

Approved 4/12/2021

Town of Chelmsford Select Board Minutes
Chelmsford, MA 01824

Virtual meeting via Zoom

Regular Meeting MINUTES
January 25, 2021

Attending

Kenneth Lefebvre, Chairman
Virginia Crocker Timmins, Vice Chair
Patricia Wojtas, Board Member
George Dixon, Clerk

Paul Cohen, Town Manager

Please note that all documents referenced in these minutes are on file at the Town Manager’s Office, 50 Billerica Rd., Chelmsford, Mass. The meeting was recorded by Chelmsford Telemedia.

Chairman Lefebvre called the meeting to order at 6:01 PM, and read the following statement into the record:

Pursuant to Governor Baker’s March 12, 2020 Order Suspending Certain Provisions of the Open Meeting Law, G.L. c. 30A, §18, and subsequent orders imposing strict limitations on the number of people that may gather in one place, this meeting will be conducted via remote participation to the greatest extent possible. Specific information and the general guidelines for remote participation by members of the public and/or parties with a right and/or requirement to attend this meeting can be found on the Town’s website, at www.chelmsfordma.gov. For this meeting, members of the public who wish to watch the meeting may do so by accessing the Chelmsford Telemedia website www.chelmsfordtv.org. No in-person attendance of members of the public will be permitted, but every effort will be made to ensure that the public can adequately access the proceedings in real time, via technological means. In the event that we are unable to do so, despite best efforts, we will post on the Town’s website an audio or video recording, transcript, or other comprehensive record of proceedings as soon as possible after the meeting.

PUBLIC SERVICE ANNOUNCEMENTS

Nomination Papers for Annual Town Election

Board Member Timmins read the announcement that nomination papers are now available at the Town Clerk’s Office, until February 11, 2021. Available seats were listed. Requirements for filling out papers were also listed.

Nomination papers must be filed with the Town Clerk’s Office by February 16, 2021, at 5:00PM. The last day to register to vote will be March 17, 2021, by 5:00PM.

OPEN SESSION

No one came forward at this time.

COMMITTEE VACANCIES

Board Member Timmins read the list of current vacancies. Interested applicants can apply online at <http://www.chelmsfordma.gov> or through the Town Manager's office.

TOWN MANAGER BID AWARDS

Planimetric Mapping and Orthoimagery Acquisition Project

Town Manager Cohen explained this bid is to update GIS mapping, and will involve a digital flyover. Funding was previously approved by Town Meeting.

Six companies submitted bids, four were interviewed, and one came in over the approved limit. The bid process was described by Mr. Cohen, and Assistant Public Works Director Steve Jahnle who explained what qualifications the reviewers were looking for when reviewing bids.

Motion: by Board Member Timmins to approve the Town Manager's Bid Award for Planimetric Mapping and Orthoimagery to Quantum Spatial, Inc., in an amount not to exceed \$99,975.00, as presented. Seconded by Board Member Dixon.

Roll Call:

Board Member Wojtas: Aye

Board Member Timmins: Aye

Board Member Dixon: Aye

Chairman Lefebvre: Aye

Motion carries, unanimous, 4-0.

TOWN MANAGER APPOINTMENTS

Historic District Commission: Donna Ready, Alternate Member – 3- year term exp. 6/30/2023

Motion: by Board Member Timmins to approve the appointment of Donna Ready to the Historic District Commission for a term to expire June 30, 2023. Seconded by Board Member Dixon.

Roll Call:

Board Member Wojtas: Aye

Board Member Timmins: Aye

Board Member Dixon: Aye

Chairman Lefebvre: Aye

Motion carries, unanimous, 4-0.

TOWN MANAGER'S PROPOSED FY22 CAPITAL AND OPERATING BUDGET PRESENTATION

The Town Manager reminded the Board that the Town Charter requires him to have a budget presented 90 days before Town Meeting.

An overview of this budget was done at a Tri-Board meeting two weeks ago, which included a vote to direct the Town Manager to budget to the full tax levy limit. All materials related to the development of the budget are included in the packet provided to the Board, and is available to the public.

