

THESE MINUTES ARE SUBJECT TO APPROVAL AT THE NEXT BOS MEETING

TOWN OF CHESTER, CONNECTICUT
BOARD OF SELECTMEN
REGULAR MEETING
Chester Town Hall
Community Room
July 14, 2021

CALL TO ORDER

First Selectwoman Gister called the meeting to order at 7:10 p.m. In attendance included: First Selectwoman Gister, Selectman Englert, Selectwoman Janecek, Elizabeth Reinhardt, Press, Margot Burns, RiverCOG, Bettie Perreault, and Terri Englert.

AUDIENCE OF CITIZENS – None.

APPOINTMENTS TO BOARDS AND COMMISSIONS

Lauren reported that John Lavy has resigned from the Planning and Zoning Commission (he was the Chairman). The Selectman’s Office has received a request from the DTC to fill this vacancy with Shubert Koon. The term expires on 11/18/25; however, any individual appointed to this seat must be on the 2021 ballot.

Bettie Perreault reported that the P&Z Commission has already filled the vacancy with Pat Bisacky.

Lauren will research the appropriate protocol for filling vacancies on P&Z. This item will be discussed further at a future BOS meeting.

ORDINANCE APPROVALS TO SEND TO PUBLIC HEARING

Item tabled - Lauren reported that she is waiting for feedback from the Town Attorney relative to the proposed Ordinances.

Proposed Garbage Ordinance – Lauren clarified that garbage cans are required to be out of sight when not scheduled for curbside pick-up. In addition, cans are no longer being placed in the Maple Street Parking lot (the landlord provided dumpsters at the Key Bank parking lot).

Cedar Lake – Lauren reported that the Town can prohibit use of the State’s boat launch; however the State does not want the Town to do so. This proposed Ordinance, like all proposed changes to Ordinances, will be discussed at a Public Hearing.

ARPA PROJECTS DISCUSSION

Lauren recommends that a “conversation” be started with appropriate parties; i.e. BOF, Board and Commissions and the Public to explore ideas for use of the “Rescue” funds (technology, generator for Town Hall, digitalizing of records, EDC, expansion of sewer and a variety of other ideas), what is eligible, what is not eligible, etc. The public was encouraged to submit suggestions to the BOS.

RiverCOG has had numerous discussions on the Rescue Funds including the potential for towns “reserving” a portion of the County Funds for a Regional Project.

Lauren reported that CCM, COST, RiverCOG and the State have developed FAQ sheets and related materials relative to the ARPA (Federal Rescue) Funds. This information, updated regularly, will be forward to the Selectmen and placed on the Town’s website.

TRAFFIC SAFETY ISSUES

The BOS discussed traffic concerns throughout the Town and in particular:

1. Speeding complaints, pedestrian safety, bike safety – The Constables and Resident State Troopers are aware of these concerns and are increasing traffic patrols, speed traps. The electronic speed limit signs are moved regularly throughout the Town.
2. Cedar Lake Road is an area of concern (speeding and stop sign violations); especially in the summer months as the area experiences beach traffic, camp traffic, etc. Enforcement in this area is being increased and Lauren has consulted with Public Works and the Fire Dept. regarding the possibility of placing temporary speed bumps to “calm” traffic in the area.
3. Railroad Ave. – The new restaurant in this area has increased traffic and parking concerns. The police, Fire Marshal and ZEO are discussing these concerns and the need for additional signage; i.e. “no parking”, etc.
4. Kings Highway and Goose Hill – stop sign issues.
5. West Main Street – Pedestrian safety is a concern as the sidewalk ends on a curve across from Jennings Pond and it is difficult for drivers to see pedestrians crossing at this curve. A resident has proposed a crosswalk (information included in the BOS packet). This is a State road and any signage, crosswalk, blinking light, etc. would have to be approved and installed by the DOT, including their Engineering Dept. Lauren and the RST will discuss this area with DOT representatives in Haddam and request an evaluation. Note that a phase of the Main Street Project did extend the sidewalk to Pleasant Street; however, no timeline for this phase has been established.

