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**TOWN OF CHESTER
SELECTBOARD MEETING
April 17, 2024, Minutes**

Board Members Present: Lee Gustafson, Arne Jonynas, Arianna Knapp, Tim Roper, and Peter Hudkins at Town Hall.

Staff Present: Julie Hance, Town Manager, at Town Hall; and Susan Bailey, Recording Secretary, via Zoom.

Visitors Present: Bill Lindsay, Shawn Cunningham of the Chester Telegraph, Evan Parks, Cathy Hasbrouck, Preston Bristow, Chief Tom Williams, and Chief Mike Randzio, Gianna Farnigia, and Olga Carye at Town Hall; and Kate Marshal, Robert Nied, Representative Heather Chase, Caroline Morgan, Gene Czarnecki, and SAPA TV via Zoom.

Call to Order

Chair Arne Jonynas called the meeting to order at 6:30 p.m. and led those in attendance in the pledge of allegiance.

Agenda Item 1, Addition or Deletions

There were none.

Agenda Item 2, Approve Minutes from the Previous Selectboard Meeting

Lee moved and Tim seconded a motion to approve minutes from April 3, 2024. A vote was taken, and the minutes were approved, as written.

Agenda Item 3, Citizens Comments/Answers from Previous Meeting

There were none.

Agenda Item 4, Old Business

Housing Feasibility Study

There was only one bidder, SE Group, who is the same organization that did the Master Plan and the Wayfinding Plan and had done a lot of work for Chester. Chester gets great product from them.

Paving Projects

All bids have been received. A new company, Fuller Construction out of Londonderry, will be doing all the projects and they came in below the estimated cost. The projects are Andover Road, the parking lot at Cobleigh Street, and the area for the pickleball court at the recreation facility. Pavement will be used instead of concrete because it's significantly cheaper.

Congressional Directed Spending Opportunities

They applied under the Sanders' appropriation for the Community Health Initiative. Peter Welch's

1 Office highly recommended they submit a grant application for the sewer project, so Julie
2 submitted the whole \$2.3 million project.

3 4 Tree Projects

5 Various tree removals throughout town are taking place that are part of the Urban and Community
6 Forest Grant Chester received. A group is working with property owners and others on placement
7 of plantings. Julie will update the board. They are going to be very public and advertise the process.

8 9 ARPA Funds

10 Funds need to be designated by December 31. At the May meeting they will start discussions about
11 the remainder of the funds and where to allocate them. Julie will provide the exact amount, which
12 she thought was a little over \$300,000.

13
14 Arne asked if there was anything else under old business.

15
16 Lee asked where they stood on the Wayfinding project and Julie said the signs are being
17 constructed now and expected them to begin installation in May. Arne asked what color they were,
18 and Julie indicated they would be a beautiful darker blue.

19 20 **Agenda Item 5, Legislative Update: Rep. Heather Chase**

21
22 Heather Chase said it is currently crazy in Montpelier with long days and weeks. The crossover
23 was four weeks ago when the bills in the House went to the Senate, and they were in a place where
24 nothing is certain, because once the bills are passed, they go through the committee again and a
25 lot of things change. Heather and Julie had discussed the Ethics Bill which is 51 pages and passed
26 the House and went to Senate. When it was in the House, Ted Brady from the League did a lot of
27 testimony which changed things that concerned towns. Now it is in the Senate, and she believed
28 the previous week the Senate took it up in Committee and. Heather will follow it and let everyone
29 know how it pans out.

30
31 S18, the E-cigarettes and Vaping Bill passed in the House and Senate and was vetoed by the
32 Governor. Heather thought the bill was flawed and a lot of other things were piled into it. There is
33 a lot of vaping in high schools and pediatricians provided shocking testimony about what they see
34 in their practices.

35
36 In Heather's committee last year, they looked at a Right-to-Repair bill that looked at logging and
37 farming equipment and farmers and loggers would have the right to repair their own equipment
38 and it passed and the rumor was it may be coming out of the Senate and passing but it was all
39 rumor and conjecture.

40
41 They've been working on H.121, the Vermont Data Privacy Act and she thought it would have an
42 impact on a lot of Vermonters' lives. It was currently in the Senate and will be the framework, if
43 passed, for AI legislation going forward.

44
45 Heather said there were over 1200 bills going back and forth so there was a lot of activity. People
46 from Chester have been in the State House recently and it was good to see them. Heather offered

1 to investigate certain bills if anyone wanted. She hoped to appear in person at the May meeting
2 and present a synopsis of things that had passed the House and Senate.

3
4 Lee received an email from the Vermont League of Cities and Towns about H.687, the Act 250
5 bill, and wondered if Heather could tell him a little bit about it with preemptions about municipal
6 zoning and how they should view it. It was Heather's understanding that Chester would be tier one
7 and it would mean if they had their own zoning, they wouldn't have to engage with Act 250 for
8 certain projects. Heather offered to give a 10- or 15-minute presentation in May if they wanted.
9 Lee was going to reach out to Senators McCormack and White relative to the thinking behind it
10 because he saw it taking away some of Chester's authority with housing and zoning. Heather
11 understood it as Chester being in a better position as smaller projects wouldn't need to engage with
12 Act 250. For towns without zoning, there would be more restrictions. It was in the Senate currently
13 and Heather thought they could also invite Becca to talk to them. Lee and Arne thanked Heather.

