

THESE MINUTES ARE SUBJECT TO APPROVAL AT THE NEXT BOS MEETING

TOWN OF CHESTER, CONNECTICUT
BOARD OF SELECTMEN
REGULAR MEETING
Wednesday, January 12, 2022
ZOOM Meeting

CALL TO ORDER

First Selectwoman Janecek called the meeting to order at 7:02 p.m. In attendance included First Selectwoman Janecek, Selectman Englert, Terri Englert, Bettie Perreault, Susan Wright, Ed Meehan, Virginia Carmany, Bob Blair, Scot Mills, Jamie Grzybowski, Michael Joplin, Kimberley Megrath, Mike Sanders, Rick Nygard, Deb Vilcheck, Lori Clymas, Andrew Gardner, Carolyn Kane, and Cindy Lignar.

AUDIENCE OF CITIZENS

Susan Wright submitted the following:

Morning everyone,

"The Middletown Press has a story about Lauren's resignation in today's paper. From talking to counsel this is briefly what I can tell you.

It is entirely up to Tom and myself as to who will fill the empty seat and who will assume the First Selectman seat. We are not to make any type of announcement as to what our choices are until after 5pm on January 5, 2022, which is the exact time Lauren resigns. We have 30 days to make this decision and announcement. I'm sure Tom and I will not take that long. The respective town committees have no say in our decision and the person who we choose does not have to be a Democrat as long as minority representation remains. We have people who we feel would work well with us and we are reaching out to them and talking to them. This is not to say the selected person won't be a Dem.

As far as a challenge goes. If someone wants to call for a special election they would have 15 days from our filling the seat to challenge. It requires 5% of the registered voters in town signing a petition that is then presented to the Town Clerk who then sends it to the Secretary of State to start an election cycle. They cannot go directly to Secretary of State. The petitioner has to state specifically which seat they are challenging and that is the only seat they could possibly win. It would result in a new election for that seat only and must take place within 150 days. Because of the election process, which it then becomes, it is my understanding that the political parties can also nominate someone to run. That is the only time a party has a say.

This is my understanding of the process and if a challenge were to take place. We just need to be patient and see what happens.

Charlene"

Ms. Wright questioned why was DTC was privy to the letter/process but not the rest of the town. She questioned Charlene's commitment to the Town vs. her commitment to the DTC. Ms. Wright reported that other town residents have been asking these same questions. In addition, she reported that the article on ZIP06 contained inaccurate information.

Charlene reported that information relative to the replacement of a Board member is available via the Secretary of State's office any anyone could have accessed the information. The Statute is being

followed and this is the information that has been relayed to the DTC. At the 1/5/22 BOS meeting, the decision was made to name Charlene as the First Selectwoman.

Andrew Gardner commented that he looks forward to working with the BOS relative to the ARPA funds. He requested a list of items considered by the BOS that were not deemed an appropriate use of the ARPA funds. Charlene reported that she met with the BOF Chairman today and will attend the next BOF meeting.

APPOINTMENTS TO BOARDS AND COMMISSIONS

Tom Englert made a motion to appoint Meredith Devanney as Chester's Veteran's Representative. Charlene Janecek seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

BOS and Audience members spoke highly of Ms. Devanney.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Tom Englert made a motion to approve the minutes from the 12/29/21 BOS meeting, as presented. Charlene Janecek seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Tom Englert made a motion to approve the minutes from the 1/5/22 BOS meeting, as amended. Charlene Janecek seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Note: Paragraph 3 – "Resignation of First Selectman Lauren Gister" – the phrase "effective immediately following the close of the meeting" should be stricken from the record.

ARPA DISCUSSION

As previously discussed, all items "tabled" at the Town Meeting must be brought back to a future Town Meeting exactly the same way as presented at the original Town Meeting. BOS members agreed that an informational meeting relative to the ARPA projects will be scheduled. In addition, the BOS will meet with the BOF to review the requests. Ultimately, these items will go back to a Town Meeting for final vote.

