

1 **TOWN OF CHESTER**
2 **SELECTBOARD MEETING**

3 **January 3, 2024, Minutes**

4 **Board Members Present:** Arianna Knapp, Lee Gustafson, Arne Jonynas, and Peter Hudkins at
5 Town Hall and Heather Chase, via Zoom.

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

8 **Visitors Present:** William Lindsay, Keith Jungermann, Russ Cumming, Dick Jewett, Geary Mills,
9 Angie Cooley, Wayne Cooley, Rob Nye, David Cherry, Kevin Forbes, Ken Walker, Ruth Walker,
10 Jon Clark, Victoria Mostoe, Conner Eklund, Georgia Mastoe-Ekland, John Vallo, Roger
11 Batchelder, Andy Rogatard, Mike Westine, John Murphy, Joe Marini, Lewis Lettenberger, Sean
12 Snyder, David J., Ruthanne Batchelder, Lee Whiting, Paul Bidgood, and Cortlandt Pennell at Town
13 Hall; and Robert Nied, Tim Roper, Hugh Quinn, Donna McNeill Hudkins, Evan Parks, Jerene
14 Slovinsky, SAPA TV, and Chester Telegraph via Zoom.

15
16 **Call to Order**

17
18 Chair Arne Jonynas called the meeting to order at 6:30 p.m. with the pledge of allegiance. Arne
19 noticed there were many in attendance which often indicated a controversy or something that
20 everyone in town was interested in. He welcomed everyone to the meeting and asked that they
21 sign the attendance sheet. He noted that Heather Chase was attending by Zoom.

22
23 **Agenda Item 1, Additions or Deletions to the Agenda**

24
25 There were none.

26
27 **Agenda Item 2, Approve Minutes from the December 20, 2023 Selectboard Meeting**

28 Lee moved and Peter seconded a motion to approve the December 20th meeting minutes regarding
29 the Water and Sewer Department and Selectboard meetings. Arianna asked if the minutes included
30 both meetings and they did. Arianna called attention to line 44 on page 12 and said she did not
31 want to appoint him “to be chair” but thought she said she wanted to appoint him “to be clear” as
32 it changed the meaning entirely. Lee noted on pages 1 and 12, line 13, that Jerene Slivinsky’s name
33 was misspelled. Page 4, line 39 there was a typo about the trees across the river causing damming
34 and damming was misspelled. The minutes were approved unanimously, as amended.

35 **Agenda Item 3, Citizens Comments/Answers from Previous Meeting**

36
37 There were none.

38 **Agenda Item 4, Old Business**

39
40 Report given by the Town Manager, Julie Hance:

41
42 Hennessey Property

43 Mr. Hennessey passed away 1.5 weeks ago leaving his property which had a health order and was

1 condemned by the town. It requires significant cleanup for which the town can access Brownsfield
2 funds. Julie has been in discussions with the siblings who are the only remaining heirs and under
3 her advisement, have contacted a local attorney, Steve Ankuda, who Julie has spoken with, and
4 the family is in favor of letting the town access the property. The Selectboard will have a lot to do
5 along the way and they will be entering the process. Arne asked if there would be reimbursements,
6 which Julie confirmed. Lee asked if there was a deductible for the town and there was not.

7
8 **Agenda Item 5, Class IV Road; Bailey Hill Road**
9

10 Arne noted Bailey Hill was in Smokeshire and there had been a lot of documentation presented to
11 the board to read from both sides, and it was a lot to digest, and there were a lot of questions and
12 concerns. He said the board would likely seek legal counsel to help them understand the documents
13 and didn't see any action happening at this meeting. Arne said it took him a while to get through
14 some of the pages. Some of the maps were exact and concise and some seemed primitive, and a
15 lot of questions came up which should be addressed by counsel to help them make decisions. It is
16 a serious consideration they are being asked to talk about and make decisions about and that's why
17 it's important for the board to do its due diligence to make sure they cover all the topics and
18 ramifications, which could be huge. It will affect many communities in the area and part of
19 Southern Vermont and items related to the one trail and class IV road they were discussing. Arne
20 noted they had begun talking about class IV roads at the last meeting. They would do their best to
21 have people speak about the issue and give their reasons for what they thought should be done.
22 Arne said Paul Bidgood and Cortlandt Pennell , who were two landowners, wanted them to
23 consider this class IV road discontinuance. There was a lot of work done by Peter Farrar, who was
24 a local historian and helped them a lot with the roads and boundary lines. Arne thanked him for
25 his work.

