

THESE MINUTES ARE SUBJECT TO APPROVAL AT THE NEXT BOS MEETING

TOWN OF CHESTER, CONNECTICUT
BOARD OF SELECTMEN
SPECIAL MEETING
Thursday, October 1, 2020
ZOOM Meeting

CALL TO ORDER

First Selectwoman Gister called the meeting to order at 7:02 p.m. In attendance included First Selectwoman Gister, Selectwoman Janecek, Selectman Englert, Terry Englert, Cedar Lake Watershed Commission Members, Conservation Commission members, and BOF members, Margo Burns, RiverCOG, Greg Bugby, Connecticut Agricultural Experiment Station, and members of the public.

APPOINTMENTS – OFFICIALS, BOARDS & COMMISSIONS

Charlene Janecek made a motion to re-appointment Tom Brelsford and Nancy Byrne to the Cedar Lake Watershed Commission with a term to expire 7/1/22. Tom Englert seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

AQUATIC INVASIVE SPECIES – Presentation

CEDAR LAKE – Ordinance Proposal and Discussion

Greg Bugby provided an extensive overview of the invasive aquatic species and actions to date to address same throughout the state. In 2016 it was determined that a plant in the Connecticut River was Hydrilla; the river is being negatively impacted by same. Hydrilla is a troublesome invasive aquatic plant that is extremely expensive and difficult to manage once it has established itself in a waterway (herbicides {can be controversial} are a method of eradication, manually pulling it tends to spread it further, other experimental methods, i.e. carp, are being studied). To date, Hydrilla has not been found in Cedar Lake but has been found in Chester Creek and at some marinas located in Chester.

Appropriate signage has been posted at boat ramps to encourage individuals to thoroughly clean their boats and trailers prior to launching into lakes. Various sizes and types of boats can transmit Hydrilla. Propagation methods and seasonality of Hydrilla include fragmentation, tubers and flowers. Note that tubers and flowers have not been found in the Hydrilla identified in Connecticut.

Margo Burns provided an update on the rate of the spread of Hydrilla in the Connecticut River. Two years ago, it was identified at the Haddam boat launch (very sparse); however, by 2020, it had spread throughout the cove and you now cannot get a boat through the area due to the plant.

Mr. Bugby was available to address questions posed by BOS members and the public including:

- Clarified that Hydrilla can survive at low tide/exposed to the air. Would exist well if it gets into Cedar Lake.
- Identifying Hydrilla and removing immediately would be an appropriate way to monitor. Note however, that Hydrilla looks similar to a native species plant.
- Unclear as to why Hydrilla has not been found yet in lakes.
- Provided an update on the extensive DEEP permitting process for treatment.

The BOS heard input from several residents including:

- There are grants available for aquatic invasive species; however, there is competition for said grants and funding, if approved, is not anticipated for a least a year.

Tom Brelsford reported on the importance of alerting and educating the public on the dangers of Hydrilla. The Cedar Lake Watershed Commission discussed the matter extensively and developed a proposed Ordinance for permitted uses on Cedar Lake. The proposed Ordinance would not permit motor boats on the lake. The proposal was presented to the BOS in the Spring but put “on hold” due to the pandemic. Due to the pandemic, it has been difficult to hold public hearings on items of importance to the Town.

Lauren reported that the Town has had maintenance plan, including hydro-raking for other invasive species in Cedar Lake.

Audience members offered the following comments:

- Joe Kowalski, CBN (Connecticut Bass Nation), reported that CBN provides fishing programs for disabled Veterans and occasionally uses Cedar Lake for same. He urged the Town to NOT use herbicides on the lake due to the negative impact they would have on fish. He will forward information to the First Selectwoman on alternatives to herbicides.
- John King, forwarded an email, included in the BOS packet, relative to the history of evasive species on Cedar Lake. He expressed opposition to the closure of the boat launch to trailers. A copy of his email was available on the Town’s website.
- Tom Brelsford commented that the goal is to educate the public and to protect Cedar Lake and taxpayers.

Lauren is waiting for information, requested from DEEP, relative to best practices and experiences addressing Hydrilla on fresh water lakes. A “no trailers” approach may infringe on the ADA accessibility of the lake.

Tom Englert suggested that a forum be developed for further discussion on the topic. Lauren will discuss with the Health District an appropriate manner in which to accommodate public input in a safe and effective way amidst the Pandemic.

The BOS thanked all participants for their input at this evening’s meeting.

LAND USE OFFICE STAFFING

Lauren reported on recent staff changes in the Land Use Department including:

- Ron Rose, Building Official retired and the position was posted two times. Unfortunately, no qualified applicants were identified and the State, due to Covid, has postponed the Building Official examination. Dick Leighton, Fire Marshal, was appointed as part-time Building Official for the Town of Chester.
- Three weeks ago, Judy Brown, ZEO, resigned and Betty Perrault has been temporarily filling in as ZEO. As P&Z is working on a replacement, several administrative “clean-up” projects have been identified in the Land Use office. The P&Z Chairman is requesting that unexpended funds in the ZEO salary line be reallocated to Outside Clerical to engage temporary, part-time personnel to bring the property files up to date.

This item was brought to the BOS's attention as an FYI; no action necessary.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Tom Englert made a motion to approve the minutes from the September 9, 2020 BOS meeting. Charlene Janecek seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

SELECTMEN REPORTS

Charlene reported that a video has been developed and posted on the Town's website outlining the proper protocols for filling out and returning an absentee ballot.

Tom Englert reported that the BOE plans to return to 100% in person classes the week of Columbus Day. An option for remote learning will still be offered.

Laruen reported on the following:

- Valley experienced a positive Covid result. Contact tracing identified up to 40 students possibly affected and quarantined. Schools were not closed. The Health District has reported that positive cases in students seem to be passed in settings other than school.
- The Covid positivity rate in CT, including hospitalizations, is increasing and is now up to 1.9%; however, Chester's numbers remain low.
- The Celebrate Chester Event was a great success.
- The first quarter FEMA request was submitted. Any items not covered by FEMA will be forwarded to the State for reimbursement under the CARES Act.
- The State is requesting that the Federal Government approve FEMA funding for Tropical Storm Isaias. Lauren has a meeting scheduled with Emergency Management staff relative to same. Eversource is required to meet with all municipalities they serve regarding their response to the storm.
- Main Street Project update:
 - Final stage
 - Guardrail installed
 - Plantings going in at top of Wall
 - Trees to be planted in approximately 3 weeks (when dormant)
 - Still outstanding – handrails at Chester Wall
- Cherry Hill Rehab Project – Small Cities Grant – halfway complete – project includes: windows, sidewalk, heat pumps, siding, and parking lot renovations

AUDIENCE OF CITIZENS - None.

EXECUTIVE SESSION – Real Estate

Tom Englert made a motion to go into Executive Session at 8:50 p.m. for a discussion on real estate negotiations. Charlene Janecek seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Regular Session resumed.

ADJOURNMENT

Charlene Janecek made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Tom Englert seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Respectfully Submitted,

Suzanne Helchowski
Clerk