TOWN OF CHESHIRE

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OFFICE OF THE BOARD OF SELECTMEN

Board of Selectmen
Public Safety Complex Committee

Meeting Minutes –February 5, 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 Wednesday February 5, 2025, at 6:30 PM.

Board of Selectmen Members Present:	Shawn McGrath, Chair Jason Levesque, Vice Chair Ray Killeen, Member Ron DeAngelis, Member Michelle Francesconi, Member
Public Safety Complex Committee Present:	Tom Francesconi, Chair Corey McGrath, DPW Director Ray Killeen, BOS Member Jennifer Morse, Town Administrator Patrick Pettit, Finance Committee Representative Corey Swistak, EMD & Asst. Fire Chief
Public Safety Complex Committee Absent:	Tim Garner, Resident Michael Alibozek, Police Chief

Others Present: Jennifer Morse, Town Administrator; Peter Traub (remote), Andrea Woods, Woods Consulting (remote); Barbara Astorino; Lynn Melchiori; Corey McGrath, DPW Director; Bob Tetlow; Tom Francesconi, Fire Chief.

Summary of Votes

Vote to adjourn the Public Safety Complex Committee Meeting at 7:08 p.m.	Unanimous
Revote creation and appointments to the Semi to Quarterly Tax Subcommittee	3-0-2
Vote to sign Verizon support letter for expanded high-speed internet funding	5-0
Vote to sign the endorsement letter for the Open Space and Recreation Plan	5-0
Vote on the useful life of the new fire apparatus for borrowing purposes	5-0
Vote to approve the consent agenda with one edit to the January 7, 2025, minutes	5-0
Vote to enter executive session and adjourn the regular meeting at 7:59 p.m.	5-0

S. McGrath called the meeting of the Board of Selectmen to order at 6:30 p.m.
T. Francesconi called the meeting of the Public Safety Complex Committee to order at 6:32 p.m.

Joint Meeting with Public Safety Committee & Procurement Consultant Andrea Woods - 6:30 p.m.
Andrea Woods of Woods Consulting joined the meeting to discuss the next steps in the project. T. Francesconi gave an update on the committee's work to date which has included identifying a location (community house grounds) and completing a basic space needs assessment. Andrea explained that because the project will be over the 1.5-million-dollar threshold an Owner Project Manager is required. The OPM is a support system for the Town to ensure that all laws and regulations are met with the project including procuring design and construction. The search is a qualification-based process through a Request for Proposal (RFP). Once the RFP is distributed and proposals are returned the town will work with the OPM to set a fee which is typically 3% of the cost of the project. Andrea suggested several companies who provide this service and have done public safety complex work in Franklin and Berkshire County. Andrea will send several contracts including scopes of work for the committee to get an idea of the process.

The timeline for moving forward with an RFP was discussed, it was noted that appropriation will be sought at the Annual Town Meeting to move forward with OPM services. Discussion on what the committee can do in the meantime included a more defined space need analysis including the total number of offices, bays, etc. and an updated land survey. Andrea was thanked for her time and expertise.

A motion was made by T. Francesconi and seconded by C. Swistak to adjourn the Public Safety Complex Committee at 7:08 p.m.
Vote: Unanimous

Board of Selectmen Discussion/Decision Items

- Revote creation and appointments of Semi to Quarterly Tax Bill Subcommittee

A motion was made by M. Francesconi and seconded by J. Levesque to create and appoint the Semi to Quarterly Tax Bill Subcommittee with the same members previously appointed.
Discussion: S. McGrath inquired why the board had to revote the creation and membership. The Town Administrator confirmed with counsel that while there is no financial interest or benefit for the members appointed to the committee past practice of the board has been for members who are being appointed to abstain from the vote.
Roll Call Vote: M. Francesconi – Yes; J. Levesque – Yes, R. Killeen- Abstain; R. DeAngelis- Yes, S. McGrath – Abstain
Motion Carries: 3-0-2

Members of the committee appointed include Rebecca Herzog, Treasurer/Collector; Kellie Lahey, Board of Assessors; Robin Wadsworth, Assessors Administrator; Jeff Chaput and Bill Rech, Finance Committee; Jennifer Morse, Town Administrator; Ray Killeen and Shawn McGrath, Board of Selectmen.

- Verizon request for Support Letter

The Town Administrator explained that the letter of support and email in the packet came from Verizon as they are looking to obtain grant funds to expand high speed internet in Cheshire.
A motion was made by S. McGrath and seconded by R. Killeen to sign the Verizon support letter
Roll Call Vote: M. Francesconi – Yes; J. Levesque- Yes, R. Killeen – Yes; R. DeAngelis – Yes; S. McGrath – Yes
Motion Carries: 5-0

- Open Space and Recreation Committee endorsement letter

J. Levesque shared that the Open Space and Recreation Committee sent the plan for final approval by the state and the endorsement letter will follow.

A motion was made by S. McGrath and seconded by R. Killeen to approve the Open Space and Recreation Plan endorsement letter

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

- Vote regarding the maximum useful life of the fire truck to be financed with the proceeds of the $850,000 borrowing authorized by the votes of the Town passed June 10, 2024, Annual Town Election and August 12, 2024, Special Election pursuant to c. 44, s 7(1) to be twenty years.

A motion on was made by S. McGrath and seconded by J. Levesque to vote the maximum useful life of the fire truck to be financed with the proceeds of the $850,000 borrowing authorized by the votes of the Town passed June 10, 2024, Annual Town Election and August 12, 2024, Special Election pursuant to c. 44, s7(1) be twenty years.