26
27 Paul Bidgood, a landowner in Smokeshire, said he had met some of the board members and Julie
28 before. Paul put together documentation and reviewed it with Peter Farrar, the road researcher,
29 back in 2010 and it demonstrated the Town Highway 136, Bailey Hill Road, was incorrectly put
30 on the highway map in 2010. He reviewed that information with Peter Farrar and Julie, who were
31 also there, it's represented in his meeting minutes from December 21st. He reviewed with Julie and
32 Peter previously and was happy with the way Arne introduced it as it needed consideration and
33 review. Paul said as landowners, they are entitled to their private property, and he was there to
34 correct the problem put on the table in 2010. Arne asked if any board members had questions.
35 None did, except Arne asked what Paul wanted to see happen and his desire for the discontinuance.
36 Paul wanted to see it treated like all other roads that were discontinued and remain a private right-
37 of-way for the landowners and follow the normal course of events. Lee asked if the right-of-way
38 applied to those assigned to it in the deed. Paul said it was a right-of-way to the abutters to the
39 former roadbed. Paul appreciated they had set the tone for a legitimate review of the
40 documentation.

41
42 Arne asked if anyone in the audience wanted to comment.

43
44 Dick Jewett, a Chester resident, has been the Chester Snowmobile Club trail master for around 35
45 years. He noted there were lots of club members present and some from other clubs. His tasks were
46 to oversee the buildings and maintenance of 59 miles of trails in two towns and 6 counties. He

1 read from the letter he had sent the board members the day before. The letter explained all the
2 snowmobile club has done for the roads in Chester over the years. It described the trails and the
3 money spent maintaining the trails and bridges associated with them, including the Bailey Hill
4 Road. A lot of money and volunteer time was spent after the July flood to improve the trails in the
5 Smokeshire Bailey Hill area. He publicly thanked the contractors who donated material and time
6 and asked the town not to waste the club's efforts and money spent on the trails and said if the
7 snowmobile club were to lose this section of the trail, it would cripple them and possibly ruin them
8 as they would lose their main corridor to the north cutting them off from the neighboring clubs and
9 the rest of the VAST network of trails. The Chester Snowmobile Club asked the town not to
10 discontinue the Bailey Hill Road Class IV Road from Smokeshire Road to the Cavendish Town
11 line. Arne said the Snowmobile Club had given a lot to the town, was of huge value, and part of
12 the fiber of the town and had done nothing but good things for the town, including scholarships,
13 education, and the Winter Carnival in addition to snowmobiling.

14
15 Arne said it would be nice if it snowed soon given the recent weather. He again said no decision
16 would be taken at this meeting given the amount of information to be considered. He also thought
17 the Selectboard should conduct a site visit before making any decisions.

18
19 Mike Westine said when he was on the Selectboard 25 years ago and dealt with the same issue,
20 they made the decision, and he wanted the Selectboard to hold that up. He noted the road was high
21 and it may be needed during future floods to provide access and it would be pointless to give it up.

22
23 Arne thought back in '05 when the Act 178 program was started, a lot of it would be laid to rest
24 and they would see how it played into it. Lee asked what their next step was, and Julie said she
25 would send it to Jim for his review and research the documentation provided by Mr. Bidgood to
26 guide them as a board to their responsibilities and what the land records say. Julie thought it was
27 important to get an unbiased opinion and research the records. Arne thought it would be
28 appropriate for the board to meet with Jim as he had a lot of questions that he didn't want to bring
29 up publicly in the event it went to litigation. Julie agreed. Lee agreed there was a substantial
30 amount of information after spending a couple hours reviewing it, and agreed an attorney should
31 be involved. Peter asked if any resident of Chester present was in favor of discontinuing the road.
32 There was no response. Julie said Jim needed to look at the legal history and the members agreed.

33
34 Kevin Forbes of Andover responded to Peter's question that he was against throwing any roads
35 up. He said more and more of the land was being sold and it was getting harder to recreate unless
36 you were a skier or a hiker. They were being left to defend themselves. He said it was something
37 in the state since he was a young boy, and it was going away and was a shame. Kevin said it
38 brought a lot of money into the state and he asked the committee to consider their needs and wants
39 and they had put a lot of money and effort into improving the trails and were good stewards of the
40 lands and watch for people who disrespect the property. He thanked the board for their time.

