

THESE MINUTES ARE SUBJECT TO APPROVAL AT THE NEXT BOF/BOS BUDGET MEETING

Town of Chester, Connecticut  
BOF/BOS  
Special Meeting  
Thursday, February 20, 2020  
203 Middlesex Avenue  
Community Meeting Room

CALL TO ORDER

Chairman Carmany called the meeting to order. In attendance included: Chairman Carmany, Rick Nygard, Jon Joslow, Richard Strauss, Greg Merola, Mike Joplin (for Jennifer Rannestad) and Andrew Gardner (not seated). Also, in attendance were Jennifer Rannestad (not seated), First Selectwoman Gister, Selectwoman Janecek, James Grzybowski and Peter Evankow, Business Manager.

BUSINESS

Preliminary discussion of the Draft Town Operating Budget Expenditures, budget drivers, new initiatives and communications. Determination which Boards or Commissions might be asked to present

The BOS and BOF reviewed the proposed 20/21 Budget. Highlights include:

- Proposed revenue is up \$178,159.00.
- The Grand List shows an increase.
- 2.75% increase in payroll per Union contract.
- Expenditures are up approximately \$13,000
- Capital is at \$7,000 based on last year's approved budget.
- CES is up \$127,202 – 2.61%
- Region 4 is up \$298,999 – 6.16% to Chester
  - ADM shift to Region 4 – Chester is the only town that is up. Laruen has requested exact figures.
- Department Head budgetary requests were included in information distributed to the BOF.
  - Hose Company, Visiting Nurses, Police
- The First Selectman's budgetary requests were included in information distributed to the BOF.
  - Camp Director/Medical Officer for Park & Rec. – role used to be filled by the Director of Health per State Statute. However, the Health District does not fill this role.
  - Public Works – request for additional staff hours as the Public Works staff has facilitated projects that otherwise would have cost more if contractors were hired to do the projects.
  - Part-time Building Official – position has been posted twice. Difficult to find individual for a part-time position and our salary is not competitive.
  - Tree Warden – request for additional salary as duties have increased.
- Capital requests:
  - Dredging of Chester Creek – time does not allow for this project to be completed this year. The project must go out to bid and be completed by April.
  - 2018 Flood Damage repairs
  - The Tree Budget will be substantial.
  - Major mechanical needs for Town Hall should be considered (roof, boilers, etc.)

o Roads

Dependent on the school's budget, Lauren reported that the Town should consider a part-time Planner or the use of a consultant to facilitate grant applications and work with EDC, P&Z and the BOS.

The "not for profit" tax status of Masoncare and two other properties was discussed.

Board/Commission representatives that may be invited to a future joint BOS/BOF meeting:

- Library
- Fire Department
- Public Works
- Police
- Nursing

Lauren reported that Chester's Resident State Trooper is retiring. On 2/26/20, she will be interviewing, along with the State, candidates for the position.

The BOF discussed an appropriate protocol to fund Capital and the possibility of pre-funding Capital using the anticipated end of year surplus of approximately \$80,000.00.

The schedule and potential agenda items for the upcoming joint budget meetings was discussed. It was suggested that the budget meetings have a sharp end time of 9:30 p.m. Peter Evankow keeps a list of additions, deletions, changes to the budget per the BOF/BOS discussions during the budget workshops.

Lauren reported that the Meeting House floor is currently under construction. The contractor has removed the top layers of the floor down to the sub-flooring. The sub-flooring is signed and dated 1876. These floor boards will be given to the Historical Society. They have also uncovered rot and termite damage. A structural engineer has been involved in the project. It is anticipated that the project will be complete by the end of March. The bathroom facilities will also be renovated as part of the project.

AUDIENCE OF CITIZENS – None.

ADJOURNMENT

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

Respectfully Submitted,

Suzanne Helchowski  
Clerk

THESE MINUTES ARE SUBJECT TO APPROVAL AT THE NEXT BOF/BOS MEETING

TOWN OF CHESTER, CONNECTICUT  
BOARD OF FINANCE  
BOARD OF SELECTMEN  
JOINT BUDGET WORKSHOP  
Thursday, February 27, 2020  
Community Meeting Room  
Chester Town Hall

CALL TO ORDER

Chairman Carmany called the meeting to order at 7:30 p.m. In attendance included: Chairman Carmany, Rick Nygard, Jon Joslow, Jennifer Rannestad, Richard Strauss, Greg Merola, and Michael Joplin.

