

**TOWN BOARD MEETING
December 27, 2023
7:00 PM**

Supervisor Valentine opened the meeting at 7:00pm followed by a salute to the flag. Members present: Supervisor Valentine, Councilman Ardisana, Councilman Courtenay Councilman Holdridge, Councilwoman Smith

Also present: Al Fusco, Fusco Engineering

PUBLIC COMMENTS

Dr. Sha-Ron Pierre, Chester, addressed the Board and submitted her comments for the record. "I have been a resident of the town of Chester for six years. I am also an advocate for health and wellness utilizing cannabinoid-based therapies . I am here this evening to discuss the opportunity for the town of Chester to revise the current opt-out status and allow cannabis retail dispensaries and on-site consumption sites as authorized under New York Cannabis Law article 4, a local law adding chapter 68A, entitled, opt-out of cannabis retail dispensaries and on-site consumption sites, to the town code of the town of Chester.

Reportedly, almost one-third of New Yorkers consume cannabis, with 2.7 million residents consuming at least once a month according to Siena College Research Institute; with approximately 40 percent of patients reporting use for medical reasons according to Centers for Disease Control. The New York State Department of Health established a regulated medical cannabis program in November 2016 allowing doctors or other health care providers to prescribe cannabis for treatment of debilitating or life-threatening medical conditions. Cannabis is believed to have a wide effect on health, with findings suggesting certain plant-derived cannabinoids may be beneficial in relieving some of the side effects of cancer treatments, as well as treating conditions such as epilepsy and seizure disorders, HIV infection, inflammatory bowel disease, dementia, rheumatoid arthritis, and neuropathic pain. 72% of New York State voters feel adult-use cannabis is safe, and in many situations beneficial in encouraging well-being.

New York stands to earn more than \$1.2 billion dollars in cannabis tax revenue over the following six years, according to the New York State Fiscal Year Executive Budget report. Approximately 743 million dollars is estimated to be the value of cannabis sales in New York by 2025. This year, the burgeoning New York Market has generated a total legal revenue of 137.5 million dollars over 38 legal retail dispensaries and Cannabis Growers showcases throughout New York State, including the lower Hudson Valley region with no reported incidences requiring onsite local law enforcement intervention.

Opting-in will allow for economic development and support of community cannabis education initiatives like the Hudson Valley Education and Workforce Consortium which is a partnership of six Hudson Valley community colleges providing education opportunity in the emerging cannabis sector including project management, industry and business development, curriculum development, education and training, student supportive services, and outreach courses.

What does that mean for the town of Chester's residents? Unemployment rates in Chester, NY rival the national average of 6.0%, with 6 percent of residents also living below the poverty line. The median age of a Chester resident is 37.7 years old, with less than 9 percent of residents holding a graduate degree, with the median income per household is \$92,868. Comparatively, for example, the average annual salary for budtenders working in a legal cannabis dispensary is

\$45,000 annually and a retail store managers position will earn an average of \$99,000 annually; with over 420,000 legal cannabis jobs nationwide.

I implore the Chester town board to exercise the right to now opt-in and allow legal cannabis dispensaries and

on-site consumption stores the opportunity to provide access to safe and reliable products needed to maintain patient health and wellness. The decision to opt-out of retail cannabis stores was made in 2021 prior to the first opening of a legal cannabis dispensary on December 29th 2023. The purpose of this discussion is informing the town board that it can exercise the option to now opt-in for cannabis retail. Thank you for listening, and I would love to discuss this matter with all stakeholders before the end of the year.”

Tracy Shuh, FB, thanked Supervisor Valentine and Councilwoman Smith for their years of service and wished all a Happy New Year.

Lydia Cuadros, FB, thanked Supervisor Valentine and Councilwoman Smith for all their service and wished them the best in their future endeavors.

Councilwoman Smith made the following statement: “I would like to thank my sister Connie who has always given me that little push to run and keep going. Next, I would like to thank all the residents who have voted for me over my 22-year span to be the longest woman sitting on the Town Board which has meant something special to me and always to be here. Lastly, I'd like to thank Supervisor Valentine for appointing me as his Deputy Supervisor. His honesty and integrity have made me feel proud to work alongside of him to be his right-hand person and I appreciate that very, very much thank you.”

