

THESE MINUTES ARE SUBJECT TO APPROVAL AT THE NEXT BOF MEETING

TOWN OF CHESTER, CONNECTICUT
BOARD OF FINANCE
REGULAR MEETING
Thursday, October 15, 2020
Via ZOOM

CALL TO ORDER

Chairman Carmany called the meeting to order at 7:34 p.m. In attendance included: Chairman Carmany, John O’Hare (seated for Greg Merola), Jennifer Rannestad, Rick Nygard, Andrew Gardner, Michael Joplin (not seated), Richard Strauss, Jon Joslow, Peter Evankow, Business Manager, First Selectwoman Gister, Selectwoman Janecek and Joe Cohen.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Rick Nygard made a motion to approve the 9/17/20 BOF minutes as amended. John O’Hare seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Note proper spelling of Tax Collector: Madeline Meyer

Page 2 (top) – Note that Richard Strauss abstained from the vote relative to the BOF Attorney Discussion.

Page 2 – paragraph 6 – Note that a new roof is included in the Capital Plan.

Page 5 – 3rd Paragraph under “Annual Report” discussion – clarify that Richard Strauss, in conjunction with the First Selectwoman, will develop a protocol for nominations.

AUDIENCE OF CITIZENS – None.

REPORTS

Monthly Financials

Monthly financial reports were included in the BOF packet.

Tax Collection and Revenue

The Tax Collector’s Report was included in the BOF packet.

Approximately 54% of the tax revenue has been received. Note that not all first quarter figures have been “loaded” into the spreadsheets. Peter and Madeline will update the document as appropriate. Overall, the tax collection rate is excellent. Approximately 800 of the 1800 tax bills are paid via escrow accounts.

Building Permit fees are higher than budgeted. Peter will update the Revenue report to include missing categories.

Masioncare – As previously reported, the status of Masioncare is still in the “Discovery Phase”. There is the potential that a portion of this may be at risk, depending on the outcome of the court case.

No substantial savings were realized when the Town Hall was closed to the public due to the Pandemic. Employees worked remotely and were paid accordingly. The State has provided some funding for the extra duties of the Town Clerk and Registrars relative to the election. Also, CARES Act funds may be

available for additional costs associated with the election. No staff member is receiving additional payment for increased duties associated with the election.

Lauren will follow-up with the Tree Warden relative to the submission of his timesheet.

Peter will adjust the report, as requested, to add a percentage column.

Lauren clarified the protocol for receipt of funds related to the storm damage and is confident that the funds will be received. However, they may not be received in the current fiscal year.

The BOF had extensive discussion on the Capital Budget. Highlights of the discussion include:

- The need for accurate cost estimates and timelines, vis a vis potential bonding, for Capital projects; i.e. new boilers, new HVAC, roof, etc.
- The Capital Budget should include details on large health and safety projects; i.e. roads, bridges, sidewalks, drainage.
 - Lauren reported on the difficulty in accurately budgeting for/predicting the many unforeseen projects, especially in drainage and roadwork, that arise throughout the year.
 - It was suggested that a list of priority Public Works projects, including the rationale for same, may be beneficial when discussing Capital projects. Note that projects are prioritized depending on funds in the budget and safety is always a priority.
 - The Road Committee reevaluates their list every year.
- Peter will update the report as information is received from Department Heads; specifically Public Works.
- Tree Removal budget – of the \$70,000 budgeted, approximately \$40,000 remains in the account. Additional funds may be necessary in the Spring.
- The Energy Efficiency Project line reflects costs associated with purchasing the streetlights.
- Chester Creek Dredging – the project is expected to require a 25% match from the Town. Joel Severance is working on a Grant to facilitate the project.
 - The status of Jennings Pond was discussed and is on the “to do list” but to date, no plan has been developed. Note that extensive permitting (DEEP, Army Corps of Engineers) would be required for a project.

Virginia provided a “high level” look at BOE costs as reflected in BOE minutes including:

- Supervision District 18/29 Surplus - \$57,000 – Chester’s share - \$13,000
- Supervision District 19/20 Surplus amount lowered as benefit costs did not transfer when staffing moved.
- RFP being developed for Medical Insurance services
- R4 – 2018 – surplus of \$36,000 – Chester’s share approximately \$10,000
- Potential Deep River tax lien for Mislick property closed out
 - Athletic facilities currently being evaluated for potential use of Mislick property for same.
- \$62,000 spent at John Winthrop for security at the entrance to the building
- CES 18/29 surplus - \$107,000, 19/20 - \$138,000

Virginia reported that at the state level, there is a \$3 billion reserve, a 15% of general fund expenditure and a \$2 billion deficit. The state feels they will be able to cover the deficit for the current budget and they expect additional funds from the Federal government. The biggest impact from the Corona virus has been to transportation and tourism.

