TOWN OF CHESHIRE

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OFFICE OF THE BOARD OF SELECTMEN

Board of Selectmen

Meeting Minutes –January 7, 2025

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 January 7, 2025, at 6:30 PM. (Revised Time)

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

Others Present: Jennifer Morse, Town Administrator; Donna MacNicol, Town Attorney; Peter Traub; Corey McGrath, DPW Director; Whitney Flynn; Lynn Melchiori.

Summary of Votes

Vote to enter executive session at 6:38 p.m.	5-0
Vote to approve IRS 2025 mileage reimbursement rate of $.70	5-0
Vote to approve Cheshire Rod and Gun Club One Day Liquor Licenses	5-0
Vote to present zoning bylaw amendments to the Planning Board	5-0
Vote to lower ground floor rentals at former town hall to $15 SF	5-0
Vote to approve the Consent Agenda as presented	5-0
Vote to approve Peak Youth Wresting Facilities Use Form	4-1
Vote to adjourn at 8:12 p.m.	5-0

S. McGrath called the meeting of the Board of Selectmen to order at 6:38 p.m.

Executive Session- M.G.L. Chapter 30A, Section 21(a), Reason 6 – Youth Center Lease - POSTPONED
This agenda item was postponed to January 21, 2025, due to illness, the agenda was revised on 1/7/25 at 11 a.m. after notification of illness.

Executive Session – M.G.L. Chapter 30A, Section 21(a), Reason 3 – Pending Litigation
S. McGrath stated that the Board would enter the executive session according to M.G.L. Chapter 30A, Section 21 (a), Reason 3 to discuss strategy with respect to collective bargaining or litigation if any open meeting may have a detrimental effect on the bargaining unit or litigating position of the public body as he so declares.

A motion was made by M. Francesconi and seconded by J. Levesque to enter executive session at 6:40 p.m. according to M.G.L. Chapter 30A, Section 21(a), Reason 3 to discuss strategy with respect to pending litigation as an open meeting will have a detrimental effect on the litigating position of the public body as declared by the Chair.
Roll Call Vote: R. DeAngelis – Yes; R. Killeen – Yes; J. Levesque- Yes; M. Francesconi – Yes; S. McGrath- Yes
Motion Carries: 5-0

The Board of Selectmen re-entered the regular meeting at 7:06 p.m.

Discussion/Decision Items

Fire Truck Borrowing - The Board reviewed the documents provided by the Treasurer office regarding borrowing for the new fire engine. The Town Administrator shared that she had received a verbal update from the Fire Chief earlier in the day that the engineer would be delivered in approximately two months. The board discussed the interest rates and the options between a 10 and 15 year borrowing and ultimately decided to go with a 10-year BAN as recommended by the Financial Advisor. The Town Administrator will update the Treasurer with the delivery date and the board's decision.

IRS Mileage Reimbursement Rate

The 2025 mileage reimbursement rate increased to $.70 from $.67 in the previous Calander year. This reimbursement is for employees/board members etc who use their personal vehicle for work related functions as approved by the department head.

A motion was made by M. Francesconi and seconded by S. McGrath to increase the mileage reimbursement rate to $.70.

Roll Call Vote: R. DeAngelis – Yes; R. Killeen – Yes; J. Levesque- Yes; M. Francesconi – Yes; S. McGrath- Yes
Motion Carries: 5-0

Cheshire Rod & Gun Club One Day Liquor Licenses - January 25, 2025

A motion was made by S. McGrath and seconded by R. DeAngelis to approve the one-day liquor license as presented.

Roll Call Vote: R. DeAngelis – Yes; R. Killeen – Yes; J. Levesque- Abstain; M. Francesconi – Yes; S. McGrath- Yes
Motion Carries: 4-0-1

Zoning Bylaw Amendment & General Bylaw

As recommended by the Town Attorney and Zoning Enforcement Officer the Planning Board will be asked to amend Zoning Bylaw 3.2 Table of Use Regulations (b) Accessory Uses 10. The raising or keeping of domestic animals, for use by residents of a premises, not as a commercial venture subject to regulations of the Board of Health, provided all grounds used for pasturing or other purposes involving restrained animals shall be fenced.
Recommended Change: Remove SPA (Special Permit Application)

3.3 Use Prohibited in all Districts (c) Keeping of Livestock or poultry in the R-1 District, provided, however that the keeping of pets shall be permitted
Recommended Chage: Remove

Draft Language for the General Bylaw was discussed including changes to the first paragraph clarifying which districts would need to apply for a Board of Health issued permit. The Town Administrator reminded the board that this amendment request would be sent to the Planning Board for them to have amendment hearings and the General Bylaw language can continue to be reviewed until it is placed on the Annual Town Meeting Warrant for voter consideration. The warrant will put the adoption of the General Bylaw first with the amendments after as they will be tabled if the general bylaw does not pass.

