TOWN OF CHESHIRE

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OFFICE OF THE BOARD OF SELECTMEN

Meeting Minutes – January 5, 2021

Members Present: Michelle Francesconi, Chair
Jason Levesque, Emergency Services Liaison
Mark Biagini, Clerk
Ronald DeAngelis, Highway and Infrastructure Liaison
Robert Ciskowski

Others Present: Noelle M Pandell, Interim Administrative Assistant

M. Francesconi opened the meeting at 6:00 pm.

Open Session

Ms. Francesconi read from a prepared set of remarks that was listed on the agenda concerning that, pursuant to Governor Baker's March 12, 2020 Order Suspending Certain Provisions of the Open Meeting Law, G.L. c. 30A, §18, and the Governor's March 15, 2020 Order imposing strict limitation on the number of people that may gather in one place, this meeting of the Board of Selectmen will be conducted via remote participation to the greatest extent possible.

Ms. Francesconi acknowledged the members of the Board present at the meeting.

M. Francesconi made a motion to enter into Executive Session to conduct strategy sessions in preparation for negotiations with nonunion personnel or to conduct collective bargaining sessions or contract negotiations with non-union personnel (Water Superintendent) – seconded by M. Biagini – ***Roll Call Vote – All members yes – Motion carried.***

At 6:30 pm, M. Francesconi re-convened the open meeting. In the spirit of transparency, M. Francesconi noted that there was an Executive Session meeting at 6:00 pm.

1. **To Hear and Act on the Minutes from the Prior Meeting – December 29, 2020**
   M. Biagini made a motion to approve the minutes from December 29, 2020 as written – seconded by J. Levesque – there was no discussion – ***Roll Call Vote – All members yes – Motion carried****.*

2. **Reports of Town Departments**

   a. **Highway Department –** R. Navin reported that in between snowstorms they are working on washing and performing maintenance on the equipment. They received the fogger machines, and they are trying to get on a routine using them. He said now that they would be switching to the treated salt

for the roads now that we are in the winter months. Going forward the weather will dictate what they do. Weather permitting, they will try to stay ahead of the potholes. With regard to the transfer station lights, they are waiting for the parts to come in and then the lights will be installed. There was a brief discussion regarding the service and whether or not it was upgraded; R. Navin said yes, the service is all part of the upgrade and a new transformer is being installed.
M. Francesconi noted that R. Navin has been very helpful and she thanked him for installing the railing on the loading dock.

b. Water Department – No update as the Water Superintendent was not in attendance.

c. **Council on Aging** – C. Hilderbrand provided the Board with a written update on current and future projects; a copy of which is attached to the minutes. She noted that there has been a lot of telephone calls about Covid testing and vaccines. The CDC has the vaccines, but they have not been given the okay to distribute them yet.

C. Hilderbrand said that she met with M. Biagini to discuss building issues, procedures, and repairs. M. Francesconi thanked C. Hilderbrand for her report and she noted that there is a lot going on. M. Francesconi applauded her for planning for the future. M. Biagini apologized. He said he received Carole's report and he tried to email it to the Board, but it never went through**.** He said he will get the report to them.

M. Biagini also noted that he set up the phones for C. Hilderbrand and the van drivers. M. Francesconi acknowledged that the telephone number differs from the number on the van. She said she would reach out to Verizon to see if we can get the number back.

Also on the agenda was the Senior/Veteran Tax Work-off Program. M. Francesconi noted that the Board wants more information from the Assessor, who is compiling data from the Town Clerk. She said this program has not been forgotten; it is being worked on behind the scenes. Discussion followed – M. Francesconi noted that we do not know how many applicants we will receive but we need to have policies in place so that we do not overextend the Town. C. Hilderbrand, P. Traub, and E. Gebarowski offered to help develop the application.

M. Francesconi also thanked C. Hilderbrand for her help today with the business licenses; she said it is appreciated by all.

d. Cemetery Department – No update as no one from the Cemetery Commission was in attendance.

3. Old Business

a. Discussion regarding the Search for a Town Administrator
M. Francesconi advised that she spoke with a representative from the MMA, who directed her to a video and two documents that are associated with the video. They said that we do not have to go through an RFP process for a consultant. The MMA rep gave the names of three consulting firms that advertise in *The Beacon*: Municipal Resources Inc., Community Paradigm Associates, and the Collins Institute at UMass Boston. M. Francesconi noted that the Collins Institute was the consultant the school district used when deciding to close Cheshire Elementary School so she did not think they would be a good choice to use. The Board agreed.

