TOWN OF CHESHIRE

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OFFICE OF THE BOARD OF SELECTMEN

Board of Selectmen

Meeting Minutes –April 29, 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 April 29, 2025, at 6:30 p.m.

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

Others Present: Jennifer Morse, Town Administrator; Lynn Melchiori, Corey McGrath, DPW Director; Peter Traub; Sabrina Damms, IBerkshires; Sean Lydon, Hoosac Lake District Prudential Committee Chair; Liseann Karandisecky, Hoosac Lake District Prudential Committee; Ed Ameen; Barbara Ameen; Mike Tatro, National Grid; Ben Gelb, Treasurer

Summary of Votes

Vote to approve the National Grid/Verizon Pole Petition for South Street	5-0
Vote to approve the National Grid/Verizon Pole Petition for Henry Wood Road	5-0
Vote to approve the Herbicide Agreement for three years with Pond and Lake Connection	5-0
Vote to approve and post the Collector job description	5-0
Vote to approve the certificate adoption of the HMP and CPA	5-0
Vote to approve the consent agenda, except for the minutes	5-0
Vote to approve two one-day liquor licenses for the Cheshire Rod and Gun Club	3-0-2
Vote to adjourn at 7:45 p.m.	

S. McGrath opened the meeting at 6:30 p.m. with one recording device (iBerkshires)

Pole Hearings

6:30 p.m. National Grid and Verizon - South State Road – National Grid to install 1 JO Pole on South State Road beginning at a point approximately 0 feet East of the centerline of the intersection of Pole 49 and South State Road and continuing approximately 82 feet in a Southwest direction. National Grid proposes to install pole 49-1 and anchor/guy- 82 feet Southwest of the existing pole 49, on the other side (west) of the road.

Mike Tatro of National Grid explained the project on South Street, there were no questions from the board and no abutters present.

A motion was made by S. McGrath and seconded by J Levesque to approve the petition as submitted.

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

6:40 p.m. National Grid and Verizon – Henry Wood Road - National Grid to install 4 JO poles and relocate 5 JO poles on Henry Wood Road beginning at a point approximately 15 feet North of the centerline of the intersection of Savoy Road and continuing for approximately 1575 feet in a Northerly direction. National Grid to install 4 new poles P1, P2, P3, P8-50. National Grid to relocate existing P4, P5, P6, P7, P8. All poles go alongside the roadway of Henry Wood Road and to be 40ft class- 3 poles. Old P4, P5, P6, P7 in grass right of way to be removed by Verizon Company.

Mike Tatro of National Grid explained the project on Henry Wood Road, one abutter was present and Mr. Tatro addressed their questions.

A motion was made by S. McGrath and seconded by J Levesque to approve the petition as submitted.

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

HLD – Herbicide Agreement Fiscal Year 2026-2028

Sean Lydon and Liseann Karandisecky joined the board to discuss the three-year herbicide agreement with the Pond and Lake Connection. J. Levesque inquired about the change in pricing to which Sean explained that with support of the lake biologist they are doing a trial by changing the timing of chemical treatments and chemicals used, it was noted that the NOI issued by the Conservation Commission is still active. A full Invitation for Bid was issued to obtain bids for the contract.

A motion was made by S. McGrath and seconded by M. Francesconi to approve the Herbicide Treatment Agreement as submitted.

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

Budget Discussion

Finance Office – Job Descriptions

Ben Gelb, Treasurer, joined the board and was asked to give an update on his first few weeks with the Town. Ben stated that taxes went out on time, direct mailed by the vendor. He recommends changing to a new deputy collector, Point Software, which will save approximately $4,000-$5,000 per year, however that is not a change he wants to make until a new collector is in place. He has shown the Assistant new reports that should save time and shared that online turnovers are now being done monthly instead of every time a transaction is made. He has moved the trust funds into different accounts that will yield a higher interest rate. Ben shared that town officials earning less than $5,000 can opt out of OBRA deductions. At the beginning of the new fiscal year the pay weeks will change currently they are Friday – Thursday it will change to Sunday – Saturday. Ben recommends putting at least $30,000 into Stabilization which will put the town into a higher interest bracket. He also discussed rolling the borrowings so they all happen at the same time.

The Town Administrator shared that she and the Treasurer had reviewed job descriptions which were presented in the packet. The Treasurer believes that the Collector job can be done in 16-19 hours per week. He then discussed time saving options including Lock Box payments and online payments. There was discussion about moving forward with separating the Treasurer/Collector position on the town meeting warrant, last year it passed at the Annual Town Meeting however it did fail at the special election.

