

TOWN OF CHESTER, CONNECTICUT
Board of Selectmen
Regular Meeting
Wednesday, April 25, 2018
203 Middlesex Ave.
Community Meeting Room

CALL TO ORDER

First Selectwoman Gister called the meeting to order at 7:02 p.m. In attendance included: First Selectwoman Gister, Selectman Grzybowski, Selectwoman Janecek, Susan Wright, Virginia Carmany, BOF Chairman, Dick Leighton, Fire Marshal and John Brainard, Fire Chief.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

James Grzybowski made a motion to approve the minutes from the 4/11/18 BOS meeting. Lauren Gister seconded the motion. The motion passed with Charlene Janecek abstaining from the vote.

APPOINTMENTS TO BOARDS AND COMMISSIONS – None.

LAND USE BUILDING DEPARTMENT FEE REVIEW

Dick Leighton updated the BOS on proposed changes to the Land Use and Fire Marshal fees. The proposal and addendum were included in the BOS packet. The BOS discussed same. Fees are not intended to be punitive or to deter economic development, they allow the town to re-coup expenses, not make a profit.

Mr. Leighton reported that he reviewed the current fees in the Building and Fire Marshal departments. The building fees apply to construction, electric, plumbing etc., per the cost of the job. The proposal includes a rate increase. The proposed increase will bring Chester's fee rate in line with surrounding towns (Deep River, Essex). Mr. Leighton provided a spreadsheet showing the fees in neighboring towns (note that no two towns have the exact same fees). The State requires a portion of the fee collected (.26 per \$1,000).

The current and proposed Fire Marshal fees were discussed, including commercial plan review, liquor license, fireworks (including time spent at event as required), fire scene calls and reports, and inspections (including re-inspections as necessary). The State allows the Town to issue permits and charge fee because the Fire Marshal's office is mandated to perform inspections.

Mr. Leighton clarified the protocol and fees associated with the re-submittal of plans and parameters for temporary permits/licenses vis a vis non-profit events. Mr. Leighton reported that the BOS has the authority to waive fees.

Lauren will clarify Town Meeting and Ordinance requirements for fee and related matters with the Town Attorney and Mr. Leighton will provide additional information as requested by the BOS (parameters for re-inspection fees). BOS members will review documentation provided and discuss further at a future BOS meeting.

HOUSING COMMITTEE

Lauren reported on the lack of affordable housing in Chester and surrounding towns. The State has prioritized the need for affordable housing and has provided for exceptions for developers of affordable housing (incentive housing zones). Lauren clarified the difference between affordable housing (workforce housing, 30% of monthly income for housing costs) and low-income housing.

The State's goal for each town is to provide 12% affordable housing. The Legislature recently rejected legislation calling for the ineligibility of discretionary funds for towns not meeting the goal set by the State. The bill no longer includes the financial dis-incentive.

In the past, Chester had an Affordable Housing Committee. The Committee was active and provided research a result of property studies. The goal was to identify property for potential affordable housing. Many of the properties identified in this study have since been developed. Lauren distributed information to BOS members for review. Lauren suggested that an Ad Hoc Housing Committee be formed to address the issue. Said Committee may work with the POCD committee to some extent and there may be Planning funds available. The BOS will discuss further at a future meeting.

SUSTAINABLE CT

The Sustainable Connecticut program was introduced at the CCM conference. This free, voluntary, statewide (currently 40 towns are registered) certification program calls for the development of well-rounded and economically thriving communities. Chester has already completed many of the criteria for certification including providing energy efficient buildings, solar panels, watershed education, Cedar Lake weed removal, streetlight conversion, etc. Sustainable CT can, at no cost to Chester, allow us to "toot our own horn" as a great place to live and work. It would also allow Chester to keep track of initiatives that preserve our environment and access potential funding sources.

To join the program, a BOS resolution is required along with a revision to the E-Team's role. Lauren has discussed the initiative with the E-Team. Part of the mandate of the Sustainable Committee is to work within the POCD. Lauren distributed information on the program to BOS members. The BOS discussed same. Lauren will submit an application to the Committee for analysis.

Lauren Gister made the following motion:

That the Town of Chester support and participate in the Sustainable Connecticut Municipal Certification Program;

Whereas, Sustainable Connecticut is a comprehensive state-wide action oriented, voluntary certification program built by and for municipalities with the vision that: Sustainable Connecticut communities strive to be driving, resilient, collaborative and forward looking. They build community and local economy, they equitably promote the health and well-being of current and future residents and they respect the finite capacity of the natural environment;

Whereas the Sustainable CT is designed to boost local economies, help municipal operations become more efficient, reduce operation costs and provide grant and additional support to municipalities;

Whereas Chester embraces an ongoing process of working toward greater sustainability, selecting which actions it chooses to pursue from the voluntary menu of actions provided by Sustainable CT;

Resolved by the BOS of the Town of Chester that we do hereby authorize Lauren Gister to serve as Chester's Sustainable CT contact person for the Sustainable CT Municipal Certification process and authorize her to complete muni registration on behalf of the Town of Chester;

Resolved that to focus attention and effort within Chester on matters of sustainability and in order to promote the BOS's local initiatives and actions toward Sustainable CT Municipal Certification, the Chester BOS hereby expands the Energy Committee, known as the E Team, and revises its role to serve as a Municipal Sustainability Team.

Resolved that the first meeting of the Sustainability Team must be held within 90 days of passing this resolution and that the Sustainability Team shall meet as frequently as needed but no less than quarterly.

Resolved that the Sustainability Team shall report annually to the BOS on the progress of its activities toward Sustainable CT certification with reports and presentations made publicly available.

Charlene Janecek seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

WATER STREET – KEY BANK

Lauren reported that Key Bank is moving out of the 9 Water Street location and listing the building for sale. It was reported that no bank will be allowed to purchase the property (deed restriction).

The Key Bank building is in a “prime location”. There has been some discussion in Town that the property could perhaps be used as a library/community center. The parameters of the State Library Grant were briefly discussed.

The lease between Essex Savings Bank and the Town was briefly discussed.

The above information was for informational purposes only.

SELECTMEN’S REPORTS

Lauren Gister reported:

- Maple Street – home in disrepair and vacant. The owner of the property has been notified to no avail. The Town intends to secure the property for safety purposes.
- The Budget Hearing Presentation is scheduled 5/9/18 and the legal notice has been sent to paper.
- Lauren has been receiving complaints regarding speeding, air brakes and running stop signs throughout various locations in Chester. The incidents have been reported to the Troopers for additional enforcement.

Charlene Janecek reported on voter registration at the high school. Twenty-seven young adults registered to vote throughout the 3 towns.

AUDIENCE OF CITIZENS

Susan Wright requested that the BOS and BOF videotape their meetings. Lauren responded that she has looked for volunteers to videotape the meetings to no avail. Lauren suggested that perhaps the BOS can purchase a camera to video the meetings themselves. Lauren has scheduled a meeting with the staff at the local TV station to pursue videotaping the meetings.

Susan reported on the need for descriptions/parameters for each Board/Commission. This may encourage interested individuals to volunteer to serve on a Boards or Commission.

ADJOURNMENT

On a motion made and duly seconded, the meeting was adjourned.

Respectfully Submitted,

Suzanne Helchowski
Clerk