

TOWN OF CHAPLIN
ANNUAL TOWN MEETING MINUTES

May 8, 2023

Approximately 50 electors and those authorized to vote at Town Meeting assembled at the Annual Town Budget Meeting on May 8, 2023, at 7:00 P.M. at the Chaplin Senior Center, 132 Chaplin Street, Chaplin, Connecticut. Also present were Selectman Juan Roman, III, Selectman Joe Pinto, Board of Finance members, Chairman Richard Weingart, State Representative and BOF member Doug Dubitsky, Town Attorney Dennis O'Brien and Regional District 11 Superintendent Henrici. The following business was transacted:

1) The Town Clerk called the meeting to order at 7:01 P.M., read the call and opened the floor for nominations to elect a Moderator. Selectman Roman/William Jenkins moved/seconded to nominate Irene Schein. Hearing no further nomination, Irene Schein was declared Moderator and read each item on the call as it arose.

2) To nominate and elect to the Regional Board of Education of Regional District 11 one member for a full term of three years to commence July 1, 2023; Sally Ireland/Eugene V. Boomer, Jr. moved/seconded to nominate Ellen Gillon. Eugene V. Boomer, Jr./William Rose IV moved/seconded to nominate Jeremiah Rufini. Discussion in favor of both candidates ensued. The Moderator called for a hand vote. There were 21 votes for Ellen Gillon and 15 votes for Jeremiah Rufini. Ellen Gillon was elected to the Regional District 11 Board of Education for the term commencing July 1, 2023.

3) Whereas the Town is applying for Local Capital Improvement Grant Funds: therefore, to resolve to approve the CIP plan for FY 2024-2028 (on file with the Town Clerk). The Moderator called for a motion to approve the CIP plan. Christopher Komuves/Linkesh Diwan moved/seconded. Selectman Roman and BOF Chairman Weingart gave an overview of the CIP plan noting that most of the funding this going into the Department of Public Works projects such as road maintenance, tree removal, equipment and vehicle replacement (including a new plow truck), the Bedlam Road Bridge project, drainage infrastructure and equipment for the Firehouse. The Moderator called for a vote to approve the 2024-2028 CIP plan with a result of 30 in favor of the plan, zero opposed and zero abstentions. The 2024-2028 CIP plan passed.

4) *To receive and approve the Annual Town Budget for the Fiscal Year July 1, 2023-June 30, 2024 in the amount of \$ **9,647,758** as submitted by the Board of Finance and to appropriate funds required; (contingent on asterisk *).

*At their meeting held on April 25, 2023, the Board of Selectmen voted, pursuant to CGS § 7-7, that item #4 of the Call of the Annual Town Meeting be submitted to a referendum vote at an Adjourned Town Meeting to be held May 16, 2023, at the Chaplin Firehouse, 106 Phoenixville Road (Rte. 198) in said Chaplin from 12:00 Noon to 8:00 P.M.

The Moderator read #4 of the call and Chairman Weingart discussed the highlights of the proposed budget noting a 1.85% proposed increase to the mill rate which would increase the rate from 34.50 to 36.35 mills. The proposed budget has a 1.50% increase over the current budget. The projected revenues (based on the Governor's proposed budget) are \$9,556,577 which is an approximate 1.42% increase from the current FY 22-23 adjusted revenue budget. This will leave a deficit of \$86,881 which will be offset by the Town's General Fund – Unassigned Fund Balance. The Town's Unassigned Fund Balance is projected to be \$1,305,637 at the end of FY 23-24, which is within the recommended range. The Town is currently undergoing a real estate revaluation which will likely increase the Grand List, but Chaplin is also currently experiencing decreases to personal property due to depreciating equipment at the Algonquin Gas Transmission Company plant as well as increases to the Chaplin Elementary School budget and increases to Parish Hill Middle/High School enrollment costs. Superintendent Henrici pointed out that the Parish Hill increases are due to assessments based on student enrollment and not budgetary increases.