M. Francesconi said she would contact the other two consultants to get a scope of work and cost estimates if the Board agreed and all members noted their agreement. A brief discussion followed.

b. Update on the Town Hall Project – M. Francesconi advised that the painter finished painting the Annex and has moved into the meeting room upstairs. After the meeting room, he will move to the basement. J. Levesque suggested that, if the scope of work is meeting our needs, we could take the building accounts and pool them together to hire an inhouse maintenance person.

M. Francesconi noted that there is an expectation that we will purchase the furniture reserved for the Town Administrator. The former Town Administrator ordered the same furniture as the floor model at a cost of $2,498. M. Francesconi said that she will try and re-negotiate the cost.

c. CARES Act Purchasing

M. Francesconi said that she has requested a refund for the app and the 5K masks. She was told that a refund for the masks was less likely to be a problem, but a lot of work has been done on the app behind the scenes. M. Francesconi said that she would check with the Board regarding the app. Following a brief discussion, the Board agreed that they want their money back for the app too.

It was noted that M. Biagini and M. Francesconi located many items purchased with CARES Act funding which were in the basement of Town Hall are in the process of distributing them to departments as needed. Items included disinfectant, masks, signs, and hand sanitizers. There was a brief discussion regarding the high school and the need for air purifiers so the teachers can close the windows. M. Francesconi noted that the system at the high school always takes in fresh air. There is no need for air purifiers.

4. New Business

a. Appointment – Interim/Part-time Town Administrator – Mark Webber

M. Francesconi made a motion to appoint Mark Webber as Interim/Part-time Town Administrator – seconded by M. Biagini – No discussion – ***Roll Call Vote – All members yes – Motion carried.***

b. Town Compactor Operator – Open Position – R. Navin advised that there were two operators that worked one week on one week off. One of the operators took another position and can no longer work at the transfer station so he is requesting to repost for one position. M. Francesconi said that she would repost the position using the old post.

c. Custodian – Open Position – R. Navin said he would like to table this open position at this time, and he will keep the Board updated. Open position was tabled.

5. Public Comment Period

C. Hilderbrand noted that she never saw a post for a van driver or an aid. M. Francesconi said it was posted on the Town website, but she will also share it on social media. John said he would be happy to post the position on the COA page.

There were no other public comments.

6. Announcements from Board Members

R. Ciskowski said that he was putting together a pole hearing for National Grid and Verizon. He submitted it to the paper and once he sees it in the paper, he will let M. Francesconi know so she can put it on the agenda. A brief discussion followed. He also noted that Great Barrington cut some of their fees in half; he further noted that their fees are higher than our fees to begin with.

R. Ciskowski also reported that he received a letter from the Historical Commission requesting that Mr. Martin be reimbursed $300 for publishing a book. He said much of their budget is expended already. R. Ciskowski said he was uncomfortable reimbursing Mr. Martin as the Historical Commission asked him to put something together but he self-published. Following a brief discussion, R. Ciskowski will talk to the chair of the Historical Commission and get copies of their minutes so that we can hopefully settle this next week.

M. Francesconi said she would like to reduce the bills that the Board sees in advance to just reimbursements to people or payments to town employees. She felt this would help with more timely payments to creditors. R. DeAngelis questioned whether that was really the problem and M. Francesconi said she thinks it's at least part of the problem. The Board agreed.

M. Francesconi said that the accountant, tax collector and the town administrator have access to Vadar, the financial software. The Town Administrator's access was read-only. She feels that all department heads should have read-only access but there will be a cost to the town. Discussion followed regarding the financial system and what its capabilities are. R. DeAngelis said he would like to know what it can do at a high level because it probably does way more than what it is being used for. M. Francesconi said she would reach out to Vadar.

M. Francesconi also noted that the Town website is clunky and not user friendly to edit. She thinks the Town may save money by going to a new provider. She said she will research other providers and report back to the Board. The Board agreed.

M. Biagini suggested that the Board start moving forward with finding out what the departments need to work remotely from home if necessary. The Board agreed and M. Francesconi said she will fast-track the meeting with Retrofit.

7. **Any Other Business Not Reasonably Anticipated 48-hours Prior to the Meeting**
A driveway permit was submitted by Andrew Crane for property on Reservoir Road. R. Navin reviewed the permit application and met with the landowner. He said he does not have any concerns and the landowner is being very cooperative. Discussion followed – R. DeAngelis suggested that R. Navin look into an MS4. Following a lengthy discussion, R. Navin said he would meet with M. Francesconi about this and M. Francesconi asked that he let the landowner know that there will be a delay in getting the permit while we look into the issues raised.

8. **Adjournment** – With no further business, *M. Biagini made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 8:12 PM – seconded by J. Levesque –* ***Roll Call Vote – All members yes*** *– Motion carries*

Respectfully submitted,
Noelle M. Pandell