

MINUTES OF TOWN MEETING
HELD ON JANUARY 5th, 2023

(32 residents in attendance)

The Meeting was called to order by First Selectwoman Charlene Janecek at 7:12 p.m. John Ivimey was duly named as Moderator. A motion was made, seconded, and SO VOTED to waive the reading of the call. A motion was made, seconded, and SO VOTED to adopt the call as presented.

- 1. A motion was made and seconded to authorize the First Selectman to sign the STEAP GRANT in the amount of \$500,000 for North Main Street reconstruction project from the intersection of Route 148 up to the bridge over Great Brook.**

Discussion:

Charlene gave an overview that we applied for a grant from the state to redo the drainage, sidewalks, and the road for North Main Street going from Rte. 148 up to the bridge at Great Brook. The sidewalks are crumbling, the roads are in bad shape. It really needs to be done so we applied for and we have received a STEAP GRANT in the amount of \$500,000 to do that work.

Karin Badger asked Where is Great Brook? What bridge is that? Charlene answered that it's the one on North Main Street just before the Norma Terris Goodspeed Theater.

Henry stated that was one problem he had with this meeting call because it says that this is a bridge over Great Brook and every map that I looked at says that bridge is over Chester Creek, and so, and in fact I couldn't find any map that had Great Brook anywhere other than on the other side of 9, and so I'm really wondering whether this call has enough of a flaw within it to say we really shouldn't be talking about this because nobody knew where it is, what we are talking about. This is really a huge mistake here. This really should be the bridge over Chester Creek. None of the communications said Chester Creek.

Ed responded that this is not a major flaw in the definition of what is known locally as Great Brook. We know where Chester Creek is. It's the section of the water body from the CT River up through and behind the buildings on Main Street. This has been identified in many of our planning documents. It's known in our engineering plans as the Great Brook. Great Brook starts where you said Henry; it's behind Route 9, goes through Deuces Pond and all along, and runs parallel to Deep Hollow. The maps that I'm familiar with in the inventory that was done for the natural resource conservation work has always identified this as the Great Brook.

Henry went on to say that he couldn't find it on Apple Maps or Google Maps. Ed said that doesn't mean that those maps are correct. Ed added that the Water Street Bridge crossing; when that Water Street Bridge was replaced in 2014; those construction plans and engineering plans identified this watercourse as Great Brook.

Michael Cressman said he could add that brook also runs through the Carini Preserve and it's called Great Brook, and I encountered the same thing that you did Henry, seeing that things are different on other maps but you know that, that's Great Brook.

Aaron Zain asked is the \$500,000 that grant is allocating adequate to cover the project? Ed answered that it's not adequate to cover the project. It's the maximum amount we can be awarded under the STEAP program. STEAP GRANTS are known as the State, Town, Economic Assistance Programs. The Town is required to match what is shared with local funds, which is further down on this call. We are proposing at least 22%. The total project cost is estimated by our town engineer and it's about \$640,000. for 610 feet of reconstruction of the road. I would add to what the First Selectwoman said earlier, which is that the reason this is timely now is because it was recommended in the Main Street Master Plan and the Town Plan of Conservation and Development, which incorporates recommendations from our Main Street plan, which was done back in 2013 but this has been on hold for a variety of reasons one of which was getting the rest of the downtown center put back together. We've also been waiting for the Connecticut Water Company to replace a 12 inch water line, which was supposed to be done a year and a half ago. So, now it's time to reconstruct this half a million dollars worth of state road.

Felise Cressman said the most important question she has is if this is item #1 and the last item is the sewer on that same stretch of road, why are we voting on this first one if we don't know if the sewer line is going to be dug up on that road and then you're going to have to repave it again. Like it just seems like let's do the work first on this road, which is not as bad as Liberty Street but that's another story, and you're going to repave this road, and then you're going to dig it up again if we pass this last thing about the sewer line along that section of the road? I think the sewer should have been brought up first as item #1.

Charlene answered that the sewer line would be done in conjunction with the other reconstruction of North Main Street. Felise said that it doesn't say that anywhere in the call.

Ed said the first step is to accept the STEAP GRANT and do the reconstruction project. We cannot mix the STEAP GRANT money with ARPA money. Then later on at this Town Meeting, you folks - the legislative body, can decide ok while this reconstruction is underway, let's use ARPA money to do the sewer line so that we do it in conjunction, in a coordinated way and not repave the road and go back in. Felise said I understand that but I think it should have been brought up at the beginning of the Meeting.