14
15 Arne asked Heather if the Ethics Bill had any teeth to it. Heather said it was 51 pages and if towns
16 didn't have a code-of-conduct or conflict-of-interest policy, they needed to adopt one. Heather said
17 there was more on the state level and if someone was running for a state office, they would need
18 to disclose monies greater than \$25,000 in stock or other interests. The amount would not need to
19 be disclosed, only that the person had an interest. Heather would get the information and thought
20 Ted Brady was pleased with the negotiations of the committee. Julie would be at VLCT the
21 following day and would get their perspective and she understood it had changed significantly
22 from the start. Heather thought it was okay for towns to have ethical guidelines and those who run
23 for state office. She thought more transparency was good.

24
25 Heather thought they may need a consultant to come in and speak about the Act 250 bill which
26 was complex. The representative who stewarded the ethics bill offered to hop on a call if the board
27 wanted. Heather thought they should wait until they knew where things were before they got to
28 that level and was happy to answer questions and find people who knew. Heather said she could
29 return to the second meeting in May. Arne thanked her for keeping track of the bills and providing
30 an update. Heather said she missed everyone and was looking forward to attending in person in
31 May. Everyone thanked Heather.

32 33 **Agenda Item 6, Short Term Rental Ordinance**

34
35 Arne said the attorney had covered all the bases and none of the legal challenges seemed like they
36 were happening in Vermont, except in Burlington. Arne said some of the issues mentioned by the
37 attorney had not yet been challenged but were expected.

38
39 Lee asked to go through Jim's letter and get into the weeds, if necessary. Arianna thought the letter
40 correlated with the redline.

41
42 Arne started with the annual registration application. The recommendation was to follow the
43 annual calendar recommended by the state. Preston said it was relatively easy and they could get
44 through it somehow. Tim wondered how difficult it would be to pro-rate as they didn't know when
45 it would take effect. Preston said they could reduce next year's fee as a prorate but noted they were
46 also considering doubling the fee. Preston didn't see it being too difficult but expected some people

1 to gripe. Preston said the attorney wanted it clearer and Preston didn't take issue with the changes.
2 That took care of the first two items in Jim's letter.

3
4 The third one was sewer capacity, and the attorney was clarifying dates and the ordinance. Preston
5 said there was no problem, and he just wanted a reference to an amnesty date.

6
7 Arne said emergency contact was an interesting one and was based on a geographical area and Jim
8 was suggesting being more arbitrary and choosing a distance as opposed to a county. Lee suggested
9 rather than being in the two counties it should be related to a distance. 100 miles was all New
10 England and some of New York. Lee thought a 50-mile radius was better and asked what the
11 purpose was. Preston said the purpose was if they needed to enforce them, they could serve
12 enforcement and had relations with the sheriffs in those two counties, so if the contact was in those
13 two counties, it would be easier. Serving someone in another state is more difficult and involves
14 hiring someone so it made sense using two sheriff's offices they know. Lee agreed and wondered
15 how they would enforce it. Enforcement involves a municipal ticket and is the same ticket Chief
16 Williams fills out for a speeding violation. A speeding violation is immediately served to the driver
17 of the car. Municipal tickets require a driver's license and that is why the short-term rental
18 application asks for a driver's license. Preston is registered as an enforcement officer with the
19 judicial bureau and has a ticket book he hasn't used yet. Preston has spoken with other zoning
20 administrators who say the municipal bureau throws out tickets all the time because they lack very
21 basic information, and it must be filled out completely. Tom Williams, Chief of Police, agreed and
22 has seen tickets dismissed for an abundance of reasons, including clerical errors. There needs to
23 be enough identifiable information to choose the correct person. Preston said that's why the rental
24 application requires date-of-birth, driver's license, and whether they're in active military service.
25 Arne noted 100 miles puts them in different states and makes it more difficult to do anything and
26 Preston agreed. Lee thought if they sent a ticket with no response, a permit should not be issued
27 next time or revoked, if possible. Preston said they could choose not to renew a permit but wasn't
28 sure about revoking it. Cathy said if they don't register and continue to rent, all they can do is issue
29 tickets. Preston agreed and said that was the most common violation. Arne was inclined to stay
30 with the two counties. Lee agreed. Arne didn't think the issue would come up much, but it would
31 be easier designating someone in Windsor or Windham counties. Preston envisioned following up
32 with Jim. Tim thought a 30-mile radius made sense and was more reasonable than 100 or 50, which
33 takes you out of state a lot. Sticking with the two counties was the consensus.

34
35 The waiting period seemed to deal with hosted and unhosted. Arne said there were things in the
36 state that applied differently with taxes and fees whether you were a resident or non-resident. The
37 dormant commerce clause was popping into a lot of what was happening as a short-term rental
38 was commerce because someone was making money, so the laws of the clause needed to be
39 applied. Lee said they were trying to provide relief to hosted or owners who live in town. Lee
40 wondered how they would do that if they applied it to everyone and weren't fighting for the rights
41 of the constituents but understood they didn't want to be the guinea pigs for another lawsuit. Peter
42 said they hadn't been snowed with a lot of people dying to have an Airbnb and wondered why they
43 would want to set themselves up to pay more attorney fees. Arianna said the fact Jim can reference
44 four or five cases in two or three states indicates it's a trigger situation. She thought to read between
45 the lines of his recommendation, there were ways to dissect this piece of the puzzle if they weren't
46 careful. Arne said for those two parts: the waiting times and caps, their options were to either not

