

THESE MINUTES ARE SUBJECT TO APPROVAL AT THE NEXT BOF MEETING

TOWN OF CHESTER, CONNECTICUT
BOARD OF FINANCE
REGULAR MEETING
Thursday, March 18, 2021
Via ZOOM

CALL TO ORDER

Chairman Carmany called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. In attendance included: Chairman Carmany, Jon Joslow, Jennifer Rannestad, Richard Strauss, Michael Joplin (seated for Rick Nygard), and Andrew Merola, (seated for John O'Hare who arrived at 7:25 p.m.).

Also, in attendance, First Selectwoman Gister, Selectwoman Janeczek, Jamie Grzybowski, Fire Chief and Peter Evankow, Finance Manager.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Michael Joplin a motion to approve the 2/18/21 BOF minutes. Jennifer Rannestad seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

AUDIENCE OF CITIZENS – None.

NEW BUSINESS

Dredging Project

DREDGING OF CHESTER CREEK OPTIONS

As previously discussed, an additional \$25,000 was requested to the \$25,000 already approved for dredging. The potential grant is now a reimbursement grant with a 20% match. The permitted dredging period is October through April. Due to the potential loss of property (property sold) to place the "spoils" from the dredging, the Harbor Commission recommends that the project proceed as soon as possible.

Lauren and Virginia Carmany, BOF Chair, have been requesting from the Port Authority clarification on a number of issues relative a dredging project including potential financial contributions from slip owners, protocol for bid process, location for placement of dredged materials and appropriate use of the permit.

At the appropriate time, Attorney Bennet will review the project; i.e., contract and potential liability (if marina operates under the Town's permit). When clarification is received, the BOF and BOS will discuss this topic further.

REPORTS

Tax Collection and Revenue, Education and State of the State Updates

Virginia reported:

- Unemployment rate in December was at 5% and in January it was at 6.3%
- Tax collection rate is outstanding; however, Madaline has expressed concern relative to the delinquency rate (nothing late yet due to the 3-month grace period). She is offering residents payment plans. The Tax Collector reported that due to a reassessment at Chesterfields, \$33,000 needs to be credited from 18/19 and in addition, the Grand List will be affected by the change.

- Jon Joslow expressed concern with the appraisal process and the need for a strategy to address inaccurate valuations done at the last Revaluation (currently entering into the last year). Lauren will follow-up with Attorney Bennet relative to any potential liability on the last Reval company for inaccurate valuations.
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- Education – Covid Relief Funds – CES to receive \$96,000 and Region 4 to receive \$217,000. Additional funds will be realized via the Rescue Plan. It is unclear, at this time, what these funds can and will be used for within the school system.
- It is anticipated that the Town will receive approximately \$400,000 in Covid Relief funds. Again, additional guidance is necessary relative to what these funds may be used for; it is anticipated that this guidance from the State/Feds will be available in the near future.

Annual Budget Status Report (screen shared)

Jamie Grzybowski reported that he anticipates that the ambulance revenue will increase in the upcoming month(s); however, the fiscal year will end in an approximate \$60,000 deficit.

LOCIP – Lauren will submit an application for \$44,000 in LOCIP funds. The Pandemic has not affected this revenue stream.

A copy of the Covid Spreadsheet was included in the BOF packet. Note that the report is updated regularly. Virginia reported that \$46,000 reflected in uncollected tax maybe Covid related as well as uncollected ambulance revenue.

First Selectwoman’s Report

Lauren reported:

- Volunteers continue to call Chester residents relative to assistance in scheduling their Covid vaccine. To date, approximately 1,200 Chester residents have received telephone calls. The vaccine opens to those 45 and older on Friday, 3/19 and the number of vaccines available continues to increase.
- The Health District is reporting that events may be scheduled in Town; i.e., triathlon, Rotary events, Meeting House events, Chester Fair etc. with the understanding that if there is a spike in Covid cases, events may need to be cancelled/postponed.
- Attorney Bennet is retiring and as of 3/31, he will be “Of Council” only. His partner, Ken McDonnell will handle his outstanding business. The BOS will discuss and appoint a new Town Attorney.
- E. Haddam has determined that the number of hours they need our shared Assessor will decrease as of 3/18/21. Chester will develop a separate arrangement with the Assessor and it is anticipated that costs associated with the Assessor will decrease significantly.

OPEN ITEMS IN OLD BUSINESS

Town Clerk App and Retirement Board

Town Clerk App – appropriate equipment is being installed at this time.

Retirement Board – Jennifer reported that the contract with Essex Financial has been executed. They will now be the fiduciary. The Guidance on Investment Distribution document, as recommended by the Auditor, has been signed. A copy of appropriate paperwork will be forwarded to the First Selectwoman’s office.

Main Street Project – the financial report was included in the BOF packet and will be discussed further at the next BOF meeting. Note that due to the retainage for the plantings, the project will not be completely paid until the end of May.

AUDIENCE OF CITIZENS – None.

ADJOURNMENT

Jennifer Rannestad made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 7:57 p.m. John O’Hare seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Respectfully Submitted,

Suzanne Helchowski
Recording Clerk