TOWN OF CHESHIRE

BOARD OF SELECTMEN

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Board of Selectmen

MEETING MINUTES –SEPTEMBER 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 Friday September 5, 2025, at 6:00 p.m.

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

Board of Selectmen Absent : Shawn McGrath, Chair

Others Present: Jennifer Morse, Town Administrator; Lynn Melchiori; Peter Traub; Bob Tetlow; Corey McGrath, DPW Director; Sabrina Damms, IBerkshires; Tom Francesconi, Fire Chief.

Summary of Votes:

- Vote to approve borrowing authorization for the new Fire Engine and Police Cruiser 4-0-0
- Vote to use black snow fencing around the Pickle Ball Court 3-1-0
- Vote to approve the One Day Liquor Licenses for the Cheshire Rod & Gun Club 3-0-1
- Vote to reduce the speed limit to 25mph on the roads outlined 4-0-0
- Vote to approve the Solicitation Policy as edited 4-0-0
- Vote to create a Bylaw Review Committee 4-0-0
- Vote to ratify the Annex Lease Agreement with William Merrell 4-0-0
- Vote to approve the consent agenda with edits to the minutes 4-0-0
- Vote to approve the Northern Tier Support letter 4-0-0
- Vote to approve the Thomas Cook – 10 Stafford Hill Rd Support Letter 4-0-0
- Vote to adjourn the meeting at 7:10 p.m. 4-0-0

Open Regular Meeting and Pledge of Allegiance

J. Levesque called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m.

Fire Truck Borrowing Authorization

The borrowing authorization is in the amount of $917,150 which includes the borrowing for the Fire Engine and the Police Cruiser. The note expires in January 2026 at which time it will be consolidated with Highway Truck debt. The lowest bid was Unibank with a 4.05% interest rate. The Town Administrator shared that the Town Clerk would complete the borrowing documentation on Monday, the Treasurer will send it through the appropriate channels and a special warrant will be created to pay electronically on Friday September 12, 2025. J. Levesque inquired about the timing of the truck delivery to which Chief Francesconi responded that it will be sent within a couple of days of payment and then equipped which

should take a couple of days. The old truck will be retained for 3-4 months to ensure that the new truck is functioning as expected. R DeAngelis inquired as to how many payments the Town made on the vehicle waiting for the legislation to be approved, the Fire Chief stated that there were five payments made for a total of $35,000. The Town Administrator shared that bond counsel is required for any borrowing over $500,000 and that the Treasurer has a check list of documents required that will be used in the future to ensure that all documents and votes are properly posted.

A motion was made by J. Levesque and seconded by R. Killeen to approve the borrowing authorization for the New Fire Truck and Police Cruiser.

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

Board of Selectmen Discussion/Decision Items

- **Pickleball Court – Request for Fencing**

The DPW Director shared an estimate for fencing, the fencing will have two-foot-deep footings with plugs, the fence would be placed at each end and can be easily removed for events. Each piece of fencing is $700 and two would be needed, one for each end. Discussion ensued on the two options presented. The Town Administrator shared that she spoke with the Council on Aging chair and both agreed that no stone should be placed around the outside of the fence as it could be a tripping hazard during events. R. Killeen spoke about the other needs of the building including a generator and stated that he was not in favor of spending the funds at this time as it was not budgeted. Discussion turned back to the black snow fencing option, the snow fence is already owned by the Town and can be easily removed for events.

A motion was made by J. Levesque and seconded by M. Francesconi to utilize the black snow fencing for the pickleball court.

Roll Call Vote: R. DeAngelis – No; R. Killeen- Yes; M. Francesconi- Yes; J. Levesque- Yes
Motion Carries: 3-1-0

- **Cheshire Rod & Gun Club One Day Liquor Licenses : 9/6; 9/12; 9/20; 9/27**

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

Roll Call Vote: R. DeAngelis – Yes; R. Killeen – Yes; M. Francesconi – Yes; J. Levesque- Abstain
Motion Carries: 3-0-1

- **M.G.L. Chapter 90, Section 17C – Vote to lower speed limit in thickly settled or business districts to 25 mph**

The Town Administrator shared that the Town adopted the MGL Chapter 90, Section 17C at the Annual Town Meeting in 2023 that allows the Board of Selectmen to lower the speed limit within thickly settled areas to 25 mph. A meeting was held between the Police Chief, DPW Director and Town Administrator and the following roads are being recommended; Church Street, E. Main Street, Portion of Wells Road, Main St., Furnace Hill Rd, Flaherty Rd, Pit Rd, Prospect St., Dean St., Richmond St., School St., Railroad St., Depot St., Richardson St, Fisk St., Meadowview Dr., Wood Lane, Dean St Extension, Portion of Ingalls Rd, Devonshire Dr. Yorkshire Dr., Berkshire Dr., Wilshire Dr.,

An audience member inquired about the definition of thickly settled: The Town Administrator read the MassDOT definition" any way where dwelling houses situation at such distances are as will average less than two hundred feet between them for a distance of a quarter of a mile or over". Discussion ensued on other roads including Crest Road, Arnold Court, Lanesborough Road to Daniels Terrace and lower West Mountain Road to the cemetery. The DPW Director will look at Lanesborough Road and West Mountain Road to determine if they are eligible. If all roads are included the town will need to purchase 26 signs for enforcement. The next step in the process is to notify MassDOT of the roads voted after the final review by the DPW Director.