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The State operating budget is being presented on January 27, 2021. Growth in the State budget is expected to be 3.5%, and general unrestricted local aid will increase by the same amount. Chapter 70 funds will see a 1.4% increase, or about \$30.00/student. Chapter 90 funds will remain the same as the last eight years, at \$1.2 million, or less than half of what is needed.

This year's Operating and Capital Budget is \$144.2 million, of which \$65 million will go to the Public Schools. This budget total represents an overall increase of 5.4% over the previous year. General Government accounts for \$32 million, the Nashoba Valley Technical High School assessment will be \$280,000.00, and \$26.9 million will account for health insurance and benefits. Debt service will be \$12.7 million.

The increase to the schools was made possible by allowing the Town to tax to the levy limit, and an additional 3.5% of State Aid being received.

Health Insurance cost increases were clarified for the Board's information.

Other local aid and assessment information will also be released by the State on January 27, 2021.

Town services will be maintained at the same level of service as in the previous year.

Budget line items changes were listed by major category. Revenue summary was listed by category. Five and ten year expenditure comparisons were shown. Municipalities are required to fund a greater proportion of their expenses, as state aid does not increase as rapidly as expense increases. Data relating to the School Department's budget was presented, and some of this was compared to other towns. Chelmsford has 212 students going to Nashoba Valley Technical High School, or 32 % of the entire school's enrollment.

The Police Department has 69 full time officers. The department has noticed their call volume is increasing. The Fire Department has 63.5 full time employees, and it was noted that fire calls have decreased.

The General Government side has 665 employees, 932 retirees. They are looking at different ways to address unfunded liability exposures by 2037. The Town pays annual contributions toward unfunded pensions, and one million dollars toward OPEB liability.

Solid waste costs are increasing due to a lack of facilities that can dispose of the waste. Collection and disposal costs will increase by about 38%.

Property, casualty and workers compensation insurance cost increased by 5.25%. Medicare costs increased by 4%.

An estimated 90% of the debt service will be retired in 10 years. Demographics and Town reserves dictate how the Town is rated by Standard & Poors, which impacts interest rates when borrowing.

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A summary of expense increases and revenue sources was listed. Five and ten year revenue comparison data was provided.

The Capital Plan is \$3.9 million, of which \$75,000.00 will come from the Child Care Account. A detailed list of the approved capital projects is available.

The Finance Committee will begin its hearings in February.

Four police cruisers will be replaced in the Police Department. Required computer equipment costs also inflated their budget. Animal Control is included in the Police budget. Fire Department overtime is an estimated amount, offset by people attending the academy, people leaving and number of calls. Legal fees are level funded at \$175,000.00. This amount fluctuates based on labor actions or litigation, or other activity.

Stormwater Enterprise Fund activity was summarized. Work to maintain the artificial turf fields were done as people were not using them. Electricity costs increased because of equipment use increases due to the pandemic, primarily from increased air quality control. The upcoming HVAC upgrade for municipal buildings will be a large number. The project is still being assessed, and the exact cost is unknown at this time.

DPW Director Gary Persichetti explained that the monitoring costs and additional oversight costs required for participating in many State funding programs make participation not cost effective for smaller capital projects.

The Chelmsford Center for the Arts and Chelmsford Community Center buildings raise enough revenue to cover their operations, and the Town covers their overhead. Board Member Timmins asked if we have considered a multi-year long term plan to grow revenues at the CCA so they can self-fund their overhead. Mr. Cohen does not see that as attainable in the near term.

Mr. Cohen's summary slide stated that reliance on property taxes require increasing state aid. Board Member Timmins asked how realistic that is. Mr. Cohen stated we have a very low chance of increasing state aid, Board Member Timmins asked what challenges we can put on ourselves and what within our control can we do to reduce the property tax burden. Mr. Cohen doesn't foresee drastic changes to Chapter 70, Chapter 90 and OPEB funding challenges. If schedules of converting to electric cars are realized, there may be less funding available. No one knows how this will be addressed. The amount of revenue sharing from the state is not keeping pace with cost increases. Redistricting may also impact Chelmsford; this is unknown and outside of the Town's control. Mr. Cohen suggested that perhaps more local options such as local income taxes or programs would help offset reductions in State Aid. All communities can do is keep communicating that they don't have the tools to be self-sufficient. There will be changes over time, but they are unknown and would be debated at the State level. Different changes will create different pressures.