A motion was made by S. McGrath and seconded by R. DeAngelis to approve and post the Collector job description as submitted

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

Semi- Quarterly Tax Bill Report and Discussion

S. McGrath shared that Finance Committee member, Bill Rech, finalized a report for the Semi to Quarterly Tax Subcommittee. The report was in the Board of Selectmen packet and had the following survey findings and recommendation. Survey responses varied from towns indicating they had "always been quarterly" to others noting they had "switched a long time ago." Across the board, towns cited several **positive impacts** of a quarterly tax billing cycle, including:

- More consistent income for the municipality
- Reduced budgetary risk
- Easier payment structure for fixed-income and low-income taxpayers
- Simplified administrative processes

Importantly, **no town reported a need for increased staffing or infrastructure** to support the quarterly cycle.

Based on these findings, it is recommended that **Cheshire transition to a quarterly tax billing cycle**. This change is expected to provide a more stable cash flow for the town, reduce financial planning risk, and offer residents smaller, more manageable payment amounts throughout the year — particularly benefiting those on fixed or limited incomes.

There was further discussion, Treasurer Ben Gelb shared that from a Treasurer standpoint quarterly it is recommended to solve cash flow issues, especially with school payments, if online and lock box strategies are put into place it will help elevate the additional workload for the Collector.

DRAFT Warrant Articles

The Town Administrator shared the non-budgetary warrant articles and asked the board to review and decide if they would be placed on the town meeting warrant.

Local Option – Meals Tax - Discussion on the meals tax and failure to pass at the annual meeting last year likely due to a lack of information. The .75 percent meals tax would be added to the state's 6.25 percent tax. R. Killeen stated that voters thought the tax would come from the business itself when it comes from the patrons , he said

that most towns have adopted the tax and patrons don't notice the impact. It was suggested the R. Killeen approach the businesses and explain the rationale prior to the town meeting.

Keeping and Raising of Livestock or Poultry - Discussion on the General Bylaw which has been discussed at several meetings. R. DeAngelis stated that it is not fair to residents of R-1 and that direct abutters should be notified prior to Board of Health approval. Language will be added that states that permits shall include conditions and approval with direct abutter notification. If the bylaw passes then the two zoning amendments to modify language would need to be addressed at the meeting.

Exemptions - Documents provided by the Assessors were reviewed, the Town Administrator will seek additional information from the Assessors pertaining to the Hero's Act exemptions.

Discussion/Decision Items

Adoption of the Hazard Mitigation and Climate Adaptation Plan

The plan has been approved by MEMA and FEMA and is ready for adoption by the board.

A motion was made by S. McGrath and seconded by J. Levesque to approve the Hazard Mitigation and Climate Adaptation Plan

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

Motion Carries: 5-0

Firetruck Borrowing Updates and Next Steps

The special legislation has been refiled and is waiting on the Joint Elections Committee to have a hearing. There was discussion on the best path forward as the Town is currently paying a fee to hold the truck until the legislation is approved.

Consent Agenda

- Minutes – April 15, 2025 – Postponed
- Accounts Payable and Payroll Warrants
- Hoosac Hose Company – One Day Liquor License

A motion was made by S. McGrath and seconded by J. Levesque to approve the Consent Agenda except for the minutes.

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

Motion Carries: 4-0-1

Town Administrator Updates

Cheshire Rod and Gun Club - Two liquor license requests were received since posting of the agenda.

A motion was made by M. Francesconi and seconded by R. Killeen to approve the May licenses for the Cheshire Rod & Gun Club

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

Motion Carries: 3-0-2

Grants - There are three grants due the week of May 15, 2025, including the DER Culvert Grant (Lanesborough Rd), Woodland Partnership Grant (for Kiosks) and the DEP/RRR Grant (Swap Shop). The first week of June One Stop Grants are due and submission will include a MassWorks Joint Grant for Fred Mason, West Road, Friend Street: South Street Water Project and Underutilized Properties. The Town Administrator shared that a priority needs to be put on the South Street Water Project as Route 8 is on the docket to be resurfaced in 2026 or 2027, she shared that she spoke with the Director of District 1 and they will work with the town as the project cannot be completed for five years after the resurfacing is completed.

MMA – Rural Communities Conference - The Town Administrator will be attending the Rural Communities Conference in Holyoke on Saturday. Senator Mark has indicated that he will earmark money in the Transportation Bond Bill to complete the engineering on Route 116.

Announcements from Board Members

M. Francesconi shared that the Memorial Day Parade and Ceremony would take place on Monday May 26th at 1 p.m.

Adjournment

A motion was made by M. Francesconi and seconded by S. McGrath to adjourn the meeting at 7:45 pm.
Roll Call Vote: M. Francesconi – Yes; J. Levesque – Yes, R. Kileen – Yes; R. DeAngelis- Yes, S. McGrath- Yes
Motion Carries: 5-0

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Respectfully submitted

Jennifer Morse
May 15, 2025

Document List

1. Agenda – April 29, 2025
2. Pole Petition - South State Road
3. Pole Petition – Henry Wood Road
4. Herbicide Treatment Contract
5. Treasurer Job Description
6. Collector Job Description
7. Semi Annual to Quarterly Tax Study report
8. DRAFT warrant articles
9. Exemption Information
10. Certificate of Adoption HMP/CAP

Approved: 5/27/25