A motion was made by S. McGrath and seconded by J. Levesque to forward the proposed Zoning Amendment to the Planning Board for proper process.

Roll Call Vote: R. DeAngelis – Yes; R. Killeen – Yes; J. Levesque- Yes; M. Francesconi – Yes; S. McGrath- Yes
Motion Carries: 5-0

Lease spaces

Jason Levesque left the meeting at 7:30 p.m. The Town Administrator shared that there has been some interest in the ground floor offices and annex however nothing has come to fruition. M. Francesconi inquired how the spaces have been advertised, which at this time has only been by word of mouth and on the website. There was discussion about lowering the rate of the ground floor offices at the former Town Hall to $15 a square foot and contacting a real estate agent to list the space at the Annex. There was also discussion on comparable rental spaces in abutting communities.

A motion was made by S. McGrath and seconded by M. Francesconi to lower the rate for the Cheshire Antheneum Ground Floor offices to $15 per square foot.

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

Jason Levesque re-entered the room at 7:45 p.m.

Consent Agenda

- Minutes – November 26 and December 10
- Accounts Payable, Payroll Warrants

A motion was made by S. McGrath and seconded by J. Levesque to approve the consent agenda

Roll Call Vote: R. DeAngelis – Yes; R. Killeen – Yes; J. Levesque- Yes; M. Francesconi – Yes; S. McGrath- Yes
Motion Carries: 5-0

Town Administrator Updates

HVRSD District Agreement Meeting - December 17, 2024

S. McGrath, R. DeAngelis and the Town Administrator attended the first district agreement review meeting. Discussions included composition of the school committee and election of members at large by all voters within the members towns and exploring a five-year rolling average for the assessment calculation. The committee also discussed regionalization options, Adams Finance Committee member Carol Cushenette shared that three districts (North Adams Public Schools, Northern Berkshire School Union and Hoosac Valley Regional School District) have discussed a feasibility study, the deadline for regionalization grants has passed and Carol shared that Representative Barrett was contacted about funding for the study.

Wayfinding Grant

The Town Administrator shared that the scope of work for the wayfinding grant which includes signage for the downtown area and businesses is complete. Work on the project will begin at the end of January and the project will come to completion in June.

Municipal Small Bridge Grant

Two applications will be submitted through MassDOT for the Small Municipal Bridge Grant program. A phase 1, engineering grant will be applied for the Goodlife Bridge on Lanesborough Road this was at the recommendation of the MassDOT 1 Bridge Engineer. A phase 2 construction grant will be applied for the West Mountain Bridge, the engineering is almost complete with an expected construction cost of $525,000.

Peak Youth Wrestling Facilities Use Form

The Town Administrator received an application from Peak Youth Wrestling for space within the cafeteria, she shared that the group has been using the facility since July with no problems, they have been great to work with. There was a lot of discussion about space and the waiving of the fee due to it being a youth sport, it was noted that the group charges very little for registration and benefits children from all over Berkshire County. There was lengthy discussion on the mats being always left in place and other functions that would be impacted, the DPW director shared that he would communicate with the organizer the dates that mats will need to be picked up for other events. J. Levesque said that he didn't see any difference in wrestling utilizing space, it is the same as

allowing youth baseball, softball, football etc. R. Killeen suggested that it be allowed and revisit the request in six months.

A motion was made by J. Levesque and seconded R. Killeen to approve the facilities request form as submitted.

Roll Call Vote: R. DeAngelis – Yes; R. Killeen – Yes; J. Levesque- Yes; M. Francesconi – No; S. McGrath- Yes

Motion Carries: 4-1-0

Announcements

The Family Valentines Dance is scheduled for Friday February 7 and Saturday February 8

The DPW Director shared that JCB Tree Service removed balls from the drainage on the roof over the old section of the community house. A roofing company has been contacted to give a quote, it is the same company that worked on the roof at the Hoosac Valley Middle/High School. He also shared that the Ice-Skating Rink is now open.

M. Francesconi inquired about the town receiving a Purple Heart Designation, once a new Veterans Agent is in place this will be discussed further.

Public Comment

None

Adjournment

A motion was made by J. Levesque and seconded by S. McGrath to adjourn the meeting at 8:12 p.m.

Roll Call Vote: R. DeAngelis – Yes; R. Killeen – Yes; J. Levesque- Yes; M. Francesconi – Yes; S. McGrath- Yes

Motion Carries: 5-0

Respectfully Submitted,
Jennifer Morse
Town Administrator
February 2, 2025

Document List

1. Agenda – January 7, 2025
2. Fire Truck Borrowing Debt Calcs.- Email
3. IRS Mileage Rate
4. Zoning Bylaw Proposed Language Change
5. Draft Minutes – November 26, 2024
6. Draft Minutes - December 10, 2024
7. Highway Bi-Weekly Report
8. FY25 Rural Road Apportionments
9. DPW Director Certifications
10. RDP Grant Announcement

Approved: 2/5/25