A motion was made by J. Levesque and seconded by R. Killeen to reduce the speed limit to 25 mph on the roads outlined.
Roll Call Vote: R. DeAngelis- Yes; R. Killeen – Yes; M. Francesconi- Yes; J. Levesque – Yes
Motion Carries: 4-0-0

- **Solicitation Policy -2nd Review and Adoption**

The Town Administrator shared that grammar changes were made and the language was changed so that the Police Chief or designee have the ability to waive the fees for youth fundraising and nonprofit organizations.

A motion was made by J. Levesque and seconded by M. Francesconi to approve the Solicitation Policy and Permits.
Roll Call Vote: R. DeAngelis- Yes; R. Killeen – Yes; M. Francesconi- Yes; J. Levesque – Yes
Motion Carries: 4-0-0

- **Master Plan Bylaw Review Committee – Creation**

The Town Administrator shared that she had attended the last Planning Board meeting and the Master Plan came up as discussion. She shared that the Planning Board is currently dealing with the ADU bylaw, Solar bylaw amendments, Battery Storage Facilities, Special Permits and does not have the capacity to review the Master Plan. She and the Planning Board are recommending the appointment of a committee with the purpose of reviewing the current plan in preparation for an update to the plan in 2027. R. DeAngelis stated that the master plan is almost ten years old and was based on few surveys with many impossible tasks. Peter Traub, Planning Board Chair shared that there was an implementation committee who made recommendations to the Board of Selectmen however that committee was disbanded . Mr. Traub also confirmed that a lot of the work within the plan has already been completed and noted that a lot of the plan was centered around the closing of the elementary school, which was a big topic in 2017. M. Francesconi felt like the committee would be redundant. R. Killeen felt that the committee could go through the master plan making notes of what needs to be updated so when the opportunity is there to create the new plan the groundwork is completed. R. DeAngelis stated the master plan was built with survey that had limited questions and felt that the plan should have been cut in half, he also noted that the plan should be to benefit a majority of the Town and should take into consideration some of the larger scale projects that the town is currently facing. It was decided to forgo a committee at this time. J. Levesque stated that the next master plan should be financially feasible and within the means of the Town.

- **Bylaw Review Committee**

One of the recommendations within the Financial Management Review was a committee to review the General Bylaws. It was noted that the recent bylaw work was to reorganize the bylaws and at one point several years ago the Board of Selectmen started to review the bylaws, which got pushed aside for other projects. The Town Administrator shared that the scope of work for this committee will be to make recommendations to the Board of Selectmen for adoption at the next Annual Town Meeting. She then used the Police Department as an example; the Chief would like to amend the noise bylaw and dog bylaws (which are currently outdated). The Town Administrator will seek volunteers internally and also from the community to work on this project, stating that this is a good time of year since budget season has not yet started.

A motion was made by M. Francesconi and seconded by J Levesque to create a Bylaw Review Committee.

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

- **Annex Rental – Merelle**

The Town Administrator shared that a lease was signed with William Merelle for the Annex. The per month lease price is $775, the tenant will not be disposing of dangerous chemicals and has confirmed that no windows will be covered, as discussed. The bracket has been ordered to hang a sign and the tenant will be advised to speak to the Police Department regarding line of site and parking. M. Francesconi inquired about meeting with the tenant prior to the lease being approved and the Town Administrator explained that the real estate agent runs all the background checks including a credit and criminal report, they also handle the signing of the lease. The Town Administrator shared that she did contact the Librarian notifying the Library Trustees of the rental.

A motion was made by J. Levesque and seconded by R. DeAngelis to ratify the lease agreement.

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

Consent Agenda

- Minutes August 19, 2025
- Accounts Payable and Payroll Warrants
- 2026 Holiday Schedule

M. Francesconi sent edits to the minutes prior to the meeting that clarified the hanging of the Cheshire sign to be placed at the Cheshire Athenaeum. She also corrected the 2026 Holiday Schedule to Columbus Day as Indigenous Peoples Day is not listed as a federal or state holiday.

A motion was made by J. Levesque and seconded by R. DeAngelis to approve the consent agenda with edits to the minutes.

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

Town Administrator Updates

- **Woodlands Partnership Grant**

The grant contract was received for the Woodlands Partnership Grant, this grant will place two – three sectioned kiosks at the Boat Launch and Farnams Causeway. These kiosks will be used for Lake, Hiking, Recreational Information. The kiosk at Farnams Causeway will also have a Historical Display of the area. The kiosk at the Boat Launch will be placed to the right of the boat ramp. The kiosk at Farnams Causeway will be situated near the restrooms.

