TOWN OF CHESHIRE

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OFFICE OF THE BOARD OF SELECTMEN

Meeting Minutes – March 23, 2021

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

Others Present: Mark Webber, Interim Town Administrator
Noelle M Pandell, Interim Administrative Assistant

Go-To-Meeting: Denise Gregoire, Finance Committee
John Tremblay, Finance Committee
Lenwood "Woody" Vaspra, Finance Committee
Kathleen Levesque, Finance Committee
Heather Emerson, Finance Committee
Robin Poirot, Recreation Committee
Robert Navin, Highway Department
Amber LaFogg, Board of Health
George Sweet, Wire Inspector
Christine Emerson, Town Clerk
Gerald Garner, Building Inspector
Donna DeFino, Planning Board

M. Francesconi opened the meeting at 6:31 pm.

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.

1. **To Hear and Act on the Minutes from the Prior Meeting(s) – March 9, 2021 and March 16, 2021**
   M. Biagini made a motion to accept the minutes from March 9, 2021 as presented – seconded by J. Levesque – ***Roll Call Vote – All members yes – Motion carries****.*

   The minutes of March 16, 2021 were tabled to next week.

2. **Department Budget Review with Finance Committee**
   a. **Town Clerk –** C. Emerson advised that the budget is level funded except for a 2% increase in the Town Clerk's salary, a $500 increase in the book repair line item, a $55 increase in the General Code. She also advised that she added a new line item for an Assistant Town Clerk with a salary of $10K. Discussion followed – M. Francesconi asked C. Emerson what she was thinking for a rate of pay and hours worked for an Assistant Town Clerk and she said she hadn't worked that out yet.

   b. **Elections and Registrations** – C. Emerson said that the budget is level funded except for Vital Statistics, which she is asking to be removed from the budget. C. Emerson noted that the school district pays for half of the town report. Discussion followed regarding the cost of elections when there is no presidential election.

   c. **Recreation** – R. Poirot was present via Go-To-Meeting; M. Francesconi advised that the budget is level funded. R. Poirot said that she would like to keep the budget the same and hopes to get back to the town events like cruise nights, child concerts, etc. Discussion followed – M. Francesconi asked R. Poirot to brainstorm other ideas for this year.

      M. Francesconi said that we need to start thinking about Memorial Day planning; she said she will put it on the agenda over the next couple of weeks.

   d. **Library** – C. Emerson reviewed the Library budget noting that there is a 2% increase in salaries, a $600 increase in Books, Magazines, DVDs and Audio, $100 increase in Expenses/Supplies, a $100 increase in Library Programs and a $100 increase Story Hour/Summer Reading Programs.

      C. Emerson continued to explain that in order to keep the library commissioner grant, there needs to be a small increase in books and expenses. She said that they also receive a small grant for STEM projects. The money is held in trust and the Library trustees have to approve spending. C. Emerson said that this year the grant was $2,700; R. DeAngelis questioned that we spent $12,500 on books to receive $2,700 and certifications. Discussion followed – M. Francesconi said that at some point the Board will need to meet with the Library trustees to get a handle on how much money needs to be spent to get the grant of $2,700.

      M. Francesconi asked if there was a plan in place for a new librarian; C. Emerson said they are planning to advertise in the spring/summer, and she is hopeful to have a library director in place before the summer.

   e. **Planning Board** – D. DeFino was present via Go-To-Meeting and advised that the budget is level funded except for a 2% increase in salaries.

   f. **Animal Control** – M. Francesconi advised that this budget is level funded from last year. Discussion followed. K. Levesque asked why so much was allocated for a cell phone; M. Francesconi said she would have to look into it.

   g. **Building Inspector** – G. Garner advised that the budget is level funded. Discussion followed.

   h. **Gas & Plumbing Inspector –** M. Webber advised that the budget is level funded.

i. **Wire Inspector** – G. Sweet was present via Go-To-Meeting and advised that his budget is level funded. G. Sweet asked which town employees have cell phones; M. Francesconi said that she does not have a list in front of her. Discussion followed. G. Sweet also advised that the fire alarm company is coming on March 24, 2021.

