

1 **TOWN OF CHESTER**
2 **DEVELOPMENT REVIEW BOARD**
3 **MINUTES**

4 *January 24, 2022*

5 **BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT:** Harry Goodell, Bob Greenfield, and Phil Perlah, at the Town
6 Hall. Scott MacDonald and Gary Coger via Zoom.

7 **STAFF PRESENT:** Zoning Administrator Preston Bristow and Recording Secretary Cathy
8 Hasbrouck, at the Town Hall.

9 **CITIZENS PRESENT:** Bill Lindsay and Peter Hudkins at the Town Hall.

10 **Call to Order**

11 Bob Greenfield called the meeting to order at 6:30 PM. He led the group in the Pledge of
12 Allegiance and introduced the members of the Development Review Board and staff.

13 **Agenda Item 1 Review minutes of the December 27, 2021 and January 10, 2022 meetings-**

14 4:00Harry Goodell moved to accept the minutes both meetings. Phil Perlah seconded the
15 motion. There was no discussion. A vote was taken, and the minutes were accepted as written.

16 **Agenda Item 2 Citizen's comments**

17 There were no citizen comments.

18 **Agenda Item 3 Discuss parking in the Cobleigh Street and Village Green area with Peter**
19 **Hudkins**

20 Peter Hudkins explained that he and Cathy Hasbrouck, as members of the Planning Commission,
21 had conducted multiple walking tours of the proposed Village Green zoning district and decided
22 that it would be useful to study parking available in the area for the businesses and occupants of
23 the district. Peter said the purpose of the meeting was to gather opinions on various ways to
24 regulate parking in the proposed Village Green zoning district.

25 He explained the format of the parking study document included in the packet for the meeting.
26 The document lists the businesses on each parcel in the district, the number of parking spaces for
27 each business and dwelling unit that would be required under the present bylaws, the number of
28 off-street parking spaces available on the parcel, the number of additional spaces needed to meet
29 the parking requirement, the number of dwelling units with no parking provision at all, the
30 standard used to compute the number of required spaces, and a distribution of spaces needed
31 across three time periods during the day: 11:00 PM – 8:00 AM, 8:00 AM – 5:00 PM and 5:00 –
32 11:00 PM. Peter noted that the buildings without parking spaces for tenants would also not have
33 parking for the business owner or the employees. The totals for the Common Street businesses
34 show there is a shortage of about 85 parking spaces under the adopted bylaw requirements.

35 8:45 Peter cited the Fullerton Inn as an example of a business that lacks sufficient off-street
36 parking. It has only 10 off-street parking spaces available, while it has a 150-seat restaurant and
37 20 guest rooms. Peter discussed the three columns at the right side of the document that break
38 down parking by time of day. He pointed out that midday on weekends have the highest need
39 for parking. Peter enumerated the off-street parking areas along Common Street, mainly behind

1 the buildings and whether he had seen cars parked there. Peter explained the entries in the 11:00
2 PM – 8:00 AM column on the right side of the sheet as being overnight guests of the Fullerton
3 Inn and residents of building that had no off-street parking.

4 Peter said the standard for evaluating lunch time parking for a restaurant was to consider it half
5 full. The 8:00 AM to 5:00 PM column at the right of the sheet reflects that count for the
6 Fullerton. The overnight shortage for Common Street is 35 spaces, the daytime shortage was 39
7 spaces, and the evening shortage was 36.

8 15:02 Peter then discussed the part of the district that has Main Street as an address, beginning
9 with the Six Loose Ladies retail shop. He pointed out the Main Street Parking Association, a lot
10 behind Meditrina and Six Loose Ladies. The association lot space belongs to more than one
11 parcel. It is used by St. Luke’s church on Sunday mornings, Inn Victoria overnight guests during
12 snowstorms and day to day patrons and staff of businesses and residents in the area. Peter said
13 the parking requirements for St. Luke’s church is a blip and should not be seen as an ongoing
14 daily requirement.

15 Peter pointed out the Cobleigh Street lot, which has two electric vehicle charging stations, and
16 serves as parking for three apartments in a large house at the end of Cobleigh Street. There is a
17 path already beaten down by foot traffic along the north side of the athletic fields to the Main
18 Street Parking Association lot. The study totals for the Main Street parcels show a surplus of
19 parking available.

