

THESE MINUTES ARE SUBJECT TO APPROVAL AT THE NEXT BOF MEETING

TOWN OF CHESTER CONNECTICUT  
BOARD OF FINANCE  
REGULAR MEETING  
Thursday, October 17, 2019  
Community Meeting Room  
Chester Town Hall

CALL TO ORDER

Chairman Carmany called the meeting to order at 7:34p.m. In attendance included: Virginia Carmany, Jennifer Rannestad, Jon Joslow, John O'Hare (seated for Charlie Parks), Mike Joplin (seated for Dave Cohen), Richard Strauss (seated for Rick Nygard), First Selectwoman Gister, Selectwoman Janecek, Selectman Grzybowski, Peter Evankow, Accounts Manager, John Schroder, Susan Wright, and Scott Mills, Tree Warden.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

**Jennifer Rannestad made a motion to approve the minutes from the September 19, 2019 BOF meeting. John O'Hare seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.**

The BOF had a discussion regarding the format and content of BOF minutes.

NEW BUSINESS

Annual Report Dedication

The BOF discussed the BOF Annual Report dedication.

Jon Joslow and Jamie Grzybowski will write the dedication for the Annual Report and forward Virginia Carmany, who will present to the BoF and then send to the Administrative Assistant in the First Selectwoman's office.

Discussion Special Appropriations/FEMA Reimbursements to Capital

**Jennifer Rannestad made a motion to add to the agenda a vote on special appropriations. Jon Joslow seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.**

As previously reported, the Town realized a greater than anticipated end of year surplus. Documentation developed by First Selectwoman Gister regarding to the items to be considered for funding was distributed to the BOF. The status of the anticipated but not yet finalized CES surplus was discussed.. Peter Evankow will follow-up with the appropriate personnel.

Tree Work – To date, approximately \$50,000 has been expended on trees and another \$30,000 is expected to be utilized by end of December. The BOS requested \$40,000 in additional funds for tree work.

The BOF had an extensive discussion on the safety concerns relative to dead and diseased trees throughout the Town and an appropriate amount of funding to be allocated to address same. Several questions were asked of the Tree Warden, Scott Mills. Scott indicated that the work will continue for several years as trees are still dying and the cost will be significantly higher that the budget expected for this and next year. He also noted, because of a change in policy, Eversource is no longer addressing all trees; they find it more cost effective to fix downed wires in some areas than to remove trees. Eversource has also prioritized by 3 pole (more densely populated areas) which leaves some areas vulnerable to falling branches as the trees die.

BoF increased the amount from \$40,000 to \$55,000 to transfer and release for expenditure.

**Jennifer Rannestad made a motion to approve a transfer in the amount of \$55,000 from the Assigned in Capital Account into the Tree Removal line item, pending Town Meeting approval. Jon Joslow seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.**

**Michael Joplin made a motion to approve the expenditure of \$55,000 from the Tree Removal line item, pending town meeting approval. Jon Joslow seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.**

The importance of prioritizing Capital projects/items (fire trucks, etc.) was briefly discussed.

Brownfields – Kenyon/Skyview property – 59 Winthrop Road - approximately \$28,000 for Phase I and Phase II – Note that Phase II costs are dependent upon the results of the Phase I. The Town acquired the property due to unpaid taxes. The Town has a waiver of liability through the CT Brownfields program for past contamination. In order to market and ultimately sell the property and return it to the tax rolls, the condition of the property must be documented. Lauren reported that depending on the outcome of the testing, DEEP has grant money available for clean-up of contaminated properties.

An RFP will be developed for Phase I of the property. It is anticipated that the same contractor will also perform the Phase II portion of the project.

**Michael Joplin made a motion to transfer the amount of \$28,000 from Board of Finance Contingency to the Building/Grounds Outside Contractor line to facilitate the environmental study on the Kenyon/Skyview Property – 59 Winthrop Road. Jon Joslow seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.**

Lauren Gister is requesting the BoF approve releasing additional monies from Capital at this time and move the floor replacement task from 2021 to 2020. Gister indicate no “firm” cost estimates available at this time (approximately \$40,000 in additional funds necessary) but distributed an current estimate firm H.P. Broom. Currently approximately \$62,000 available for the project. Additional costs may be realized because the Meetinghouse is on the Historic Register and the project will need to go through the State’s Historic Preservation Office. Note that mechanical trades work was not estimated but the total has been increased to possibly account for this work. Other options are not included e.g. Neutrocrete, mold disinfectant treatment and drainage from an estimate prepared by H.P. Broom. The Meetinghouse floor project will need to go out to bid; a draft RFP was available for BOF review. Lauren Gister indicated that the Meeting House is used extensively and she has cleared time in January and February 2020 for this work to be done, dependent on timing of an RFP, bidding and contractor availability.