Madaline Meyer asked Do STEAP GRANTS get repaid to the State? Ed answered no, it's a grant.

Joe Cohen asked does the Town have a list of roads, sidewalks, and other projects that need to be done and then ranks them in terms of need? Because I would suggest that North Main Street doesn't appear to rank very high and this appears to be a continuation of let's pour everything into the tiny downtown that doesn't serve many, if not most, of our Chester residents, but I'd like to know, is there a ranking system so we can say, well this is more important than Kings Highway, or this is more important than Wig Hill, or this is more important than something else. Secondly, I'd like to ask through the Moderator, what/who decides in Chester what needs to be done and does Chester have any employees, currently, who have the skills and the understanding of roads and construction, and if it doesn't, why not?

The Moderator asked who would like to answer that? Ed said he would start with the second question. We will have a professional engineer manage this project and inspect the work and meet all the requirements of the Dept. of Transportation, and the standards required by the grant.

Joe Cohen then asked what happened to our long-time employees? The Moderator told him he needed to take some other people's questions and then come back to Joe Cohen.

Karin Badger asked when was the STEAP GRANT applied for? Ed answered the STEAP GRANT was applied for in August and it was awarded in September.

Mr. Devanney asked what are the issues with the road (North Main Street) from the stop sign and the 100 yards to the bridge to require the STEAP GRANT/half a million dollars? I'm down there all the time with my kids and we park right there and we walk into town. I live on Kings Highway and it's a train wreck especially around the corner where the school bus just hit a tree truck. We're talking about spending a half a million dollars on 100 yards of pavement and it's wide enough for all of us to get through. Again, Kings Highway is a train wreck going around that corner.

Charlene answered the Kings Hwy question saying that Connecticut Water Co. is coming through this Spring and laying a new water main going down that road and at that time the town is going to do drainage and paving on that whole section. Mr. Devanney said ok, thank you, I appreciate it. I'm just using that one road as an example. That 100 yards from the bridge to downtown, what is the issue with it? I mean if we're talking about spending a half a million dollars on it?

Joe Cohen said I haven't gotten an answer to either of the questions I asked. The Moderator said we are finishing to answer another question first. I said I'd get back to you and I meant it.

Charlene said that at our last Town Meeting you approved a road study to be completed by Jacobson's. It is in process and when it's done it will itemize the roads that need to be done and the order that they need to be done in. As far as the Town, we have new people in our Town Department of Public Works. The young man who is working right now, our acting foreman, has a myriad of road experience. He's very qualified to do road work.

Joe said well if we're doing a road study then why aren't we waiting for that to be done first before we spend half a million dollars on 100 yards of road first, before the study is done? And I'll say that I object that everything goes into downtown Chester; what about the rest of the town? What about the rest of the residents? You have made millionaires out of land owners, you have made millionaires out of business people, and the rest of us are subsidizing that over and over again. And I object to that.

Mr. Devanney asked again what's wrong with that 100 feet of road?

Ed answered that the issues with the road are identified in the pictures shown of the deteriorating sidewalk and curbing, a lack of drainage structures - there's only one operating drainage structure in this section. This section is not 100 feet, it's 640 feet. And the road has been cut up since the CT Water Company put in a new water main there. We have half the road paved with patches and the other half is deteriorating. When gutter flow and rain flow comes down from Goose Hill it just migrates across the broken sidewalk and goes into peoples' yards, so this is a chance to get it fixed. And this has been on the to get fixed list since 2013.

Aaron Zain asked when you applied for this grant did you specify this project in this area? Charlene said yes, the grant has to be for a specific project. Aaron said my second question is - well I remember this Jacobson road study and talking about this and so they're doing it now - so the results will come out in

the Spring and you'll share it with everybody and they'll actually do some sort of road ranking? Charlene said yes.

Henry said I see further on with items #2, #3, and #4 they all talk about \$150,000. Now if we accept the STEAP GRANT for \$500,000, are we on the hook for the \$150,000? Or, do these add up? I mean are items 2,3,4 one single \$150,00 just moving around or is there more than one of them here? The Moderator said I think what you're really saying is what is the total cost of the money we're actually spending here? Charlene answered that the \$150,00 is just one \$150,000. The Town has to spend that much money for the STEAP GRANT. It's just moving it from one item to another item. The Moderator said and just to be clear that is going to be discussed in item #4. Henry said okay.

There was a hand count vote: 22 YES 6 NO. The Moderator said it's pretty clear that it carries.