3. Department Reports

a. Interim Town Administrator

M. Webber gave the following update:

- He and the Assessor are working on independent levy limit calculations as a cross check, and it should be done by next week's meeting.
- He met with J. Tremblay and he volunteered to assist on a salary survey to guide us for this year's budget. They will meet again next Thursday. J. Tremblay also advised that the Finance Committee (FinCom) voted him as the FinCom representative to the Town Administrator Search Committee.
- The only change from last week's budget sheet was the Town Administrator position that went from $75K to $85K.
- He met with the Building Inspector, Wire Inspector and a representative from Nexamp/Borrego Solar. Everyone is now on the same page. A building permit will be issued, and the project will begin later this spring.
- Only one request was received from town officials for the Senior Work-off Program. COA responded with a short list of items but some of the items seem to be more the responsibility of the town's maintenance staff.
- He had a conversation with the Town's Green Communities vendor, Guardian Energy; they conducted surveys and energy audits of town facilities a while ago and a list of properties and projects were identified. We have about $130K of funding that has to be spent before we can apply for the next round which will be later this fall. We discussed the Fire Station boiler and he told them that he would report back in a week or two.

  There are two urgent projects that need to be scheduled in the next few weeks; they are LED lighting change overs in the Town Hall and Community Center; both of which will be paid for out of the grant. Discussion followed.

- According to DPH, 68% of Cheshire residents between 65 and 74 and 98% 75 or over have received at least their first dose of the vaccine; this places Cheshire on the upper end compared to other Berkshire communities.

4. New Business

a. Resignation – Sean Conley – Zoning Board of Appeals

M. Francesconi read a resignation from Sean Conley, who resigned from the Zoning Board. *M. Francesconi made a motion to accept the resignation with regret – seconded by M. Biagini –* ***Roll Call Vote – All members yes – motion carries***

b. Discussion and potential decision regarding the disposition of two military surplus generators currently housed at the Highway Department

The state contacted the Highway Superintendent and the Fire Chief and requested that the generators be returned to the state. Following some discussion, *R. DeAngelis made a motion to return the generators to the government – seconded by J. Levesque –* ***Roll Call Vote – All members yes – motion carries***

5. **Old Business**
   a. **Update and discussion regarding Senior/Veteran Tax Work-Off Program**
      This was covered under the Interim Town Administrator's report.
   b. **Update regarding Town Administrator position**
      M. Webber advised that one person responded that they would like to sit on the search committee. M. Francesconi said that she would put a reminder out on social media.

6. **Public Comment Period**
   Ben Garner said he hopes the Board is going to look into the Town Clerk allowing someone to pull papers to run for Selectmen four days after the deadline to pull papers. M. Biagini left the meeting for this discussion. M. Francesconi thanked Ben Garner for coming forward; she said the Board will look into it. Discussion followed and M. Francesconi said that she will put this on the agenda for next week.

   Eileen Quinn said they are putting up a privacy fence at the site for safety and minimize who sees it and uses it. She said that volunteers will build the privacy fence, but she would like to request money from the Recreation budget to pay for materials. M. Francesconi said that it's worth having a discussion and suggested that she keep the Recreation Committee in the loop.

   John Tremblay said he recalls when we got the generators there was no charge, but the shipping charges were quite expensive; he questioned how they would be going back and what the costs will be. M. Francesconi said she will look into it.

   Kathy Levesque questioned if the excess money needs to go back to free cash or can it go to the stabilization fund; she suggested contacting one of the state representatives. M. Francesconi said that she raised an interesting question.

   Peter Traub asked if the meeting on Thursday is at 6 pm or 6:30 pm. M. Francesconi said that it's at 6:30 pm and the agenda is posted.

7. **Announcements from Board Members**
   M. Francesconi said that she received a request from the Youth Center to hold its annual recycling fundraiser on May 1st – discussion followed – M. Francesconi said she will clarify the restrictions.

   She also received a request from the Northern Berkshire Youth Lacrosse to use the field that the softball league is using; the Board suggested that the softball coaches and the lacrosse coaches get in touch with each other to discuss. She said this will not impact the Little League.

   R. DeAngelis suggested the following usages for money from the Recreation budget: purchase bleachers, fence repairs, lighting, trash receptacles

8. **Any Other Business Not Reasonably Anticipated 48-hours Prior to the Meeting –** None

9. **Adjournment** – *M. Biagini made a motion to adjourn at 8:03 pm – seconded by J. Levesque –* ***Roll Call Vote – All members yes –*** *Motion carries*

Respectfully submitted,
Noelle M. Pandell