First Selectwoman Gister called the meeting to order at 7:30 p.m. In attendance included: First Selectwoman Gister, Selectwoman Janecek and Selectman Englert. Also in attendance: James Grzybowski, Stephanie, Library Director, Trooper Ward and representatives from the Hose Co.

SHORT PRESENTATIONS FROM POLICE, VISITING NURSES. LIBRARY AND CHESTER HOSE COMPANY – Budget Requests

Library - The Library Director updated the Boards on the request for additional hours (3) for the Director to accommodate the increase in Library hours and programs. The total request is for \$5,300.00. Note that additional Library employees are part-time and do not receive benefits.

The Library Director provided an update on the increased programs and the resident's participation in same.

Jon Joslow asked if the Library Director could provide a forecast for future years and the potential for additional requests for increased hours. Stephanie reported that she is developing a comparative outlook of surrounding Town's libraries. Most of her colleagues work between 35 and 40 hours per week. There has been a great response to the library's increased hours and programs. The library has become a gathering place for residents and the needs continue to expand.

The library's utility expenses were discussed. Lauren reported on the protocol used to determine an appropriate figure to budget. Lauren will follow-up with Peter for additional clarification.

Jon Joslow requested clarification on the book purchases account. Stephanie reported that she has approximately \$5,000 remaining in the account. This account is also used to purchase magazines, newspapers, downloadables and a Hoopla streaming service. Lauren reported that there is a "lag" in the recording of the line item due to the timing of credit card payments.

Police

Trooper Ward updated the BOF on the Police budget request. The State decreased costs for State Troopers (reduced the fringe rate and Chester realized an approximate \$55,000 in savings). Trooper Ward is requesting that this money be used to enhance police services in Town. His proposal includes a request for additional constable hours. Funds for these increased hours have been approved for the current fiscal year. Moving forward, the request is for 16 to 24 hours per week (approximately \$45,000)

for this part-time constable in the upcoming budget. There is also a request for additional OT for Resident Trooper, increase in equipment maintenance, gasoline, and professional development.

Note that town tickets will now be issued and the Town will realize some revenue as a result.

Trooper Ward provided a summary of crime/incidents including car break-ins, drug issues, burglaries, motor vehicle accidents, and approximately 5,000 calls for services per year. Trooper Ward offered an update on private-duty details and the use of less expensive constables vs. use of Troopers for same. Note that the Town is reimbursed for private duty details and Chester has a relationship with Deep River to accommodate private duty needs.

The need for police coverage as the Main Street Project progresses was discussed. Trooper Ward reported that during the approximate 10-week period, police assigned to the project will be funded by the State. Most of these costs will be incurred in the current budget.

Lauren and Trooper Ward updated the Board(s) on the protocol for Trooper replacement. Trooper Ward reported that he and Lauren are participating in the interview process with the State for the replacement of Trooper Ward. It is anticipated that Trooper Ward's replacement will not be at the same level as Trooper Ward and the Town will realize savings.

#### Chester Hose

Chief Grzybowski and representatives from Chester Hose were present to discuss their proposed budget.

- Ambulance - Staffing – Chief Grzybowski reported that as a result of schedule adjustments, the amount of Ambulance calls not responded to has dropped. However, the Ambulance/Town can realize additional revenue if more staffing is provided. Additional funds have been requested for increased staff hours. James provided a brief outline of the surrounding town's Ambulance operations and staffing. James does anticipate requesting funding for a full-time employee in a future budget request.
- It is anticipated that the additional staffing request of \$7,400 will be off-set by net revenue.
- Paramedic costs – remain the same at \$1.00 per capita and have increased approximately \$200 based on population.
- Equipment maintenance shows an increase.
- Supplies – represents medical supplies for ambulance, office supplies.

Lauren distributed Household Hazardous Waste documents, workers comp estimates (down 4%), liability estimates (up 3%), and tipping fee information from MIRA. Peter will update the budget(s) accordingly.

Virginia developed and distributed various spreadsheets (preliminary budget figures as of 2/27/20, budget to actuals, Grand List, mil rate calculations).

Lauren requested that the dredging cost share be removed from the budget and transferred into Capital. Note that the Capital Budget will be discussed at a future meeting.

