TOWN OF CHESHIRE

80 CHURCH STREET | CHESHIRE, MASSACHUSETTS 01225
PHONE (413) 743-1690 | FAX (413) 743-0389

WWW.CHESHIRE-MA.GOV

OFFICE OF THE BOARD OF SELECTMEN

Board of Selectmen

Meeting Minutes –March 26, 2024

Pursuant to a notice duly filed with the Town Clerk, a meeting of the Board of Selectmen was held in person at 191 Church Street (Cheshire Community House) on Tuesday March 26, 2024, at 6:30 PM.

Board of Selectmen Members Present: Shawn McGrath, Chair
Ray Killeen, Member
Michelle Francesconi, Member
Ron DeAngelis, Member

Board of Selectmen Members Absent: Jason Levesque, Vice - Chair

Others Present : Jennifer Morse, Town Administrator ; Corey McGrath, DPW Director ; Lynn Melchiori; Bob Tetlow; Rebecca Herzog; Whitney Flynn, John Tremblay

S. McGrath opened the meeting at 6:30 p.m.

FY25 Budget

The purpose of the meeting is to review the Draft Budget as Free Cash was certified at $384,652 and decreases need to be made to stay within the levy and to maintain reserves as required by the financial policies. S. McGrath and the Town Administrator met last Friday and revised the workbook, changes are noted below.

- Treasurer/Collector Tax Title Expenses - Level fund due to available revolving account funds and the ability to raise the deficit on the tax rate recap.
- Town Buildings – Reduction of $2,000 to the Town Garage utilities account
- Town Compactor – Level funded due to increased efforts to reduce hauling and tonnage amounts.
- DPW/Highway - Level fund the Road Machinery, Tools, and Gas account.
- HVRSD - There was discussion about requesting a reduction in the school assessment that included the knowledge that the town has been supporting the district budget at a level of 13% over minimum requirements and has rural aid money not allocated to the current budget. M. Francesconi brought up the school committee meeting minutes from March 27, 2023, which referenced the ACTA Presidents concerns regarding the budget, these concerns were not addressed on any agendas/minutes, these concerns included the increase in administrative staff when the district is one of the smallest in existence,

loss of paraprofessional jobs, no increases in the para and teacher contract and significant increases in administrative positions with no rationale.. S. McGrath shared his concern regarding rollover of previously funded position by ESSER to the operating budget and suggested that they use E&D funds, he also mentioned the per pupil cost difference for Adams and Cheshire. There was discussion about regionalization for the future noting that the overall population is expected to decline. M. Francesconi shared her frustration that the town is currently struggling to cover town expenses and pay a fair wage to employees and suggested that the district level fund their budget. S. McGrath suggested a 1% overall increase to the budget. There was discussion regarding the process for voting down the school budget if the district is not willing to reduce the assessment and what that means for the district.

A motion was made by S. McGrath and seconded by R. Killeen to send a formal letter requesting a reduction in the school assessment to 1%.
Roll Call Vote: R. Killeen – Yes, R. DeAngelis- No, M. Francesconi – No, S. McGrath – Yes
Motion Tied: 2-2

There was further discussion about the impact on the town budget and requesting a level funded budget.

A motion was made by M. Francesconi and seconded by R. DeAngelis to send a formal letter requesting that the School District level fund their budget for Fiscal Year 2025.
Roll Call Vote: R. Killeen – Yes, R. DeAngelis – Yes, M. Francesconi – Yes, S. McGrath- Yes

A formal letter to the School Committee, Business Manager and Superintendent will be reviewed and signed at the conclusion of the meeting.

- There was discussion on retaining free cash and stabilization fund reserve levels indicated in the financial policies.

- Police – Student Resource Officer position

R. DeAngelis shared that the department is growing too fast and there were concerns from the entire board about what happens when there is not a funding source in the district, the town would be responsible for the position in its entirety. The Town Administrator will ask the Police Chief to continue with his analysis of the position and share it with the board at their next meeting.

- Capital Project

There was discussion on the request from the Highway Department for a BOOM Mower. S. McGrath noted that this piece of equipment is heavily utilized, the current piece of equipment is malfunctioning a great deal of the summer and roadside mowing complaints are the biggest community concern in the summer.

There was discussion about the possible need to set up a Special Election sixty-five days prior with the ballot questions going to the Town Clerk at least thirty-five days before the meeting. This will be added to the future budget hearing agenda.

There was a discussion about the need for a Facilities truck, the DPW director explained that staff is utilizing personal vehicles and that there are not enough vehicles in the summer with cemetery and facilities both in operations. They were looking for a vehicle that could hold both facilities and highway tools. R. DeAngelis stated that this is a huge cost, the town has added employees, and the costs continue to grow. He asked what more important compensation, or a vehicle, and that the town should have a strategic plan for capital purchases. The Town Administrator reminded the board that a 10 Year Capital Plan is in progress. R. DeAngelis further stated that residents are incurring additional living costs with the economy, a lot of seniors are on fixed incomes.

- The next budget meetings will be held on April 9, April 16, and April 23. The Town Administrator requested that questions for HVRSD be sent to her to be passed along prior to the meeting on April 9th.

Transfer Station Point of Sale System

The Town Administrator requested that a bank account be set up specifically for the Transfer Station. She noted that another municipality recently moved to a Point-of-Sale System for the sale of Transfer Station waste and permits and it is working with great success. The Board agreed to move forward with the request for a new bank account and point of sale system.

Announcements from Board Members – None

Public Comment

Rebecca Herzog inquired about the vacation time policy she was informed that would be on the next agenda for discussion.

Lynn Melchiori shared her concerns about the recent news regarding the Football Coach and wants to request an independent audit at the school to ensure that all staff and volunteers are CORI checked as required by state law. It is believed that there is a location on the DESE website to submit a complaint and Ms. Melchiori was advised to contact the school committee, members of the board agreed that the recent news was unsettling.

Whitney Flynn stated that as a Cheshire parent of small children Hoosac Valley is not where she wants to send her children to be educated.

Adjourn

A motion was made by S. McGrath and seconded by M. Francesconi to adjourn the Board of Selectmen meeting at 8:15 p.m.

Roll Call Vote: R. Killeen – Yes, R. DeAngelis – Yes , M. Francesconi – Yes, S. McGrath- Yes
Motion Carries: 4-0

Respectfully Submitted:
Jennifer Morse
April 2, 2024

Document List

1. FY25 DRAFT Budget Workbook

Approved: 4/16/24