- **Rep. Barrett Request for Support: Northern Tier Passenger Rail**

The letter was reviewed and signed by the Vice Chair.

A motion was made by J. Levesque and seconded by R. DeAngelis to approve the support letter.

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

- **Thomas Cook – 10 Stafford Hill Road request for Support Letter**

Thomas Cook, 10 Stafford Hill Road, requested a letter of support to have his barn located at the former Valentine Bowen Place registered on the Massachusetts Most Endangered Historic Resource List. The letter was supported by the Historical Commission and signed by the Chair.

A motion was made by M. Francesconi and seconded by R. Killeen for the board to sign a support letter for Thomas Cook.

Roll Call Vote: R. DeAngelis- Yes; R. Killeen – Yes; M. Francesconi- Yes; J. Levesque – Abstain
Motion Carries: 3-0-1

M. Francesconi reminded the Town Administrator to give an update on the work was being done at the Senior Center. The Town Administrator shared that the bathrooms were being renovated, both she and the DPW Director were unaware that the work had been bid and contracted until Tuesday when the DPW Director received a call to purchase the exhaust fans/lights for the bathroom. The Town Administrator had discussed the project briefly with the COA Chair; however, no contractors or estimates were discussed. At that time the COA Chair was advised to speak with the DPW Director about the project. Discussion on building projects going through proper channels to ensure that procurement and insurance requirements are being met with a reminder to the Council on Aging that the building is Town owned and all projects should go through the Board of Selectmen

Public Comment

Bob Tetlow asked when the paving project was set to begin, the DPW Director explained that the Chapter 90 funds were not released by the state until it was too late to contract for the work this summer and that the funds roll over to the next fiscal year. Mr. Tetlow also inquired about the kayak launch and was informed that it was moved at the request of the state to Farnams Causeway in the spring. Discussion about having a kayak launch near the boat launch and parking restrictions within the area. It was determined that the conversation should be placed on a future agenda and J. Levesque suggested that the Open Space and Recreation Committee could approach the state as the entire area is not under town ownership.

Announcements
J. Levesque inquired about the Town having a ceremony or event for America's 250th Anniversary. M Francesconi and the DPW Director shared that the Cheshire Events Committee and the Historical Commission will be having a joint meeting to start planning.

Any other business not anticipated 48 hours prior to the meeting
The DPW Director shared that a resident of Stewart White Road contacted him regarding three trees that he believed were on the town right away. The DPW Director shared that he did a site visit and does not believe that the trees are on the town right of way. He stated that if they are that other trees are a higher priority by jeopardizing public safety and property. The trees owned by the resident of Stewart White Road are in a pasture, not jeopardizing any structures. An estimate was obtained at $6,000 to remove the three trees. The board agreed that the trees should not be removed at the towns expense.

M. Francesconi asked for an update regarding the issues with the water billing software after seeing public comments on social media within the last 24 hours. She said that some of the comments were disheartening and not factual. The Town Administrator reminded everyone that the Water Department has been working for more than a year with a new software vendor with the hope to improve billing. The Water Department signed a contract in February 2024 and the software went live in June 2025. Since that time, there have been issues with demands, interest charges and payment batches. It was shared that shut off notices were placed at properties with outstanding water receivables which currently total $45,000+ for all accounts. Discussion about outstanding receivables led to conversation about the shut-off notice process and educating residents about paying bills timely. The Water Commissioners have taken steps including demands ($10) and interest fees in hopes that users will pay timely. R. DeAngelis noted that in some communities outstanding lists are published. Unfortunately, due to an error in the billing system with a batch, four properties did in fact pay and did not owe the funds. When this was brought to the attention of the Collector, she would diligently correct the mistake and spent multiple days working with water users to make corrections and answer questions. The Water Department is working to remedy the issues with the software company and will seek other software if necessary. It was noted that when staff is not on the office on a scheduled day it is typically due to owed accrued time or for a personal reason/family emergency and notification is always posted at Town Offices. It was requested that the topic be added to a future agenda for updates regarding the situation.

Adjournment
A motion was made by J. Levesque and seconded by R. Kileen to adjourn the meeting at 7:10 p.m.
Roll Call Vote: R. DeAngelis- Yes; R. Killeen – Yes; M. Francesconi- Yes; J. Levesque – Yes
Motion Carries: 4-0-0

Respecfully Submitted;
Jennifer Morse
Town Administrator
September 10, 2025

Document List

1. Agenda - September 5, 2025
2. Google Maps – Speed Limit Discussion
3. 2026 DRAFT Holiday Schedule
4. Email/Letter Rep. Barrett regaring Northern Tier Letter of Support
5. Letter from Thomas Cook regarding support letter
6. DRAFT Minutes - August 19, 2025
7. Senior Center Report (July)
8. NBEMS Update

Approved: 9/30/25