1 have them or apply them to everyone. Peter said they didn't have a big rush of people and Preston
2 would let them know if there was a huge jump and suggested they back off from it. They are paying
3 someone to collect the data so they would know. Lee wondered if they had a huge jump, what they
4 would do or if they would maintain the status quo and Peter suggested maintaining the status quo
5 until they saw what the jump was. Peter thought the state would address it eventually. Lee didn't
6 think the state was looking out for their interests based on history. Peter agreed and said the state
7 was receiving the rooms and meals tax and Chester wasn't. Peter suggested letting someone else
8 go through the legal system first, like Burlington. Lee wondered how other municipalities were
9 dealing with it and Julie said everyone was in a similar situation and tiptoeing around and getting
10 legal opinions. Preston's comment to Jim has been that other towns are doing it, and Jim has
11 warned him that Chester may be sued if they did it. Tim said a few years ago when interest rates
12 were low, people were buying homes for retirement or business, but the market isn't the same now
13 and thought if rates changed, they would be between a rock and a hard place because they couldn't
14 change the ordinance, but Peter said they could. Tim added that they couldn't change it quickly
15 and noted how long it had taken them to get to this point. Tim thought if they adopted it tonight, it
16 would take 60 days to take effect and would leave a big window for people to come in and could
17 see a repeat of 2021 and 2022 which wouldn't be desirable for the community. Arne said they
18 could keep the caps but would need to apply it to everyone and Tim was advocating for that. Arne
19 added if they hit the ceiling, they would need to rethink it, but it would provide a guardrail. Arne
20 said they could still have a waiting period, but it would have to be applied to both hosted and non-
21 hosted because they can't discriminate. Preston said there were 55 and the cap was 60 unhosted.
22 One-third of the Airbnbs are hosted. The 60 could change. Tim said there was an underlying issue
23 of housing and noted three properties would be removed from the Grand List through FEMA
24 buyouts and cautioned against increasing the cap and advocated for applying the waiting period to
25 all. Arianna struggles with applying the waiting period to everyone. She found it appealing to
26 someone buying a house to be a business but applying it to everyone would hurt those moving to
27 town but wanted to rent out a room. Arianna would advocate for increasing the cap because it
28 would address a potential influx. Lee wondered if they applied Jim's recommendations, if there
29 would be a way to reject an application without a reason or if that opens them up to a lawsuit. Arne
30 saw it as a lawsuit waiting to happen. Lee felt whatever they did, they were stuck. Preston said
31 there must be a valid reason to reject someone and saw it analogous to issuing liquor licenses
32 where if they were lots of complaints of disorderly conduct, they could opt not to renew their
33 license. Lee asked if a lottery system would solve the problem and Preston said he didn't care for
34 one because it was unattractive to homeowners who had invested in their properties without
35 knowing if they would be able to rent them. Preston saw the cap as a fairer method and Lee agreed.

36
37 Evan Parks asked about establishing a provision for people trying to stay in their home by renting
38 short-term and saw a lot of people as needing that option. Arne thought that's what they were
39 attempting to do by hosted versus non-hosted, but they didn't have the legal grounds to. Preston
40 noted the law says a citizen is a citizen and although they were well-meaning to help folks who
41 live there to pay taxes, it isn't how federal law views it. Tim said an STR is a business and not a
42 residence and should be viewed that way and businesses are regulated. Arne said the goals they
43 were trying to accomplish may have been easier and legal to do through zoning by classifying it
44 as a business. Arne didn't know if that would change things if they controlled it through zoning.
45 Evan asked if he lived in his building and had both a short-term and long-term rental if it would
46 be a business. Tim said if he lived there, it would be hosted. Arne said they don't classify any

1 apartments in town as a business, but they follow zoning regulations. Preston said at a zoning level,
2 they hadn't made that distinction and he had never been thought to think that way as a zoning
3 administrator. Peter said through zoning, there wasn't a number limit, and they were just creating
4 another hurdle. Tim added they could be regulated differently. Peter said they still wouldn't be
5 able to change the number and could only put conditions on it and thought they had more control
6 by ordinance than zoning. Tim wondered if they could do both. Peter thought the ordinance worked
7 and they didn't have significant numbers and that they shouldn't set themselves up for legal
8 consequences and the pandemic was out of the ordinary. Peter thought they should have the fire
9 inspection as part of the ordinance. Julie said they didn't have the staffing to do it so it wouldn't
10 happen, and it wasn't the law which only requires it for STRs with more than 8. Chester could
11 bring in their own inspector to do it. Preston said Jim didn't have a problem with the limit on the
12 number of STRs someone can own.

13
14 Arne suggested a cap of 65 with a one year waiting period for hosted and unhosted until they had
15 more information. Preston said in theory, most who are hosted already live in town, so it wouldn't
16 apply but would for someone who moved to town from out-of-state, even if they were going to
17 live there full-time. Arne pointed out if someone lived in town and bought another house, the year
18 would apply. Evan said his plan is that his sisters will get the building when his mother passes and
19 he will live in it and his sisters live out of state. The plan is to rent out the rest and his sisters will
20 own the building. Arne thought he would be fine because he was a designated person of contact.
21 Evan questioned the definition of a unit, whether it was an apartment, a building, or a room, and
22 Preston said it could be any of those and would be whatever he applied for. A building with four
23 apartments would be four units. Preston said it was how he advertised it and Julie agreed.

24
25 Preston said Jim was skeptical of a natural person. They agreed to remove it.

