

THESE MINUTES ARE SUBJECT TO APPROVAL AT THE NEXT BOARD OF SELECTWOMEN
MEETING

CHESTER BOARD OF SELECTWOMEN
Regular Meeting
February 22, 2017
7:00 p.m.
Community Meeting Room
Chester, Connecticut

CALL TO ORDER

First Selectwoman Lauren Gister called the meeting to order at 7:02 p.m. In attendance included: Selectwoman Carolyn Linn, James Schaefer, Fire Department, Erik Anderson, Dawn Parker (Chester Carnivale Committee), and Jeff Foggitt. Absent: Selectwoman Charlene Janecek.

APPROVAL OF FEBRUARY 8, 2017 MINUTES

Lauren Gister made a motion to approve the minutes 2/8/17 BOS meeting as presented. Carolyn Linn seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

AUDIENCE OF CITIZENS

Dawn Parker, Chester Carnivale Committee member, submitted a letter regarding policing in the Town of Chester, including costs, amount of coverage for events and the selection process used to assign a Resident State Trooper to the Town (the Trooper assigned to Chester should match the “personality” of the Town). Lauren reported that the Town does participate on the selection of the Trooper assigned to Chester; however, the State ultimately decides who is assigned to the Town. A discussion was had regarding how the town pays for the resident trooper program, and how costs are determined (the State determines the salary and benefit levels that we pay for the trooper, who then submits a budget request to the town for constables, equipment and other necessary line items for adequate police services. Ultimately, the Board of Selectmen and Board of Finance winnow down the police budget along with the rest of Chester’s budget during a series of budget workshops that are open to the public).

The BOS discussed the policing protocol used at the recent Winter Carnivale event, including a breakdown of costs (substantially higher than prior year’s coverage of the same event) associated with increased police presence. Due to state requirements, the police presence was increased at the Carnivale. The state required that all detoured intersections be “manned” by a trained officer of some type, whether State Trooper, municipal constable or fire police. The Town did negotiate with the State Police and surrounding towns to utilize trained municipal officers and Police Explorer volunteers at a lower rate. Lauren reported that Trooper Ewing did submit a plan for policing the Chester Carnivale, and that the State Police Sergeant was also present at the meetings.

A gentleman reported that the history of the Carnivale should be considered when determining the number of police required for the event. He continued that the excessive police presence was not warranted. Ms. Parker requested the State's policy, in writing, regarding the protocol used for planning events, i.e., the number of police required. Lauren commented that the State wanted to be prepared for any emergency situation that may have arisen at the Carnivale.

Lauren reported that events that are sponsored by other entities, 4 on the Fourth, Chester Fair, Lobsterfest, although they take place in Chester, they contract directly with the police and are considered "private duty". The Town does not pay for police services at these events.

Ms. Parker suggested that because of the costs associated with the Resident State Trooper program, statistics and demographics in Chester, perhaps now is the time to consider a police department. Lauren responded that costs associated with a town police department may be substantially higher than utilizing the State Police.

Ms. Parker commented that the use of the Resident State Trooper program is not appropriate for the town of Chester (excessive costs, fees). She suggested that a Committee be formed to investigate the matter further.

Carolyn Linn requested clarification on the State's policy for use of private security (trained traffic "flaggers"). Costs at the Carnivale would have been substantially lower if the Winter Carnivale Committee was able to use private security for the event.

A gentleman thanked the Town for allowing the Boy Scouts to hold a fundraiser at the Carnivale.

Carolyn Linn clarified that the Carnivale is an event sponsored by the Merchant's Association and is not a Town event.

Lauren will review the matter of policing in Chester further and report back to the BOS. She will also respond, in writing, to the letter submitted this evening.

NEW BUSINESS

WINTER CARNIVALE REPORT

Carolyn Linn reported that the final report on the Carnivale is currently being developed. Overall, the event was a success. Vendors all reported that they had a great day. Approximately 5,000 people attended the event. Carolyn continued that the Winter Carnivale Committee will be meeting to discuss possible improvements to the event, including "policing".

TELEPHONE SYSTEM—LONG TERM PLAN FOR REPLACEMENT

Lauren Gister reported that while the current telephone system is adequate, the server supporting the system is old, outdated and parts are no longer available for it.

The phone company has been using parts from “spare” servers to address concerns; however, the server will need replacement. Costs to replace the server are approximately \$16,000 to \$20,000.

Documentation regarding a new system was distributed to the BOS for review. If the intent is to replace the system in next year’s budget, funding should be allocated for the project.

Lauren Gister also states that she would also like to explore the possibility of boosting cell service to Chester.

PRELIMINARY BUDGET

Lauren has reviewed the preliminary budget with Peter Evankow, including increases to line items. The Police and the Capital budgets were reviewed in detail. After this review, approximately \$230,000 in “low hanging fruit” was realized.

The State’s preliminary budget shows significant changes to many areas, including how education is funded; particularly pensions, Resident State Troopers, and capital.

Lauren reported that the Regional Probate Court’s lease with the Town of Old Saybrook has expired. Currently, the Court does not pay rent to Old Saybrook. There is a possibility that the Court will be relocated or Old Saybrook may request that the participating Towns contribute to rent.

The BOS discussed the Fire Department’s proposed budget increase (up 7%) including personnel costs. (See BOF DOCUMENTS FEB 16, 2017). Mr. Schaefer reported that the personnel line was underfunded last year. There is a possibility of increased billables.

PERSONNEL POLICY MANUAL

Lauren Gister reported that the current Personnel Policy Manual is outdated, does not reflect the actual practices of the Town and requires updating; particularly to the bereavement leave section, longevity plan, hiring procedures, health insurance, and definitions of a ‘full time’ position (possibly increasing it to 30 or 35 hours per week).

The BOS discussed the possibility of including a Social Media Policy section to the document. The BOS will create a list of items that should be changed immediately; remaining items will be discussed at a future BOS meeting.

SELECTWOMAN’S REPORTS

Deep River Transfer Station – Lauren Gister and Carolyn Linn will continue to work with the Town of Deep River to ensure fair payment to the Deep River Transfer Station for Chester’s waste removal. The BOS discussed the lack of controls at the dump and the need for an accurate system to track Chester waste being taken to the Deep River Transfer Station.

Carolyn Linn reported that Chester is paying more for bulky waste removal than surrounding towns, even though Chester residents are not able to dispose of household trash at the Deep River Transfer Station. A possible charge for dump stickers was discussed briefly.

The BOS discussed the protocol for appointing individuals to Boards/Commissions. Anyone wishing to fill a vacancy on a Board or Commission should contact their respective political party. If the individual is unaffiliated, they should contact the Selectwoman's office directly.

AUDIENCE OF CITIZENS

Dawn Parker suggested that the Town may wish to hire a consultant for budget review.

ADJOURNMENT

Carolyn Linn made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 9:04 p.m. Lauren Gister seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Respectfully Submitted,

Mary Jo Helchowski
Clerk