

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

3 **July 6, 2022, Minutes**

4 **Board Members Present:** Arne Jonynas, Ben Whalen, Lee Gustafson, and Heather Chase at Town
5 Hall; and Leigh Dakin via Zoom.

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

8 **Visitors Present:** Bill Lindsay, Cheryl Joy Lipton, Lauren Baker, Gary Baker, Alexandria Steele,
9 Khol Hitchcock, Mike Reeb, Judy Henning, Derick Jenkins, Amanda Jenkins, John Velit, Judy
10 Hallberg, Chelsea Austin, Joseph Winot, Gary Rapanotti, Kirby Putnam, Amanda Silva, Gary
11 Pollard, Susan Pollard, Graham Kennedy, Darcy Noble, Dave Johnson, Kathy Mayshar, and Brian
12 Rapanotti, at Town Hall; and SAPA TV, Chester Telegraph, Kathy Walsh, Carol's iPad, Stephen's
13 iPad, Joy Slaughter, Emily Burkland, Robin Reilly, Luna Burkland, Hugh Quinn, Sharon Jonynas,
14 Janna Aldrich, Lora Cokolat, Linda Diak, and Melody Reed via Zoom.

15
16 **Call to Order**

17
18 Arne Jonynas called the meeting to order at 6:30 p.m. with the pledge of allegiance. He welcomed
19 everyone to the meeting and thought it was nice to see so many in attendance.

20
21 **Agenda Item 1, Approve minutes from the June 15, 2022, Selectboard Meeting and June**
22 **22, 2022, Special Selectboard Meeting**

23 Lee moved and Heather seconded to approve the June 15th minutes. Arne asked for any changes,
24 corrections, or omissions. Ben stated he was not at the meeting but was listed as being present. A
25 vote was taken, and the minutes were approved as amended.

26 Arne asked for a motion to approve the minutes of June 22, 2022, Special Selectboard Meeting
27 with a change on the date from July to June. Heather moved and Leigh seconded the motion. There
28 were no changes, a vote was taken, and the motion passed unanimously, and the minutes were
29 approved as amended.

30 **Agenda Item 2, Citizens Comments/Answers from Previous Meeting**

31 Arne asked for comments regarding issues not on the agenda.

32 Arne had been approached about an accident at the four corners on the Grafton Road and he
33 wondered if they could look into it. Julie said they had and one of the issues was line of sight. Due
34 to fencing and landscaping, you can't see. It was a freak accident. There are not a lot of incidents
35 there. She spoke with Rick and Kirby and there wasn't a lot to be done unless they required the
36 landscaping to be removed from the corner lot. Arne asked if it was a 4 way stop and if there were
37 crosswalks there. Julie said it was a 4 way and there were no crosswalks, and the sidewalk ended
38 there. The accident was a woman came down the hill on her bike into the middle of the intersection
39 and she didn't stop. An unidentified woman from the audience came to the microphone and said
40 she goes through there every morning and the cars barely stop. Julie had heard that and said
41 patrolling was supposed to increase.

1 Arne added he had a comment from someone else regarding compression or jake brakes. Julie said
2 they can't prohibit jake brakes. Leigh said it had been ongoing since she was a Selectboard member
3 in the '80s. She suggested if they went the speed limit through town, they may not be affected so
4 much by the noise they make. Julie agreed.

5 There were no other comments.

6 **Agenda Item 3, Old Business**

7 Report given by the Town Manager:

8 Police Department Assessment

9 The focus groups will meet on July 13th at Town Hall and is open to anyone who wants to
10 participate. The target of the focus groups are Chester Business owners, in-town residents, and
11 rural residents. She encouraged people to attend as it was a good opportunity to talk with Jim Baker
12 who is conducting the assessment and have their voices heard regarding what they want to see
13 from the police department, what the police do well, and where they want to see improvement.

14 VLCT

15 Julie is working with VLCT. They have a lot of new members of new boards in towns and through
16 email chains, it is evident they need updates on open meeting laws in Vermont. On either
17 September 12th or 14th, VLCT will conduct a training for all the committees for open meeting laws.

18 Solar Field

19 Finally, thanks to Tim Roper, they were given the name of Mike Gammal from Gammal Real
20 Estate Services of Essex who has offered a contract price of \$4,950 to appraise the solar field.
21 Once confirmation is received from Green Lantern that they agree with the appraiser, she will
22 contract with Gammal.

