



**Chesterfield Select Board Minutes  
Monday, December 18, 2023 at 3:30 p.m.  
Town Office Building - 422 Main Road**

Mr. Fuller called the Select Board meeting to order at 3:52 p.m.

**Select Board Members Present:** Trish Colson-Montgomery and Don Willard III

**Select Board Members Participating Remotely:** Roger Fuller

**Town Administrator Present via ZOOM:** Brenda Lessard

**Public Officials Present:** Matt Smith, Highway Superintendent; Finance Committee Members: Lee Manchester, Larry Cervelli, Carol Jolly, Marianne Drake, Justin West, Sarah Hamilton and John Follet; Sandra Wickland, Town Clerk

**Recorder of Minutes:** Brenda Lessard

On March 29, 2023, Governor Healey signed into law a supplemental budget bill, which, among other things, extends the temporary provisions pertaining to the Open Meeting Law to March 31, 2025. Specifically, this further extension allows public bodies to continue holding meetings remotely without a quorum of the public body physically present at a meeting location, and to provide "adequate, alternative" access to remote meetings. The language does not make any substantive changes to the Open Meeting Law other than extending the expiration date of the temporary provisions regarding remote meetings from March 31, 2023 to March 31, 2025.

This meeting was conducted with ZOOM access for the public.

**Warrants:**

The Select Board reviewed and signed the W24-13, WP24-13, and WBB24-13.

**Minutes:**

Ms Colson-Montgomery made a motion, seconded by Mr. Willard to accept the Minutes of 12/04/23 as amended.

**4:00 P.M. Finance Committee request to meet with Select Board re: FY25 Budget:**

The Finance Committee requested to meet with the Select Board to discuss some items as the Town heads to a new budget season. The committee wants to identify possible weaknesses and deficiencies in the wage and compensation plan. A goal is to retain employees. Mr. Manchester spoke first. He noted that the wage and compensation plan has some data limitations. There were some discrepancies between the data that Don Jacobs did and the update that Sue Labrie did. Grades 1, 3, 5 and 6 were okay. The issues were with employees in the Grade 2 and 4 category. Employees in those brackets are either hourly

or stipend employees. It is difficult to compare with other towns as hours worked or job duties may be different. Ms Labrie added some towns but also took out some of the towns that Mr. Jacobs included. Mr. Manchester would like to meet with Ms Labrie to discuss how she distinguished which data to include and how she arrived at hourly wage from a stipend. The Select Board agree that Ms Labrie may be willing to meet with the Finance Committee and there is money available to pay for her time. Ms Hamilton and Mr. West noted that with statistical data, it is difficult to come to a hard number for salaries. Ms Hamilton would like to hire a HR (Human Resources) professional to look at the data the Town has and try to come to a fair wage and compensation plan. She noted there are resources available and some firms that deal with municipalities. MMA (Massachusetts Municipal Association) has an online data set but it is a clunky database. Ms Hamilton would like to see the Town employ a small HR firm that works with small towns. Goshen is conducting a wage study through the Collins Institute with a Community Compact grant. It was noted that Chesterfield had done a study with a HR professional, Don Jacobs, through the same grant to do a salary study. It was also noted that the FRCOG (Franklin Council of Governments) does a yearly wage study for the Franklin County towns but also includes some Hampshire County towns also. Ms Colson-Montgomery agreed there will always be issues with the data but the data is a good starting point to set fair salaries. The job market changes each year. Mr. Fuller stated that no plan will be perfect and the Select Board and the Finance Committee needs to work together. The Finance Committee opined they may not be ready for the FY25 budget with wage adjustments. They are hoping to be in a better position for FY26 to do the salary adjustments.

#### **4:45 P.M.: Continuation of Damon Pond Road Pole Hearing:**

Verizon asked to continue this hearing to January 16, as they are not ready. No new plans have come to the Town yet. Mr. Fuller suggested not continuing the pole hearing and the Town request that Verizon and Eversource submit for a new hearing. Ms Lessard will let Don Voner and Brandon Owens know and have them submit new paperwork with a request for a new hearing. Ms Colson-Montgomery made a motion, seconded by Mr. Willard and unanimously voted to close the continuation of the pole hearing for Damon Pond Road.

#### **Additions to the Agenda:**

##### **Special Town Meeting (STM) Dates:**

Ms Colson-Montgomery noted that there should be two Special Town Meetings. The layout for North Road and Damon Pond Road are almost complete. There are eight or nine articles for one of the meetings and the Cannabis Bylaw amendment should be on its own meeting. The Select Board agrees. The Board suggested January 25, 2024, with a weather contingency date of February 1, 2024, for a STM to include the articles for three FY22 and FY23 bills that need to be paid, acceptance of the land donation for the Mount Cemetery, acceptance of the layout of North Road and Damon Pond Road, the Farm and Forest signs request, and creating a special purpose stabilization fund for the Opioid Settlement money that the Town is receiving. The Select Board chose the dates of March 26, 2024, with a weather contingency date of March 28, 2024, for a STM for the cannabis bylaw amendment. Ms Lessard will check with the Town Clerk, the COA Director and the Moderator on their availability and the building availability for those dates. Both STM's will be held at the Community Center. There was a discussion by Sandra Wickland, Town Clerk who opined that the postcard mailings to residents with information about the Special Town Meetings may help in notifying voters.

**Layout of North Road and Damon Pond Road:**

The plans should be completed by the end of the week. The information needs to be sent to Town Counsel for review and verbiage for the articles for the STM warrant. Once the layouts are accepted, this should move the North Road/Damon Pond Road Project forward with Mass DOT (Massachusetts Department of Transportation).

