

THESE MINUTES ARE SUBJECT TO APPROVAL AT THE NEXT BOS MEETING

TOWN OF CHESTER, CONNECTICUT
BOARD OF SELECTMEN
REGULAR MEETING
Wednesday, August 28, 2019
203 Middlesex Avenue
Chester, Connecticut

CALL TO ORDER

First Selectwoman Gister called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. In attendance included First Selectwoman Gister, Selectwoman Janecek, Selectman Grzybowski, and approximately 12 audience members.

AUDIENCE OF CITIZENS

Robert Galbraith expressed dismay about a recent incident at the Chester Fair and reported that because of “influence” First Selectwoman Gister exerted over the Chester Fair Committee, Ammo Crafters was asked to leave the fair. He commented that the BOS “should be ashamed of themselves”.

Lauren responded that she attended Chester Fair on Saturday, 8/24/19 and was approached by a Deep River resident who expressed concern that a vendor (Ammo Crafters) was displaying merchandise (t-shirts with weapons) in the area of a school bus. Lauren approached the vendor and commented to the vendor that it was not a good “visual”, at a family event, to have t-shirts with weapons on them in the vicinity of a school bus; especially in light of recent events and the fact that school would be starting in a few days. The vendor was argumentative and immediately wished to discuss the 2nd Amendment; however, Lauren had no issues with what was on the shirts (guns); it was merely the placement of the booth in the vicinity of a school bus. She continued that she understood that the vendor does not choose their site location (this is done by the Chester Fair Committee). Lauren then approached the Fair Office and reported that it was not a good “visual”, at a family event. She did not direct the Chester Fair Committee to do anything. She spoke as a resident, not as the First Selectwoman.

Mr. Galbraith expressed disappointment that the First Selectwoman allowed the Chester Fair Committee to remove the vendor. Lauren responded that the Chester Fair is a private organization and neither the Town nor herself as a private citizen was part of their decision-making process.

Tim Comstock, President Chester Fair, agreed that the vendor’s merchandise was not appropriate at a family event and reported that after reviewing the vendor’s merchandise (ammo, bullet can openers and t-shirts depicting guns, etc.) he asked the vendor to leave. He continued that, in hindsight, he should have simply asked the vendor to remove the t-shirts and allowed the vendor to remain at the Fair. Mr. Comstock added that he received complaints from various individuals attending the Fair.

A gentleman commented that one booth “was permitted to have a “Dump Trump” display at the Fair”.

Ray Guasp reported that fair officials should do their due diligence when choosing vendors. He continued that he spoke to the vendor and the vendor would have, if asked, removed the t-shirts. Mr. Guasp suggested that someone should apologize to the vendor (either the Fair Committee or First Selectwoman). Lauren responded that she had had a conversation with the owner of Ammocrafters that day.

Michelle St. Marie, Vice President Chester Fair, reported that this incident will be used as a learning experience and the Board will review protocol and be more careful in future vetting processes.

Annette Babbick warned against becoming an exclusionary event.

David White commented that there were no guns at the vendor's booth, just t-shirts. Mr. Comstock responded that the t-shirts offended people and in light of recent mass shootings, he felt it inappropriate.

David White commented that it was ironic that people with guns (State Troopers) were asked to remove the vendor.

Lauren responded that the police explorers assisted the vendor in backing up his vehicle but that no police were involved in removing or escorting the vendor from the Fair. Mr. Comstock confirmed that the Fair Committee did not ask for police assistance and that the vendor was very cordial during the conversation.

Mr. Comstock reiterated that in hindsight he should have asked him to do away with the tee shirts only. He continued that the placement of the school bus did not play a role in his decision.

Lauren commented that in her opinion, the placement of the school bus relative to the vendor was a concern.

Ray Guasp suggested that in order to move forward, the First Selectwoman should issue an apology to the vendor. He agreed that it was in poor taste to have the vendor in the vicinity of the school bus but commented that the vendor should have simply been asked to remove the t-shirts.

Lauren reiterated that she spoke to the gentleman today.

Lori Ann Clymas, vendor at the Fair, reported that families and parents were complaining about the t-shirts and the placement of the school bus relative to the t-shirts. She commented that social media was "out of control" and that the Fair Committee did their best at the time to deal with the situation.

Mr. Guasp commented, and Mr. Comstock agreed, that the political booths should not be permitted at the Fair. The Fair is a place for families to go for a few hours "to get away from political views".

