

THESE MINUTES ARE SUBJECT TO APPROVAL AT THE NEXT BOS MEETING

TOWN OF CHESTER, CONNECTICUT
BOARD OF SELECTMEN
REGULAR MEETING
Wednesday, October 27, 2021
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, Bettie Perreault, and Terri Englert, Jamie Grzybowski, Ed Meehan, Bettie Perreault, Elizabeth Reinhart and additional audience members.

AUDIENCE OF CITIZENS – None.

Lauren Gister made a motion to add agenda item: Discussion and possible action: RiverCOG Resolution relative to ARPA Funds. Tom Englert seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

APPOINTMENTS TO BOARDS AND COMMISSIONS

Charlene Janecek made a motion to appoint Kristen Dean to the Park & Rec. Commission for a 3-year term expiring 11/1/24. Tom Englert seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

ARPA FUNDING PROJECTS

At the recent RiverCOG meeting, Attorney Mednick outlined a recommended, streamlined process to distribute ARPA funds. The process includes allocating funds by percentage for different categories; i.e.; Public Health, Regional Project, Water/Sewer and addressing negatively economic impacts. Approval of the recommended percentages for each category would need Town Meeting approval, but once approved by the Town Meeting, the BOS would be able to distribute the funds.

The first round of ARPA funds was received by the Town in the amount of \$623,000.00. It is anticipated that an additional \$623,000 will be received next year. The funds being discussed this evening are the \$623,000 already received by the Town.

Lauren proposed the following categories and percentages:

Public Health – 25% - \$155,000 – Tri-Town request (mental health), Technology Upgrades, Soup Kitchen Refrigerated Truck

Set aside for Regional Project – 15% (of County allocation) – \$93,000 – Project TBD

Water/sewer – 15% - \$93,000 – Projects defined by WPCA

Negative Economic Impacts – 45% - \$280,000 – Fire boat, enhancement of Social Service Structure, generator for town hall

The proposed process as follows: BOS approval of percentage allocation, forward to BOF for further action with final approval via a Town Meeting.

Lauren Gister made a motion to establish percentage allocations, by category, under the ARPA rules and to authorize the BOS to distribute those funds within the parameters of that allocation. Charlene Janecek seconded the motion. Discussion followed:

Lauren read Attorney Mednick's comments relative to the role of local official's vis a vis ARPA funding. This document was "screen shared" and the recommendation was that the town follow its normal protocol relative to allocating of funds (BOS, BOF, Town Meeting approvals). Then, the BOS would be responsible for the administration of those approved funds. Note that all established bid protocols would remain in place.

Lauren defined the process used to "categorize" each request for ARPA funding and the BOS had a robust discussion on same.

The final percentage allocations were revised as follows:

Public Health – 35% - \$218,000

Negative Economic Impact – 35% - \$218,000

Water/Sewer – 15% - \$93,000

Set aside for Regional Project – 15% (County Allocation) - \$93,000

The motion passed unanimously.

Tech Upgrade – Meeting House and Town Hall

CT Comp has been asked to provide comprehensive, conservative estimates for IT upgrades to the Town Hall and Meeting House.

Town Hall – \$25,500 – outfit the Community Room with fixed, seamless equipment (3 cameras, speakers, monitors), networked with the current system in the building. An optional but recommended item would be additional WIFI access points to accommodate connectivity. Lauren outlined additional parameters of the proposal.

Meeting House – \$38,500 - Lauren outlined the parameters of the "portable" proposal, including moving the internet configuration. Additional annual costs would be incurred (no current system at the Meeting House, these costs not included in ARPA funds because they are part of the operating budget).

Timeline – 8 to 12- week project duration. It is anticipated that this project would necessitate the bid process.

Tom Englert made a motion to support technology upgrades for the Community Room at the Town Hall and Meeting House to facilitate remote/hybrid meetings at said locations. Charlene Janecek seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

WPCA

Ed Meehan outlined proposed WPCA projects including pump station repairs and emergency transfer switch, Colt House sewer right of way and manhole repairs and 4 Water Street pump station sewer line replacement or lining. Priority of projects include: Colt House, Water Street and Pump Station.

Details on quotes will be determined ASAP and Lauren will investigate if "prevailing wages" are applicable for ARPA projects.

Lauren Gister made a motion to support the WPCA ARPA projects as presented. Tom Englert seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Fire Boat

Jamie Grzybowski reported that the Fire Department currently utilizes a 1986, 23 ft. fire boat to respond to an area from Haddam to Essex. The department has been discussing replacement of the fire boat for several years. The pre-Covid estimate was \$90,000; however, post Covid/supply chain estimate cost of the boat is \$160,000. The project will go out to bid in November with the anticipation of having a boat available by next Summer. The Town has already approved some funds via the budget process for a fire boat.

In addition, a fire truck is also “scheduled” to be replaced. The original cost estimate for the replacement was \$650,000 and the post-Covid estimate is now at \$720,000.

Jamie was available to address questions, comments, concerns posed by BOS members.