FIRST SELECTWOMAN'S REPORT

Lauren reported:

- Kelly Sterner, BOE Business Manager, has given her notice and will work through Thanksgiving.
- Main Street Project
 - The project nearing completion
 - Perennial plantings have been placed at the top of the Chester Wall.
 - Brian Kent and Scott Mills are “tagging” trees for the tree wells. It is anticipated that the trees will be planted when they are dormant.
 - A financial report/update will be available at the November BOF meeting.
- In spite of change orders and unexpected items, the project is still within contingencies and on budget.
- FEMA update
 - To date, FEMA has not responded to the March through June claim submitted relative to Covid-19.
 - Items not covered by FEMA will be submitted to OPM for CARES funding.
 - An additional claim will be submitted with June through September expenses.
- Covid-19 update
 - Positive cases increasing throughout the State.
 - Governor has allowed municipalities to revert to Phase 2 as they deem appropriate.
- Election planning
 - The Registrars, Town Clerk, First Selectwoman and Resident Trooper have met to discuss Election Day Protocols.
 - All CDC guidelines; i.e. masks, social distancing, hand sanitizer etc. will be in place.
 - Parking – as previously discussed, tents, etc are not permitted in the Town Hall parking lot. Parking spots will be reserved for Essex Savings Bank customers. The parking lot will be lined prior to Election Day.
 - Flow of voters in and out of the Town Hall.
 - Protocol for individuals not willing to wear a mask.
 - Protocol for potential “poll watchers”.
 - The Town Hall offices will be closed for business on Election Day; information on same will be communicated to the public.
 - Police will be available on Election Day.
 - There have been approximately 1,200 requests for Absentee Ballots and 800 ballots have been returned.

- Status of Building Inspector – Dick Leighton is currently Chester’s Building Official. The position has been posted twice and there is an individual interested in the job; however, due to the Pandemic, the test has been delayed several times.

OPEN ITEMS IN OLD BUSINESS

Update on Chester’s Audit Report – Recommendations to Management

Town Clerk App, Retirement Board and Asset Life Adjustments

Due to increased duties of the Town Clerk during the election, this item has been placed “on hold” until the election is completed.

Peter is updating the Manual relative to the Asset Life Adjustments.

Andrew provided an update on the Retirement Board. To date, he is awaiting documents he requested of the Chairman regarding the VSAP and Pension Plan statements. Peter will forward appropriate documents to Andrew as discussed.

Annual Report - Dedication

The “mock up” dedication nomination form, developed by Richard Strauss, was included in the BOF packet. Note that this document was not edited by the First Selectwoman.

Lauren reported that the BOF is responsible for the financial aspects of the Annual Report. The format of the Annual Report varies from town to town. There is no specific statutory requirement of the report except that of financial matters. Chester’s Annual Report also includes a brief overview of each of the town departments.

The BOF had an extensive discussion regarding the draft Annual Report Dedication Nomination Form and the distribution and content of the Annual Report. Lauren reported that approximately 40 to 50 bound copies of the report are produced each year. The report is distributed to the Treasurer, BOF, BOS and is available at the Town Hall. The report is also published on the Town’s website. Additional copies are placed in the Town’s vault. A request for Annual Report submission has been sent to the Chairmen of all town Boards and Commissions.

The consensus of the Board was that a structure to the nomination process was appropriate; however, the draft provided may be too extensive/onerous. The Board agreed that the process should be open to the public.

Additional items of discussion included:

- A list of past recipients will be developed and distributed to BOF members.
- Lauren will work with Richard Strauss to simplify the nomination form and proposed process, including a “preamble”.
- The possibility of a “hall of fame” display at Meeting House of lobby of Town Hall incorporating past Annual Report honorees.

Virginia reported that for the current year, an honoree must be named at the November BOF meeting to meet deadlines for publication. Moving forward, Richard Strauss and Lauren will work together to develop a protocol for next year’s Annual Report. It was determined that nominations will be submitted to Lauren who will review same with Richard Strauss and make a recommendation for the November BOF meeting. Jon Joslow offered to provide the “write up” on the individual chosen.

AUDIENCE OF CITIZENS

Joe Cohen commented that the Annual Report dedication is “political” and he suggested that the document not be dedicated to any individual.

ADJOURNMENT

John OHare made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 9:52 p.m. Rick Nygard seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Respectfully Submitted,

Suzanne Helchowski
Recording Clerk