

TOWN OF CHAPLIN
ANNUAL TOWN MEETING MINUTES

May 9, 2022

Approximately 49 electors and those authorized to vote at Town Meeting assembled at the Annual Town Budget Meeting on May 9, 2022, 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, Linda Carron, Peter Haines, Victor Boomer, 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 7:06 P.M., read the call and opened the floor for nominations to elect a Moderator. Selectman Roman/Chairman Weingart 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, 2022; Stacy Foster/Eugene V. Boomer, Jr. moved/seconded to nominate Stephanie Harrington. Sandra Horning/Diane Cox moved/seconded to elect Therese M. Smith. Discussion in favor of both candidates ensued. The Moderator called for a hand vote. There were 12 votes for Stephanie Harrington and 24 votes for Therese M. Smith. Therese M. Smith was elected to the Regional District 11 Board of Education for the term commencing July 1, 2022.
- 3) Whereas the Town is applying for Local Capital Improvement Grant Funds: therefore, to resolve to approve the CIP plan for FY 2023-2027 (on file with the Town Clerk). The Moderator called for a motion to approve the CIP plan Selectman Pinto/Helen Weingart moved/seconded a motion to approve the CIP plan. BOF Chairman Weingart gave an overview of the CIP plan noting that most of the funding this year is for ongoing Public Works projects such as road maintenance, England Road bridge project, equipment and vehicle replacement, drainage infrastructure and tree removal. Also, in the plan is \$15,000 for the upcoming Bicentennial celebration and \$45,000 for Chaplin Elementary School Smart Board replacement. The total CIP plan is \$1,025,875.00 with net CIP funding from the general fund budget of \$292,206.00. The Moderator called for a motion to approve the CIP plan for FY 2023-2027. Selectman Pinto/Helen Weingart moved/seconded a motion to approve the CIP plan. The Moderator called for a vote with a result of 30 in favor of the plan and zero opposed to the plan. The 2023-2027 CIP plan passed.
- 4) *To receive and approve the Annual Town Budget for the Fiscal Year July 1, 2022-June 30, 2023 in the amount of \$ 9,496,493 as submitted by the Board of Finance and to appropriate funds required; (contingent on asterisk *).

*At their meeting held on April 26, 2022, 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 17, 2022, 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 an increase to the mill rate for the first time in seven years of 2 mills. The proposed budget has a 4.48% increase over the current budget. The projected revenues (based on the Governor's proposed budget) are \$9,364,116 which will leave a deficit of \$132,377 which will be offset by the General Fund – Unassigned Fund Balance. Chairman Weingart also feels that future mill rate increases are likely. Resident Todd Marsh asked if we are locked into the current contract that we have with Willimantic Waste now that Willimantic Waste has been sold to another company. Selectman Roman answered that the Town may look for other service providers in the future. Christopher Komuves asked if the closure of Connecticut Incinerator will increase Chaplin's cost for waste disposal. That answer is not known at this time.

Chairman Weingart discussed the Chaplin Elementary School current budget of \$3,906,805 with a proposed 2.75% increase of \$107,505 to \$4,014,310 for the upcoming FY 2022-2023. Noting there were significant decreases in the areas of special education tuition and special education transportation as well as some increases in other areas. The Board of Finance felt it was reasonable to hold the budget at \$3,906,805 which is a zero percent increase for the upcoming year. Superintendent Henrici spoke noting that the Chaplin's Elementary School student enrollment has gone up in the past few years and Chaplin students make up almost 50% of the entire student body of Parish Hill Middle/High School. Also, there has been a 15% increase in health insurance, increases to certified staff and an additional special education teacher and para-professional, an increase for the newly certified school librarian and increases to the Buildings and Grounds Maintenance line item. He further noted there have been reductions in PPT

services. The BOF approved a transfer of \$45,000 from the Unexpended Education Account/Non-lapsing Account into the Capital Improvement Account to pay for new Smart Boards.

Resident Linda Roman noted that she would like to see the Town's Reserve Fund used to offset the proposed 2 mill increase. Resident Todd Marsh encouraged the reserve fund to be used as well.

5) To appropriate and transfer for fiscal year 2021-2022 an amount not to exceed **\$650,000** from the General Fund Unassigned Fund Balance to the CIP Fund for the following project(s):

a) Project #3315.7 - England Road Bridge (**\$600,000**)

b) Other projects per CIP Plan (**\$50,000**)

The Moderator called for a motion to approve the above transfers. Selectman Roman/Selectman Pinto moved/seconded the motion to approve the transfers. The Moderator called for a vote. 30 yes, 0 opposed. The vote to approve the transfers passed.

6) To appropriate and transfer for fiscal year 2021-2022 an amount not to exceed **\$45,000** from the General Fund Reserved Account #10701.10 BOE Non-Lapsing Carryover to the CIP Fund for the following project:

a) New project - CES Smart Board Replacement.

The Moderator called for a motion to approve the above transfers. Helen Weingart/Selectman Pinto moved/seconded a motion to approve the transfers. The Moderator called for a vote. 30 yes, 0 opposed. The vote to approve the transfers passed.

