

THESE MINUTES ARE SUBJECT TO APPROVAL AT THE NEXT BOS MEETING

TOWN OF CHESTER, CONNECTICUT  
BOARD OF SELECTMEN  
REGULAR MEETING  
Wednesday, December 9, 2020  
ZOOM Meeting

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 Englert, Tom Brelsford, Charlene Fearon, Lol Fearon, Jamie Grzybowski, Fire Chief, Madaline Meyer, Elizabeth Reinhart, Joe Cohen, Anna Sweeney and Virginia Carmany, BOF Chairman.

Lauren Gister made a motion to add to the agenda two items; proposal for outdoor classroom at CES and Boards/Commission/Committee appointments. Charlene Janecek seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

AUDIENCE OF CITIZENS

Lauren provided an update on the 9 Parker's Point property in response to Mr. Cohen's inquiry. The property is still in the "exploration mode".

UPDATE FROM CHARLENE AND LOL FEARON – Chester Elementary School - Outdoor Classroom  
Plans for a proposed outdoor classroom at CES were "screen shared".

Lol Fearon outlined the parameters of the proposed open air meeting space/classroom to be installed/built at the rear of the Chester Elementary School (just outside of the main entrance toward the back of the school abutting the nature trail and rain water garden). Ms. Cassie Archer, Architect, developed the plans "pro bono". The intention is to use the structure not only as a classroom but also for the community; i.e. book clubs, Rotary club meetings, Scout meetings etc.

Mr. Fearon reported that CES has been recognized for its innovative approaches to learning and was recently named the #1 Elementary School in Middlesex County and has received various other distinctions throughout the State. The proposed outdoor classroom will further distinguish CES as a leader in innovation.

The project will be funded (approximately \$70,000) via donations and to date, they have reached 69% of their fundraising goals. If approved, the proposed timeline for the project includes continued fundraising through winter with a spring/summer construction timeframe. The Middlesex Community Foundation is the fiduciary for the project and the Chester Leadership Fund has donated funds for the project.

Mr. Fearon has discussed this proposal with the BOE and other appropriate entities (P&Z meeting this week and BOF next week). Mr. Fearon is currently collecting information on the potential on-going budgetary impacts; i.e. maintenance, electricity, insurance/liability, etc. He continued that leaves and debris may have to be removed from the roof of the structure 2 times per year.

Mr. Fearon was available to respond to questions/comments posed by BOS members.

Tom Englert made a motion to support the outdoor learning area as a positive addition to teaching and learning at Chester Elementary School as well as a community resource. Charlene Janecek seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

The Board thanked the Ferons for their efforts in moving this project forward.

#### BOARDS/COMMISSIONS/COMMITTEE APPOINTMENTS

Charlene Janecek made a motion to reappointment – Francine Cornaglia to the Retirement Board for a 3 year term expiring 12/16/23. Tom Englert seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

#### INVASIVE AQUATICE PLANT UPDATE

Charlene Janecek reported that she has been unable to contact the representative from DEEP relative to Hydrilla and its potential to contaminate Cedar Lake and DEEP's best practices to address same. To date, this particular strain of Hydrilla has not been identified in lakes. In her discussion with Joe Kowalski, Environmental Club, he expressed concern about the potential of prohibiting boats and the use of pesticides as chemicals frequently kill fish and travel into other waterways. He suggested that the Town consider installing a boat washing station at the launch and "staffing" the launch to ensure boats are cleaned.

The BOS had extensive discussion about the proposed Ordinance to ban motor boats from the lake including the potential "risk" to the lake if no action is taken. Lauren reported that it is unlikely that DEEP will contribute resources to address the situation and a cleaning station and staffing of the launch may be cost prohibitive.

Tom Englert suggested that a first step may be an extensive educational program to inform users of the risk of Hydrilla to the life and usability of Cedar Lake. He suggested that a boat washing station would be helpful too.

Tom Breslford clarified that chemical treatments in the past may have killed fish if improperly applied; however, if chemicals are applied appropriately, fish kill should not be a concern. In addition, in his experience as a Conservation Officer for 27 years, education programs have historically failed. A boat washing station will be expensive and it is doubtful that DEEP will assist with such a project. If the Hydrilla gets into Cedar Lake it would be catastrophic to recreational use of the lake as well as property values for homes located on the lake. Both the Conservation Commission and the Cedar Lake Watershed Committee recommend banning motor boats on the lake. Tom Breslford reported that paddleboards, kayaks, canoes are most prevalent on the lake and motor boats are in the minority of users of the lake.