The Net increase to date is \$363,839.00, excluding Capital.

REVIEW OF DRAFT BUDGET REVENUE AND CONTINUED REVIEW OF EXPENDITURE BUDGET/ DISCUSSION OF INITIATIVES AND BOS BUDGET RECOMMENDATIONS

The Boards discussed the following budget requests:

- Treasurer request – new hours - \$300 – no action/hold - Lauren to research further.
- Library Director – new hours - \$5,677 – consensus of Boards– reasonable request – note that the Library payroll consistently comes in under request because the part-time employees are not paid for sick time, personal time, vacation time, etc.
- Police – new hours off set by retiring State Trooper now but not for next year – 24 hours - \$44,117. While there are savings to be realized due to lower Trooper fringe costs. Lauren reported that she has requested a police patrol during the Farmer’s Market, Cedar Lake Snack Shack concerts, and the Town has expanded events. Constables are also working Private Duty events. Lauren recommends additional hours to accommodate public safety, events and administrative responsibilities. Note that Constable DeCrosta is a current employee and is interested in the increased hours. He already has his certifications, training, equipment, uniforms, etc. The Boards discussed the need for additional constable hours and debated an appropriate number of increased hours. The consensus of the Boards was to add the requested 24 hours understanding that this may be re-visited during the budget discussions. Lauren updated the BOF on the history of issuing town tickets vs. State tickets. State tickets are much more expensive than town tickets and the Town receives no revenue from State issued tickets. Town issued tickets provide revenue to the Town.
- Hose Company/Ambulance – new hours off-set by increased revenue - \$7,400 – James Grzybowski updated the Board on the possibility of the Ambulance generating a revenue for the Town. The Chester Ambulance, unlike private Ambulance companies, i.e. Hunters, is not licensed to provide routine transport. Jon Joslow expressed confidence in the work of the Hose Company and their data. He continued that the Town is not a for-profit business. The consensus of the Boards was to approve the request for additional funds.
- Visiting Nurses – budget had been cut prior to 18/19 – feeling was that the ratio was set too high for Chester – \$13,600 - data, including services provided by the VNA was included in the Board’s budget books. The Board(s) discussed same. For the past 4 years, Chester has not increased funding to the VNA. Jennifer outlined Medicare/Medicaid, private pay protocols. She requested information on the VNA’s protocol to make up for contractual allowances. She continued, why should Chester subsidize the VNA’s home health, skilled nursing and other therapy when we don’t subsidize other agencies doing that same work? The VNA and their Board were invited to this evening’s meeting but no representative was present at the meeting. In the past, requests for additional information has not been provided by the VNA. The BOF requested additional information prior to making a decision on additional funding. The consensus of the Boards was to NOT increase funding to the VNA until additional data is received from VNA. The VNA will be invited to an upcoming meeting.
- Camp Director/Medical Officer stipend or as needed basis - \$3,000 - Per State Statute, the Health Director (Dr. Kotrady in past) was the official Camp Director. The Health District does not provide this service. The Hose Co. pays “a la carte” for necessary services. Lauren is currently in discussion with Dr. Bird relative to this matter. The consensus of the Board(s) was to approve this request.
- Public Works – additional hours - \$3,450 - additional hours for part-time seasonal employee (leaves, mowing) (was 20 hours for 20 weeks, request for 25 hours for 22 weeks), 110 hours –

The Public Works budget will be reviewed in further detail at a future meeting. The Director of Public Works will be invited to present to the Board(s) as appropriate. The consensus of the Board(s) was to approve this request.

- There is an additional Highway General Maintenance request for funds due to purchase of tires for payloader
- Building Official – \$6,600 - Part-time Building Official – the position has been posted twice. There is a shortage of Certified Building Officials – additional funds requested to attract a qualified candidate; also funding for mileage has been requested. Note that many towns in the State are in need of a Building Official. An interim Building Official is in place in Chester and the COG is in the process of pursuing a grant relative to a Regional Building Dept. to be shared by 2 or more towns. The consensus of the Board(s) was to put \$6,600 as a placeholder and re-visit if/when a Building Official is hired.
- Tree Warden – The Tree Warden has experienced increased hours to address the state-wide tree crisis. An additional \$2,500 has been requested to accommodate his increased hours. The consensus of the Board(s) was to approve this request.

