

Chester Board of Finance

Minutes of Regular Meeting March 17, 2022

Present: John O'Hare, Rick Nygard, Bill Bernhart, Michael Joplin, Virginia Carmany; Steve Cline and Deborah Vilcheck. Also present: First Selectwoman Charlene Janecek.

Call to Order: Hybrid In-Person and Zoom Meeting called to order at 6:08 by Co-Chair Board of Finance John O'Hare.

Seated in addition to John O'Hare, Chairman Rick Nygard, Virginia Carmany, Michael Joplin, Bill Bernhart and Steve Cline

Audience of Citizens:

Comments from Audience of Citizens. Charlene Janecek read into the record a letter from Karin Badger dated March 16, 2022:

"To the BOS and BOF,

Re: Minutes 2/17/22, New Business – Police Body Cameras

I want to point out that the State of CT's mandate for police body cameras needing to be in place by July 2022 is NOT a 'recent development' as stated in these minutes, as a justification for claiming emergency status. Please see the timeline below from the Hartford Courant. The bill passed in 2020, but has been in the works since 2015.

Please tell the truth; that unfortunately this issue was not addressed, evidently for years, by the Town of Chester. Why? By delaying we have missed out on 100% reimbursement.

I would urge the Town to apply NOW for that 30% grant that may still be available, by July 31, 2022.

Thank you,

Karin Badger"

Provided by Karin Badger and attached to these minutes Hartford Courant, August 6, 2021 "As deadline approaches, some Connecticut police departments still don't have body cameras"

Approval of the Minutes: Virginia Carmany moved the approval of the minutes for the meeting held on 2/17/22. Seconded by Richard Nygard. All in favor.

6:15 Andrew Gardner joined the meeting, not seated.

Old Business: None

Financials: John O'Hare led review of the 2021 – 2022 Annual Budget Status Report – March 14, 2022

Discussion: General Fund Revenue - Property taxes increased by \$161,631; Police Private Duty Expense of \$18,320 comes back to the Town as revenue; Generator Rental reported at \$7,998 is actually over \$8,000 as of 3/17/22.

Virginia commented regarding Risks and Opportunities. If Masonicare wins case, the Town owes \$603,000 to be paid over three years by reduction of future tax. Town has only put \$500,000 in surplus so we are light \$100,000. We could almost pay that in one year if necessary as we've been saving for nearly a worst-case scenario.

NRCS is the streams that need to be cleaned. This is a reimbursement grant. Town needs to pay up front and 75% is reimbursed. The \$195,349 may need to be added as an appropriation at one of the Town Meetings.

Rick Nygard - We need to speak with Peter Evankow, and we may need to do a new appropriation. We don't have time to get it into the April 7 Town Meeting.

Charlene advised all the up-front approvals have been done, the contractor is ready to do the work, and it must be done in July.

59 Winthrop Road – Michael Joplin questioned whether we are assuming we will have some practical recovery of the clean up expense upon the sale of the property?

Charlene – we have grant money to do the assessment.

Virginia – are their brown field grants reimbursement grants and have grants been identified?

Police Body Camera Storage – to be discussed at joint BOS/BOF meeting at 7pm.

Bill Bernhart questioned whether the body camera storage quote is for \$81,000 or \$88,000.

Rick responded \$81,000 but more information will be discussed in next meeting.

First Selectwoman's Report – Charlene reported that Dick Leighton, Fire Marshal wants to attend the next meeting to discuss condemned property. The cost of clearing would be a lien on the property and paid off at the sale of property.

Reports on Assigned Areas:

Virginia – Reporting on Public Works, there is nothing new to report. Reporting on Elected Officials' salaries will be at the next budget meeting.

Bill – Reporting on ARPA Committee – the committee has two proposals to move to BOS and BOF – WPCA and the IT Updates to Town Offices and Meeting House.

Discussion – these items are already going to be presented at Town Meeting as those items tabled at the December 17 meeting must come back as they were when tabled. They can then be amended. Costs that go down can be approved at Town Meeting but if the cost goes up, they cannot be approved by Town Meeting, those must come back to BOF.

Rick – BOF did not get a chance to review the proposals before they were presented at the Town Meeting. WPCA and IT upgrade are major expenses and need to be procured through the normal procurement process.

Virginia – Referring to RiverCog ARPA information – if using revenue loss as the rational for the expenses, then there is the \$10M loophole. What we can do is make a motion to approve up to \$98,000 but first must add it to the agenda.

Rick moved to add ARPA's two proposals to the agenda, Virginia seconded. Voice vote all in favor. No objections, no abstains.

Discussion – Is there an advantage to approving one IT upgrade first and wait until a later time to approve the other? For example, approve the IT upgrade for the meeting house first. No benefit to splitting them. Comfortable with moving forward.

Steve Cline reviewed the CTComp quote – Town Hall \$25,500 and meeting house \$38,500.

Virginia moved to approve up to \$98,480 for the projects to allow them to move forward and contingent on using competitive bidding per BOF policy. Rick Nygard seconded.

Discussion – projects to go through normal procurement process. Voice vote in favor. One objection, no abstains. It will take about a month after the bidding process to complete the IT upgrades

Rick – the IT upgrade does not qualify as an emergency. The emergency is in the police body cameras and storage.

Police Body Cameras and IT Storage

Discussion - John O'Hare had spoken to Joanne at Telrepcos about the IT storage component costs. Telrepcos's advice is that we do not need the redaction part as the system allows for burning DVDs and sending them to the State. This would be a \$6,000 savings. Nicole Hovel is working on the 30% reimbursement for a portion of the costs.

Audience of Citizens: No comments.

Meeting adjourned at 7:15 pm.

Attachment

FROM Hartford Courant, August 6, 2021

As deadline approaches, some Connecticut police departments still don't have body cameras

"This mandate was included in a sweeping **police accountability bill that passed in 2020** following a wave of protests against police violence and the murder of George Floyd in Minneapolis."

"The push for body cameras in Connecticut began in earnest in **2015**, following the high-profile killings of Michael Brown in Missouri and Walter Scott in South Carolina, two Black men who were gunned down by police. That year, Connecticut lawmakers voted to create a grant program to help fund the purchase of body cameras for state troopers, campus police and local departments throughout the state.

More than \$12 million was eventually offered up for that effort — \$10 million of which was dedicated to local police forces.

The state initially promised to refund local departments 100% of the cost of the camera purchases. Even so, many departments were slow to apply for the grants."

"There is at least \$4 million in state money that is currently available to departments that are acquiring cameras for the first time, but the state is no longer being as generous with the grants as it was in past years. Municipalities that are considered economically distressed will still be reimbursed for up to 50% of the cost, but the remaining towns and cities are only eligible for **30% reimbursement.**"

LINK

<https://www.courant.com/politics/hc-pol-connecticut-police-body-cameras-20210806-x5v5inztp5gvfejdzt4qykybpm-story.html>