REPORTS AND PRESENTATIONS

Diversity Committee Report and Request for Select Board Approval of Proclamation

Committee Chairman Phil Hicks explained they have been researching the best way to complete their goal.

To date, they have created a mission statement. They have completed a proclamation, and they hope the Board will sign and support it.

They have created an anti-racism pledge which demonstrates support of the work the Committee does. They have created a Diversity webpage on the town website. Information will be added regularly to this page. Black History month activities and information will be listed here.

They have been reaching out to various organizations in Town. They will be meeting with the Human Resources Director and Police Chief Spinney, as well as Business Development Director Lisa Marone. They will also meet with Library and School Department people for discussions.

They continue to look at different goals and activities they will be working on.

The Committee has not determined how they will measure their success yet, as they are still working on creating momentum to get people aware of what they are doing. Board Member Wojtas noted that when the current members terms end in June, there may be an opportunity to standardize this committee as others are structured with rotating terms and a set number of members..

Board Member Timmins thought the Committee's work could go beyond anti-racism to include different backgrounds and orientations. There is training available they may want to watch. Mr. Hicks agreed that valuing all differences is important. The Committee would like to participate in training programs, but they are still looking at how to get people to learn more about them and get more involved with them. Committee member Latosha Dixon recommended interested people look at the Committee's calendar which covers a wide variety of interests.

Board Member Dixon stated he has watched a few meetings, and he feels the committee is doing a good job. They hit a few bumps, and their programming for Black History month is great.

Committee member Trish Dzuris stated the proposed proclamation was intended to be used as a kickoff for their work. She asked the Board to read the proclamation if they are prepared to make a commitment at this time.

Board Members Wojtas and Timmins requested they be allowed to provide some edits to the Proclamation, as it should be coming from the Town, not from a committee perspective. The Board does not have the authority to make anyone do anything, as is implied in the current version of the proclamation. Mr. Hicks stated the Committee will be open to the Board offering some edits.

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Ms. Dixon advised that the proclamation is not just against racism. It is also for discrimination and hatred, as well as for the handicapped and disabled.

Chairman Lefebvre advised that Board members can send their comments directly to Mr. Hicks, and he will discuss these changes with the committee. Comments should be sent to the Committee within a week.

Mr. Cohen advised the Committee that if there are resources the committee needs, he is willing to facilitate.

LSP Update Regarding PFAS at 54 Richardson Road Highway Yard

Paul McKinlay of Weston & Sampson advised that three monitoring wells were sampled in October. PFAS were found in the samples. The amounts were higher than is allowed by EPA standards, which is 20 parts per trillion. The highest levels detected were on January 11, 2021, of 657 parts per trillion in Well One. The North Chelmsford Water District's wells are 700 feet away, and they are concerned. DEP was contacted in December, 2020, as the Water District considered this a situation requiring immediate response. Weston & Sampson is trying to determine where the PFAS is coming from, and why the PFAS is increasing. An action plan is due by February 9, 2021. This Plan will include how they will evaluate the presence of PFAS and how they will determine where it's coming from, and the impacts to the Water District's wells. Evaluation could mean creating additional wells to see if they are coming from offsite, and where it is migrating. They are obtaining all available information, and looking at other sources offsite to determine a sampling program. DEP would need to approve the Plan.

At this time, the search area is about a mile out. There are no known sources of PFAS in this area. There is carbon treatment being done on the water wells along with blending the water to be within the 20 parts/trillion limits. There is no health risk at this time, but the concern is there. The need remains to find the source of the contaminants.

Water District Commissioner Bruce Harper stated that PFAS is a long term pollutant, and poses a health risk. When it breaks down, it gets worse as it becomes harder to filter.