**Septic Betterment Email:**

An email was received from the Tax Collector stating that the last septic betterment loan is about to be paid off. There is money available to homeowners to borrow for failed septic systems. There was a discussion of having the HCDC (Hilltown Community Development Corporation) manage the program and advertise it. The loan comes as a tax bill to the borrower from the Town. More research needs to be done regarding how much the HCDC would charge, if administrative fees can be paid out of the funds and what the criteria is for the borrowers. The information could then be put on the town website.

**Reports:****Edwards Museum Updates:**

Mr. Fuller reported the work is complete except for the drainage. There is a payment to Royal Renovations in this week's warrant for the last invoice except for the retainage. That payment will be on the next warrant. Mr. Hicks has approved all the work as complete. Mr. Willard will look at the building before the next meeting. The total cost with the change orders was \$9,297 over the budgeted amount of \$69,110. The extra cost will come from the Major Repairs line.

**WOLA (Wright Ostermier Landscape Architects) 6 North Road:**

Mr. Fuller and Ms Lessard had a ZOOM meeting with Emily Wright and Allyson Fairweather. They will be ready to present their recommendations to the town in a public forum in late January. They have requested to do the forum via ZOOM. Ms Colson-Montgomery thinks the forum should be in person. Mr. Fuller will contact Ms Wright again.

**MIIA Revaluations of Town Buildings for Insurance:**

The Town Office, Highway Garage and Community Center were revaluated for insurance purposes. The new revaluation of the Town Offices and Community Center went up significantly. Mr. Fuller and Ms Lessard spoke with Mick Garrold from MIIA and he will see if he can get the revaluation report. Mr. Fuller believes they are counting the basement as usable space at the Town Office and the square footage is not correct.

**MVP (Municipal Vulnerability Preparedness) Executive Committee Updates:**

Ms Colson-Montgomery reported that there has been quite a few meetings, along with meetings with the state. They plan to have a kick-off event in February at the Community Center. There has been discussion of a bonfire and food, but the plans are in the beginning stages. There was a meeting to discuss town wide communication and how it can be improved. Justin West and Peg Whalen were present at that discussion.

**Recreation Committee Updates:**

Mr. Willard reported that the holiday event at the school was this past weekend. It was a good time and there was a hayride, crafts, snacks and a movie. It was a great event for the community and only made possible by the large amount of volunteers who were willing to help out.

**School Updates:**

Mr. Willard reported that one of the members of the negotiation committee has stepped down. Ms Colson-Montgomery will take that seat. Mr. Willard also reported that the Superintendent, Diana Bonneville is not seeking a renewal of her contract. A new superintendent search will be conducted.

The family of the home-schooled student that requested to attend Smith Vocational was advised to speak with Smith Vocational about a tuition reduction and then meet with the Finance Committee.

**Town Administrator Report:****Police Department Room:**

Flooring will be done starting 12/19. The flooring has been delivered

**Entre:**

The network had to go down for approximately ½ hour on Thursday, December 14 to accommodate a changeover with WGE and our network.

**Municipibid:**

Ms Lessard has spoken with the person who was second in line but he has not come yet to pay for the generator nor pick it up. He had talked with Matt and had an employee issue.

**Elevator Lift State Inspection:**

The State Inspection on the lift at the COA will be done on 12/26 at 8:00 am.

**Center Cemetery Access Road Agreement:**

Ms Lessard left a message on Holly Gage's phone to have her come in on 12/13, 12/14 or 12/15 to sign the agreement. Ms Lessard received a call from Nancy Wyman, Holly's mother who inquired about the need for the agreement since the road has been fixed. She asked to see the agreement so I have emailed it to her. Ms Lessard has heard nothing back and has left another message with Ms Wyman.

**Dunham Building:**

Select Board's response to the letters from Friends of the Library and Dana Dauterman Ricciardi were mailed. Ms Salins came in and would like to be on the agenda for 1/16/23 via ZOOM as she will be in Europe. Ms Lessard looked up the previous rental. It was \$500 a month plus utilities. Mr. Fuller will follow-up on getting an appraisal on the building.

**Center Cemetery Parking Area:**

Ms Lessard notified Clarks and CE Roberts of the Select Board taking the proposals under advisement and not awarding the work to either of them as the pricing was over what was budgeted. Ms Lessard spoke with Dee Cinner and let her know the decision by the Select Board to have Highway do the work. Ms Lessard let Dee Cinner know that any leftover funds cannot be used for other projects.

**Tax Rate:**

DOR (Department of Revenue) has approved the FY24 tax rate. It is \$14.97/thousand.

**Planning Board Request:**

The Planning Board is requesting a town email for each member of the planning board. Each email address costs \$6/month. Ms Colson-Montgomery suggested that any emails to the Planning Board be forwarded to the member's personal emails in the same manner that Entre is forwarding the emails to the MVP Executive Committee

**Lafayette Trail Sign:**

Julian Icher has reached back out to see if the Select Board has made a decision about the sign to be installed. The Select Board has approved the sign and a letter will be sent to Mr. Icher.

**Meeting with Library Trustees:**

Ms Lessard reported she had met with the Library Trustees to discuss Ms Squiers benefits and what she has for sick time, vacation time and personal time. The Library Trustees are overseeing the running of the Library and stated the three employees are stepping up to put in more time in Ms Squiers absence. They hope to see a fund set up at the bank to financially assist Ms Squiers.

**Action Items:****2024 Liquor Licenses:**

Ms Colson-Montgomery made a motion, seconded by Mr. Willard and unanimously voted to renew the three liquor licenses for 2024 contingent on the two businesses submitting the required paperwork for the building and fire inspections.

**Adjourn:**

Mr. Willard made a motion, seconded by Ms Colson-Montgomery and unanimously voted to adjourn the meeting at 7:49 p.m.