41
42 Paul said the property in the region had been in his family since 1812 and there were no better
43 stewards of Vermont property than his 9 generations of family. He reminded the board that the
44 certificate of highway mileage would be coming up in February and the board would be required
45 to certify an oath of what the roads were, and he was offering to assist so the board could properly
46 sign the certificate. Arne said February 10th was the date and he would not be looking at a timetable

1 but rather do what was needed to get answers. The certificate would be signed the 10th whether
2 they were done with this issue but didn't think a deadline was necessary. His civic duty, along with
3 the rest of the board, was to the town. Arne added they were just temporary stewards of the land,
4 town, and roads and needed to make sure they were worthy stewards to assure future generations
5 of the same rights.

6
7 Heather appreciated the thoughtful approach to getting counsel input so they could make a
8 knowledgeable decision.

9
10 Peter disclosed that he doesn't have a snowmobile but is a regular user of the road and thought
11 others who weren't members of the club used the roads. Arne said the same applied to him and
12 said he uses every class IV road he can find for walking, hiking, and recreating and thought the
13 same applied to a lot of people. He appreciated Peter calling attention to that.

14
15 Conner Eklund, from Stone Hearth Inn and Eatery, as a local business in town who is directly on
16 the trail, said business that travels through from Londonderry or north down, and people traveling
17 through, stop in for rooms and food and it would impact them greatly in the winter because it
18 would split business between the snowmobilers and skiers because half the business is from
19 snowmobilers.

20
21 Arne suggested they watch the agenda to see when it was addressed next. Julie suggested the
22 Snowmobile Club appoint a contact person for her to let them know when it would be on the
23 agenda again. A member of the club said they would appoint someone.

24
25 (Arne called a brief 4-minute recess so many of those in attendance could leave the meeting if
26 they wanted.)

27
28 Arianna asked if a motion was necessary to finish the last topic, and one was not as it wasn't a
29 hearing and the board had given Julie guidance. Lee asked if they needed to keep the information
30 and Julie said it was his choice and she would send everything to Jim Carroll who was aware it
31 was likely coming. Julie said once Jim had a chance to review it, an executive session meeting
32 could be scheduled. Lee asked for future submissions if letter authors could identify themselves
33 along with the date.

34
35 Lee commended Bill Lindsay for remaining at the meeting after everyone left.

36 37 **Agenda Item 6, Alarm Policy Adoption**

38
39 Julie said Lee found a few more grammatical errors but nothing of substance in the policy. The
40 copy presented to the members was a clean copy. Arne entertained a motion to adopt the Town of
41 Chester Alarm Ordinance, as written. Lee moved and Peter seconded the motion. Julie said it
42 would take effect 20 days from their signatures. Arianna asked if there was a prior ordinance and
43 there was not. Arne said it was brought about because of false alarms, and multiple calls for
44 unmanaged alarms. Peter agreed. Arianna said the logic made sense. Arianna asked if the draft
45 was based on another one and Julie said it was from another town and they had permission to use
46 it. Julie also shares ordinances with other towns.

1 Lee asked what action they take with repeat offenders relative to fires. Someone he knows dumps
2 their live ashes and drives to Connecticut and the Fire Department must put out a brush fire as a
3 result. Lee wondered if they could bill them for the Fire Department needing to respond. Julie
4 would speak to the Fire Department. Julie understood but said this policy wasn't responding to a
5 fire but an alarm so it would not apply.

6
7 Peter asked if there was a policy that applied to rolling the truck because there was an accident.
8 Julie said they are billing the insurance company, and it didn't require a policy because motor
9 vehicle accidents are different. She would investigate billing for fires. Arne thought there may be
10 a law on the books that applied to negligent behavior. Lee felt people needed to be responsible for
11 their actions and not require others to pay.

12
13 A vote was taken, and it passed unanimously. The members signed the ordinance.