Mr. McKinlay advised they have 10 months to complete the assessment to find the source and determine if remediation is warranted. The final report is due on October 11, 2021.

Mr. Harper has requested an expedited timeline based on the increased contamination in January. Mr. McKinlay is still trying to determine why the trend is happening. The typical time frame is 6 years. Determining a risk tends to take 3-4 years.

Mr. Harper noted that other communities have had to take remediation steps earlier because of the seriousness of the situation. Mr. McKinlay responded that is why DEP has asked for a 10 month study.

DPW Director Gary Persichetti indicated that the fire station efforts will not affect the study. Mr. McKinlay advised that they took a tour of the fire department's facility; there is nothing ongoing that could be a source of PFAS now. Additional sources will need to be monitored.

Mr. McKinlay noted that blended levels of water propose no significant health risk. PFAS causes reproductive issues, increased cancers, liver and kidney issues, and other health problems. Work will occur at different wells, after DEP approves the proposed plan. Work to identify sources will continue.

Mr. Harper advised that their treatment plant was built for removal of different chemicals, not PFAS. They need to keep the plume away from the wells. Continued carbon treatment may impact other chemical levels they also monitor.

Sewer Capacity Study Update

Assistant DPW Director Steve Jahnle reported that overall flows are down 5.5%. He was not sure what is causing this; it could be because commercial uses have decreased. Residential flows have picked up a bit.

There are five tasks in the study contract. Weston and Sampson have been able to get some data from Lowell and other towns, and DEP. All the communities want to meet, but Lowell has not committed to meet yet. Lowell is appealing their latest operating permit with the State.

They are also reviewing reports and studies done over the last 15-25 years. There may be a gasket leak, but there is not a lot of ground water coming into the system. Lowell has historically had issues with leaks as their system is much older. Billerica has been asked for assistance, which would require re-routing several pump stations to go to Billerica. This option could be expensive. They may not have capacity, and they would need upgrades, too. The Town could look at 3-4 sites for a treatment plant right in Chelmsford. A candidate site is the Southwell Athletic Fields because of existing infrastructure. Some studies have been started. He is looking at other 5-10 acre pieces of land for other potential treatment facilities. The towns of Acton and Littleton have developed similar facilities. An issue with Southwell is that it is located in a flood plain.

Lowell is permitted to treat 32 million gallons per day, which is distributed into the Merrimack River.

Periodic updates will be forthcoming. This contract ends in September, 2021.

Cost and acceptance of a new treatment plant will be a considerable challenge. The plants have odors. Helping Lowell may help everyone, especially on a federal level. There are now new reporting requirements at the state levels to report overages, and who this is impacting. There are many financial hurdles. These are nationwide issues.

Traffic Safety Committee Monthly Report

Police Chief James Spinney reported that two traffic speed studies were done in the last quarter of 2020. The first was on Littleton Rd. by the Lime Quarry. This study captured all west bound traffic leaving Chelmsford center and heading toward Westford between November 23-November 29, 2020.

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The speed limit is 40 mph on this State road. The study results showed that 36% of cars were travelling under the speed limit, while 35% were going 5 MPH over the limit, and 11% went 10 MPH over the limit. Average speed was 42MPH. Additional signage and enforcement may be helping.

The second study was done on Westford St. at Dalton Rd., between December 2-December 7, 2020, and captured outbound traffic leaving Chelmsford center. This study's results showed that 77% of cars were travelling 35 MPH, while 19% were travelling 10 MPH over the speed limit, and 5% were travelling 15 MPH over the speed limit.

Asst. DPW Director Jahnle reported that estimated costs related to the reconfiguration at Ledge and Dunstable Roads would be \$350-400,000.00 to complete, not including taking of land costs. Roads would need to be regraded. A wall would be needed to be built. Mr. Jahnle will create a sketch plan for the next meeting.

Additional information regarding the intersection at Richardson Rd. and Princeton St. was submitted to the MassDOT. A meeting will be held next week to discuss sidewalks and a traffic signal.

Signage for Westford St. is at the shop, and will be installed later this week.

LED flashing stop signs should be here shortly, and there will be striping upgrades in the Spring.