2. A motion was made and seconded to appropriate the sum of \$150,000 from the unassigned general fund balance, to Capital Non-Recurring line item #10-05-62-1000-150 per the Board of Finance.

Discussion:

The Chairman of the Board of Finance, John O'Hare, started to explain that we have the money to do it but we have to move it and then Charlene clarified that it's going from the General Fund unassigned account into the Selectmans' assigned account. And then it will get moved from this account (item #3) to roads, sidewalks and bridge repairs account. Item #2 and #3 are kind of joined. This is all a procedural accounting process. As advised by our Accounts Manager.

Ed added that the Board of Finance when they discussed this, there were a couple of options for coming up with the local share for this project. One was to borrow it from ourselves internally from one capital line item to the next (like a piece of fire department apparatus or other parts of the infrastructure budget) but the decision was made, as it was discussed and voted on, by the Board of Finance to expend the money from the General Fund balance, which we are very fortunate to have at this current fiscal year at about 25% fund balance. so we're carrying a balance of \$3,967,000. The auditors would tell us we would have to look for a fund balance between 10 and 16%. 16% of the operating budget would be \$2,554,000. So we're in very good fiscal condition. The Board of Finance I think made a wise decision to use our own money and not borrow internally.

John Ivimey said, just for my clarification so what we're doing here is getting the money out of the General Fund balance and putting it into the Selectmens' balance and the taking out of the Selectmens' balance and putting it into the proposed until we get to #4. So this is the same money we're talking about. Charlene said yes. So these are just procedural until we get to #4.

John O'hare said yes and this is all done with the good advice of our Accounts Manager.

Aaron Zain said so it's the same \$150,000. Moving around until we can spend it on the road. Charlene said correct.

Joe Cohen asked through the Moderator is it a fact that we are overtaxed? And that we are taxing our current and previous taxpayers too much so that future taxpayers won't have to pay? Am I understanding that this is an accounting matter and we have too large of a reserve?

John O'Hare answered that we have been very fortunate in the last couple of years due to the ARPA funds. Without the ARPA funds we wouldn't have gotten any of this done. And that's the reason we have excess money in the account. Now we are getting into the new budget season and there is no more ARPA and we will have to operate on our own.

And without the ARPA funds in many cases we wouldn't have gotten any of this done so that was a windfall of \$300,000. And that is the reason that we have the excess money in the account now we are just entering the budget season and that will be addressed in this next budget season. Because there's no more ARPA, that's gone. So, we'll have to operate on our own.

Charlene added it's also because of COVID. Over the last two years money that was budgeted because it couldn't get spent because of COVID is now in our General Fund. But like John O'Hare said we're in budget season and adjustments will have to be made.

John O'Hare added that Reg. 4 also gave us back a lot of money.

Joe Cohen said so really what I'd like is a yes or no answer. Are we overtaxed and over reserved?, and thus, we the current taxpayers, are paying an excessive amount so that at some point in the future projects can go along. When I think of ARPA funds the thing I think of is the 270,000 boat for the fire department that wasn't delivered, but really wasn't necessary. Because there wasn't a single call on the river. Do I understand this correctly?

The Moderator said you're asking a lot of questions and making a lot of statements.

Charlene said we have not overtaxed anybody, Joe. It's money that has come back to the town because it did not get spent because of COVID. We got money back from the school systems. And because a lot of people worked at home, and Town Hall wasn't open, and it's just money that did not get spent. And we also had over \$600,000 that we were holding because of taxes that possibly had to be given back to Masonicare. That has now been resolved and that money has been returned to us. They are going to have to pay their full fare as far as taxes go so that's why currently we have a larger reserve than we normally would have. Now we are in the budget process and we will make some adjustments this year so that we don't have this large reserve anymore.

Joe Cohen asked can I ask the moderator when is the fire boat going to come? Charlene said I believe it is almost completed. Jimmy Schaeffer said, you'll have to ask the Chief and he's not here tonight. Charlene said I know that it's in process and they had problems getting parts again because of the supply chain problems. And that's been the biggest holdup. Joe Cohen said thank you.

The Moderator asked if there were more questions. There was a yes or no (1) vote and the yes won.

3. A motion was made and seconded to authorize the following Capital transfer:

From 20-00-01-0000-007 Board of Selectman Assigned	\$150,000
To 20-00-31-0000-446 Infrastructure-Road/Sidewalk/Bridge Repairs	\$150,000

No discussion followed.