26
27 Arianna pointed out Jim's recommendations regarding both the cap and waiting period, and while
28 he said the core issue is the need to combine hosted and unhosted, she thought the counsel was
29 they were setting themselves up for litigation regardless because he didn't tell them. If they apply
30 it to both, they're fine but he states the issues. Julie clarified the last sentence of number 5; he
31 recommends making the waiting period applicable to all STRs. Tim said he also addressed the
32 zoning in paragraph 6. They agreed to a cap and a waiting period for all STRs. They will not vote
33 on it until it's cleaned up and goes back to Jim with their comments.

34
35 Preston said after their bad experience last year, Cathy has found the website of the new provider
36 much easier to use. Cathy looked at it this week and it said 115 STRs in Chester, which would
37 have taken her 4 to 5 hours to go through under Granicus but didn't take her anywhere near that
38 amount of time with the new provider and she was pleased with the product. 30 of the 115 were
39 not renting, so she needs to ask them why they were listed. Cathy said the company gets their
40 information from the advertising agency and concludes from the calendars what they say. Preston
41 thought a lot of listings were dormant. Julie said they have 55 registrations. Preston thought once
42 hotels and motels and dormant ones were removed, it was only 55. Preston added that Shawn keeps
43 them informed about ones they aren't aware of.

44
45 They will modify the ordinance and return it to Jim for review.

46

1 **Agenda Item 7, Community Health Initiative**

2
3 Julie said the board approved this initiative last year and it is happening across the country. Chief
4 Randzio gave a presentation on the work that has been done, and the direction the initiative is
5 heading. They would like to add a paramedic position. It is not the addition of another position but
6 Chief Randzio becoming a paramedic. The training is for a year and begins in September. Chief
7 Randzio has offered to use his army GI bill to pay for the training. The training would be completed
8 at the end of 2025. They wanted to make sure the board agreed before Chief Randzio enrolled in
9 the school. The successful health initiatives across the country are at the paramedic level or
10 equivalent to a community nurse. Municipalities that don't have existing ambulance services tend
11 to go the community nurse approach. Chester already has an ambulance, so it is more cost effective
12 to advance one of the staff to a paramedic level and make the community health initiative equal in
13 terms of what they provide. Julie included benefits in the board's memo. The second part that
14 helps fund what they are asking is the addition of the transport service. Chester was approved to
15 purchase an ambulance which would be delivered late summer or early fall. They would like to
16 keep the current ambulance and run a one-to-two-year pilot program on running a transport service.
17 Their research indicates ambulances are getting closer to self-sustaining using a transport service
18 and is where revenue comes in. They would use the old ambulance and other staff to operate the
19 transport service. Chester would still always be staffed if the ambulance was out doing a transport
20 so they would not be taking an ambulance out of service. The revenue makes everything flow
21 nicely together and is what ambulance services are doing throughout the country. Hospitals are in
22 dire need of this service.

23
24 Chief Mike Randzio gave a PowerPoint presentation about the initiative, which is attached and
25 made part of the minutes. Mike pointed out for interfacility transfers there aren't many ambulances
26 in the area so it is a much-needed service and a lot of business that Chester can tap into. Patients
27 wait 2 to 3 days for a transfer and sometimes lose their beds because they are unable to get
28 transported. It would benefit public safety greatly.

29
30 Arne wondered if Chester didn't offer wellness checks or wound care if the patients would need
31 to go to the hospital or have a home nurse visit and Mike agreed and added visiting nurses are
32 difficult to find in the area. Arne wondered if they would be able to be reimbursed for the costs.
33 Mike said they are still trying to figure that out long-term. Arne wasn't against the initiative or
34 what it would provide but didn't like the idea that they were saving money for a corporation and
35 Chester bears the cost and thought it was fair that Chester be reimbursed.

36
37 Lee thought about where they would be in 5 years and where they were 10 years ago, and it seemed
38 to him the necessity for the services Mike discussed have increased over the past decade and will
39 continue to. Lee wondered if there was something they were missing as to why the need was
40 escalating and if there was something they could do better as a community to help people, so they
41 weren't calling 911. Lee said there was a cost to all of it no matter which department and wondered
42 what the benefit to him as a taxpayer was. Lee didn't have any problem helping his neighbor and
43 thought we all should but wondered about the long-term implication after the pilot program ended.
44 Lee asked how they could present it to the taxpayer to make it palatable and thought it was a big
45 deal with respect to the benefit and the cost and they needed to be thoughtful and evaluate and
46 present to the taxpayer the benefit. Mike said they want to make sure they can sustain it and was

