

THESE MINUTES ARE SUBJECT TO APPROVAL AT THE NEXT BOF MEETING

TOWN OF CHESTER, CONNECTICUT
BOARD OF FINANCE
Special Meeting
August 23, 2022
Community Meeting Room
Chester Town Hall

CALL TO ORDER

Chairman O'Hare called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. In attendance included: Chairman John O'Hare, John Chillock, Steve Cline, Michael Joplin, Deb Vilcheck, Bill Bernhart, Roger Labrecque, and First Selectwoman Janececk, Elise Cressman and Michael Cressman. Kimberley Megrath and additional residents were also in attendance in the Audience of Citizens.

Chester Community Partnership - \$100,000 (original request - \$25,000 per year – FY23, 24, 25 and 26) – to support the Chester Food program. Note that the request was amended to \$25,000 at this time (one year's request with additional requests for funds in future years).

The BOF continued to discuss the Chester Community Partnership's request for ARPA funds. Additional documents received from the "Partnership" was forwarded to BOF members and discussed.

If funded, the money would be used to provide food to households experiencing food insecurity; in particular, those households impacted or disproportionately impacted by the Pandemic. Ms. Megrath and Committee members were available to address comments, questions and concerns posed by BOF members.

The Community Fund, funded by donations, has been in existence for many years. These funds were used for food, energy and other emergencies. Due to the Pandemic, these funds have been depleted by the purchase of food. The BOF recommended that the BOS submit a proposal for the use of ARPA funds to replenish the Community Fund to allow for assistance with fuel and other emergencies.

In addition, the BOF recommended that the Chester Community Partnership provide a new proposal for consideration to include information on how similar services are provided in surrounding towns.

AUDIENCE OF CITIZENS –

A letter from Lori Ann Clymas was received and is attached.

Ms. Megrath reported that the BOF has received several letters of support for the request. She provided background on the formation of the Chester Community Partnership and the services provided by same. In addition, the request was unanimously supported by the BOS. The Community Funds used by the "Partnership" were authorized by Social Services and the Selectmen. Much of money in the Community Fund was designated for the purchase of food and was not just spent by the "rogue" Chester Community Partnership.

Elise Cressman reported that she administered the Food Pantry in past years (with only 2 additional individuals) and did not spend the amounts of money that the Chester Community Partnership has used to purchase food. She supported the BOF's recommendation to provide ARPA funds for social service

emergencies. Administering to the public is not as complicated as the Community Partnership is making it.

Susan Wright commented that this group is different because of the additional outreach the Partnership is providing to residents and additional people are needed to provide adequate services.

Michael Cressman reported that it may be difficult for residents to navigate the varied programs; i.e. Food Pantry, Social Services, Chester Community Partnership. The Director of Social Services should be facilitating programs/funds, etc. While the Community Partnership provided extraordinary services during the Pandemic, it is now time to go back to the “normal” and simpler models used pre-Pandemic to provide social services.

The BOF thanked residents for their participation at this evening’s meeting.

ADJOURNMENT

On a motion made and duly seconded, the meeting was adjourned.

Respectfully Submitted,

Suzanne Helchowski
Clerk