The Moderator asked if there were any questions. There was a yes or no (1) vote and the yes won.

4. A motion was made and seconded to authorize the expenditure of \$150,000 from the Capital Fund-Road/Sidewalk/Bridge Repairs line item #20-00-31-0000-446 for the North Main Street reconstruction project per the Board of Finance.

No discussion followed.

The Moderator asked if there were any questions. there was a yes or no (1) vote and the yes won.

5. A motion was made and seconded to consent and approve an appropriation in the amount of \$19,283.50 to be allocated from the American Rescue Plan Act funds (ARPA) for the new Town Hall generator as recommended by the Board of Finance.

Discussion:

Aaron Zain asked didn't we already decide that ARPA funds were going to go towards a Town Hall generator?

Charlene answered yes, and when the generator got ordered it came in at \$19,283.50 more than what was originally appropriated. Aaron Zain asked, what was originally appropriated? Charlene answered \$128,000. And again, the cost of everything has gone up and the delivery time has gone up as well. We are not going to get the generator for another year.

Karin Badger asked, so it's \$150,000 almost? Charlene said yes.

Meredith Devanney asked if this would also benefit the bank and if so, would the bank be required to compensate for that? Charlene said yes it will cover the bank and we just negotiated a new contract with the bank and their rent is going to go up. And, the current generator that is there is going to get moved to the Town Garage and be used at the Town Garage.

Joe Cohen asked how many bids were received on the original bidding of the generator? And, how many companies were contacted to make bids and third, and most important, were there any bids lower than the contract awarded plus the \$19,000 that is now coming due? Could we say take the generator back because we didn't get our bid? Charlene said we took the lowest bid. That it was considerably lower. It was posted and went out to all the generator companies. We only got two bids back - one was \$160,000 something and this bid was \$138,000 that was awarded.

Joe asked did you consider going out for a whole new round of bids? Things are coming down in price you know.

Ed added that the other bidder did not offer to relocate the existing generator and repurpose it to the Town Garage. That requires crane service and new electrical service at the Town Garage and that was also in the bid specs. We have to remember that the other bidder did not cover that requirement.

Aaron Zain asked is there some sort of spreadsheet of accounting for the ARPA funds - what came in and what got spent, and what's remaining?

Madaline Meyer, the Tax Collector, answered that Peter, our Finance Director, created one and I'm sure if you contacted him, he would share it with you. Charlene said that if everything tonight gets approved, there will be \$76,542.32 left in ARPA funds. Some of the funds that have already been allocated have not been totally spent yet and may not get totally spent, and then they would go back into the ARPA fund. Aaron Zain asked what happened to the ARPA Committee and Charlene answered that they dissolved themselves. They voted to dissolve and now it's in the hands of the BOS and BOF because whatever they decided to do had to go through the BOF / BOS.

Meredith Devanney said so we won't have the generator for a year, supplies chains are starting to get back to normal, prices are starting to go down; I'm wondering would we be better off waiting 6-9 months and going through rebidding process? Charlene answered that the generator has already been ordered. Meredith said so you've already spent the money? Charlene said yes we have committed to ordering it with this company, yes. Based on the last Town Meeting when it was approved to order the generator, yes. If we don't approve using ARPA funds tonight we'll have to use town funds for the additional \$19,283.50.

Karin Badger asked does then Elementary School have a generator? Was that a place that was ever considered because it might be better equipped because they have a cafeteria? Charlene answered that Reg. 4 controls that. And she believes it is in their plan to get one but they don't have one yet.

The Moderator asked if there were more questions. There was a yes or no (3) vote and the yes won.

6. A motion was made and seconded to consent and approve an appropriation in the amount of \$11,570. to be allocated from the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) to WPCA work on manhole #20 behind former Town Hall as recommended by the Board of Finance.

Discussion:

Ed explained that the reason for the additional funds was that the Town Meeting back on April 7th allocated about \$98,000 to fortify ARPA projects, one of them being the sewer line that runs between 43 and 51 Main Street. For your reference that is the building that has been under renovations for the last couple of years. The sewer line behind that building is in a 10 foot Easement controlled by the Town of Chester. Those two manholes behind that building serve the Pattaconk Restaurant 43, 47 Main Street and 51 Main Street. There was a problem with that sewer line pipe. A 6 inch pipe that comes out of the back of those buildings. It's been a problem for about 5 or 6 years. There is what they call a slump in the pipe, which is a depression caused by, we believe, a nearby fallen tree or root system that compressed the pipe. The engineers for our WPCA had the line jetted and videoed and there was an estimate of about \$29,000. to repair that section of pipe, about 66 feet of pipe, plus their engineering cost which is another 20% so we're looking at \$35,000. to do this 66 foot length section. Upon excavating and opening the hole we found out that the pipe was more than just compressed that it was not installed in alignment with the original as built plan. It was off by a degree of almost 15%, it looked like a boomerang rather than a straight pipe. The gravity flow wasn't working in the pipe and therefore that is why we've been having problems for the last 5 years, especially, but since it was installed in 1984. So the engineers redesigned the pipe, replaced the full 109 feet from manhole to manhole, and that cost \$67,000. Now that bumped into our next project which is the rebuilding/reconstruction of another manhole which is immediately behind the former Town Hall. We call that one the 'mother of all manholes' in Chester because everything that goes to the pump stations on the other side of the brook go through this manhole. Also, in this manhole the force main that goes out pumps all the effluent to

Deep River. The inside of that manhole has been deteriorating, we have leakage problem, which those leakage problems turn into water, which goes to the pump station, and we pump it back to Deep River, and we get charged by the gallons. So again, this is a 1984 manhole that is in dire need of replacement.

Felise asked is that the same manhole that had the grease clog up related to the Pattaconk backup with the grease? Ed said yes. Felise said and also the same one that flooded out when the stream flooded during our big flood? Ed said yes.

Felise said so shouldn't we also be doing something to prevent further flooding? I have been observing the trees hanging over the cemetery area and if more trees come down with another flooding event and back up the brook, then that manhole will have problems again. I also know there is Japanese knotweed near that one manhole too.

Ed said I agree with your observations but that is not a part of this project. The flooding of that area is a combination of tidal, spring freshet, and heavy rain. So the point of this item is to get the sewer system fixed. The other items you're talking about certainly should be done as ongoing maintenance.

Madaline Meyer asked is there anyone higher up that could say no, somebody at the state level involved with ARPA, who could say no that anything connected to sewer should not be paid out of ARPA? Ed said no. Infrastructure, waste water treatment for public supply are two of the highest ARPA project priorities in the federal act. Madaline said perfect, thank you.

Aaron Zain asked because they're public utilities, are there any state or federal grants other than the ARPA funds that are available for the overages on these projects? Like the EPA?

Ed said there might be but to open that Pandora's box with the Clean Water Fund and DEEP we would probably be waiting for several years.

Joe said that I would like to point out that we were promised, when the WPCA was created and sewers were brought into Chester downtown, that General Funds, money that could affect taxes, would never be used. This is another clear violation of that and I think it's a reflection of the WPCA being unable to do its job properly. We, residents who do not use the sewer system, should not be paying one penny for it, including the ARPA money.

Ed said I think the speaker has not been informed on the operations of Chester's WPCA. If you will remember in 2007, after about two years of extensive study, the present, past/present WPCA got full town government legislative body approval to do bonding for the system that's in place now with the connection to Deep River. The whole town is supporting those clean water bonds. They're amortized over the next ten years, we took out a 2.5 million dollar loan, and that's the general population that benefits from the public health, environmental benefits of the sanitary sewer system. We were under orders for 20 years by DEEP and the State of Connecticut Dept. of Health before the sewer system was put in and it has been a public service in the town. It's driven our economic development, it's cleaned up that Pattaconk Brook, and it's a resource that Chester center and the adjacent neighborhoods would not be the quality they are without sanitary sewers.

Joe Cohen asked that it be clarified that when it was originally done, were we not promised that we would never have to pay anything?

Peter Zanardi stated yes, I was a Selectman then and the answer is yes.

Ed said that in 2007, a long time after 1982 or 1984, the town reconsidered and realized that a lot more needed to be done to handle the effluent. It was causing problems on Maple Street and to adhere to the state requirements to abate pollution, we had to go to a much larger system interconnecting with the treatment plant in Deep River. We have a system that is going on 40 years old and we just can't not take care of it.

Meredith Devanney said in consideration of this 40 year old system she was curious what the plan has been to compensate for these costs? Have we raised the cost of sewer fees for those individuals? What's our plan going forward in the future?

Ed answered yes, we do have a Capital drinking fund in the WPCA budget. Fees have gone up. Its based on the amount of water flow the household or business uses. I invite you to come to WPCA meetings. Look at our minutes, look at our record, our budget and we'd be happy to have another member because we don't have a full board right now, and for anyone in the room who wants to join we meet once a month, the third Tuesday of each month. Thank you.