1 the reason it's been labeled a pilot program. Mike thought if they couldn't figure out funding in
2 three years, it was probably not meant to be and hoped through the transfer they could mitigate the
3 cost and the overall increase to the budget kept small. Mike said if the program was successful,
4 they may be able to take it further to cover the entire ambulance expenses. Julie added it had a lot
5 of moving parts. She said a time was coming down the road where every community would be
6 doing this, and community health was the initiative. Staffing is down and patient readmissions are
7 up in the hospital setting for many reasons they hear about regularly. Julie recalled when her dad
8 was practicing having to wait a few weeks for an appointment and now the wait was a few months.
9 Almost every community has an ambulance and some form of emergency response and how can
10 they fill in the gap from what hospitals are seeing. Everything does not need to be done in a hospital
11 setting so community health can step in and assist with blood draws and other things to keep people
12 out of the hospital or office setting so doctors and nurses can meet higher levels of care. Julie
13 thought community health would help prevent readmissions with education and anticipated the
14 same discussion in 5 years. Tim wondered if Chester would be eligible for federal reimbursement,
15 like NorthStar Health, through the community health initiative. Mike said a few years ago, there
16 was a CP3 model through Medicare with a trial period, but it did not have participation. Mike saw
17 an article through the National Association of EMTs regarding legislative funding models for
18 community health so it's being considered. Mike has had communication with BlueCross/
19 BlueShield who have some interest in how to fund this program and he believes insurance funding
20 is coming and is only a matter of time. Tim noted that the whole healthcare system was evolving.
21 Mike and Julie agreed, and the pilot will provide data to support an application for grant funding.
22 They are working with the hospital to provide metrics and when they can show the benefits, is
23 when funding will come in. The budget impact isn't as high as Julie had thought. They want to
24 start with one paramedic and build it as they go and start with needs they are seeing. They don't
25 need a huge elaborate program to find out it's overkill for the community until they find the needs,
26 which Julie expected they would see. Mental health the police and EMS are dealing with also plays
27 a role in the need. Lee wondered how to communicate it to the community to reduce the 911 calls.
28 Mike has business cards he gives out on repeat calls so consumers can follow up and they can
29 figure out a course of action. Ideally, it would be set up through a referral program at a primary
30 care provider or emergency room. When a patient has a need, they would send a referral and that's
31 how they would get connected with the Community Health Initiative in Chester. Both Chiefs
32 Randzio and Williams, when they see something that they can do, try to offer it out. The
33 community outreach event on May 2nd will provide another opportunity to advertise as well as
34 word of mouth. Julie added those present on May 2nd are the special interest articles that provide
35 to the community, and they should reach out to Chester. Tim wondered if this was a fill-in for
36 visiting nurses and wondered how they were funded. Mike did not know how they were funded
37 but currently, there are no visiting nurses for the area. Tim noted that was a huge gap. Evan said
38 from experience of caring for his father, most of the trips to the emergency room and with the
39 ambulance were due to the gap in care. They were at the hospital, he wasn't better, but the
40 insurance company said he had to leave. Evan said it could be 5 days before someone showed up
41 at the house, if at all, to evaluate and could only do limited things while they were there. They
42 would tell him that if he got worse, to call the ambulance. Julie wanted to be clear that the
43 paramedic program would be amazing, but they would have a scope of practice they could not go
44 out of. Paramedics are trained to a higher level but are not doctors, nurse practitioners, physician
45 assistants, or registered nurses. They have a scope they must stay within, and function and operate
46 under a director at Springfield Hospital who must approve and sign off on the program, and they

1 have.

2

3 They have applied for a couple different funding sources and are seeking approval for this and the
4 fire chief piece. They are asking for assistance without the grant source but if they receive the Safer
5 Grant, it will fund three positions, two of which already exist: the ambulance chief and second in
6 command. They are morphing them into 50% firefighter, 50% EMT. The third position is the full-
7 time fire chief. Three full-time positions with benefits are reimbursed to the town. Julie's plan
8 would be to gradually increase the budget over three years, as revenue comes in and for a couple
9 of years, they would see a surplus because they will have budgeted the salaries. The transfer service
10 will be building at the same time. Arne asked about the dedicated response vehicle mentioned
11 during the presentation and was informed that it was long-term. Julie said if they ever got to the
12 point where there were multiple paramedics because of the demand, they would consider a
13 response vehicle but was not a current ask. When Mike wrote the grant, he included a response
14 vehicle, but it was not a current ask. The board thanked Mike for the great presentation.

15

16 Arne told the board they should consider it if they don't get the grant because the grant ends in 3
17 years. Julie said the numbers show that if Mike is a paramedic and a full-time fire chief has a
18 \$60,000 a year implication which for all they are getting, isn't much. It would include the
19 interfacility transfers with one paramedic in 2025. If they implemented everything now, Mike
20 would have to attend school so the paramedic piece doesn't come in, but the transport service could
21 when they receive the ambulance. If they could begin the transport service in October and made
22 25 calls with 70% reimbursement and the fire chief was hired effective July 1, the impact on the
23 budget would be \$11,000 for 2024 because the transport service would help offset the cost. Peter
24 wondered how they would replace Mike while he was in school. Mike said it was one day a week
25 with the rest online and clinical time on off hours. Mike said if they had him and another person,
26 the schedule would be covered 7 days a week. Arne asked about the shape of the old ambulance
27 and Mike said they had invested \$15,000 in repairs over the last year and a half, so a lot of major
28 components have been replaced and it wasn't in the best shape but that was another reason why
29 they wanted to try it for a year or two because realistically, that was probably the life it had left.
30 Mike said if they wanted to maintain the same ambulance, they could do a remount which is half
31 the cost of a brand-new one. They want to see if they can make it work. Julie added the need for
32 an ambulance was different if it was just for a transport service. Mike said they could even use an
33 advance style ambulance which was significantly cheaper for interfacility transfers. They have
34 options and a year to two to decide. Tim said it was really a business plan they were discussing.
35 Ben Whalen, Acting Fire Chief, said the fire service was fire-based EMS now because EMS is
36 revenue for the municipality. Ben said ambulances are increasing their staff and vehicle inventory
37 to grab that revenue string. It isn't a new concept nationally but in Chester. Ben said three years
38 ago it was a conversation they may not have entertained but with how the ambulance service is
39 doing now and how public safety is working well together he would endorse it and it was a great
40 opportunity for Chester to move forward in a good direction. Ben said they had already discussed
41 where to keep the new ambulance, which they have the space for.