14 **Agenda Item 7, 2024 General Fund Budget**

15
16 Julie said most expenses were in but there were a few stragglers that would come in January for
17 2023 but nothing big at this point. This budget reflects a \$378,000 increase and \$176,000 of it was
18 the principal payment for the EMS bond. Removing that to get an accurate picture, the budget was
19 up about \$200,000 or 5%. So given inflation is at 8.5%, they are below inflation. In that number,
20 they ended 2023 with a highway surplus of about \$186,000 due to the flood because highway labor
21 was moved from the general fund to the flood account so this year there was \$186,000 highway
22 surplus and this budget uses \$100,000 of it and reserve \$86,000 for whatever may come in 2024.
23 They ended 2023 with a capital fund surplus of \$279,000. The last two loan payments are in 2024
24 and this budget proposes \$50,000 come from capital fund budget to keep the increase at only
25 \$200,000. If they still feel that amount is too high, there are things to look at. Julie said projects
26 could be pulled from ARPA if they chose. Julie mentioned the clapper valve included in the library
27 budget that cost \$15,000 could be paid by ARPA funds. \$30,000 for the Yosemite window match
28 could be pulled but would cause that budget to spike next year. She tries not to pull things from
29 the budget that will only spike it next year. The other item in the budget was the additional position
30 for lister and zoning which could be pulled but Julie suggested they leave it because those two
31 departments needed help and she expected the two employees, though wonderful, wouldn't be
32 there much longer. It would be nice to get someone full-time in there to learn the job to make
33 transitioning easier. Zoning, listers, and finance are the three areas throughout the state that
34 municipalities are having a difficult time filling positions, often because they're part time. Those
35 positions create the Grand List. In addition, short-term rentals and housing are adding a piece and
36 they're very busy, and there's economic development stuff to be done and it would be great to use
37 that office. It represents about \$50,000 in the budget and Julie sees it as what it costs to run the
38 town. Peter asked about less revenue being anticipated for current taxes. Julie reminded Peter the
39 number included revenue from the school and the tax rate had not been set yet, and it was what the
40 state anticipated. She wished the budget didn't require showing the school payments because it
41 was confusing and caused difficulty because they don't know until June 30th. Julie said if they
42 were on a fiscal year or a July to June budget, they wouldn't have an issue. She said they have a
43 spreadsheet that continually adjusts each month after the school tax gets set.

44
45 Arne asked the members how they felt about the budget. Lee said he needed to spend more time
46 looking at it. Some of the things discussed, he wasn't sure what to think. He mentioned \$101,000

1 for the library and said the school was always a thorn. Lee questioned how the taxpayers would
2 pay for it with the inflation rate and wasn't sure yet that they could cut anything. Julie said she had
3 been struggling for weeks. It wasn't just municipal but that was the budget that got hit because it
4 was the only one that they had control over. Lee noted they have zero control over the school
5 budget, and it was the taxpayers, and most weren't paying attention. Lee applauded Julie for her
6 work. Julie said at some point the economy had to settle or it would collapse. Julie said if people
7 were seeing an increase in their home budget, they had to anticipate they would see it in the town's
8 budget too. Expenses that couldn't be avoided such as plow blades, chains, and a health insurance
9 increase that was part of salaries. Lee questioned if the various departments broke even who
10 generate revenue and Julie said they don't and none of the departments were fully self-sustaining
11 because they don't charge to use the facilities. Lee was looking at the cost benefit and never wanted
12 to get rid of the rec department but wondered if there was something they could do. Julie said
13 revenue wise, it wasn't bringing more in. Julie said none of the departments were self-sustaining.
14 She noted that revenues were up, and departments had been looking at where revenue could be
15 generated such as things like the alarm policy, ambulance by getting advanced EMTs and they
16 could charge higher rates, billing for hazmat calls which they hadn't in the past. Julie said they are
17 looking at zoning fees and Preston is doing research about what Chester charges compared to other
18 towns, and Amie is gathering information about cemetery fees, and other things they can do.