Additional sidewalks for Turnpike Rd. are in design stage, and will need several easements.

Documents for the bus turnaround easements for Ledge Rd. are being drafted.

Rapid flash crosswalk signal units in the Town Center should be in soon.

The grant application to install rapid flash signals at the South Row School was denied. The Town will re-apply through a different grant program.

Construction on road improvements at Boston and Concord Rds. Is expected to begin this Spring, and should be completed by Spring 2023.

Bridge work at Billerica and Riverneck Rds. is ongoing, and is expected to be completed by Spring 2022.

The Federal program to re-number exit signs on Rts. 495 and 3 is ongoing.

TOWN MANAGER REPORTS

Draft Spring Annual Town Meeting Warrant

The second draft of the Spring Town Meeting Warrant was presented. A Street acceptance article was added, and several other Zoning articles were edited. A third draft will be available for review in two weeks. The Warrant will be signed two weeks after the third review.

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The Board suggested that Article Three may need editing, there are typographical errors in Articles 11 & 12. Article 31 codifies what was in a previously agreed to settlement. Easements in Article 33 were described. Article 19 was clarified for Board Member Timmins' information.

The Town Manager assured the public that COVID-19 vaccine clinics will become available. Vaccinations are starting with healthcare providers this week. Other clinics will be coming. It's a very regulated process, and supply is unknown. There are ongoing efforts to have a facility in Lowell, and hopefully Chelmsford.

SELECT BOARD LIAISON REASSIGNMENTS

Board Members agreed to assume Liaison assignments created by the recent vacancy as follows:

Agricultural Committee: Chairman Lefebvre
Board of Health: Board Member Timmins
School Department: Board Member Wojtas
State Representative Gouveia: Board Member Wojtas
Permanent Building Committee: Board Member Wojtas
Recycling Committee: Chairman Lefebvre
Roberts Field Committee: Board Member Timmins
Community Preservation Committee: Chairman Lefebvre

SELECT BOARD MEMBER LIAISON REPORTS & REFERRALS

Board Member Wojtas:
No Reports this evening.

Board Member Dixon:
No Reports this evening.

Board Member Timmins:

- The next meeting for the School Department will be on February 2, 2021, where they will present their preliminary annual operating budget. Their meeting after this will be open to public comment on the budget.
- The Planning Board will have a meeting on January 27, 2021, where they will discuss development at the Fiske building, 248 Princeton St., and the Zoning articles for Spring Town Meeting.
- The Vinal Square Strategic Action Committee is happy to report that the Community Preservation Committee recommended sending to Town Meeting the two projects for Varney Park, and Southwell Playground.
- The Age Friendly Initiative is coordinating with CHS students to offer snow shoveling for anyone that would like this service. Please call the Chelmsford Senior Center to schedule a volunteer.
- Issues regarding the Town web site will be discussed offline.

Chairman Lefebvre:

- The Economic Development Committee recently met on January 19, 2021.

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-Len Olenchak is retiring from the Council on Aging, the Council will need a replacement candidate.

PRESS QUESTIONS

No one came forward at this time.

ADJOURN

Motion: by Board Member Timmins to adjourn this meeting at 9:43PM. Seconded by Select Board Member Dixon.

Roll Call:

Board Member Wojtas: Aye

Board Member Timmins: Aye

Board Member Dixon: Aye

Chairman Lefebvre: Aye

Motion carries, unanimous, 4-0.

NEXT REGULAR MEETING DATE: February 8, 2021

Respectfully Submitted,
Vivian W. Merrill,
Recording Secretary

Supporting Documents:

- Announcement for the Availability of Nomination Papers
- List of Committee Vacancies
- Supporting Documents for Town Manager's Bid Award
- Committee Application
- FY22 Capital and Operating Budget Presentation
- DREIC Report and Proclamation
- Supporting Documents Regarding 54 Richardson Rd.
- Supporting Documents for the Sewer Capacity Update
- Traffic Safety Committee Report
- Draft Spring Annual Town Meeting Report
- List of Select Board Liaison Assignments