AUDIT OF CLAIMS

Supervisor Valentine said the bills were already approved.

BUDGET MODIFICATIONS

ON A MOTION OFFERED BY Councilwoman Smith and second by Councilman Courtenay to accept the budget modifications as listed below:

Transfer \$5,474.87 from the Supervisors Equipment budget to the Indep. Auditor contractual account to cover remaining 2023 invoices.

| | | | | | |
|--------------|------------|---------------------------|-------------|----------|------------------------------------|
| From: | A | 1220 | .200 | | 3,474.87 Current |
| | Amount Due | | | | |
| | | Supervisor Equipment | | | 2,000.00 Anticipated Outstanding T |
| | | Indep Auditor Contractual | | 5,474.87 | |
| | | | | 5,474.87 | 5,474.87 |

Transfer \$2400.00 from the Parkland Reserve CM Fund for the cost of the additional color coat strip-ing of pickleball court

| | | | | | |
|------------|----------|-------------|------------|-----------------|--|
| To: | A | 7140 | 400 | 2,400.00 | |
| From: | CM | Parkland | | 2,400.00 | |

Transfer \$6,450.00 from DA5130.100 to DA5130.200 to cover GPG Solutions invoice & purchase of trailer from R. Conklin for \$2500.00

| | | | | | |
|-------|---|------|-----|----------|----------|
| From: | D | 5130 | 100 | | 6,450.00 |
| | A | | | | |
| To: | D | 5130 | 200 | 6,450.00 | |
| | A | | | | |
| | | | | 6,450.00 | 6,450.00 |

Transfer \$11,633.95 from the appropriated Fund balance to cover unanticipated expenses. See list below.

Transfer \$480.00 from Parkland to cover amount not included in transfer approved on 9/2023.

| | | | | |
|------|----|--|---------------------------|-----------|
| From | A | | Appropriated Fund Balance | 11,633.95 |
| | CM | | Parkland | 480.00 |

| | | | | |
|-----|---|--|------|----------|
| To: | A | 7110 | .200 | |
| | | Double Gate Pulvirant Field | | 1,990.00 |
| | | Replace Memorial Sign at Pulvirant Field | | 400.00 |
| | | Replacement Parts for slides | | 1,649.68 |
| | | Defibrillator Chester Commons | | 1,539.27 |
| | | Defib Cabinet & AED Wall Sign | | 377.00 |
| | | Defibrillator Carpenter Field | | 1,728.00 |

| | | | | |
|-----|---|-----------------------------------|------|-----------|
| To: | A | 7110 | .400 | |
| | | Kobe Electric - Lights & Bathroom | | 2,950.00 |
| | | Additional Pickleball Fence Fees | | 480.00 |
| | | Misc. Expenses | | 1,000.00 |
| | | | | 12,113.95 |
| | | | | 12,113.95 |

Prepared by Mariann Weymer

VOTE:AYES(5):VALENTINE, ARDISANA, COURTENAY HOLDRIDGE, SMITH **ADOPTED**

ACCEPT MEETING MINUTES

ON A MOTION OFFERED BY Councilman Ardisana and second by Councilman Holdridge to accept the Meeting Minutes of December 13, 2023 as presented by Town Clerk Zappala.

VOTE:AYES(5):VALENTINE, ARDISANA, COURTENAY HOLDRIDGE, SMITH **ADOPTED**

ORANGE COUNTY LAND TRUST FOR LAROE PROPERTY

ON A MOTION OFFERED BY Councilwoman Smith and second by Councilman Courtenay to authorize the Supervisor to sign the transfer documents for the 10.439 acres on Laroe Road to the Town of Chester.

DISCUSSION: The closing to occur after January 1, 2024.

VOTE:AYES(5):VALENTINE, ARDISANA, COURTENAY HOLDRIDGE, SMITH **ADOPTED**

EQUIPMENT PURCHASES

ON A MOTION OFFERED BY Councilwoman Smith and second by Councilman Courtenay to approve the purchase of a 12ft. snow pusher through low bidder, Amazon, in the amount of \$4,960.95 for the Sugar Loaf Performing Arts Center.