Peter Zanardi said he doesn't have an opinion on this but he wants people to know that when WPCA came into Chester it wasn't universally accepted. Everybody didn't accept it and it was an ordeal pushing it through.

Aaron Zain said last year at this time, Selectwoman Lauren Gister said these ARPA funds were the chance of a lifetime for this town and we had to be really careful about where the money was being spent. And I have a general comment that this is a lot of sewer money. What was the plan going to be if the ARPA funds never materialized?

Charlene said if we didn't get the ARPA money this would be paid from taxpayers' money. Ed said yes, we would have to work it out through our Capital budget like we do normally for other infrastructure costs. The ARPA funds are a windfall and I think this is a wise way to spend some of it.

The moderator asked if there were more questions. There was a yes or no (3) vote and the yes won.

7.) A motion was made and seconded to consent and approve an appropriation in the amount of \$43,750. to be allocated from the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) to reline the sewer line that goes to the pump station at 4 Water Street as requested by WPCA as recommended by the Board of Finance.

Discussion:

Ed said this is the manhole behind the former Town Hall, which is a major manhole that serves the movement of effluent to the pump station underneath Pataconk Creek. It is in dire need of replacement. We have a quote of \$32,000. To do this manhole. We are putting a contingency on that for engineering assistance and inspection and it's a project that needs to be bid a second time pursuant to the BOF and its fiscal policies, which we can do once we get the money.

Meredith Devanney asked did you go out to bid for the engineering? Because recently Harbor Management got three bids for something and Jacobson's was the highest out of all of them.

Ed said Jacobson's are the engineers registered with the DEEP to do our sewer systems. They are our town engineers for WPCA and have been since 1982.

Aaron Zain asked so this is the same sewer line that's attached to the manhole so items #6 and 7 are a part of the same project? Ed said yes. The sewer line into the pump station is what this item is about and that needs to be relined, it's a ductal iron pipe, it should have been plastic and it's 330 feet of pipeline. Aaron said now we've allocated these funds to the sewer project and now were being asked to allocate the funds to finish the sewer project due to the overage and problems that were found. Ed said correct Aaron said I know you'd not have a crystal ball but is this the end of that project and the overages?

Ed said I don't have a crystal ball. Aaron asked does the committee think they can complete the project barring any other crazy findings for this amount or less and it's done? Ed said that's a good question and were going on the advice of our consulting engineer who oversees the sewer system for us and the other professionals who come at least twice a year and jet the lines to get rid of the debris and the grease that coagulates in the pipe and videotapes it. This pipeline has been videotaped from the manhole and it looks like stalactites of grease are growing in the there. It is either this or dig up the parking lot (in back where the Wheatmarket is) and that would be more expensive and an inconvenience to the businesses. And, if we can't get the right bid we may have to kick this down the road. Aaron said ok, thank you for clarifying.

Joe Cohen said he'd like to say again that he fully supports sewers but we have created a bit of a monster when it comes to downtown Chester. You put in sewers and then we got a whole bunch of restaurants, a whole bunch of very expensive restaurants, grease shedding restaurants and now the monster needs to be fed again. This is not necessarily in the best interest of Chester. I actually do have a partial background in economic development and I can tell you that downtown Chester is a pimple on the ass of the Chester economy. It's nothing, ok, its not what drives this town. Whelen Engineering drives this town, Aaron Manor drives this town, and other larger businesses do. My point is we're spending a lot of money and were taking it from working people, lower middle class people - some people are losing their houses, to support restaurants who charge \$60 for an entree and \$20 for a salad, and that is not right and it is not in the intent of ARPA. Although ARPA is for sewers, it is also to help the economy and to help people who are impacted from the pandemic, not the millionaires who are taking money out of Chester and opening million dollar restaurants in Old Saybrook.

Meredith Devanney said so the way this reads, and I understand the stalactites and things, is it failing at this time and if not what is the estimated time until it fails? Ed answered a failure would be a collapse in the pipe and I can't answer a time line for that, Im reporting on what a video of this section of pipe showed this is an opportunity to back it back to how it should have been built. We're going to have two engineers look at this. I understand that sometimes when something is not broken, it's don't try to fix it but this is something that we don't want to have fail because if this fails our nice smelling Chester center will not be so nice.

Mr. Devanney asked will there be inspectors to make sure we're doing this correctly this time? Are we using the same contractor that made the mistake in the first place?