Superintendent Henrici spoke noting that the BOF reduced the Elementary school's budget by 2% and he recommends making cuts in the budget line items of substitute teachers, pupil transportation-special education, electricity, building grounds/maintenance, heating oil, pupil transportation by consolidating buses, diesel gasoline. He also noted a last-minute increase in Magnet School tuition.

5) To appropriate and transfer for fiscal year 2022-2023 an amount not to exceed **\$150,000** from the General Fund Unassigned Fund Balance to the CIP Fund for the following project(s):

a) Project #3305.4 – Road Maintenance

The Moderator called for a motion to approve the above transfers. Selectman Roman/Helen Weingart moved/seconded. The Moderator called for a vote. 28 yes, 0 opposed, 0 abstentions. The vote to approve the transfers passed.

6) To appropriate and transfer for fiscal year 2022-2023 an amount not to exceed \$415,000 from the CIP Fund Project #3315.7 England Road Bridge to the CIP Fund Project #3315.6 Bedlam Road Bridge:

The Moderator called for a motion to approve the above transfers. Linkesh Diwan/Linda Caron moved/seconded. The Moderator called for a vote. 36 yes, 0 opposed 0 abstentions. The vote to approve the transfers passed.

7) Public hearing and possible action to:

a) Adopt a proposed “Chaplin Bicentennial Arboretum Commission Ordinance.”

The Moderator called for a motion to approve 7a-to adopt the proposed ordinance. Leslie Ricklin/Selectman Roman moved/seconded. Linkesh Diwan asked about the difference between the duties of the Recreation Commission and the Arboretum Commission in terms of taking care of the trees in Garrison Park. Tree Warden, DPW Supervisor and Recreation Commission Chairman David Stone answered that recently, by an amendment to the Recreation Commission Ordinance, the responsibility of the maintenance of Garrison Park, including the trees in the park, was transferred from the Recreation Commission to the Board of Selectmen/Department of Public Works. Also noting that, by statute, all the existing trees in the park are under the jurisdiction of the Town’s Tree Warden. The Tree Warden will still issue guidance, but the Arboretum Commission will oversee the trees that are part of the Arboretum. Christopher Komuves inquired as to the amount of ongoing maintenance that the Arboretum trees will require and if a separate commission is necessary. Helen Weingart, who together with Leslie Ricklin, worked to fundraise for and establish the Arboretum, answered that the Commission is intended for more than tree maintenance. The plan will be to provide educational programming and opportunities for students, and for the Arboretum to become nationally certified. The vision is for the Arboretum to become a “living and breathing part of the community”. Town Attorney Dennis O’Brien, who helped to develop the Ordinance, spoke in support of it and congratulated the Commission on their hard work in creating a wonderful arboretum to commemorate the Town’s Bicentennial celebration that took place last year. Leslie Ricklin also spoke in support of the Arboretum Commission, that it is a legacy marking Chaplin’s 200-year Bicentennial, pointing out that many people, from near and far, have donated money to the Arboretum, many to commemorate loved ones and family members. She sees the Arboretum as not only an educational opportunity but “a place where we can all go and be esthetically among the trees”.

The Moderator called for a vote to approve the “Chaplin Bicentennial Arboretum Commission Ordinance.”. The vote was approved unanimously, and the ordinance was passed.

b) Move and relocate the Chaplin Museum building from 11 Chaplin Street to 132 Chaplin Street.