7) Public hearing and possible action to:

a) Adopt a proposed "Ordinance Authorizing Appointment of an Alternate Member to the Library Board of Trustees of the Town of Chaplin." Town Attorney Dennis O'Brien explained that the Library Board is having difficulties getting a quorum for their meetings. This ordinance would allow an alternate member to be seated if there are not enough regular members to make a quorum.

Resident Jeremiah Rufini/Ryan Perry moved /seconded a motion to amend the ordinance to have the alternate position be appointed right away and until the next municipal election and then at that point, to have the alternate position be elected for a 2 year term as opposed to appointed by the Library Board of Trustees. Residents spoke both for and against the amendment. The Moderator called for a vote to approve the amendment to the ordinance. 4 yes, 28 opposed. The vote to approve the amendment to the ordinance failed.

Selectman Roman/Jeanette Haines moved/seconded the motion to approve the main ordinance. The Moderator called for a vote to approve the main ordinance. 32 yes, 2 opposed. The vote to approve the main Ordinance Authorizing Appointment of an Alternate Member to the Library Board of Trustees of the Town of Chaplin passed.

b) Adopt a proposed "Snow Removal Ordinance."

Selectman Roman/Peter Haines moved/seconded a motion to approve the main ordinance. Attorney O'Brien gave an overview of the Snow Ordinance stating that if snow is pushed into the road, it creates a dangerous situation. The main purpose of this ordinance is to prevent snow from being pushed into the road and left there. The ordinance provides for a written warning for the first offense, a fine of \$50 for the second offense, \$150 for the third offense and \$250 for further offenses. The ordinance also provides for a process to appeal the fines. The ordinance further states that residents should not push snow across the street and deposit in front of a neighbor's property without permission from that neighbor and that the Town will reimburse residents whose mailboxes are struck by a plow, \$25 for the pole and \$15 for the box.

Resident Ryan Perry stated that he is concerned for neighbors who may not be able to repair their own mailboxes and feels that the Town should not only pay the owner but should also install the new box. Selectman Roman stated that the Town does not have the resources to replace mailboxes. Resident Christopher Komuves stated that he feels that the Town should replace the mailbox at the value of the mailbox and should not be limited to \$25 for the pole and \$15 for the box. He also feels that mailbox replacement should be a separate issue from this ordinance.

Chairman Weingart asked about a remedy if a person pushed snow onto his property and he has not given permission. Chairman Weingart/Therese Smith moved/seconded for a 1st amendment to section 4 of the ordinance by striking the words "without the neighbor's permission".

Resident William Ireland is in favor of leaving the words in. Resident Warren Church wanted to know if the issue of people leaving snow in front of neighboring houses is a big issue.

Selectman Roman stated it is not. The Moderator called for a vote to approve the 1st amendment to the ordinance. 9 in favor, 17 opposed. The 1st amendment was defeated.

Resident Ryan Perry/Christopher Komuves moved/seconded for a 2nd amendment to the ordinance by striking the entire section of 5C. The Moderator called for a vote to approve the second amendment to strike section 5C. 19 in favor, 8 opposed. The 2nd amendment to the ordinance passed.

After further discussion, Resident William Ireland/Selectman Pinto first/seconded a motion for a 3rd amendment to repeal the 2nd amendment to strike all of section 5C. The Moderator called for a vote to approve repealing the 2nd amendment. 21 in favor, 3 opposed. The 3rd amendment to the ordinance passed.

The Moderator made a motion to end the debate. Chairman Weingart/Selectman Pinto moved/seconded. 23 in favor, 1 opposed. The motion to end the debate passed.

The Moderator called for a vote of all in favor of approving the main Snow Removal Ordinance. 22 in favor, 5 opposed. The motion to approve the main Snow Removal Ordinance passed.

8) To discuss and to vote whether to approve the sale of the previously discontinued Tutko Road to an abutting property owner for the price of Ten Thousand Dollars (\$10,000.00).

The Moderator called for a motion to approve the sale of Tutko Road. Robert Dubos/Selectman Roman moved/seconded the motion. Attorney O'Brien stated that the Town discontinued Tutko Road in 2011. Property owner Rory Smith spoke saying that in 2018 he purchased a large parcel on both sides of the road and has now approached the Town to purchase the discontinued Tutko Road. He mentioned the reasons the Town originally discontinued the road, being that the road is a liability to the Town as, if someone built a house on the road, the Town would have an obligation to maintain and improve the road which would cost millions of dollars. He is currently building a house on Tutko Road. He spoke regarding a state law that gives abutters the right to travel the road regardless of whether it is owned by the Town or privately owned by him. Resident William Ireland requested a statement from the abutting property owners that they are in favor of the sale. Property owners/abutters Richard and Helen Weingart and Ted Decyk confirmed verbally that they are in favor of the sale so long as they have a legal right to access their own properties.

The Moderator called for a vote of all in favor of selling Tutko Road. 25 in favor, 1 opposed.

9) To adjourn the meeting after completion of the foregoing business. The Moderator called for a motion to adjourn. Richard Weingart/Sandra Horning moved/seconded. The meeting was adjourned at 9:33 P.M.

Respectfully submitted, Shari Smith, Chaplin Town Clerk