**Jennifer Rannestad made a motion to transfer the amount of \$40,000 from the Capital Assigned account to the Town Building Repair Code Compliance/Meetinghouse Floor account, pending Town Meeting approval. Jon Joslow seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.**

**John O’Hare made a motion to authorize the expenditure of \$102,000 from the Town Building Repair Code Compliance/Meetinghouse Floor account pending town meeting approval. Jennifer Rannestad seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.**

Note: While the tree funds will not change what will likely be budgeted for these purposes in the next fiscal year, both the environmental evaluations and the Meetinghouse floor replacement being done sooner will save the taxpayers from having to include these requests in the 20-21 budget.

A Funds Request sheet, developed by First Selectwoman Gister, relative to the release of \$64,500 from the Main Street III Capital Improvement Account for soft costs associated with the Main Street Project was distributed to the BOF and discussed extensively. The funds to complete the design for the project have been budgeted and approved to be set aside in capital. Projects include easements/legal fees, additional engineering, construction management relative to

“walls”, test pits, easement map, SHIPPO, Jacobson’s participation at additional meetings as requested by Main Street Committee, and the bidding process.

Lauren reported that the request also includes costs associated with a plan to keep downtown vital during the construction period. A committee has been formed to design a plan for marketing, signage and communication. After getting advertising quotes from two magazines and attending the first two committee meetings, it is estimated that \$15,000 would be an appropriate amount to set aside for this process.

Several individuals stressed the importance of beginning the project as soon as possible. Any delay will have a negative effect on the Merchants. It is anticipated that the construction on Main Street will begin in mid-March and end sometime in June.

The “void” project, costs and responsibility of same was discussed by the BOF. While the property owners are responsible for the work, the Town will design/engineer the project to ensure that it is done properly.

Mr. Schroder outlined parameters of the proposed work to be done up Maple and Spring Streets to address grading and drainage concerns.

**John O’Hare made a motion to release \$64,500 from the Main Street III Capital Improvement Account for soft costs associated with the Main Street Project, pending Town Meeting approval. Jennifer Rannestad seconded the motion. The motion passed with Michael Joplin abstaining from the vote.**

#### R4/Supervision/CES – Open Issues

A copy of questions, and the auditor’s answers to same, relative to the CES Cafeteria analysis was distributed to the BOF and discussed extensively. Also, a copy of a Power Point presentation recently presented at an R4 BOE meeting was distributed. The BOF expressed concern that the figures in the documents do no “match”. Virginia reported that an additional \$1,000 is necessary to pay the auditor for work done, at the BOF’s request, on the CES Cafeteria. The additional \$1,000 will be an end of the year transfer. The consensus of the BOF was that the auditor not do additional work relative to the CES Cafeteria on behalf of the BOF.

The BOF discussed the possibility of developing a letter to be sent alerting the R4 auditor that the BOF has concerns relative to the financial operations (cafeteria, Capital, payroll) of the District.

#### Fiscal Oversight Task Force

As previously reported, the final CES surplus figures are not yet available. A Task Force meeting is scheduled on 10/21/19 W 6 p.m. at the JW Library. BOF members were encouraged to attend the meeting.

Upcoming meetings include a Region 4 BOE meeting on 11/4. Several attorneys familiar with the Mislick property sale will be in attendance at this meeting. The importance of BOF members being active participants at the BOE meeting and having more than 3 minutes of “public comment” in order ask questions of the auditors was stressed.

The BOF again expressed no confidence in the numbers being presented by the BOE/Administration.

Lauren commented that the new Superintendent of schools is well aware of the BOF’s concerns.

A second Task Force meeting is scheduled on 11/6.

#### REPORTS

##### Monthly Financials

Copies of the Monthly Financials were included in the BOF packet. Peter will develop a draft protocol relative to Capital for BOF review. It will address how approvals for release of funds will be handled for the various capital accounts from year to year.

The Tax Collector's report shows a 57.33% total collection and there were no issues with the expenditures or revenues reports.

First Selectwoman's Report

Lauren reported that the Kings Highway drainage project is complete. At this time, a similar project is underway on Story Hill.

The Water Company is replacing the water main on Main Street. The piping will be completed on Friday, 10/18 and the hydrant installation and testing will be done next week. This project will not interfere with the Main Street Project. During the project, the Water Co. hit a sewer lateral and a service line that were not marked properly. Both of these items have been addressed appropriately.

AUDIENCE

Jamie Grzybowski reported that this is his last meeting as a Selectman. He thanked the BOF for their support and commented that it was a pleasure to serve on the BOS. BoF thanked him for his service and look forward to seeing him as Fire Chief at future meetings.

OPEN ITEMS IN OLD BUSINESS

Status of POCD/Strategic Plan - \$10k encumbered – no report

Main Street Project Update – see above.

ADJOURNMENT

Richard Strauss made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 11:10 p.m. John O'Hare seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Respectfully Submitted,

Suzanne Helchowski  
Clerk

Reviewed  
Virginia Carmany  
BoF Chair