The Moderator called for a motion to approve item 7b to move and relocate the Chaplin Museum. Selectman Roman/Sally Ireland moved/seconded. Selectman Roman asked for public opinion on the move saying that he feels the move would help to preserve the building and the history of the Town by moving the building to a location with running water, septic, electricity and adequate as well as safe parking. Right now, the building is not being maintained, there is no water, septic or parking, it is not ADA compliant, and it is in a dangerous location because it is very close to the high volume of traffic on Route 198. William Ireland spoke in favor of the move so that water and sewer would be accessible and envisioned a connecting corridor from the library to the Museum. Johann Philbrick said that she and her late husband William Philbrick dedicated many years of their life to the museum and spoke in favor of the move stating that the building is of no use to us currently because of its deteriorating condition. She feels strongly that if it is not moved it will continue to decay as it already has for many years, and we will be left with nothing. She feels that it is a “move it or lose it” situation. Warren Church believes in history and in the history of the museum building and states that it was previously used as the town hall, a library, a grange hall and the old Davenport Store. However, he believes this move is premature because we currently are lacking in many things to support the move, such as a Chaplin Historic Society or director that would be responsible for the operations of the museum, coordinating supporting material, providing an inventory of historic material that will be of interest to have in the museum, a maintenance plan for the building or a plan for how the building will be used. Peggy Church feels unsure about whether the museum should be moved and feels that many of Chaplin’s residents have never been in the building or seen the inside. She states that the building is on the National Historic Registry and can be used as is, without water, sewer and that ADA compliance can be attained by video with people viewing the contents of

the museum on a tablet outside of the building. She suggests buying the land behind the building to create more parking spaces. And would like to hold small events there to invite the public so that residents can visit the building and then be able to make an informed decision. State Representative Dubitsky spoke recalling that there have been at least two past town meetings where people voted to move the building and \$35k was put into the Town's Capital Fund to pay for the move and still nothing has happened, and the building continues to decay. He noted that if the building is moved to the new location, there will be people there all the time and we can build the infrastructure as we go. The cost of moving the building increases as each year goes by. He is in support of moving the building now. Selectman Roman spoke of ADA compliance and felt that it is important to make sure everyone has access to the interior of the museum. Former Selectman William H. Rose IV spoke in support of the move. He said that his vision during his terms as Selectman was to move the building next to the current library where it has access to electricity, water and septic and where there is safe place away from traffic to hold programs for the public. He mentioned William and Johann Philbrick's years of dedicated work at the museum and would like to see the move come to fruition. Also, saying that many steps will need to occur before the move can happen such as Historic District Commission approval to move the building, State funding through grants, permitting requirements, etc. Residents continued to speak in favor of repairing the building, some in favor of repairs to the building in the current location and some at the new location.

The Moderator called for a vote to Move and relocate the Chaplin Museum building from 11 Chaplin Street to 132 Chaplin Street. 38 yes, 7 opposed 1 abstention. The vote to approve the move of the museum passed.

8) Discussion and possible non-binding action on a potential sidewalk project from the Chaplin Senior Center to Town Hall. Selectman Roman is looking for public input regarding the sidewalk project that the Selectmen are currently seeking funding for. There are proposed plans that will provide safe and ADA accessible sidewalks that will connect the Library/Senior Center complex to the Town Hall and continue up into Garrison Park and the new Chaplin Bicentennial Arboretum. There will be a crosswalk at the end of Chaplin Street by the old post office, benches for seating and decorative light posts along the way and additional parking spaces. The Selectmen are hoping to fund the entire project with State funding. Resident Sally Ireland, Bill Ireland, Scott Mathies, William Rose IV, Janine Rose, Linda Roman, Linkesh Diwan, Peter Haines all spoke in favor of the project. A few residents, Carl and Julia Lindquist, Christopher Komuves had reservations about the project. They felt the project may change the historic charm and character of Chaplin, add unnecessary light pollution and that there is not enough foot traffic to warrant the addition of sidewalks. The Moderator called for a non-binding vote for approval/disapproval of the sidewalk project. 25 yes, 3 no, 1 abstention.

9) To adjourn the meeting after completion of the foregoing business. The Moderator called for a motion to adjourn. Selectman Roman/Linkesh Diwan moved/seconded. The meeting was adjourned at 9:12 P.M.

Respectfully submitted, Shari Smith, Chaplin Town Clerk