Ed said we are not using the contractor again that initially made mistakes. I don't think they are even in business anymore. We do have very good engineers that are overseeing this project and as built plans were built, recorded and surveyed before the hole was back filled.

Aaron Zain asked so, at the end of the relining project an engineer or someone on the committee will follow up to check that we don't repeat the same mistake twice? Ed said yes, we have a record of buildings. It's called as built buildings.

The Moderator asked if there were any questions. There was a yes or no (0) vote and the yes won.

8.) A motion was made and seconded to consent and approve the appropriation in the amount of \$240,000. as requested by WPCA to be allocated from the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) to extend the sewer line on North Main Street up to the bridge over Great Brook as recommended by the Board of Finance.

Discussion:

Ed said we're doing this for the extension of the existing sewer line that stops approximately next to the frontage of the former Archambault insurance company, the manhole there. We have an opportunity when we excavate and reconstruct this portion of the road to extend the sewer line not through the Great Brook bridge, but just to stop short of it. There's no need to go under the bridge, it's very expensive, it's time consuming and requires many permits to do. We felt that this improvement should be coordinated with the reconstruction of North Main Street now. There are properties, maybe a half dozen or so on North Main Street that would benefit from this. It is perhaps an opportunity for some longer range economic development. If something were to happen with the Norma Terris Goodspeed, and there was an opportunity to enhance the use of that property, the extension of the sewer line in in conformance with the 2006/2007 sanitary sewer system. The green area is the proposed future sewer system so we're compatible with that, and were also compatible with the 2019/2029 Plan of Conservation and Development, which recommends the extension of sewers up North Main Street to the intersection of Liberty Street. So, it's good community planning. Again, it's ARPA money. It will be engineered and designed and recorded, and as new property owners or existing property owners along North Main Street tie in they are going to be charged an assessment of benefit and a usage fee based on the amount of gallonage they put into the system like anyone else in the system is required to pay now. I think we would be remiss if we didn't take advantage of the ARPA money and got this infrastructure project completed. I think it will enhance the town center.

Felise said, Ed you mentioned that it would enhance if something happened at the Norma Terris but having been on WPCA I know that it costs a fortune to get the sewer to go under the bridge to get to the Norma Terris. So this is not going to enhance anything that's going to happen at the Norma Terris. This proposal is only going to help the half a dozen buildings on North Main Street up to the bridge, if they decide to tie in. And, I know there was a proposal to buy the Norma Terris and then have two boutique hotels but I understand from the neighbors that those people backed out of the offer. So, I don't really see how this is going to help the Norma Terris.

Ed said well I don't know about the rumors but I do know that this is going to bring the sewer line 450 feet closer to the property, which is in conformance with the long range plan and the concern for enhancement of the town center. Maybe, maybe it could be a catalyst or incentive for something to happen at the Norma Terris. Yes, and then someone else will have to talk about how you get it underneath the brook.

Aaron Zain said so we approved the sewer project last year that lead to additional funds being approved tonight and now your suggesting that we continue it because we're digging up the road and its going to affect 6 houses and possibly a new purchaser or possibly new owners and it could possibly bring in economic development of possibilities and possibilities. Why should we be agreeing to another sewer project when the first one isn't even finished? With these particular funds, what about all the other things we could do with these funds for the whole town and not just downtown?

Ed said well the sewer system project is finished. The manhole and relining are maintenance projects dealing with a 40 year old system. This is a new extension based on the plan that was adopted going back to 2007 for the so-called expansion of the sewer system within the town center. It is in conformity of the Master Plan of Conservation and Development, which is a 10 year plan. It doesn't make sense to me not to do something here when we have the ARPA money. Again, I don't have a crystal ball for the future but I do know that to manage community development, this is one way you do it, you put in infrastructure.

Aaron Zain said why do all these funds 1. end up downtown? and 2. Go to this project rather than another or others?

Ed said well that's the decision we're here for tonight. That's the decision that's been made by many town meeting, the boards and commissions, planning & zoning, the plan of conservation and development, the Main Street Committee for a town plan, this is why the legislative body tonight votes on these things. And if you have another idea for the ARPA money then you bring it forward and go through the process.

Aaron said I thought there was an ARPA committee set up to do that.

The moderator said that has already been asked and answered.

Ed invited Aaron to come to a BOS meeting or another board or commission meeting and say I have an ARPA project . Start the wheels moving on it. But, tonight, we're not here to talk about those. Were here to talk about what's on the agenda tonight.

