

TOWN OF CHESTER  
HOUSING COMMISSION  
Meeting Minutes  
December 19, 2023

PRESENT: Nancy Pennell, Hugh Quinn, Jason Rasmussen, Joe Karl, Joel Fineberg, Bill Lindsay, Julie Hance, Preston Bristow

VISITORS: Peter Hudkins

***Meeting was held at the Town Hall and via Zoom.***

1. ADDITIONS OR DELETIONS:

There were no additions or deletions to the agenda. We agreed to move agenda item 6 closer to the top of the agenda.

2. APPROVE MINUTES:

A motion was made by Hugh Quinn to approve the minutes as drafted. Seconded by Bill Lindsay. Motion passed.

3. CITIZEN'S COMMENTS:

Jason noted that Chris is a new employee with Regional Planning who will be addressing housing.

4. REVIEW AND DISCUSS HOUSING MAPS:

Jason presented the larger maps of the village as well as the water sewer lines. Lighter yellow represented areas that were more developable. The Commission reviewed the maps with open discussion. Joe Karl suggested that he could go onto the MLS and start looking at the clusters of parcels for potential development.

Peter commented that the Jeffrey Barn is a structure that could be removed and rebuilt. Another parcel is Motel in the Meadow which is a larger tract but would need sewer run to the property. He stated that it is possible to make the town parcel across the street the leach field. This would require determining if the town property could be used this way and can septic run under Route 11.

Other properties identified for review were the Farnsworth Property, Universal Map property, Congregational Church, Jerry Stewart's property and Omar Austin's property. The catholic church had an interest in leasing chunks for tiny house development at one point in

45 the past. M&M Property on Elm Street/Pleasant Street seems appropriate but there would  
46 need to be soils testing done.

47  
48 The town land on Route 103 South will be reviewed for a potential development now that  
49 the Planning Grant has been awarded. Peter also noted that there is a water/sewer stub at  
50 the end of Pine Drive that could be developed. Dick Whitham also owns parcels that he has  
51 talked to Preston about subdividing in the future.

52  
53 Hugh suggested that the lightest yellow parcels should be inventoried by name and  
54 determine which properties are potentials. Jason stated that as the maps are finalized, the  
55 maps will be able to be layered over ortho photos.

56  
57 The Commission discussed the number of units needed to incentivize developers and agreed  
58 that 25 seems to be the number. This is for brand new development, not remodels or  
59 redevelopment. Jason stated that there are some developers that are putting together  
60 smaller projects.

61  
62 Jason stated that he will be speaking with Windham Windsor Housing Trust and SRDC this  
63 week. He is hoping to invite them to the next meeting.

64  
65 The commission discussed potential next steps being hard looks at the catholic church and  
66 the congregational church.

67  
68 Julie updated the Commission that she has spoken with Josh Hanford from VLCT. He and  
69 Katie Buckley will be doing a presentation in Manchester in January to talk with their new  
70 housing commission about next steps. Josh will reach out to Julie and get something  
71 schedule shortly after for Chester. Julie stated that he did tell her that the next step will be  
72 to set up a housing trust so that there are funds allocated specifically to housing. Discussion  
73 continued that this could potentially be filled by establishing a local options tax.

74  
75 The Commission divided up tasks as follows: Joe will review maps and parcels; Jason and  
76 Julie, along with Joel will review funding sources; Nancy will talk with the Congregational  
77 Church; Hugh and Bill will reach out to the Catholic Church; Peter and Nancy will talk with  
78 Bob Stone.

79  
80 5. REVIEW COST DATA AND SCHOOL ENROLLMENT:

81  
82 Jason presented the school enrolment numbers which shows that enrollment is declining.

83  
84 Jason reviewed the cost data. Cost burden shows that 19% of occupied homes people are  
85 spending 30-49% of household income on their home to include heat. The charts also show  
86 that renters are spending close to 50% on housing, to include heat. Approximately 40% are  
87 spending too much on housing. Hugh noted that the numbers are showing either rentals are  
88 decreasing or incomes are increasing. Covid funding could have had an impact on these  
89 numbers as well as large unemployment boosts. Jason noted that much of this data points

90 to the lack of housing, confirms that there is a housing issue and confirms what has been  
91 suggested and demonstrates the need.

92  
93 Joe questioned if there is data that suggests what type of housing needs to be developed.  
94 Preston noted that in his research and experience, all of the groups are in need. He stated  
95 that the Planning Commission has learned that the most desired housing is work force  
96 housing or senior housing. Nancy suggested that there be a list of the developments that  
97 were constructed and the reasons for their construction. Jason stated that Vermont is an  
98 aging population. Providing housing stock for seniors would free up larger housing for  
99 families.

100  
101 Joe Karl mentioned a program he saw, Write the House 802. This is a way to write pieces to  
102 amplify the needs for housing. Joe will email the information to the group.

103  
104 Julie mentioned the award of the Municipal Planning Grant. Grant agreement will come in  
105 60 days and she will bring to the commission to review the Request for Proposals.

106  
107 6. NEXT AGENDA

108  
109 The next meeting is January 23, 2024 at 6:00 p.m.

110  
111 7. ADJOURN

112  
113 A motion was made by Joe Karl to adjourn. Seconded by Hugh Quinn. The meeting  
114 adjourned at 7:10 p.m.

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