

THESE MINUTES ARE SUBJECT TO APPROVAL AT THE NEXT BOS MEETING

TOWN OF CHESTER, CONNECTICUT
BOARD OF SELECTMEN
REGULAR MEETING
Wednesday, December 23, 2020
ZOOM Meeting

CALL TO ORDER

First Selectwoman Gister called the meeting to order at 7:01 p.m. In attendance included First Selectwoman Gister, Selectwoman Janecek, Selectman Englert, Elizabeth Reinhart, Joe Cohen, Madaline Meyer, Tax Collector and Bettie Perreault.

AUDIENCE OF CITIZENS – None.

COVID RELIEF FUND ACCEPTANCE

Lauren updated the Board on Covid relief funding as follows:

- A FEMA claim in the amount of approximately \$20,000 was submitted for expenses from 3/13/20 to 6/30/20. This claim included additional payroll (approximately \$7,500) for emergency medical personnel, PPE, cleaning supplies and Park & Rec hours.
 - Throughout the process, FEMA changed the protocol for reimbursement and several items in the claim were no longer eligible for reimbursement.
 - It is anticipated that between \$6,000 and \$9,000 will be approved by FEMA.
- The State, through CARES Act funding, will provide assistance to towns.
 - At the beginning of the Pandemic, the State requested that towns provide an estimate of expenses. At that time, Chester estimated \$41,000 would be expended.
 - The first claim to the State, covering 3/13 to 6/30/20 was in the amount of \$12,903.03; extensive background was submitted to the State and the Town was reimbursed.
 - The State has since changed the protocol for reimbursement. The State has determined that towns will now be reimbursed per population. It is expected that an additional \$28,000 will be reimbursed by the State (funds are expected within the next few weeks).

Charlene Janecek made a motion to accept the CRF funds from the State of Connecticut for reimbursement of expenses related to the Covid-19 Pandemic. Tom Englert seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

VOTE – TAX DEFERRMENT PER EXECUTIVE ORDER 9R

Executive Order 9R allows municipalities to offer a tax “Deferment Program” and/or a “Low Interest Rate Program”; similar to the program offered in the spring at the beginning of the Pandemic. The Board discussed the parameters of each program and documentation on the Executive Order was included in the BOS packet. In the spring, the Town offered the “Tax Deferment Program” to residents. Last week, the BOF was updated on the Executive Order and suggested that the Town now offer both the “Tax Deferment Program” and the “Low Interest Rate Program” to tax payers.

Lauren Gister made a motion to offer both the Deferral Program and the Low Interest Rate Program to Chester residents under Executive Order 9R. Tom Englert seconded the motion. Discussion followed.

The BOS, along with Madaline Meyer, Tax Collector, discussed the parameters of each option including the status of bank escrow payments and landlord/tenant provisions in the Executive Order. Ms. Meyer was available to address questions/concerns from the BOS and reported that when the program was offered in the spring, a small amount of tax payers utilized the program. Ms. Meyer supported the BOS suggestion/motion to offer both options.

Lauren reported that a message will be sent to Chester residents clearly outlining each of the options. The First Selectman's office and the Tax Collector's office will be available to address resident's questions/comments relative to the program. All appropriate paperwork will be submitted to the State.

The motion passed unanimously.

ZONING ENFORCEMENT OFFICIAL VOTE

A copy of the CHA proposal for Planning & Zoning Support Services was included in the BOS packet.

Since Judy Brown's resignation in September, John Lavy, P&Z Chairman and Bettie Perreault have been managing the Planning and Zoning Department; Mr. Lavy as acting ZEO and Bettie has been handling the clerical duties of the Department. The Planning and Zoning Commission formed a Search Committee to hire a new part-time ZEO. After research, it was determined that the most prudent course of action was to contract with CHA for ZEO responsibilities, including grant writing. Both Deep River and Essex currently are contracted with CHA for zoning work. The CHA proposal includes \$3,000 per month or \$18,000 until June 30, 2021. These funds are available in the current Planning and Zoning budget. Bettie has offered to continue with clerical services through the end of June. The Planning and Zoning Commission passed a motion recommending that CHA be employed on a temporary basis through the end of the fiscal year.

Lauren reported that in last year's budget, there was some discussion about hiring a consultant for Planning purposes and grant writing services. CHA offers both of these services. She continued that Deep River and Essex are thrilled with CHA's services.

Charlene Janecek made a motion to authorize First Selectwoman Gister to sign the agreement with CHA for Planning & Zoning Support Services through June 30, 2021 in the amount of \$18,000. Tom Englert seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

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

Note – Parker's Point – should be Parkers Point

SELECTMEN REPORTS

Lauren reported that the Health District took possession of 500 doses of the Moderna Covid-19 vaccine today and is currently scheduling administration of the vaccine (next week) to first responders, health care providers, nursing homes etc.

Positive Covid-19 cases are still being reported in Chester. Lauren was concerned that the reporting mechanism in place is not accurate and that some known cases of Covid-19 are not included in the reports.

Town Hall will close at noon on December 24th.

AUDIENCE OF CITIZENS – none.

ADJOURNMENT

Charlene Janecek made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 8:07p.m. Tom Englert seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Respectfully Submitted,

Suzanne Helchowski
Clerk