DISCUSS PROCESS OF STATUTE 9-222 ELECTION ENFORCEMENT

A copy of the Statute relative to filling the vacant seat on the BOS was included in the BOS packet and discussed. The Statute outlines the process to petition for a "special election" to fill the seat. It is the Board's intention to "fill" the seat at the 1/26/22 BOS meeting. All interested parties were encouraged to submit their name, in writing, along with qualifications/background to the Selectman's office or to Tom or Charlene directly. To date, no names have been submitted to fill the seat.

DISCUSS MASK REQUIREMENT AND ZOOM MEETINGS

The BOS discussed the recent uptick in Covid-19 throughout the state and country.

Tom Englert made a motion to suspend in-person meetings of all Boards/Commissions/Committees being held on Town property and such meetings are to be conducted remotely via ZOOM or another platform for the protection of members of the Boards as well as the public, effective the week of 1/17/22. Charlene Janecek seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

The BOS will re-visit this motion in 30 days.

HARBOR MANAGEMENT REQUEST

A copy of a memo from the Harbor Management Commission regarding the Chester Creek Dredging Project was included in the BOS packet. The memo is requesting that the BOS and BOF transfer \$100,000 from the General Fund to the Chester Creek Dredging account for reimbursement of dredging expenses.

BOS and BOF members in attendance requested clarification on the appropriate amount to be “released”. Carolyn will forward a copy of the grant to Charlene and Charlene and Virginia will review the grant documents prior to the transfer of funds. This item will appear on a future BOS agenda. This request was tabled.

2022-23 BUDGET PROCESS

Charlene reported that she met with the BOF Chairman and they are working on the budget calendar (formal presentation to the BOF after BOS review). In addition, Peter Evankow will be consulted relative to the process.

Virginia reported that the above process is different from what is in the Policy Manual.

Charlene will report back to the BOS after her meeting(s) with Rick and Peter.

SELECTMEN REPORTS

Tom Englert reported that distribution of approximately 500 Covid-19 test kits and masks took place at the elementary school. Residents were encouraged to come to the town hall to pick up masks. Note that the test kits expire in October.

Charlene reported that she has been at the Town Hall every day reviewing documents, etc. The BOS appreciates residents’ patience during this transition period.

AUDIENCE OF CITIZENS

Virginia Carmany requested clarification regarding the approval process for ARPA funds. Charlene responded that while the BOF is not part of the approval process, the BOS does intend to seek their advice. Ultimately the decision on how the funds are used is up to the Town via a Town Meeting vote.

In addition, Charlene reported that the BOS will schedule informational meetings to solicit input from residents. At this time, the formation of a “task force” is under consideration.

Charlene reported that she will read the ARPA documents thoroughly and report back to the BOS/BOF. A copy of the documents will be forwarded to Virginia as requested.

Virginia reported that she attended an ARPA seminar today and that the use of funds should follow the town’s Policy and Procedural Manual. She believes that the BOF should be part of the approval process.

Tom reported that residents want “oversight” from the BOF relative to the ARPA funds. The overall goal is to ensure that the BOS and BOF are in agreement with the projects presented to the voters.

Andrew Gardener reported that statistics will be necessary to determine lost revenue.

Mike Cressman spoke in support of an informational session, including “the big picture”, to discuss the ARPA funds.

Kris Pollack reported on the difficulty experienced at the hybrid Town Meeting meeting; vis a vis voting for items.

Julianne Divis recommended that the ARPA guidelines be posted on the Town website, town email, etc.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

Tom Englert made a motion to go into Executive Session at 8:15 p.m. for discussion of a Personnel matter. Charlene Janecek seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Regular Session resumed at 9:45 p.m.

Action:

ADJOURNMENT

Tom Englert made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 9:50 p.m. Charlene Janecek seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

CT Examiner article

Respectfully Submitted,

Suzanne Helchowski
Clerk