19
20 Lee asked about current use tax and Peter said that was another where they have a spreadsheet.
21 Peter said they are reimbursing them for fees they have deducted taxes for, and he didn't think
22 they were being reimbursed fully. Peter wondered if they could get the ambulance to stabilize.
23 Julie said they were doing well, and the ambulance was an expensive department. Julie thought
24 2024's budget would hold. There was a lot that happened in 2023 with changing of chiefs, and
25 2024 will show a stable budget. Lee asked if they could dip into the public funds account, and he
26 saw something about buying a tractor. Julie said there was a tractor that would be about \$15,000
27 and when asked the response given to her was no because the trustee of public funds felt it was
28 routine maintenance and equipment. Julie didn't fight it because they paid for the shed and trees
29 last year. She wanted to get an answer and most of the bequests were left as poor funds or cemetery
30 funds. They are the public funds and are \$800,000 to \$900,000 which are difficult to access. Some
31 of the money is Cyprus Minerals' money that is the town's and is just sitting there but the town
32 has access, but the conversation would be if it should go towards solar. Julie said bequests left in
33 the late 1800s were left for the poor, but they no longer have poor funds or farms because there is
34 a federal welfare system for that. Very little of that money is given out to families in need in the
35 community. Julie said at their church a few years ago they had funds sitting there, and their attorney
36 suggested the base of what was bequeathed be set aside and the rest of the money be available to
37 be used for other things. Julie has a difficult time raising taxes 8% to 9% every year when there is
38 \$400,000 in Economic Development Funds, and \$900,000 in Trustee of Public Funds. Peter
39 questioned why they couldn't use the poor funds for housing to help working people who need a
40 helping hand and Julie thought it may be a perfect catalyst and was a good idea. Arianna said
41 someone could do research on the definition of a poor fund and find the housing development
42 services were serving the same area and they were in correlation. Lee wondered if there were other
43 pots of money being saved for a rainy day that could be used and how they could change the
44 attitude of the Trustees of Public Funds to allow this money to be used for the public because that's
45 what it was for. If they just sit on it, they can't use it for the good of the community. Arne thought
46 the town meetings were dealing with organizations that were non-profit and helping the

1 community in all different ways and seemed to be a perfect spot. It is about \$35,000 in allotments.
2 Peter said it would need to be written into the article and Julie agreed that it could not be applied
3 this year. Julie thought these discussions needed to take place in 2024 before the 2025 budget.
4 Julie wondered if the budget was at a level the town could sustain long-term and it wasn't just
5 board discussion but community input. Arianna wondered if they could discuss an element at the
6 beginning of the year and discuss each topic related to budget and services and provide an
7 opportunity to solicit ideas from the community and thought the budget seemed precarious, but
8 they were making a bed they can't maintain. Julie agreed and said if they cut back on it, they would
9 be cutting services and would impact the community and it was important for people to understand
10 it was the cost to run the town as it is right now and there was nothing extra in the budget. Julie is
11 often told Chester is a small, large town. Arianna suggested an informational session and Julie
12 agreed and suggested it be done quarterly. Arianna would feel better if they spent more time this
13 year digging in before they got to the point they were. Lee agreed that they needed to find a way
14 to get the voters engaged. Lee suggested each of them invite 10 people to the board meeting the
15 next couple of months and thought because few people attended is why they got pushback for their
16 actions. Arianna wondered if for 2025, they could have a Selectboard meeting at the beginning of
17 the month and an informational meeting for the second to allow for budget review and exploration.
18 Arne said that was completely their choice as a board. Julie said it couldn't be done every month
19 because of the agendas. Arianna suggested identifying two meetings next year and the others
20 agreed. Peter said looking back at the budget and the zoning past, there were a ton of things like
21 restaurant or gift shop which were conditional uses, and the commercial businesses are what pay
22 taxes and the Planning Board thought they were still in a perfect little town, and they needed to
23 open some to generate revenue. Peter said the land use question was huge for him because they
24 were subsidizing a huge amount of open land, and the state was telling them they weren't. Peter
25 explained half of Chester was receiving the current use property tax benefit, and those people
26 weren't poor. The difference in the tax rate last year for forest was \$175 an acre for something
27 valued at \$1,000 an acre which negatively affected revenue. Arne noted they were subsidizing the
28 tax rate. Peter agreed and said Burlington wanted them to have undeveloped land while they
29 developed theirs and if they wanted undeveloped land, they should subsidize it. Arne said there
30 was a formula the state used, and they weren't reimbursing them for the whole amount, and agreed
31 with Peter. Julie said the conversation would need to start with the listers connecting with the State.
32 Julie didn't know their formula but said they could ask questions. Lee said a couple weeks ago
33 Peter raised the question concerning a 100-acre parcel that could be given a significant tax break
34 to the landowner on 75 acres in current use and the town doesn't receive the difference. Arianna
35 thought they should make sure they can receive the money they should. Julie said the land use and
36 pilot on the budget was the money they received. Julie said the education tax also was factored
37 into the formula.