23 Brookside

24 The piers for the boardwalk will be installed on July 25th with construction taking place shortly
25 thereafter. By mid-August, the Brookside bridge and sidewalk should be completed.

26 Public Safety Building/Town Garage

27 Work is coming to completion. Steve was working on the punch list for both projects and would
28 be meeting with them later in the week to go through the final items. By the end of July or
29 beginning of August, they expected to nail down the true cost overruns due to COVID costs.

30 VHFA Program

31 The program is run federally with ARPA dollars. The program will help pay delinquent
32 water/sewer, delinquent tax, or delinquent utility bills for people in primary residence. Amie and
33 Debbie have been doing a great job getting several people signed up and so far, Chester has
34 received just under \$29,000 of delinquent payments with another \$31,000 waiting for final
35 approval. By the time they were done, Chester will have received about \$60,000 in delinquent
36 payments through the program. It is a great program. Arne asked how they were sitting with
37 delinquent payments and if there were more due to COVID. Julie said their delinquent rate was
38 down and they have collected more. They would be doing financials in August so Julie would have
39 the numbers at that time.

40

1 **Agenda Item 4, Chester Community Greenhouse Update**

2 Arne said it was specifically warned so that the folks who about the property could be part of the
3 conversation and offer their input regarding the project.

4 Cheryl Joy Lipton was in attendance to give an updated presentation on the site itself and if there
5 were any questions, comments, or concerns from those in attendance, she could help them out with
6 some answers.

7 Cheryl Joy Lipton gave an updated presentation from June 15th which had been recorded and was
8 on SAPA TV. She was joined in attendance by her fellow board of directors, John Velit, Judy
9 Hallberg, and Melody Reed, Luna Burkland, Andrew Malaby, Deb Velto and Nate Farrell were
10 probably on Zoom. They are a member of the Vermont Community Garden Network and dedicated
11 to creating an operating a community greenhouse and gardens for people who live, work, or go to
12 school in Chester, Vermont can garden. They work to align their programs with efforts to address
13 local food production, food security, holistic health, climate change, sustainability, education,
14 access for seniors and those with disabilities, environmentally compatible economic development
15 and the overall quality of life for the residents of Chester treating everyone with justice and
16 equality.

17 The presentation included pictures of other community gardens from Ludlow, Putney, Burlington,
18 White River Junction, and Colchester. There was an arial view of the proposed site on Canal Street,
19 as well as a sketch of the proposed community garden and greenhouse.

20 Cheryl Joy offered to answer questions for those in attendance.

21 Gary Baker asked about the dark green in the chart. Cheryl Joy said they were trees and shrubs
22 that were native and would produce fruits and nuts. He followed with how someone could use the
23 garden and would there be a fee. Cheryl Joy said the only requirement was to live, work, or go to
24 school in Chester. If someone didn't and they provided a reason why they should be able to have
25 a plot, they would consider it. As far as a fee, they are still determining that. There would be
26 financial aid for those who need it. He asked if they had considered the Pinnacle for the garden.
27 Cheryl Joy said they had but it wasn't in the center of town and there wasn't an acre available. Mr.
28 Baker asked how they were getting funding. She said they were having a capital campaign,
29 donations, and would also be funded by memberships. Arne added it was the beginning of the
30 project and keeping in mind in the future, the greenhouse would be there. It's a small start and the
31 scope of the project in its totality is large and would take a lot of funding and effort. And it wasn't
32 like this was just a small step in that direction. They thought the positive aspects, like community
33 building, the education part, and the attraction to tourists, and self-sustainability with growing were
34 an important part of the community. Gary asked when the project would be complete. Cheryl Joy
35 said they don't know and that it would take a lot of work. They may put in a couple of fruit trees
36 this year. The greenhouse would take a lot of time. They are starting out to engage community
37 interest and if enough, it would continue. It would be a positive park like setting.

38 Alexandria Steele bought her property back in November because it was quiet and peaceful and
39 there wasn't a lot of traffic, and she could sit in her backyard and watch her animals run around
40 and play. People drive fast down that road, and she was concerned with the people that would drive
41 down that road aimlessly. Kids that walk down the road. Judy Hallberg, a community member,
42 said there were 42 plots in Ludlow. She had been working there this morning and saw 4 cars.
43 People worked quietly. The only thing that makes noise is the power lawnmower. This year they

1 invested in a push mower because none of them like the sound of the mower. It's a quiet peaceful
2 activity. It's not a party place. One of the things she likes about the community garden in Ludlow
3 is how quiet it is. It's a quiet almost meditative activity. Alexandria's property is on Canal Street.
4 Judy didn't think the garden or gardeners would have any impact at all. If cars are going too fast
5 on Canal Street, it had nothing to do with the gardens. The Ludlow Garden has been in existence
6 for 22 years and is larger and has more members than they will have room for.