20 The combined totals for Common and Main Street businesses are below the double black line on
21 page 2 of the study. In absolute numbers of bylaw-mandated parking for all the businesses and
22 spaces available, there is a 51-space shortfall. When the bylaw-mandated requirements are
23 distributed across a 24-hour period, there is no actual shortfall as long as the Cobleigh lot spaces
24 are included.

25 19:05 Peter suggested several projects to assist in managing parking in the Village Green district.
26 Signage directing people to the Cobleigh Street vehicle charging stations and parking would be
27 needed. Striping to define spaces along Main Street from Common to Cobleigh Street, along
28 School Street and in the Cobleigh Street lot will increase parking capacity.

29 He suggested that new zoning permits issued in the Village Green district include a condition
30 that employees not park on Common Street, that they find off-street parking or use the Cobleigh
31 lot.

32 Peter suggested another way to increase available parking space would be a weekend or holiday
33 parking ordinance for Common Street that limited parking to 2 hours between 8:00 AM and 6:00
34 PM. A resident who used the Common Street parking would have to move their car off
35 Common Street between by 10:00 AM and could bring it back after 4:00 PM.

36 21:30 Phil Perlah said that aside from major events such as the Fall Festival he never had
37 problems finding parking in the area. Phil wondered if there was actually a parking problem on
38 the green. Peter admitted he couldn’t see the green from his house and said he was reporting
39 complaints from business owners on the green that parking was a problem for them.

40 Phil Perlah recounted his experience of working at a retail store in Brooklyn on Flatbush
41 Avenue. He found that when customers complained about a lack of parking what they actually
42 meant was there was a lack of parking directly in front of the store. Phil wondered whether the

1 complaints of business owners on Chester's green were similar. Was there a shortage of parking
2 space in front of their business, but not within a walkable distance, such as across Main Street,
3 along School Street or further west on Main Street. Phil said he would be more sympathetic to a
4 store owner losing business if their customers circle the green, can't find parking and decide to
5 go to Springfield instead. Scott MacDonald suggested that customers would find parking in the
6 Cobleigh lot to be too far away.

7 Peter said if the business employees parked in the Cobleigh Street lot, parking along Common
8 Street would be freed up. Scott MacDonald agreed that would be a good idea, but he doubted
9 that customers would want to park in the Cobleigh lot. Scott said he was opposed to limiting the
10 hours people could park on Common Street.

11 Gary Coger said he had owned 295 Main Street (the Meditrina building) for several years and he
12 is frequently on the green now. He said some business owners who complain about parking
13 actually park in front of their business in the public spaces. He felt this was unreasonable. He
14 thought signage could help, particularly in directing employees to spaces behind the building and
15 in the Cobleigh Street lot. Gary felt that every town has unusual days where parking is a
16 problem and didn't feel parking in Chester was a major issue.

17 27: Phil Perlah said in his time on the DRB there have been possibly 3 or 4 applications for
18 permits along the green. For each application, the DRB simply said the green had plenty of
19 parking spaces and there was no need to analyze the specific requirements for the permit.
20 Parking has been a non-issue. He felt the bylaw requirements could not be met without the
21 Cobleigh Street lot, but he didn't believe there was a parking problem.

22 Peter Hudkins said he felt better about the Planning Commission proposal to drop the parking
23 requirements for the proposed Village Green district because the parking study data supports the
24 move. If it becomes necessary to clear more space for customers along Common Street, the
25 town could require employees to park elsewhere. Building a path between the Green and the
26 Cobleigh lot and installing signage would provide a workable solution for any business who
27 cannot locate off-street parking elsewhere.

28 The group discussed the Main Street Parking Association lot. Peter Hudkins said he was amazed
29 at how well the association worked and how long it had endured. He was not certain that
30 signage directing the public to the space could be posted because it is a private lot. Gary Coger,
31 who once owned a portion of the land that makes up the lot, said he thought it was to be used as
32 space for anyone who wanted to park. Tenants in the building that houses Six Loose Ladies used
33 it. He said he encouraged tenants in his building at 295 Main Street to use it while he owned the
34 building. He said he never felt the area was his, but that it was owned in common.