VOTE:AYES(5):VALENTINE, ARDISANA, COURTENAY HOLDRIDGE, SMITH **ADOPTED**

ON A MOTION OFFERED BY Councilwoman Smith and second by Councilman Ardisana to approve the purchase of LED lighting through choice bidder, in the amount of \$15,840.00 for the Sugar Loaf Performing Arts Center.

VOTE:AYES(5):VALENTINE, ARDISANA, COURTENAY HOLDRIDGE, SMITH **ADOPTED**

ON A MOTION OFFERED BY Councilwoman Smith and second by Councilman Ardisana to approve the purchase of Jumping Jack Rammer through local bidder, in the amount of \$3,475.00 for the Water Department.

VOTE:AYES(5):VALENTINE, ARDISANA, COURTENAY HOLDRIDGE, SMITH **ADOPTED**

INSURANCE REQUEST

ON A MOTION OFFERED BY Councilwoman Smith and second by Councilman Courtenay to approve the sponsorship and indemnification of adult basketball league at Chester Union Free School District, Elm Ave. School.

VOTE:AYES(5):VALENTINE, ARDISANA, COURTENAY HOLDRIDGE, SMITH **ADOPTED**

EXECUTIVE SESSION

ON A MOTION OFFERED BY Councilwoman Smith and second by Councilman Courtenay to enter into Executive Session at 7:20pm on a matter of personnel and contract negotiation.

VOTE:AYES(5):VALENTINE, ARDISANA, COURTENAY HOLDRIDGE, SMITH **ADOPTED**

ON A MOTION OFFERED BY Councilwoman Smith and second by Councilman Ardisana to adjourn the Executive Session at 7:45pm.

VOTE:AYES(5):VALENTINE, ARDISANA, COURTENAY HOLDRIDGE, SMITH **ADOPTED**

COLLECTIVE BARGAINING AGREEMENT

ON A MOTION OFFERED BY Supervisor Valentine and second by Councilwoman Smith to approve the Collective Bargaining Agreement with White Collar Bargaining Unit.

VOTE:AYES(2):VALENTINE, SMITH, NAYS(3): ARDISANA, COURTENAY HOLDRIDGE

THE MOTION WAS NOT ADOPTED.

EDUCATION REQUEST

ON A MOTION OFFERED BY Councilwoman Smith and second by Councilman Courtenay to approve the attendance of Officer Donato to the Basic Radar/Lidar Operator Course. It will be held at the Orange County Police Academy in Middletown from January 23rd to 26th. There is no fee for the course.

VOTE:AYES(5):VALENTINE, ARDISANA, COURTENAY HOLDRIDGE, SMITH **ADOPTED**

REPORTS

Engineer's Development Report

1. Greens at Chester: SWPPP systems performed well during the last storm event. Still waiting for water district engineering details, tank etc.
2. Cappelli Sports: Stormwater systems working properly. Requested clean up along Route 94 between their fields and pond. It appears cleanup has started.
3. Started MS4 report for 2023 will be mapping new outfalls, weather permitting.
4. Finalized mapping for transfer of property to Chester Union Free School District.
5. Canevari: 3549 Route 94, inspected fill site for compliance with road bond.
6. Building Department services: permits, reviewing plans, issuing stop work orders and code enforcement letters.
7. Investigated/inspected flooding on Kings Highway and Black Meadow Road.
8. Met with Highway Department and Senior Director regarding installation of Senior Parks Equipment.

TOWN BOARD COMMENTS

Councilman Ardisana opined that there was confusion with the union contract and felt it was too early to sign.

Councilman Courtenay had no comments.

Councilwoman Smith had no comments.

Councilman Holdridge asked about the status of the contract with IWS and the question concerning inclusion of e-waste. Supervisor Valentine said he would sign and send back. Councilman Holdridge wished a Happy New Year to all and said he is looking forward to serving as Supervisor of the Town of Chester and thanked everyone for their trust.