Discussion: Chief Francesconi confirmed that according to NFPA Standards the useful life of the apparatus is twenty years.

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

- HVRSD District Agreement Update & Chairs Meeting Update

S. McGrath shared that both the District Agreement Committee and Chair met within the last two weeks. The district agreement committee is looking at two changes. The first change would be to the October 1st enrollment, over foundation minimum which would be based on a five-year rolling average, over time it has the same impact, however it takes away the year-to-year jumps in enrollment numbers. S. McGrath shared that this upcoming year Cheshire has gained eleven students and Adams student population has declined. The second change would be to the election of school committee members which is currently at large, communities will vote for their own town membership. There was discussion regarding the number of representatives from each community and that Cheshire is always behind with less representation. There was further discussion regarding withdrawal from the district and tutitioning students and how other districts have equal representation for towns with a unanimous vote of all towns for issues such as budgeting and school closures. S. McGrath shared that the upcoming budget season will be difficult as there are increases in outplacement services that were unforeseen and other factors such as enrollment numbers. J. Levesque stated that the district at some point needs to stop growing their budget and slow down, Bob Tetlow noted that school committee budget discussions are delayed but administration has been informed to make cuts. M. Francesconi stated that after the last school budget meeting voters were upset that Cheshire representatives went against the voice of the people and voted for the budget even though the Annual Town Meeting and the Special Election overwhelmingly did not support the school budget.

Consent Agenda

Minutes – January 7, January 21, January 29 (January 21 and January 29 – Postponed)
Account Payable and Payroll Warrants

A motion was made by M. Francesconi and seconded by J. Levesque to approve the consent agenda with one edit to January 7, 2025, minutes

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

Motion Carries: 5-0

Town Administrator Updates

Adams Fire District Tax Payments

The Town Administrator shared that PILOT tax bills were sent to Adams Fire District in Fiscal Year 2023 and Fiscal Year 2024, a bill has not been sent for Fiscal Year 2025 as the Adams Fire District attorney is questioning the assessment. The Town Administrator shared that the Assessors Administrator had done her due diligence in the process, however, was not getting legal questions answered by the Department of Revenue who suggested that town counsel be contacted. As town counsel does not specialize in tax law she recommended special counsel. The Town Administrator shared that while at the MMA conference last week she spoke directly to Christopher Wilcock who is the Department of Revenue Bureau of Local Assessment Chief, he will review the documentation and assessments consulting with the Town Assessor as needed. Once the town has verification that the assessment was properly calculated and confirms billing dates the Town Administrator will move forward with speaking to the Adams Fire District regarding the outstanding tax amounts.

Water Department - LSL Grant Amendment, Unaccounted Water Grant

The Town Administrator stated that an amendment to the Lead Service Line Grant was requested. However, funds are not available at this time, if funds become available for vacuum excavation on unknown lines an application will be filed. The Water Department was awarded grants for an unaccounted-for water audit, this will satisfy the DEP sanitary survey and AMP (Asset Management Plan) will be conducted looking at all assets of the water department and creating a capital plan. DPW Director Corey McGrath explained that there is no lead in the lines in Cheshire and the process for the unknown services which includes drilling down 12" to determine that make up of the line.

FY26 Budget Update

The Town Administrator shared that budget submissions are due on February 11, 2025, and she will send out an email reminding department heads. She also shared that there is a 16% increase in health insurance and that she contacted MIIA last year to get a quote for services. However, she was notified in October that a quote would not be available for FY26 until after the deadline to withdraw from Berkshire Health Group.

Announcements

M. Francesconi asked if an agenda item be added to a future meeting to relocate the DPW Office allowing for a conference space in the Town Administrator Office.

R. DeAngelis stated that the Town Administrator should have permission to access all software used in day-to-day operations of departments The Town Administrator will request from departments a list of software, company and contracts for software.

The Family Valentine Dance is on Friday February 7 and Saturday February 8, tickets will be sold at the door and are $10 per person.

The Hoosac Hose Company Fishing Derby is scheduled for Sunday February 9, 2025

Public Comment

DPW Director, Corey McGrath shared that an aluminum Osha certified catwalk has been ordered to replace the stairs at the co-mingle bin at the transfer station. The funding is through the Recycling Dividend Grant from DEP.

Bob Tetlow thanked Ron DeAngelis and Shawn McGrath for attending school district meetings, there were additional comments about reasons why teachers leave the district for other opportunities and charter school impacts on the budget.

Executive Session – M.G.L. Chapter 30A, Section 21(a), Reason 6

S. McGrath stated that the board would enter executive session according to MGL Chapter 30A, Section 21(a), Reason 6 to consider the purchase, lease, exchange, lease or value of real estate, if the chair declares that an open meeting may have detrimental effect on the negotiating position of the public body- Youth Center Lease and the board would not return to open session at the conclusion of executive session.

A motion was made by M. Francesconi and seconded by J. Levesque at 7:59 p.m.to enter executive session per MGL Chapter 30A, Section 21(a), Reason 6 to consider the lease with the Youth Center and not to return to regular session at the conclusion of the executive session.

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

Motion Carries: 5-0

Respectfully submitted

Jennifer Morse
February 6, 2025

Document List

1. Agenda – February 5, 2025
2. Flow Chart for Designing and Constructing Public Facilities
3. Email and Support letter – Verizon
4. Endorsement Letter – Open Space and Recreation Plan
5. DRAFT Minutes January 7, 2025
6. 2025 Annual Town Election Information

Approved: February 18, 2025