35 Bob Greenfield said a time limit on parking would be unenforceable. Harry Goodell said
36 requiring businesses and tenants to park off-street and not on the green would help a lot. He said
37 it is done in the winter now, it could be done year-round.

38 35:32 Peter Hudkins said he thought any new use permits should require off-street parking for
39 employees and tenants. He felt, like Harry, that some action should be taken to protect spaces on
40 Common Street for customers. Phil Perlah discussed the possibility of having the Selectboard
41 come up with an ordinance which forbids parking on the green between 11:00 PM and 5:00 AM.
42 That would encourage tenants to park in the Cobleigh He preferred an overnight ban which
43 would be simpler to enforce.

1 Scott MacDonald said he preferred a bylaw that only required off-street parking for a use that
2 increased parking needs. Peter said the impact of this requirement would chiefly be felt by the
3 parcels that had no off-street parking at all.

4 Additional points about parking in the proposed Village Green zoning district raised during the
5 meeting included:

- 6 • Bob Greenfield said it would be easier for the DRB if there were no parking
7 requirements.
- 8 • Additional dwellings added to buildings that have no off-street parking would reduce the
9 Common Street parking even further if the residents parked on Common Street.
- 10 • Phil Perlah said some type of parking requirement in the bylaw and on a permit would
11 make enforcement possible if there was a complaint about a lack of parking. A zoning
12 permit could be taken away if the permit holder was not meeting the conditions of the
13 permit.
- 14 • Harry suggested that getting the landlords to work together could help to resolve the
15 problem.
- 16 • An overnight parking ban on Common Street was favored as being easily enforced. An
17 overnight ban would be an ordinance issued by the Selectboard.
- 18 • The Fullerton Inn and Meditrina are two large buildings on parcels that have space which
19 could provide off-street parking if a new use for the building required it.
- 20 • There are 3 parcels on the green with no space for off-street parking.

21 Cathy Hasbrouck suggested that the parking issue could be discussed at the public hearing for
22 the proposed Village Green district held by the Planning Commission. If the hearing is well
23 attended and a consensus about parking emerges, the Planning Commission can change the
24 proposed bylaw to include the consensus.

25 Preston Bristow suggested that social pressure was another way to get employees and business
26 owners to park somewhere other than on Common Street.

27 55:50 Phil Perlah discussed the beaten path along the athletic fields between the Cobleigh lot and
28 the green. As a lawyer he was concerned about liability to the town from people using the path.
29 Several points were raised:

- 30 • Peter Hudkins said the town had a drainage right of way on the St. Luke's lot. The town
31 might be able to construct a path from the athletic field to Main Street across the St.
32 Luke's lot when fixing the drainage issue.
- 33 • Scott MacDonald wondered why a path was needed. He asked why people couldn't walk
34 down Cobleigh Street to Main Street.
- 35 • Cathy Hasbrouck said there was no sidewalk on Cobleigh Street.
- 36 • Harry Goodell said there was little difference between using an unimproved footpath and
37 walking down Cobleigh Street. He pointed out that the Main Street-Depot Street-Elm
38 Street-Pleasant Street walking loop does not have sidewalks in some places.

- 1 • Gary Coger pointed out that Cobleigh Street is a dead end and has little traffic. (Note: the
2 entrance to the main Readex parking lot is off Cobleigh Street. At certain times of day
3 there is traffic there.)
- 4 • Scott MacDonald said the footpath will require additional maintenance and there would
5 be additional liability associated with it.
- 6 • Peter Hudkins said the State of Vermont has a goal of a walkable downtown. The
7 footpath would support that goal.
- 8 • Scott MacDonald said the path could be revisited at any point. It did not need to be
9 resolved immediately.
- 10 • Peter Hudkins said signage and striping could be done immediately and the path could be
11 an idea to keep in mind when looking at grant money possibilities.
- 12 • Phil Perlah said the foot path was not in the purview of either the DRB or Planning
13 Commission. It belonged to the Selectboard. Peter Hudkins agreed that the Selectboard
14 was key to this proposal.
- 15 Preston Bristow said there were no DRB hearings in the pipeline. Harry Goodell moved to
16 adjourn the meeting. Phil Perlah seconded the motion. A vote was taken, and the hearing was
17 adjourned.