The following is the transcript of Supervisor Valentine's closing statement:

"Thank you. All right so it's my last board meeting tonight. I'll put down the gavel for the last time. It's been a nice ride here for 10 years I've been on the Town Board. I've met a lot of people, made a lot of friends along the way and I've always tried to do what's best for Chester. I've always put the town's interests before my own and I've always done what I thought was right for Chester. My term as a supervisor was riddled with problems coming into it with five major lawsuits at the time that I came in as supervisor and today right now I can honestly say that there are no lawsuits in Chester, not one, they're all settled and that's the best you can do when you're working for a municipality is to settle, not to fight and win because you don't have that opportunity. Insurance companies define the rules and they make the decisions and you basically just have to abide by them. You don't really have much to say in the matter but we've done a lot of good things. We bought the Performing Art Center in Sugarloaf and I think everybody in the room even the people I don't get along with would probably agree that that's a great venue and it makes money for the town. It does a lot of good for the community and our local organizations and groups and the County uses it a lot for Civic things so that's probably my favorite accomplishment as supervisor is to buy the Performing Art Center. I fought hard for the PDR bill, You know people think you didn't get it passed. Well guess what, it was never going to get passed for Chester. It wasn't in the cards and not going to be in the cards. It would have been great to have it and I'm the person who actually brought it to the town board and I'm the one who introduced it to the town board and I'm the one who passed the local law for the PDR and helped write the whole thing and get it done and the governor's office is the one who turned it down on Chester and they did it for their own reasons not because of what Chester is or what Chester stands for because the people of Chester are great people and they shouldn't be labeled like these lawsuits and you know politicians labeled us. We've also done probably more preservation since I've been on the board than was done before. I don't even know how much property, hundreds of acres of property. Most people don't even know that just recently because of the partnership that Chester had on Ashford Estates with

the solar project that a couple hundred acres were taken by Orange County Land Trust there and that was all that happened because of the deal that I struck with the Solar Company to combine the three projects together using Town of Chester property, Dominican Sisters property and other property in the area to combine and make a big solar farm there. We put up a cell tower in Walton Lake Estates that lot of people maybe didn't like but I don't even think they notice it's there now. It's going to turn in great revenue for the town probably anywhere from \$30-40,000 a year along with the solar farm, of course, that we were talking about that's going to be big payments for the town. All those payments will help offset taxes in the future and the most recent thing is the purchase on Laroe Road of the property for more parkland, I negotiated that when I was doing test holes there for the land trust and that's a great win for Chester that was actually one of our very first target properties on our preservation plan, that piece of property. You know, we've taken hundreds of acres since I've been Supervisor for preservation and I hope the new Board can continue that and that would be great if they could and preserve things for Chester. It's kind of bittersweet. I would have liked to go out of here on a better note than what was publicized about me in the newspaper and stuff like that. That's not who I am and I think everybody that's in this room that knows me knows that that's not who I am and all the people who want to attack me or make false accusations and say things about me that's not true but you know politics are a dirty business and I just chose not to be too dirty in it. I've worked with a lot of people here at Town Hall and in the town in general and they've been like a big family and every family has their ups and downs and has their crazy people and you know but you're all like family and you know you carry on you have highs and lows. I thought I had a good relationship with most people in the building but that obviously didn't pan out that way. I worked with Linda Zappala here for 10 years actually on the board when she was appointed to Town Clerk. It's too bad that she doesn't respect me and doesn't care for me anymore. I never really had a cross word with her for nine years but she has caused this town hall to be a living hell for the last year and a half and she's a bully. Councilman Holdridge: "Give it a rest." Supervisor Valentine: No you give it a rest. Councilman Holdridge: "No, you give it a rest." Supervisor Valentine: She's a bully and she attacks people in this building. Councilman Holdridge: "Seriously no shame". Supervisor Valentine: I just want the people to know that in Chester and as early as last week she let go an employee here for more retaliation against me because that person supported me in the election and I think it's disgusting and I just want that off my chest. I have nothing else to say about it and you know life will go on and I'd like to say a lot about Brandon but I'm not going to say that about him. I hope in the future he'll learn what it's like to respect people and what it's like to make opinions of people based on his own experiences with them and not what other people say but I guess that's an age thing. So, I guess we can close the meeting."

ADJOURNMENT

ON A MOTION OFFERED BY Councilwoman Smith and second by Councilman Ardisana to adjourn the meeting at 8:00 pm, there being no further business brought before the Town Board.

VOTE:AYES (5):VALENTINE, ARDISANA, HOLDRIDGE, SMITH, COURTENAY

ADOPTED

Respectfully submitted,

Linda A. Zappala
Town Clerk
2023-12-27