TOWN OF CHESHIRE

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OFFICE OF THE BOARD OF SELECTMEN

Meeting Minutes – April 6, 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
Carrieanne Petrik, Berkshires & Hilltowns Regional Coordinator

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 30, 2021**
   The March 30, 2021 minutes were tabled.

2. **FY22 Budget**
   a. **General Budget Discussion with the Finance Committee**
      1. **Estimated tax rate calculation** – J. Tremblay said it would be good to get a baseline of where we are with 2 ½ and new growth; as soon as we can have this it will give everyone a better of idea of where we are at. M. Webber said that values are not certified until fall, but we can give a ballpark based on current values.
      2. **Certified free cash balance** – J. Tremblay requested the balance of the certified free cash from R. Herzog.

3. **Stabilization Fund balance** – J. Tremblay requested the balance of the capital Stabilization Fund and the General Stabilization Fund from R. Herzog.

4. **Cost of Living Adjustment (COLA)** – J. Tremblay said that the M. Webber plugged in a 2% salary increase for any positions that were not provided but that really needs to be decided. M. Webber said that the 2% is from the union contract. He further stated that others should be uniform except the fire and police chiefs and the part-time police officers.

   J. Tremblay said he shared data with M. Webber about appointed positions benchmark to see how we compare to other towns comparable to us. Discussion followed and M. Francesconi said she would like to see the hourly rate for part-time police officers to go $19 per hour for this budget cycle and the Board agreed. M. Webber will plug in $19 per hour into the budget. As an FYI, it was noted that the social security COLA is 1.3%

5. **Capital Investment**
   a. **Highway Dept - truck, backhoe** – J. Tremblay requested the free cash balance and requests laid out for them. Discussion followed.
   b. **Fire Station – heating system and structural repairs** – J. Tremblay stated that a new building is a few years away, but we need to understand what the investment might be.
   c. **COA - Dishwasher $13K** – J. Tremblay requested model options, cost comparisons; any back up data. M. Francesconi stated that the COA did provide a hard quote and she will provide the Finance Committee with a copy of it. Discussion followed.
   d. **Potential Repurposing of $60K designated for Town Complex Design Services** – J. Tremblay suggested that the Board consider putting the $60K to use rather than just letting it sit there. M. Francesconi stated that we need engineering to begin other projects so we could use the $60K for engineering costs. M. Webber said that a warrant article could be done to move the money to the Capital Stabilization Fund – discussion followed – R. DeAngelis suggested leaving the $60K where it is until the end of the budget review. The Board agreed to leave it where it is for now, but everyone agreed that it should be moved from where it is.

6. **New Positions** – J. Tremblay requested details on new positions requested, for example the number of hours, job duties. Discussion followed.

7. **Centralization of certain department expenses – IT, cell phones, copiers** – J. Tremblay asked if the Board wanted to do this now and J. Levesque stated that we need a hard assets list in order to do this. Discussion followed and M. Francesconi stated that certain conversations have to happen first.

8. **Adams Ambulance $10K** – J. Tremblay said they would like to better understand where the number came from and they would like to see backup information. Discussion followed – M. Francesconi said she would check with the Fire Chief for more details and maybe someone from the ambulance can provide some information.

9. **Selectmen's Budget** – J. Tremblay stated that the Selectmen's budget was never reviewed, and he wanted to make sure that they had a chance to review it. M. Francesconi said that she would put it on the agenda next week.

10. **Elections & Reg** – J. Tremblay questioned whether we should leave it alone, split the difference or change to every other year. Discussion followed – M. Francesconi said we should get historical data for the last six years.

11. **OPEB Funding Level based on Actuarial Study** – J. Tremblay asked if now that we have the actuarial study, do we want to continue the way we are. M. Webber suggested waiting until the end to see where we are. Discussion followed – M. Francesconi said she would send the actuarial study to the Board members.

12. **Special Repairs to Town Buildings Line Item** – J. Tremblay said that historic data for the $50K in the Special Repairs to Town Buildings line item has not been spent. He questioned whether or not we should lower it and use the money for something else. M. Francesconi stated that the fire escape will cost about $30K alone. Discussion followed and it was suggested that we get a quote to repair the fire escape and then tackle that in a warrant article.

13. **Town Insurance Funding Level based on FY21 expenditure –** the Police and Fire Department are paid out of this line item. If we put the property insurance and casualty insurance line items together, there would be enough money to cover the cost.

14. **Library Funding Level** – J. Tremblay stated that they need a better understanding of their funding levels. R. DeAngelis stated that it appears that we are spending more than we need to be. Discussion followed – M. Francesconi suggested that we do a 5-year look back to see what has been spent.

15. **Add Stabilization Fund Balances somewhere in the budget document** – J. Tremblay said he would like to see the balances of the Stabilization Funds somewhere in the budget document. M. Webber said he would do it as an addendum to the budget.

16. **Potential uses for remaining balances in specific budget items** – J. Tremblay suggested that any remaining money left in specific budget items – recreation, marketing, TA education, repairs to town buildings – be rolled over or used for something else. A brief discussion followed.

J. Tremblay reminded the Board about the warrant articles that were discussed: changing elected positions to appointed positions and moving the town election date to before the Town Meeting date. J. Tremblay also proposed that since we are only 30-days out to finalize the budget, J. Tremblay proposed that the Finance Committee meet with the Board every week going forward and have a more pointed discussion. Discussion followed.