42

43 Lee said the total safety budget for 2024 was \$1.03 million and the first option they were discussing
44 was \$1.09 million and the \$60,000 increase and wondered what percentage of the budget that was.
45 Julie said \$40,000 raises it 1 penny so it would be about 1.5 pennies. Julie said the total budget
46 was about \$4 million so it was around 25%. She said the amount also included the full-time fire

1 chief and wasn't just the paramedic. Arne said he always thought doing nothing for public safety
2 and the EMS buildings and keeping things the same was going backwards and felt if they don't
3 keep up with the times and changes and meet the needs of the community, they fall behind. It's a
4 difficult choice to make because of the money involved but it's a necessary thing. Arne added
5 because it was a pilot program, if it crashed and burned, they could pull away from it and say they
6 tried, and it didn't work. Arne agreed with Julie that it was the direction public health was going.
7 The fact they have three different factions of emergency services working out of one building says
8 a lot for the town. Arne was for this and would support it and the added cost and hoped the grant
9 would be received. Arne hated it when schools received grants and when the grant expired, they
10 were on their own but in this case, the town was preparing to do it without the grant. Arne supported
11 it even without the grant. Arianna agreed for the most part and said a lot was still speculative and
12 asked if they approved it, if they could get a report back if numbers came in lower and Julie said
13 they could. Arianna said if they were to move forward, it was like an act of faith and Julie suggested
14 reporting back with the quarterly financials because that would provide a better picture. Julie
15 reminded them that the paramedic piece will not have started yet but the transport service will, and
16 it will give them a good idea of the financials. Lee said, as with anything else, communication will
17 be the biggest hurdle they face. Lee agreed with Arne as to the value of the program. Lee thought
18 as the population ages, they need to be good citizens and support but noted a lot of people in town
19 will look at the money and question the value to them when their taxes pay for it, and they have
20 no direct benefit. Lee encouraged the program to have a large rollout and let people know it's
21 happening. Tim was in support of it also and thought Lee's points were good and added that it was
22 a quality-of-life issue for Chester. Tim felt it tied into housing because if they were going to attract
23 new housing, quality-of-life played into it.

24
25 Arne asked what motion Julie would need and she responded that a motion to approve the step up
26 to paramedic level service, which will authorize Mike to go get his education, and allow the start
27 of the transport service. Julie didn't know that either needed to be a motion because they weren't
28 reflected in the budget. The step was to bump up to paramedic level service so Mike could get his
29 training, and for the transport service. Lee noted since they weren't voting on money, they were
30 basically showing their support for the program. Julie agreed but said the transport service would
31 have a budget effect through revenue in 2024 and where it would have a financial effect in 2024
32 is they will not be selling the old ambulance but keeping it. Julie wanted a motion authorizing them
33 to be able to do that. Lee asked what the resale or trade-in value was. Mike said the manufacturer
34 gave them the amount of \$10,000. Lee moved they authorize the ambulance chief, Mike Randzio,
35 to do the paramedic training and start the process of the transfer service. Peter seconded the motion.
36 A vote was taken, and the motion carried unanimously.

37
38 Shawn asked if the community health service was for Chester only or also Andover. Julie thought
39 because they were under contract with Andover, it was a conversation for Andover to decide if
40 they wanted it. Arne added the transport service could also include surrounding towns and Julie
41 said it was a call they received from the hospital. Arne thanked everyone for the presentation and
42 hoped the program worked out.

43 44 **Agenda Item 8, Fire Chief Position**

45
46 Julie said this related to what was just discussed. They are at a place where she would like to make

1 the fire chief position full-time to round out the public safety department. There are a lot of benefits
2 to having three full-time chiefs. There is a lot in the fire department that hasn't been done because
3 the position is part-time and not regularly scheduled. As with everything being seen across
4 municipalities, state, federal, and EPA, guidelines are increasing with more mandates and training
5 required which involves more work and it can't be done on a voluntary or a part-time basis. This
6 would not make the fire department a full-time service but having a full-time fire chief in-house
7 would resolve several issues. The fire chief would be EMT certified so there would be another
8 second during the day for calls, continuing with the crossovers. The two full-time ambulance staff
9 will at least be Firefighter I. Daytime is the hardest to get coverage. There are enhanced community
10 engagement opportunities, and 20 children just visited the fire department. Having a full-time fire
11 chief would provide those opportunities and improve response time due to incident command
12 decisions being made quicker. Not every call requires the fire department to be emptied, so that
13 equals savings over time. Julie anticipated it would take on the fire warden position providing
14 better response. They would also take on the health officer position where Mike would serve as
15 deputy. Preplans for commercial buildings and hazardous sites, such as a train derailment, would
16 be possible with a full-time person. Julie said the time to get everything done isn't there with a
17 part-time person. It would also provide continuity with other departments and the list goes on and
18 on. There is potential down the road to take on state fire inspections and there are communities
19 taking it on through a memorandum of understanding with the state. It would be a revenue
20 generator but there are things to consider. Julie noted the three are amazing grant writers and any
21 public safety grant Julie has been able to hand off to them to write. Grants take a lot of time. It
22 would also free up a lot of Steve's time from the facilities, who does a lot of the work and is also
23 a captain for the fire department. Julie added that Chester is not the only town taking this step and
24 many towns throughout the state are moving to full-time fire chiefs for public safety, which has a
25 greater demand. The buzzword is regionalization. Chester is not a town that would be covered by
26 another town and would more likely cover another town. It would complete public safety and
27 provide continuity among the three departments. The transport service will help offset the cost of
28 a full-time fire chief. Julie said for full disclosure, Ben is likely the one who would be applying for
29 the position. Ben has a wealth of knowledge, having worked for the Fire Academy for several
30 years and having been a long-time member of the Chester Fire Department, and has an important
31 perspective. Lee asked if the fire chief could do inspections for short-term rentals and Julie said if
32 they have one who is certified to perform state inspections, then yes. Julie understood they would
33 need to be certified by the state as an inspector. Ben's blanket statement was to chat with Landon
34 Wheeler, the Regional Manager at the Springfield office. Ben said it would require a memorandum
35 of understanding with the state and they would have requirements for the inspections and what
36 that person could do. DFS does a lot more than short-term rentals. Lee viewed it as another revenue
37 source and the ability to do it for their own purposes and Arne added also for the towns around
38 them. Ben said they had a meeting at the high school discussing the emergency operations plan
39 and the question was raised about how long it would take the fire department to get there. Ben
40 thought 15 minutes and one person could change the entire scenario to 2 minutes if the person was
41 at the firehouse and that response time savings would also apply to other situations. Ben said time
42 is the concept that matters when it comes to a fire, and he had been with Chester Fire Department
43 since he was 14 or 15. The concept he was taught back then was a mobile home would burn in 10
44 minutes and a house in 30 minutes. As building materials and furnishings have changed, the
45 timespan has changed. The idea of working with the community and providing fire education at
46 the schools and working on target hazards and preplanning of incidents and putting them to fruition

