

THESE MINUTES ARE SUBJECT TO APPROVAL AT THE NEXT BOF MEETING
TOWN OF CHESTER, CONNECTICUT
BOARD OF FINANCE
REGULAR MEETING
Thursday, March 16, 2023
Chester Town Hall and via TEAMS

CALL TO ORDER

Chairman O'Hare called the meeting to order at 7:00. In attendance included: Chairman O'Hare, Deb Vilcheck, Bill Bernhart, Andrew Gardner, Steve Cline, and John Chillock, seated for Michael Joplin. Also in attendance included First Selectwoman Janecek, Selectman Meehan, Selectman Englert, Bob Grissom, several BOE members (Jennifer Clark, Richard Strauss), audience members and Elizabeth Netsch, Treasurer.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Bill Bernhart made a motion to approve the minutes of the 2/16/23 meeting as presented. Deb Vilcheck seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT – None.

VISITORS

Bob Grissom – Region 4 Bond Issue

Mr. Grissom, R4 Finance Director, screen shared and distributed documentation relative to an upcoming Bond Referendum in May. Items under consideration for bonding include athletic field improvements, upgrades and 2 additional fields as recommended by the Grounds and Maintenance Oversight Committee formed to study the condition of the fields at JW and Valley (the current fields have reached their maximum recommended usage). Proposed projects would address safety, accessibility, maintenance, and drainage concerns on the fields. Cost estimates total \$9,966,000.00 (including costs associated with issuing the bonds).

Mr. Grissom shared a FAQ sheet and was available to address questions/comments posed by Board members. Additional information is available on the R4 website and a Public Hearing on the project is scheduled on 3/29/23.

Elizabeth Netsch, Treasurer

Ms. Netsch, Treasurer, provided an overview of the functions of the Treasurer's office, including responsibilities associated with the funds at R4 and CES, banking, use of STIF funds/accounts and investments.

SELECTMEN REPORTS – None.

ARPA DISCUSSION – None.

John Chillock made a motion to amend the order of agenda and to discuss "Audience of Citizens" before "Budget Discussion". Steve Cline seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

AUDIENCE OF CITIZENS

A new resident of the Town was in attendance and was welcomed by the BOF.

BUDGET DISCUSSION – Financial documents, provided by Peter Evankow were included in the Board's packet.

Board members were encouraged to review the report of the Governance Committee, in particular, elected vs. hired positions. The Board discussed the Accounting Manager's duties and the potential of him taking on additional responsibilities.

The BOF reviewed the budgets as developed by Department Heads and the Finance Department. The BOE budget is still in development. Charlene was in attendance and provided an update on the BOS's deliberations relative to the budget as follows:

- Personnel contractual increases
- Service Contract(s) - CT Comp – technology increases
- Staffing – potential savings in Tax Office
- Assessor's Office – this is a Revaluation year – Charlene recommends making the Assessor a full-time position. Our Grand List has grown.
- (BOF) Audit price increases
- BOS recommends eliminating BOF general legal and postage.
- Registrar – potential for staff to facilitate early voting as mandated by the State.
- Building Dept. – purchase of new code books - current year revenue is substantial.
- P&Z – ZEO Consultant is now month to month contract (\$3,600 per month). Town currently searching for ZEO (there is a lack of ZEOs). ZEO position mandated by State.
- Park & Rec – Director has resigned effective in May. Budget includes funds that will be due the current Director (vacation, etc.). Discussion on appropriate hours and duties of the Park & Rec Director. Capital request includes Pickle Ball court(s).
- Public Works – not all funds in current budget for road maintenance have been used.
- Bulky Waste - Deep River Transfer Station - Chester residents to access for brush disposal. DR will need to "chip" the brush 4 times per year. Charlene offered to pay for 2 of those "chipping" fees. Discussions with DR regarding the potential for a Food Scraps program.
- Fire Department – request for part-time admin. and Ambulance staff - Department has realized increased revenue for EMS calls.
- LED Streetlights have realized approximately \$45,000 in savings.
- Emergency Management – Director does not take the stipend budgeted for the position.
- Social Services – request to increase to full-time position (24 to 30 hours per week) due to increased demand for services.

ADJOURNMENT

On a motion made and duly seconded, the meeting was adjourned at 9:10 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Suzanne Helchowski
Clerk