TOWN OF CHESHIRE

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OFFICE OF THE BOARD OF SELECTMEN

Meeting Minutes – April 13, 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
Kathleen Levesque, Finance Committee
Heather Emerson, Finance Committee

M. Francesconi opened the meeting at 6:34 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. **Old Business**
   a. **Update regarding Town Administrator Search**
   M. Webber reported that the position was posted on April 12th on the Town website, social media, iBerkshires, and The Beacon; five resumes have already been received. April 30th is the deadline to apply, and the tentative start date is July 1st. The search committee has been contacted and they were given a timeline and the process going forward. Search Committee members need to be sworn in.

   b. **Discussion regarding the Municipal Vulnerability Preparedness Program (MVP)**
   M. Francesconi stated that the Board needs to put together the core team for the MVP – following a brief discussion, the suggested core team includes:
   - New Town Administrator
   - Emergency Management - Corey Swistak
   - Fire Department – Tom Francesconi
   - Conservation Committee – Ray Killeen

- Highway Department – Robert Navin
- Finance Committee – John Tremblay

M. Francesconi said that this will be on the agenda next week.

2. New Business

a. Discussion regarding a request from the Hoosac Valley Regional School District (HVRSD) Food Service Department to operate the Summer Food Program out of the former Cheshire School Kitchen

The Food Service Program is requesting to use the former Cheshire school kitchen for the Summer Food Program for the summer of 2021 from July 5th through August 6th. The meals would be prepared onsite and distributed to families outside the building. It was noted that the kitchen is not up to code. Following some discussion, *M. Biagini made a motion to approve the HVRSD Food Service Department's request to use the Cheshire school kitchen if they want to bring the kitchen up to code at their own expense – seconded by M. Francesconi –* ***Roll Call Vote – All members yes – Motion carried***

b. Discussion regarding the condition of the sinks in the classrooms leased by the Youth Center, Inc.

M. Francesconi said that the Youth Center, Inc. wants to be able to operate sinks in individual rooms, but they were shut down prior to the Youth Center, Inc. becoming a tenant due to lead in the pipes. The Water Superintendent said that if they want the sinks to be operational, they need to pay to have them de-leaded. R. DeAngelis said if they want to use the sinks just to wash hands in then it would be fine. Following discussion, M. Francesconi said that she would go back to them to get more clarification on what they are looking for and then report back to the Board.

3. Workshop Discussion – FY22 Budget

a. Review of Draft Budget with the Finance Committee

M. Webber gave the following budget overview:

- Total operating budget is $6,679,355, which reflects a year-to-year increase of $38,863 or .6%
- With the exception of the fire and police chiefs and part-time police officers, this budget reflects an across-the-board salary increase of 2%, which is consistent with the highway union contract.
- This budget does not include capital or special articles under consideration; they will be addressed separately.
- This budget version remains a fluid document.
- No anticipated state or federal COVID relief funding is reflected in this budget or related levy limit calculations.
- He will be reviewing levy limit calculations with the Town Accountant and Assessor's Clerk on Thursday to cross check his figures, but an amount of free cash will be appropriated to stay under the levy limit.
- He anticipates that the budget can be finalized no later than April 27th.

The Board and the Finance Committee then reviewed the budget:

Selectmen – There was lengthy discussion regarding the Town Administrator Assistant salary. M. Francesconi requested to increase the salary from $10K to at least $12,500 stating that was $20 per hour for 12 hours per week. Other Board members wanted to keep it at $10K. M. Francesconi disagreed.

There was also discussion about the Town Counsel line item. M. Francesconi stated that she would like to see Town Counsel be more active and attend Board meetings so she felt more than $12,500 should be budgeted. Other Board members wanted to keep it at $12,500.

Conservation Commission salaries was increased from $923 to $1,500 as the Board agreed that members of the Conservation Commission should receive $500 each. There was also discussion about the Selectmen salary. M. Webber said that he did not provide an increase. R. DeAngelis felt that the Selectmen should get a 4% increase because they did not get an increase last year. M. Webber will add in a 4% increase. The Clean Lakes Program amount was increased to $27,577.50.

Tax Collector – M. Webber said that he put in $5K as a place holder for the Tax Collector Assistant Salary. A brief discussion followed regarding what this position will be doing.

Town Clerk – M. Webber said he pulled the Town Clerk Assistant from the budget because there was no justification for the position.

Elections and Registrations – M. Francesconi said that the Town Clerk would like to come before the Board next week to discuss this budget and the Library too.

Town Building Expenses – It was noted that the Police Dept Sgt Salaries should be $66,178 and Police Dept Other Salaries should be $79,040. They were inadvertently switched in the budget. There was lengthy discussion regarding Special Repairs to Town Buildings and Cheshire Elementary School (CES) Maintenance. M. Francesconi proposed moving $35K from CES to Special Repairs to Town Buildings; making CES $35K and Special Repairs to Town Buildings $60K. M. Francesconi also suggested changing CES Maintenance to CES Utilities; everyone agreed. Following additional discussion, M. Webber said he would ask the Town Accountant to provide utilities costs for the last year. The Board decided to wait on making changes to Special Repairs to Town Buildings or CES Utilities.

Police Department The part-time police officers rate went from $16.40 per hour to $19 per hour.

Fire Department, Wire Inspector – It was noted that the 2% salary increase needed to be added for Fire Assistant Chiefs and the Wire Inspector Assistant.

J. Levesque said he thinks the Board should think about a grant matching fund. Following a brief discussion, M. Webber said he will check on how best to do this.

4. **Public Comment Period** – No comments.

5. **Announcements from Board Members**
   J. Levesque said that someone from Lacrosse contact him stating that there is a mound on the field so they can't use it. M. Biagini said he would check it out. Also, park grant information was forwarded to Gene and we do not qualify because an open space and recreation plan was not done.

   M. Francesconi read a letter from a resident thanking the COA for arranging their COVID shot.

6. **Any Other Business Not Reasonably Anticipated 48-hours Prior to the Meeting**
   Allison Warner was appointed as Assistant Town Clerk to oversee the town election because the Town Clerk position is on the ballot. The Board needs to ratify this appointment.
   J. Levesque made a motion to ratify the appointment of Allison Warner as Assistant Town Clerk to oversee the town election – seconded by R. DeAngelis – ***Roll Call Vote – All members yes – Motion carried.***

7. **Adjournment** – *M. Biagini made a motion to adjourn at 8:25 pm – seconded by J. Levesque –* ***Roll Call Vote – All members yes –*** *Motion carries*

Respectfully submitted,
Noelle M. Pandell