1 was good stuff. Ben said he planned to apply for the position as they had done lots of conflicts of
2 interest training back in his day on the Selectboard and he wanted to be clear about his intentions.
3 Arianna asked how many volunteer firefighters they had and if the full-time fire chief would be
4 perceived as manager of them as well as volunteer services. Ben said there were 18 firefighters in
5 the department and of those, 6 were certified Firefighter II level, which by federal standards was
6 huge. Ben said they wanted to increase the number and bring people in. With the new position,
7 management would not change, and the current rank structure would remain department chief,
8 deputy chief, 2 captains, 2 lieutenants, and 5 to 6 firefighters under each lieutenant. Since Ben took
9 over as acting chief, he's tried to distribute roles and responsibilities which gives a lot of buy-in to
10 what folks are doing. They've tried to work on the chain of command over the past year with better
11 communication. Lee thought this would be a harder sell and was more skeptical of the rationale.
12 Lee wasn't against going in this direction but saw it as a harder sell to the constituents paying for
13 it because it didn't look like it was broken currently. Lee thought the list was comprehensive but
14 not necessarily persuasive as being a definite need. Lee suggested more transparency is needed
15 into where they will go and what the short and long-term goals were. Lee said several constituents
16 he's spoken with are concerned about the costs and being able to afford things. Lee thought the
17 whole thing with the paramedic and ambulance was an income generating proposition and made a
18 lot of sense but wasn't sure the same applied for the full-time fire chief. Lee thought 5 years out
19 they absolutely needed it, but it would be harder to sell right now from his perspective. Peter
20 questioned how many hours Ben was currently putting in. Julie responded more than before and
21 said if they wanted the work done, they would be paying for it. Julie said the system may not look
22 like it was broken to the public. They are responding to calls but there's more than just responding
23 to a fire call and was probably more than a lot of people understand. Julie emphasized the three
24 parts working together and especially EMS and Fire. The continuity between the departments is
25 huge. Julie saw it as a lack of education in everything the Fire Department does because the system
26 is broken and a lot that needed to be done wasn't being done. Training of fire personnel is huge.
27 Police Chief Tom Williams said he is one of the 18 firefighters and has been one for 36 years and
28 there is a lot in the background they weren't aware of. Tom said Ben goes through the books front
29 to back and what applies to fire service alone is overwhelming with what they must keep up on for
30 liability. Certification for hydrostats is specific on timing, equipment, including jackets, pants, and
31 boots all have requirements of when they must be replaced. Tom said by applying a schedule and
32 not replacing everything at once, it saves money. The procedures have not been updated in years
33 and need to be specific and it takes time to do and is a potential liability if something goes wrong.
34 Keeping the firefighters, civilians, and gear safe is a huge benefit and cost savings. If a firefighter
35 is hurt because things aren't done properly, the liability will make the tax increase look like
36 nothing. Tom said whether they are volunteer or full-time, they are held to the same standard and
37 need someone in there who can monitor it. Lee said that was exactly what he wanted to hear to
38 support and explain why it was needed and that was the communication that needed to happen and
39 what people needed to hear because it was important. Tom said something as simple as today's
40 meeting at the school, the one thing missing is a firefighter at the station. The current one is part-
41 time who has another full-time job to survive. Tom said something as simple as community
42 policing and community EMS has tried to include the fire department but there's nobody there.
43 The chief is not full-time and if their schedules agree, they can participate. Tom said all three chiefs
44 are on the same page and discussing emergency operation plans for events at the high school which
45 they will merge with the grade school. With Ben being able to attend today, it made it so much
46 easier rather than having to coordinate follow-up meetings. Tom reiterated that public safety was