38
39 Arne was comfortable looking at the \$180,000 separately and they were at 5% and many
40 neighboring towns were 8% or higher. Arne would love to say less than 5% and wondered if that
41 could be done but it would be kicked right back up at the Town Meeting. Arne said it was the way
42 the country processed taxes and wealth and Lee thought it was uninformed voters who don't want
43 to listen to the board rattle on about something they find boring, so they're stuck between what
44 they know the town must have and what people are willing to put up with and an uninformed voter
45 doesn't understand. The \$378,000 increase in the budget was 9% and \$200,000 was 5%. Arne
46 appreciated that the Trustees of Public Funds was an elected position but thought it was hard to

1 engage in a conversation when they were steadfast in their beliefs, and it would help to have that
2 money go to areas that were for service. Lee loved Arne's idea of having the money go for the
3 Town Meeting articles that are designed for those who need help and loved Peter's idea about
4 having the money go toward housing. Julie hoped the economy would stabilize and noted the bond
5 increase wouldn't happen again. The \$347,000 was there for 30 years but would go down. Julie
6 said the rest was the general operating budget.

7
8 Bill Lindsay thought it was important to separate for the taxpayers who voted for the public safety
9 building that was needed and compared it to a 30-year mortgage payment. If the money was taken
10 from the Public Funds, the building would be paid off. Every mortgage payment on the building
11 is public money sitting someplace. On page 4, there is a line item for auditing and in 2023 it was
12 \$21,600 which was an increase over the previous year, and it was budgeted for \$15,000. Julie said
13 in 2023 because grants exceeded \$750,000 because of ARPA money received, they had to have an
14 additional audit. Bill wondered if the FEMA money expected would trigger an additional audit
15 and Julie said yes in 2025. Bill said in the budget under legal, they spent \$15,000 but budgeted
16 \$2,000 and he didn't think it was realistic. Julie said 2023 was because of the quarry. Arianna
17 noted the quarry wasn't done and Julie thought it was well on its way but they also had Bailey Hill
18 Road so they may want to increase the amount but said it would come out of a different legal line
19 than zoning. Julie said the admin legal line had \$10,000 budgeted and suggested increasing zoning
20 to \$5,000. She didn't anticipate another \$16,000 in 2024 due to a zoning issue. Peter asked if in
21 2024 they would be requesting a \$200,000 bond for paving Andover Road, but it wasn't in the
22 budget because it would be paid in 2025. Julie said the first payment may not even be until 2026.
23 Peter asked about the high school sidewalk study and Julie indicated it was a grant. Julie said the
24 \$40,000 match transfer to the grant fund had already been budgeted. Peter asked about the grant
25 for the hockey rink. Julie said they hadn't been awarded yet and it would be for a new concrete
26 slab for the ice-skating rink and would be constructed in 2025. Peter thought what was killing the
27 budget was the ambulance that took an \$80,000 jump and was a service they had to provide and
28 where the biggest hit was. Julie hoped that by having two EMTs responding to calls they could bill
29 at higher rates and see higher revenue. The other issue was Medicare reimbursement rates that are
30 from 1989 and there's a group fighting in Congress to increase them. Arne said these local budgets
31 are affected by national decisions and the burden keeps shifting to the local taxpayer and the money
32 at the federal level goes for military rather than taking care of its citizens. Lee also saw the money
33 spent on waste as a problem and Arne agreed. Lee would rather decide how to spend the local
34 money instead of Montpelier or D.C. Arne agreed. Julie said the capital plan surplus was \$279,000
35 and they are taking \$50,000 to pay off the two loans with a remainder of \$229,000. Of that,
36 \$200,000 is set aside for the sidewalk match which won't be in 2024. She must apply for additional
37 funds and the project won't likely be constructed until 2026. Arne thought she was being optimistic
38 and was worried it may never get done. She wondered if this year's jump should be split between
39 the 2 years and take \$80,000 from the capital plan or ARPA to offset it so it increases half a step
40 in 2024 and half in 2025. Arianna said the feeling would be they would be spreading the jump, but
41 the money would be taken from somewhere else. Arne thought taking it from ARPA would be
42 what the money was for. Julie said \$280,000 has already been taken from ARPA for the cost
43 overruns on the public safety building. Arne thought it would be a helpful way to ease the jump.
44 Lee asked if setting the warned articles was by paper ballot and Julie said it was from the floor.
45 The people asking from the funds would be expected to make a presentation. Julie thought it would
46 be nice for the presenters to discuss their financials because some of the organizations are sitting