Lauren will investigate the permissibility of using ARPA funds to cover the entire cost of a fire boat vs. just the post Covid cost difference.

Charlene Janecek made a motion to support the purchase of a fire boat and to allow the Chief to release an RFP for the purchase of same. Tom Englert seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

15% Set Aside RiverCOG

A formal letter, requesting that the Town “set aside” 15% of County ARPA funds for a regional project, was received in the Selectman’s Office. The parameters of a “regional” project is being discussed at the COG level. The level of participation in a regional project will be determined by the Town.

Lauren Gister made a motion to temporarily set aside 15% of the Town’s County ARPA funds for a potential regional (RiverCOG)project. Charlene Janecek seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Social Services

As previously reported, the Chester Community Partnership has assisted residents throughout the Pandemic with a variety of initiatives including a vaccine project, dignity totes, a diaper program, food programs, etc. No written proposal has yet been submitted; however, it was recommended that ARPA money be used to fund a temporary position (20 hours per week over a 2-year period, \$20,000 per year, and \$10,000 maximum for supplies and equipment) to continue these much-needed programs.

Lauren Gister made a motion to support a temporary limited term contract for Social Service enhancements and support through the Chester Community Partnership under the ARPA funds. Tom Englert seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Generator

As previously discussed, the current generator at the Town Hall is able to run for 72 hours. It has limited capabilities; i.e.; keeps server running, some lights in a portion of the Town Hall. It does not have the ability to allow the phones to operate in the event of a power outage. CNA Generator Services has provided an estimate for a generator with the capability of running 100% of the town hall for at least 3 days without refueling. This quote is \$117,000. Note that this project would go out to bid.

Lauren Gister made a motion to support the purchase of a full-service generator for the Town Hall. Tom Englert seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Tri-Town

A copy of the proposal developed by Tri-Town was included in the BOS packet.

A Tri-Town Youth representative updated the BOS on the effects of the Pandemic on children. Our youth are experiencing extraordinary challenges that are affecting their health, mental health, development and well-being. Tri-Town is working with the 3 towns and the school system and is requesting funds to hire an additional part-time clinician (\$15,000 shared by 3 towns per capita, \$4,050 Chester's share). There is the potential to eventually fund this position via a revenue stream; i.e., billing insurance companies for these services.

Note that several positions are currently funded via the Federal Drug Free Community Grant. This grant will expire and Tri-Town is requesting BOS consideration for the use of ARPA funds to continue with these positions in the future.

Lauren Gister made a motion to support the Tri-Town request as presented though the use of ARPA funds and to pursue additional grants when the current grant expires. Tom Englert seconded the motion. Tom Englert seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

JOB DESCRIPTION APPROVALS

A job description for a Land Use Clerk, supporting the Building Official, ZEO and Inland Wetland Official, as developed by the Zoning Office was included in the BOS packet. The job description includes clerical duties supporting the boards and commissions; i.e.; permitting, agendas, meeting minutes, processing of applications, filing, etc.

Charlene Janecek made a motion to approve the job description as presented. Tom Englert seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

A revised job description for the Town Treasurer was included in the BOS packet. The job description was re-written due to the anticipated retirement of our current Treasurer. The job description on file did not include "specifics" of the position. This revised job description is detailed and was developed by Peter and Liz.

Tom Englert made a motion to approve the revised job description for Town Treasurer as presented. Charlene Janecek seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

A copy of the CCM Salary Survey was included in the BOS packet. The salary of Town Treasurer varies from town to town. The BOS discussed the salary of the Treasurer since next week's ballot includes a write in candidate for Treasurer. A salary of \$13,500 per year (approximately 10 hours per week) was discussed by the BOS, for consideration only.

Charlene Janecek made a motion to set the Treasurer salary at \$13,500 per year based on 520 hours per year (approx.). Tom Englert seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES – 10/13/21

Charlene Janecek made a motion to approve the minutes from the 10/13/21 BOS meeting, as presented. Tom Englert seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

SELECTMEN REPORTS

Lauren reported:

- Reminder – Town Hall will be closed for business on Election Day with limited staff on site. In addition, “politics” are not permitted to obstruct parking spaces at the town hall. They are permitted to be outside of 75 feet of the polling place.
- Masks are required in the building and signage relative to masks will be made more prominent on doors to the building.
- The location of the Treasurer’s Office is to be determined.
- The Town’s Halloween celebration will take place on Friday, 10/29 with a scavenger hunt, haunted walk and trick or treating with Merchants. The street will be closed.
- Valley was dismissed early today due to a fallen tree. Eversource anticipates that the school will be open in the morning.
- The Health District is scheduling Covid booster shots (Pfizer and Moderna). It is anticipated that the vaccine will be available to 5- to 11-year-olds in early November. They have offered to administer the shots to first responders. They are also administering flu shots.

AUDIENCE OF CITIZENS

Jamie reported that he will work with the Health District to schedule booster shots to first responders to include all emergency staff.

ADJOURNMENT

Charlene Janecek made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 9:33 p.m. Tom Englert seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Respectfully Submitted,

Suzanne Helchowski
Clerk