Lisa Wahle said she had concerns about this project and 1. Was that I happened to read the minutes of the WPCA minutes of the October meeting that talks specifically about a proposal for boutique hotels and development of the Norma Terris with a dance studio and an art gallery and a rental space - for the barn to be used as a rental space, and it was a pretty detailed plan. What bothered me is that I've heard of that through heresy in our neighborhood but don't know if that's gone through any of the boards and commissions in town, and it seemed like that was kind of putting the cart before the horse. Are we favoring some specific project there? And is there any current need for those buildings on North Main Street to be able to be hooked in to the sewer?

Madaline Meyer mentioned that one of the hook ups that was done this past year was done under emergency conditions. Their septic system failed. They have the pond right behind them and they have no way to dump their sewer. If we say no to this we could could have any one of those first six or seven properties have the exact same problem and then we'll be driving through town smelling sewage. I think some of those parcels there are in danger of their septic system failing.

Ed said I can't say that there's something driving this based on what may happen at Norma Terris. We want to be proactive and be planners. And anything that happens will have to be approved by Planning & Zoning. It's zoned for village commercial right now. The use of onsite groundwater systems on those parcels is a bit tenuous but I can't say if things are failing right now but as Madaline said 2 new systems have recently gone in.

Karin Badger asked so it will be optional for people to hook up or not? Ed said yes, it's not mandatory. It's never been mandatory but if you have an onsite system that's failing it becomes mandatory. The new regulation with reserve area and engineered soils might restrict them. Now, it's cheaper to tie in to a system than do your own on site system. And that whole area is a high water table area.

Kim Price asked are there plans to expand the system beyond the center of town?

Ed said this is the plan and it is conservative. The newer plan of Conservation and Development recommends a sewer system all the way up North Main Street to Liberty Street and out West Main Street all the way to Aaron Manor. Why Aaron Manor? Aaron Manor pumps on a weekly basis, they're polluting one of our cleanest, major watersheds in town - Pattaconk Brook. They are under orders to correct that. They're back before the Inland Wetlands because the court case got thrown out and they're coming back, probably, in March. So, you're right good community infrastructure is good community health, it's good for the environment, and it's good for the economy. But, I don't think Chester is ready to go overboard on where the sewers are going to go.

Joe Cohen said that he was so glad the topic of Aaron Manor came up. Ed said it is a private issue, that they have been under orders not the Town of Chester. Joe said that Aaron Manor is one of the largest employers and tax payers and putting a sewer line out to Aaron Manor makes a lot of sense but it would cost a small fortune. The other place in town is Cedar Lake. Cedar Lake is to a certain extent, and I don't want to offend anyone if you're a landowner or house owner there, but it is a cess pool. That's the reality of it. That's another area that we just ignore. We just ignore it and we talk about spending money on North Main Street.

Meredith Devanney asked what is the maintenance cost down the road for this \$240,000 extension of the sewer up North Main Street?

Ed said that this is building and planning for the future. This area of North Main Street was investigated and there has been a history of problems. This area was identified as an area with a future need for sewers.

Aaron Zain asked what is the time frame for the STEAP Grant project? And when does it start?

Ed answered it is an 11 month project. It starts luckily by next September.

Aaron Zain said then why can't we table this now?

Ed answered that the contractors are going to want to know if there's also a sewer system going in.

Aaron Zain asked if the tree issue, talked about earlier, of trees falling into the brook, is that going to be looked into? Charlene said yes, there are many trees that are being looked into. Probably about \$80,000 worth of tree work.

Henry Krempel said it sounds to me like this new sewer system doesn't have an immediate customer but we approved a project on Water Street for a business to move into the new bank that requires a water hookup. Are we going to have ARPA funds allocated to extend that waterline to accommodate that business, which is an existing need?

Charlene said that is a whole other issue. The Water company won't extend the line for one or two customers.

Ed said they should try to solve it on site. Plus it's a state highway and when you get involved with a state highway, it's a whole different world.

Karin Badger was asking about contaminated wells in that area of Water Street. Charlene said that Honeycone does have an issue with the well at the old bank site and the other wells are being tested and we don't have the results back yet.

Ed said the whole area is a flood plain.

The Moderator asked if there were any more questions. There was a yes or no (6) vote and the yes won.

A motion was made, seconded and unanimously SO VOTED to adjourn at 8:45p.m.

Attest _____, Town Clerk

I hereby certify that the foregoing was published in the Valley Courier on January 19, 2023.

Attest _____, Town Clerk