M. Francesconi said she was informed that there was a previous request to put a roof over the kennels, but it never happened, so she suggested that improvements to the kennels at the town shed be added to the budget. Discussion followed.

3. **Department Reports**
   a. **Interim Town Administrator** gave the following report:
      - Berkshire Engineering submitted the required letter of interest last week on behalf of the Cheshire Water Commissioners as part of the grant application under the Rural and Small Town Development Fund.
      - An executed contract was received from MA DOT in the amount of $200,000 for the partial re-paving of Rte 116. M. Webber and R. Navin will be working on the bid documents next

week and R. Navin will receive training so that he will be able to put out bids by himself going forward.

- He met with two members of the Finance Committee last Thursday for general FY22 budget discussion and will hold another one this week.
- He met with L. Lemanski, B. Herzog, and Robin for FY22 budget informational gathering of the components necessary of determining our FY22 levy limit position. For the current fiscal year, the Town is $31,594 under the levy limit. Discussion followed.
- Another negotiating session was held with the Highway Department union and their representative. Amended proposals were offered by the union. Next meeting is April 27th.
- No updates have been received regarding the COVID American Rescue Plan Act.

4. Old Business

a. Update regarding Town Administrator Search

M. Francesconi said he spoke with Grandchamp about serving on the screening committee and he said he should not sit on the committee because he was hired to oversee the process. He can sit on the committee as a non-voting member.

b. Discussion and potential appointment of screening committee

Appointment: Mark Webber *M. Francesconi made a motion to appoint M. Webber as a TA Screening Committee member – seconded by M. Biagini –* ***Roll Call Vote – All members yes – Motion carried***

Appointment: John Tremblay *M. Francesconi made a motion to appoint John Tremblay as a TA Screening Committee member – seconded by M. Biagini –* ***Roll Call Vote – All members yes – Motion carried***

Appointment: William Lewis *M. Francesconi made a motion to appoint William Lewis as a TA Screening Committee member – seconded by J. Levesque –* ***Roll Call Vote – All members yes – Motion carried***

Appointment: Kelly Singer M. Francesconi recused herself because Kelly Singer is her sister-in-law. *J. Levesque made a motion to appoint Kelly Singer as a TA Screening Committee member – seconded by R. DeAngelis –* ***Roll Call Vote – Three members yes – M. Francesconi abstained – Motion carried***

Appointment: Joseph Wilk *M. Francesconi made a motion to appoint Joseph Wilk as a TA Screening Committee member – seconded by M. Biagini –* ***Roll Call Vote – All members yes – Motion carried***

M. Webber will draft an appointment letter for each of the member. The Screening Committee will operate under Executive Session. Following a brief discussion, *M. Francesconi made a motion to invite Attorney Grandchamp to attend the Screening Committee meetings to advise – seconded by M. Biagini –* ***Roll Call Vote – All members yes – Motion carried***

5. New Business

a. Discussion regarding the Municipal Vulnerability Preparedness Program (MVP)

i. Presentation of program information by Carrieanne Petrik, Berkshires & Hilltowns Regional Coordinator

C. Petrik said that this is a two-stage grant process. Look at the Town's vulnerability to climate change and create a plan to become more resilient then create an MVP and HMP (Hazardous Mitigation Plan) Plan. A certified provider will hold a community resilience workshop to discuss

infrastructure, environment, etc. and list some strategies to adapt. C. Petrik said to move forward, the Board would need to move forward with creating a core team of three to seven people and then a meeting would need to be held as soon as possible to talk about filing an extension and then pick a vendor to work with. M. Francesconi asked what the likelihood is of getting an extension and C. Petrik said that as long as the Board has a timeline for moving forward, it shouldn't be a problem getting an extension. M. Webber said that he spoke with a vendor who has done this before, and they are willing to do it for us. Following some discussion, M. Francesconi said that the Board would do some brainstorming regarding the core group and get back to C. Petrik as soon as possible.

C. Petrik left the meeting.

The Board discussed possible members for the core group and the following were suggested: R. Navin, the new Town Administrator, Conservation Committee member, Planning Board member, Water Commissioner, Board of Health member, Fire Department/Emergency Management. M. Francesconi said that she would put this on the agenda for next week.

b. Update on the business sign for H.D. Reynolds
M. Francesconi advised that there is a posted Planning Board meeting on April 12th and the H.D. Reynold's sign is on their agenda.

c. Discussion regarding the creation of a Pickleball Court
M. Francesconi said that an interested group in town is looking for a place to play pickleball and she asked if any of the Board members had any suggestions for a place to play and lengthy discussion ensued. M. Francesconi stated that in the short term, they can use the basketball court to play. Following additional discussion, Sandy said she would get quotes for adding a new concrete slab and also for extending an existing concrete slab and bring it to back to the Board.

6. **Public Comment Period** – No public comments

7. **Announcements from Board Members**
M. Francesconi said that the Youth Center Inc. has a lead problem with their sinks. Adams Plumbing & Heating said it would cost $1K per sink to fix it. They want to know what the Town would contribute to the lead remediation. R. DeAngelis asked who did the test, when was it done and was Travis involved; following a brief discussion, R. DeAngelis said he would check into this.

M. Francesconi said that Joe Nowak from Adams reached out and said that Fred Jayko is the Cheshire rep and asked if we would be willing to appoint some else at the next appointment cycle.

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

9. **Adjournment** – *M. Biagini made a motion to adjourn at 8:55 pm – seconded by J. Levesque –* ***Roll Call Vote – All members yes – Motion carried***

Respectfully submitted,
Noelle M. Pandell