As discussed this evening - Sub-total - \$528,398, less additional Grand List increase of \$178,159:

Bottom Line, excluding Capital - \$350,239 budget increase.

Lauren encouraged Board members to forward additional questions to her no later than 3/4 for discussion at the March 11<sup>th</sup> budget meeting.

AUDIENCE OF CITIZENS – None.

ADJOURNMENT

On a motion made and duly seconded, the meeting(s) were unanimously adjourned.

Respectfully Submitted,

Suzanne Helchowski  
Recording Clerk

THESE MINUTES ARE SUBJECT TO APPROVAL AT THE NEXT BOF/BOS MEETING

TOWN OF CHESTER, CONNECTICUT  
BOARD OF FINANCE  
BOARD OF SELECTMEN  
JOINT BUDGET WORKSHOP  
Wednesday, March 11, 2020  
Community Meeting Room  
Chester Town Hall

CALL TO ORDER

Chairman Carmany called the meeting to order at 7:30 p.m. In attendance included: Chairman Carmany, Rick Nygard, Jon Joslow, Jennifer Rannestad, Richard Strauss, Greg Merola, John O'Hare, Andres Gardner (not seated).

First Selectwoman Gister called the meeting to order at 7:30 p.m. In attendance included: First Selectwoman Gister, Selectwoman Janecek and Selectman Englert. Also in attendance: James Grzybowski, Charlie Greeny.

BUSINESS

Continued Budget Discussions

Lauren distributed a copy of the responses to BOF questions submitted to her since the last Budget Workshop meeting.

BOS Budget

Funds requested for community events have included police services for Winter Carnivale. This year, funds would be used for a celebration/re-opening of the Meeting House, Main Street project and, if necessary, adjustments for Budget Hearings, Town Meetings etc. relative to the Corona Virus. Consensus of the BOF members was to approve the funds requested for community events with the understanding that all line items/budgets can be re-visited as necessary.

The BOF discussed the format of budget documents developed and presented to the BOF via a vis projections for the remainder of the fiscal year etc. and the status of the current software system in the Finance Office.

**Lauren reported that she and Peter to review projections when developing the budgets that are presented to the BOF.**

Finance Budget

Peter has researched upgrades to Finance software/technology but has not yet requested funding for replacement of same. Lauren will follow-up with him to understand cost and potential financial reporting improvements it would provide.

Town Office Operations

The Service Contract increases are due to operating expenses for hardware, software, cybersecurity on IT contract with CT Comp (including Purple Dog).

Town Clerk

Advertising costs are dependent on the number of Town Meetings, Public Hearings, etc. necessary throughout the year. The auditors did recommend that the Town Clerk's office utilize a cash register connected to the Town's software. The estimate to facilitate this recommendation is approximately \$7,000.

#### Treasurer

As previously discussed, Lauren will follow-up with Town Attorney regarding the appropriateness of a family member being paid for Deputy Treasurer duties.

#### Tax Collector

The additional \$250 fee for DMV is due to the addition of the CIVLS program. The mileage, supplies, outside contractor and professional development figure is a result of the Tax Collector being unable to attend professional development.

The BOF had no further comments on Tax Collector's budget.

#### Assessor

Lauren outlined the parameters of the contract with Haddam relative to "sharing" an Assessor. The Assessor is an employee of Haddam and Chester contracts with Haddam for Assessor duties. Chester pays for only the hours the Assessor actually works in Chester (no vacation, sick, holiday etc.).

#### Board of Finance

The BOF discussed extensively an appropriate amount to be budgeted for Contingency (legal, engineering and general) and the uses of same (additional funds that may be necessary during a "bad" winter, tree work). **Lauren will request that Peter provide a 5-year history of the uses of the Contingency account.**

Legal Contingency is used in P&Z and BOS. The BOF has its own legal line item as Attorney Bennet represents the BOS and Virginia, on occasion, seeks legal counsel relative to BOF matters.

**The BOF will discuss the Contingency further at a future BOF meeting.**

The Postage budget was discussed. These funds are used to facilitate the post card mailings to Chester residents and includes postage, printing and design for 2 full mailings to residents.

#### Registrar

Professional Development – training required but Registrar was unable to attend last year and weekend classes were cancelled due to lack of individuals registered for same.