Lauren thanked the Public for their comments this evening.

APPOINTMENTS TO BOARDS AND COMMISSIONS – None.

APPROPRIATIONS

As previously reported, the Town realized a greater than anticipated end of year surplus. The BOS discussed the possible use of these funds to facilitate projects throughout the Town; i.e. the Meetinghouse floor, trees, etc.

Prior to requesting BOF action on an appropriation, Charlene Janecek will solicit estimates to complete the Meetinghouse floor project (main floor of the Meetinghouse, not the entryway). The file with

information relative to the project is available in the First Selectwoman's office. Currently \$60,000 is budgeted for the project.

Lauren reported that, as previously discussed, additional tree work and funding for same is necessary. She is meeting with the Tree Warden to discuss the additional funds needed to address safety concerns relative to trees.

Lauren is also in the process of ascertaining cost estimates for a Phase 1 and 2 study of the Skyview property.

The BOS will make a request to the BOF for an appropriation once all estimates are received.

MAIN STREET PROJECT

The Town Engineer is finalizing plans for the project and developing a traffic plan for the duration of the project. The goal is to not close the road completely unless absolutely necessary. Audience members were encouraged to review the plans that were available at the meeting.

Jamie reported on the recent Main Street Committee meeting including:

- Signage will be removed from "the wall".
- Appropriate lay down areas were identified. The Maple Street parking lot will not accommodate both additional parking and a "lay down" area. It was recommended that perhaps the flagpole area may be used for a "lay down" area for some portion of the project (perhaps the final paving).
- The use of native plantings was discussed. Note that some of the plantings suggested by the Conservation Commission may not be appropriate for the area.
- Lauren will discuss the status of the hydrant with the Water Co. The intent is to have piping to the hydrant completed now but no installation of the hydrant.

Lauren reported that she is working with P&Z on the 8-24 review in accordance with the POCD. She is also working with Attorney Bennet on necessary easements for drainage and streetlights; both temporary and permanent.

Eversource will be contacted relative to additional electrical needs. It was reported that placing electrical wires underground can be requested but is cost prohibitive.

The Merchants have scheduled a meeting on 9/4 at Masonicare. They have requested a status report on the project and the Maple Street parking lot. Lauren will be in attendance at the meeting.

SELECTMAN'S REPORT

Lauren reported on the following:

- The Goodspeed at Chester's NAA (Neighborhood Assistance Act) application in the amount of \$32,000, was accepted. The program provides tax exemptions for funds donated for energy efficiency improvements.
- Small Cities Grant awards have not yet been announced. The Cherry Hill housing complex submitted an application for the program.

- Dale Kroop is developing a plan to reinstate the Small Cities Rehabilitation Program. The \$190,000 in the account may be used to assist qualified homeowners to make necessary repairs to the property.

Jamie reported:

- The ambulance replacement is nearing completion. He will inspect the vehicle in September. Whelen will install the lights and it is anticipated that the vehicle will be in operation sometime in October.
- School begins tomorrow. The playground project has not yet been completed due to the delay in the receipt of parts. It is anticipated that the project will be completed next week.
- Two individuals at the school are trained on ALICE (Alert, Lockdown, Inform, Counter and Evacuate) protocols. St. Joseph's and the synagogue will also have staff trained on the program.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Charlene Janecek made a motion to approve the minutes from the 8/14/19 meeting. James Grzybowski seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Charlene Janecek made a motion to add to the agenda an additional "Audience of Citizens". James Grzybowski seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

AUDIENCE

Marta Daniels expressed dismay that the DTC and RTC committee may not be permitted at the Chester Fair in future years. She stressed the importance of maintaining the tradition of their participation to facilitate distribution of their literature, meet the candidates, etc. The Town Committees should not become a victim of the incident that took place last weekend. They are an important part of the community, have had a presence at the Fair for almost 50 years and have a right to rent space at the Fair.

Charlene encouraged Ms. Daniels to attend the Fair Meeting (3rd Monday of the month, 7 p.m. at the Fairgrounds) to raise her concerns as the Town/BOS has no purview over the Chester Fair.

ADJOURNMENT

Charlene Janecek made motion to adjourn the meeting at 8:05 p.m. Jamie Grzybowski seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Respectfully Submitted,

Suzanne Helchowski
Clerk