1 all three departments and would save money and keep liability off the town. Lee thanked Tom.
2 Arne said it helped with the justification for the ask for a full-time fire chief and it was difficult to
3 have a vested interest in the position without being there daily. Arne was curious if it was a step
4 to eventually having a manned fire department. Tom didn't think that was what they were trying
5 to solve right now but trying to give the taxpayers their money's worth by going over and above.
6 As a police chief, Tom isn't obligated to switch hats and jump on a fire truck or the ambulance,
7 but he does and doesn't ask for a penny more than he gets working his normal shift and it's just
8 what they do and who they are looking for in hiring people. They hire one person and often get
9 three by being able to crossover positions. Tom said there was a car crash on Route 103 North the
10 other day and it was himself and a firetruck and Steve from the facilities and Ben and Mike with
11 the ambulance and they had coverage. If Ben wasn't already at the station, they may have been
12 waiting a while. If you need CPR or defibrillation, two minutes is a long time. They won't solve
13 every problem or be perfect. Tom said the seniors at the end of the Green love what they're doing
14 and they've received community support. The board thanked Tom. Arne said while they are
15 responsible to the taxpayers, they're also responsible to the citizens' safety and they weigh the cost
16 to improve that safety. Peter used to work at a forensic engineering firm and was familiar with the
17 National Fire Protection Association and what they do every day behind their desk where they add
18 another regulation, and it was for safety but was the biggest unfunded mandate in the world. Peter
19 said for them to maintain their insurance, they must meet the NFPA standards. Peter said the only
20 way they will achieve that is if they have someone to do the work and they were very lucky to
21 have Ben who is homegrown. When the departments were in different buildings, they were
22 separate clubs and now they had players who were willing to work together if something happened,
23 which was huge. Peter noted the ambulance revenue for the year wasn't in there and Julie said she
24 had not provided that. If the fire chief position was added halfway through the year and transport
25 services started in October, the bottom-line impact to the 2024 budget would be an additional
26 \$11,000. Peter felt for Ben because he understood the amount of paperwork. Julie thought the
27 position would start June 1st or July 1st. Ben agreed that NFPA standards were changing constantly.
28 Ben didn't think they were out of compliance with the past chief. Julie said the things that were
29 unable to get done were not the fault of the chief, but the hours, as he had a full-time job elsewhere.
30 Julie said they want to transition into a better service. Arne thought they all agreed it would have
31 a positive impact on emergency services. Julie recommended beginning the position June 15th to
32 give her time to advertise and hire. Arianna moved to approve the transition from part-time to full-
33 time fire chief beginning June 15th with Lee seconding the motion. The motion was approved
34 unanimously. Arne thanked Ben for his time.

35 36 **Agenda Item 9, Local Emergency Management Plan Adoption**

37
38 The only thing that had changed was the fire chief. Julie said a thorough review and update was
39 done last year and when Matt retired, they added Ben as acting chief. Lee moved to approve the
40 Local Emergency Management Plan document as presented with Arianna seconding. A vote was
41 taken, and the motion carried unanimously.

42 43 **Agenda Item 10, Annual Highway Financial Plan Adoption**

44
45 Arne said it was giving the state the information that they spend the minimum required on the
46 roads and noted they spend a lot more than the minimum. A motion was not necessary, and Arne

1 signed the plan.

2

3

Agenda Item 11, Cemetery Deed

4

5 The members signed two cemetery deeds.

6

7

Agenda Item 12, New Business/Next Agenda

8

9 • May 2nd is the Community Health event that Chief Randzio discussed.

10 • May 1st is the next Selectboard meeting.

11 • Water and sewer rates.

12 • Jeffrey Barn.

13 • Class IV roads.

14 • Nuisance ordinance.

15 • Quarter 1 financials.

16 • Summer meeting schedule.

17 • STRs will be on the agenda if back from Jim.

18

19

Agenda Item 13 Adjourn

20

21 Lee moved to adjourn, and Arianna seconded a motion to adjourn. A vote was taken, and the
22 motion passed, and the meeting was adjourned at 9:12 p.m.

CHESTER AMBULANCE COMMUNITY HEALTH INITIATIVE

1

What is mobile integrated health?

- “Mobile Integrated Healthcare–Community Paramedicine (MIH-CP) is the provision of healthcare using patient-centered, mobile resources in the out-of-hospital environment.”
 - Being proactive instead of reactive
 - Providing patient centered care in the comfort of their home
-

2

What we have done already

- 45 individuals trained in Stop The Bleed
 - 54 individuals trained in First Aid/CPR/AED
 - 15 individuals certified as Vermont Emergency First Responders
 - 5 individuals assisted with navigating the health care system
 - 2 individuals assisted with life alert and mobility devices
 - Upcoming EMT class, bring potentially three more EMT's
 - Developed close relationships with the Police Department
 - Community Outreach event on May 2nd
-

3

Where we want to go

- Paramedic level services
 - Training a community care paramedic
 - Interfacility transfers
 - Provide the following:
 - Care transitions (hospital to home)*
 - Chronic disease support*
 - Wound care*
 - V/S monitoring / blood pressure check*
 - Medication reconciliation, compliance*
 - BP check*
 - Home safety evaluations*
-

4

How do we fund this?

- Grants (Safer, AFG, Congressional delegation funds)
 - Interfacility transfers
 - Long term funding through partnerships
 - Self funding for education (Paramedic program \$14,000)
 - Paramedic level beginning in winter 2025
-

5

Interfacility transfers

If 100 transfers were conducted between Springfield Hospital and Dartmouth Hitchcock.

At 70% reimbursement that would bring in \$80,000 in revenue after expenses.

Even with the addition of paramedic level care and services, that would be an overall taxpayer save of \$47,000

This revenue will also help offset the full time fire chief position

6