1 on bank accounts and given the current times, they should expect someone to be present and
2 discuss their current bank balances and financials. Arne didn't think that was unreasonable.
3 Arianna asked if they were voted on the floor by residents and what was the board's role. Julie
4 said before Article 5 came up, she can, in her budget presentation, make a statement to the audience
5 that she has asked a representative to be present and to discuss their financials. Lee thought a group
6 sitting on \$150,000 should explain why they were asking for money and Arianna said she was
7 pointing out that it wasn't the board who they were asking. Arne said they were citizens like
8 everyone else on the floor. Julie said a few years ago before COVID, agencies weren't sending
9 people to talk and got voted down because they weren't available to answer questions. Lee thought
10 it made sense to require this. Arne thought non-profit P&L statements should be public
11 information. Lee asked if the trustee of public funds was an annual vote and Julie said they are 3-
12 year positions that are currently filled and it's difficult to find people willing to run. Julie said it
13 was the same process as running for the Selectboard and if they knew people who were interested,
14 to tell them. Julie liked Arianna's idea where they had a couple Selectboard meetings that were for
15 discussions and economic development and was where the other position in zoning would be
16 helpful to work on economic development and how to do it.

17
18 Lee apologized that he didn't recognize the audience on Zoom when he commented that Bill was
19 the last one remaining.

20

21

Agenda Item 8, New Business/Next Agenda

22

23 Julie said they would not sign the warning at the next meeting but would receive a draft of the
24 budget and typically they set the budget at the next meeting but if they needed one more meeting,
25 the warning had to be signed by January 25th which is when the budget had to be set. They had
26 anytime between the 19th and the 25th. Arianna said she would not be in person for the meeting on
27 January 17th and would be by Zoom. Julie asked if they wanted her to play with splitting the
28 increase and considering ARPA funds. Lee is conflicted because the ARPA funds should be used
29 for something big. Arianna said theoretically it was going to the Public Safety Building. Lee
30 thought it would be nice to have cash on hand to buy the solar field if it ever happened but also
31 thought protecting the taxpayer from a huge hit was something to consider. Regarding the solar
32 field, Peter said they have the rest of the field and the infrastructure, and they should propose
33 building a solar field and push Green Mountain to change it. Peter questioned what it would take
34 to put together a proposal to build one. Julie said they could probably get it funded and the issue
35 she was having currently was getting funding because the solar field was already there. Peter
36 thought a new field was the way they should go, and Lee agreed. Lee thought it was worth inquiring
37 about upgrading the substation and building their own solar panels. They could easily double the
38 capacity of the field. Peter agreed and said they were looking to fix one transformer because that
39 was what was needed. Arianna wondered since ARPA was COVID money, would the government
40 reach a point where they wouldn't allow them to spend it. Julie said they must obligate their funds
41 by December 31, 2024, and spend them by 2026 so a discussion should start in March. Arianna
42 thought offsetting \$80,000 now would make her feel better about it if they don't pretend it's not
43 obligated. Arne said it was a gamble because they will need to obligate it by the end of the year.
44 Arianna said the ARPA funds could buy plow blades. Julie advised against using the funds for
45 annual operating expenses so she wouldn't suggest they take \$176,000 to make the whole payment.
46 Arianna said the reason for not doing it was they may need to use the \$80,000 later. Arianna asked

1 if anyone objected to doing it and they didn't. Julie would pull any expenses that looked like one-
2 time expenses for them to discuss. Arianna wanted a paragraph on what they were spending on IT
3 and computers in 2024. Julie said the reason she pulled IT out of each line was it was extremely
4 confusing to do it that way and it was not accurate, so she included the IT service they pay for in
5 the communication line. They are switching IT support services primarily because they have been
6 having issues and lost their server for one week this year. She learned the IT company is
7 outsourcing their services to foreign companies and she isn't comfortable with them in her
8 government computers where they have links to information.

9
10 Julie asked when they wanted to have their discussions in executive sessions about her contract.
11 Her anniversary is the beginning of March. They would begin them at the next meeting. Arianna
12 was concerned about not being there in person and Julie said it would take more than one meeting
13 and Arianna would be able to participate by Zoom in the executive session. Julie would provide
14 them with the current contract.

15
16 **Agenda Item 9, Adjourn**

17
18 Lee moved to adjourn, and Arianna seconded the motion. A vote was taken, and the motion passed
19 unanimously, and the meeting was adjourned at 8:26 p.m.