#### Building Department

Additional payroll not included in figures presented. Lauren anticipates that figures will be available prior to the finalization of the budget.

Lauren reported that the BOS has not yet voted on new permit fee proposals. Information relative to same was mistakenly placed in the budget books.

#### Conservation

Requests for Open Space funding would be in the Capital budget.



Harbor Management – No comments from BOF

P&Z

Lauren recommended that the Legal request should not be lowered due to the unknown costs that may arise relative to lawsuits.

Inland Wetlands - No comments from BOF.

ZBA – No Comments from BOF.

EDC

The EDC's request is not part of the \$15,000 approved for Main Street III. They also do business flyers and other initiatives to promote business in Chester. A copy of their plan was included in the budget books.

Park & Rec.

The increase in Temp. Part-time is due to hiring of Camp Counselors and revenue generated by Park & Rec. programs pays for same.

The BOF discussed recent repairs and upgrades to North Quarter Park as a result of the flood. Projects at the park include: top soil to replace clay on previous baseball field, and fees paid to a contractor for fertilizer, field maintenance, etc.

Library

Last year, the library did not have funds for professional development and the BOS paid for CPR and First Aid training.

Public Works

**Lauren suggested purchasing the requested tires and other item out of the surplus in the current year's budget and "cut" those out of the request for next year's budget.**

Lauren outlined the protocol for catch basin cleaning. More catch basins have been installed. Also, additional OSHA requirements necessitate training for Public Works.

Road Maintenance is down because of flood in 2018. The Town is being reimbursed by FEMA and Federal Highway for some costs.

The Outside Contractor increase reflected in Buildings and Grounds is due to the Skyview property.

Tree Maintenance

The Tree Removal line was moved from Operating to Capital because it is anticipated that this will be a 5 year or more project and considerable funds will be necessary to accommodate the project. This line will be discussed further during the Capital discussions.

The Tree Warden is no longer an Outside Contractor and is now an employee. The Outside Contractor line went to \$0 and Regular Payroll went to \$6,000.00.

#### General Engineering/Road Maintenance

Includes work done by Jacobson; i.e. Storm Water Management, bridge inspections and dam inspections.

#### Winter Maintenance

All except for sand/salt and equipment maintenance is prep, essentially everything else is plowing. A 5-year rolling average is reported.

**Virginia will request that Peter provide a best/worst case range for the past 5 years.**

Landfill Closure – Budget decreased from last year.

Bulky Waste/Recycling/Hazardous Waste – ***Will discuss further along with MIRA at a future meeting.***

#### Hose Company

The BOF discussed the membership of the volunteer firefighters (level at all-time high). The staffing for ambulance runs was a bit more difficult due to time from work as an average run was about 2 hours and conflicts with full time jobs and increased re-certification requirements. Approx. 524 runs are made a year.

**This led to a discussion on what the ramifications might be over the next several years and the possibility of increasing coverage and costs. There would be a balancing act between the increased need and costs with affordability.**

Equipment maintenance is based on the age of the equipment and the older equipment needs more maintenance.

#### Police

Lauren provided an update on the search for a new Trooper. It has been narrowed down to two candidates. The expected start date is April 1 and the cost is still expected to show a savings.

#### Hydrants

Costs per hydrant are increasing.

#### Street lights

Costs are continuing to decline with the implementation of the new energy saving LED lights and a \$5,000 decrease is reflected in the budget.

#### Emergency Management

Outside contractor is up but so is the grant revenue that covers part of these costs.

It was asked if we had adequate emergency equipment /gear? Lauren answered, yes and no. We do not have cots, but batteries etc., yes. The concern was there is no generator for the Town Hall. This has been discussed in previous budget discussions and it should be again; though the cost is significant at \$100k.

#### Animal Control

Lauren indicated the need for the Animal Control officer to have an assistant. The need is being shared across multiple towns.

Lauren then discussed the Coronavirus safety issues that are being considered from the Governor's office, the local Selectmen and the Superintendent. Issues around voting, public hearings, primary voting, and the Referendum; concerns regarding the school system etc. are all on the table to formulate plans and coordinate responses. Lauren will ensure information is put on the website and other means for communicating are utilized. Guidance from the Governor's office is expected and all the questions are getting raised.

ADJOURNMENT

On a motion made and duly seconded, the meeting was adjourned at 9:35 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Suzanne Helchowski  
Clerk