The implementation of any Ordinance requires Public Hearing and Town Meeting. Due to Covid-19 and per Executive Order 7JJ, the BOS may act on behalf of a Town Meeting. Lauren reported on the importance of the public's participation in this process/discussion.

The consensus of the Board was to move forward with an intense educational program, publicity on the concerns and ultimately Public Hearings and Town Meeting on the proposed Ordinance.

### PRE-BUDGET DISCUSSION

Lauren, in consultation with Virginia Carmany, BOF Chair, has developed the budget workshop schedule. It is anticipated that the Joint Budget Workshop process will begin January (earlier than in prior years). The final vote on the budget is tentatively scheduled for May 19, 2021. The Joint Meeting budget discussions will be “segmented”; i.e. half of operating at one meeting, the other ½ at a future meeting, with Capital budget discussions and BOE budget presentations at separate meetings.

The Boards must consider how Covid-19 has and will continue to affect the budget.

It is anticipated that 6 joint workshops over 3.5 months will be scheduled via ZOOM. A uniform hard copy of the budgets will be available for each board member.

### PREVIEW & DISCUSSION OF ORDINANCE FOR WASTE COLLECTION

As previously discussed, the BOS has considered placing a garbage dumpster at a centrally located, town owned property to facilitate garbage pick-up for downtown businesses; in particular the restaurants. Due to Covid-19, many restaurants have been utilizing their parking lots, (that previously housed their garbage receptacles) as dining rooms.

Lauren invited all downtown restaurants to a meeting to discuss the parameters (where it would be placed, fees, etc.) of the proposal. Several restaurants did not respond and one was not interested in participating; one restaurant owner did attend the meeting but was uninterested in utilizing a centralized dumpster.

A copy of the Proposed Ordinance for Waste Collection was “screenshared” and included in the BOS packet. The BOS had an extensive discussion on the proposed Ordinance.

Wordsmithing changes, as discussed by the BOS, will be incorporated into the proposed Ordinance and forwarded to Board members for review prior to further BOS action.

### REGIONAL AFFORDABLE HOUSING PLAN

State Statute calls for each town having an Affordable Housing Plan. To that end, River COG is developing a regional Affordable Housing Plan for COG member towns. In the plan, each participating town would have its own “appendix” that would fulfill the State’s requirements. At the present time, RiverCOG believes it has sufficient funds to facilitate the Regional Plan. If RFP results indicate otherwise, Chester may have to contribute funds for the plan. If additional costs are necessary from the towns, RiverCOG will not proceed with the project until consultation with the member towns.

Lauren Gister made a motion to participate in RiverCOG’s Affordable Housing Plan, presuming no additional costs to town of Chester are required. Charlene Janecek seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

### APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Charlene Janecek made a motion to approve the minutes from the November 18, 2020 BOS meeting. Tom Englert seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

### SELECTMEN REPORTS

Charlene reported that she has spoken with several contractors regarding the Chester Wall and the wall around the flagpole. The walls were not part of the Main Street Project and are in disrepair. Each

contractor will develop a proposal and forward same to the BOS. It is anticipated that these proposals will be available by next week.

Lauren reported on the following:

- The Cherry Hill Rehabilitation Project is on-going and nearing completion. It is anticipated that the HVAC work will be completed within the next week or so. Contractors must enter units to complete the work and some residents are anxious due to Covid-19. It is anticipated that significant energy savings will be realized due to energy improvements. In addition, residents are thrilled with the project.
- Main Street Project -not quite 100% complete. Some small punch list items remain and are being addressed.
- The Tree Warden continues to address branches on Main Street.
- Chester is now exit 9 off of Rte. 9, not exit 6.
- Covid numbers continue to increase and hospitals are nearing capacity. The importance of masks, hand washing, social distances, etc. was stressed.

AUDIENCE OF CITIZENS – None.

ADJOURNMENT

Charlene Janecek made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 9:19 p.m. Tom Englert seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Respectfully Submitted,

Suzanne Helchowski  
Clerk