NATURAL HAZARD MITIGATION PLAN APPROVAL

Ms. Burns, RiverCOG, provided a summary/overview (attached) of the Proposed Natural Hazard Mitigation Plan relative to the Town of Chester. This document is required by the State and makes the Town eligible for certain Federal funds for natural hazards. The State and FEMA have reviewed the Plan.

Lauren reported that this BOS has discussed the Plan at prior meetings. Two Public Hearings on the Plan were held and no feedback on the draft was received in the First Selectwoman’s office.

Lauren commended Margot for her leadership and work on the comprehensive Natural Hazard Mitigation Plan.

Charlene Janecek made the following motion:

WHEREAS, the Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency Assistance Act, at 42 USC 5165 and 44 CFR part 201.6 of the Federal Disaster Mitigation Act of 2000, require the municipalities to adopt a mitigation plan in order to be eligible for grants to implement certain mitigation projects; and

WHEREAS, the Lower Connecticut River Valley Council of Governments (RiverCOG) municipalities have experienced past flooding and other natural hazard events that pose risks to public health and safety, may cause serious property damage, and a plan is needed to address the results of these events; and

WHEREAS, the planning process fostered by the Connecticut Department of Emergency Services and Public Protection, Division of Emergency Management and Homeland Security, and set forth by the Federal Emergency Management Agency, offers the opportunity to consider natural hazards and risks, and to identify mitigation actions to reduce future impacts of such hazards; and

WHEREAS, the State of Connecticut has provided federal Hazard Mitigation Assistance program funds to support development of the mitigation plan; and

WHEREAS, a Hazard Mitigation Plan (the "Plan") has been updated by the Hazard Mitigation Planning Committee and staff from RiverCOG and 15 of its municipal members, including the Town of Chester; and

WHEREAS, the Hazard Mitigation Plan recommends several mitigation actions that will help minimize and reduce safety threats and damage to private and public property; and

WHEREAS, a public meeting was held on September 29, 2020, to present the Plan and proposed mitigation actions and to solicit questions and comments;

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED by the BOS of Chester, CT, that the Hazard Mitigation Plan, including Volume I and the annex for our municipality is hereby adopted.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the municipal offices identified in the Plan are hereby directed to pursue implementation of the recommended priority actions that are assigned to their agencies.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLEVD that any action proposed in the Plan shall be subject to and contingent upon budget approval, if funding is required, and this resolution may not be interpreted so as to mandate any such appropriations.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the BOS is designated to coordinate with other offices and entities and shall periodically report on the activities, accomplishments, and progress, and shall prepare a progress report as required by the Federal Emergency Management Agency.

Tom Englert seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES – June 23, 2021

Charlene Janecek made a motion to approve the minutes from the June 23, 2021 BOS meeting, as amended. Tom Englert seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Amendments: Take out question marks on page 3 and clarify that no action was taken as a result of the Executive Session.

SELECTMEN REPORTS

Charlene has received and forwarded to the Public Works Director, a proposal for masonry work to the cemetery wall.

Lauren reported:

- The Health District has reported 6 new Covid positives including 1 in Chester. This is the first increase in cases for several months. The State reports a 1% infection rate
- Interviews are being conducted for the part-time Land Use Admin. Asst. and Assessor's Clerk. Several well qualified candidates have applied for the position.

The BOS expressed continued frustration with one of the downtown restaurant's lack of cooperation relative to outdoor table placement. The ZEO and Fire Marshal continue to follow-up with this establishment. The BOS has no prevue over this Zoning violation.

AUDIENCE OF CITIZENS – None.

ADJOURNMENT

Charlene Janeck made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 8:26 p.m. Tom Englert seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Respectfully Submitted,

Suzanne Helchowski
Clerk