homage.

Lauren Gister reported on the recent mid-year state cuts to ECS (4.2%, \$28,759.00). Other towns will realize from .5% to 90% cuts in their funding. In addition, LOCIP funds, used for capital improvements, have been frozen. Chester's currently has approximately \$70,000 "saved" in this frozen account. LOCIP funds are typically distributed in March. We had anticipated approximately \$28,000 in LOCIP funds this year.

Legislative priorities for the RiverCOG include unfunded mandates, minimum budget requirements, and mandatory regionalized health districts.

AUDIENCE OF CITIZENS

Jim Schaefer reported two individuals have been hired at Chester Ambulance. These individuals have been hired at a reduced rate. He continued that will apply for a SAFER Grant for retention and a staffing positions with the possibility of a full time chief. The deadline for submittal is February 11th. They are also waiting on the AFG (Assistant to Fire Fighters) grant.

ADJOURNMENT

Carolyn Linn made a motion to adjourn the meeting 9:32 p.m. Charlene Janecek seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Respectfully Submitted,

Mary Jo Helchowski
Clerk