7 Someone from the audience commented but they did not come forward to the microphone or
8 identify themselves for the record. Both Julie and Arne told them their comments needed to be
9 through the microphone for the people in attendance on Zoom and for the minutes.

10 Cheryl Joy added that they envision it to be a park-like setting with beauty, peacefulness, and
11 healthiness, and would like to be a part of the neighborhood and work together with each other.
12 Gardens typically are quiet and gentle as are typically the people who garden. She said there
13 wouldn't be a lot of activity except for gardening.

14 Alexandria Steele said she thought it was beautiful the way it is now with nothing in the field and
15 being able to go out back and look at absolutely nothing and have their privacy in that field. That
16 is what it has been for many years, and she wished it would stay that way.

17 Mike Reeb, who is a beekeeper in Chester, was willing to contribute time and equipment and bees
18 if they were interested. Cheryl Joy said that was wonderful and added they would be happy to put
19 a buffer of plant material such as evergreens to shield them from the view if they wanted.

20 Derrick Jenkins, the grandson-in-law of Judy who lives at the end of Canal Street, said it would
21 directly affect her the way it is plotted with the roundabout, and that half of the driveway was hers.
22 The way Cheryl Joy had it angled, it invites people to go around the circle and drive by her house
23 repeatedly. He didn't think it was the view, since everyone likes a garden. But not everyone wanted
24 it right next to them to affect their daily lives. He didn't think anyone was against the Community
25 Garden, but they needed to consider the neighbors who live there who are directly affected. He
26 said Alexandria had some valid points that the neighbors should have a say. 4 or 5 cars may not
27 be a lot daily but would be to them. Not everyone sees kids running in the yard and they should be
28 able to run in the yard. Arne said he hoped the parking and turnaround would be addressed because
29 before anything happened there would be a survey done to consider everything. There could be
30 some reconfigurations as it wasn't set in stone. It was a big step not only for them but for the board
31 to grant permission for this.

32 Melody Reed was at the Co-op in Putney and their community gardens are across from it. She said
33 there were 2 people, a mother and a disabled person in a wheelchair. Their community gardens are
34 next to a senior facility. It is quiet there. Most community gardens she's visited rarely have had
35 more than 3 people in them at a time. She didn't foresee a big increase in traffic and one of the
36 reasons they're proposing this site is because people can walk or bike there.

37 Janna Aldrich asked if the greenhouse had been heated in the winter in the past and would it be in
38 the new location. Their experience has been that greenhouses which aren't heated in the winter
39 tend to collapse, especially with Vermont snow. She wondered if the Vermont building code
40 requires heat to maintain the greenhouse's stability and if it fails, would there be funds available
41 to remove it. Cheryl Joy said it would be heated and it would not be going up right away as they
42 need to raise money to cover the expense. They've had structural engineers look at it and determine
43 it can hold the newer insulated double pane glass. It will be heated and won't collapse. Janna asked

1 if there was a natural phenomenon and it collapsed, who would pay for the rebuilding of it. Cheryl
2 Joy deferred to Melody Reed who said they've planned to have monies available for that scenario
3 or if interest dies and it needs to be dismantled. They will have funds put aside. Cheryl Joy said
4 they would also have insurance. They would sell the greenhouse if there were a lack of interest.

5 An unidentified woman said there is a fair amount of foot traffic on Grafton Street and when the
6 Green is busy, they get a lot of people coming through. It's something that could increase if they
7 were encouraging walking to the gardens and people cut through their properties to get there.
8 Cheryl Joy said that was a good point and that's why there's vegetation all around the borders. The
9 only way of cutting through is if property owners wanted their own access to the garden. Cheryl
10 Joy suspected once the gardens were there, there would be less cutting through because it won't
11 look like there's a way to get there. She said it was all vegetation and mostly shrubs. She pointed
12 out that according to each homeowner abutting the property, they will accommodate what they do
13 or don't want with the plant materials with buffering.

14 Robin Reilly asked about the well, which was authorized for emergency use, and if the town
15 anticipated having to use it for emergency use and if not, was there another system in place to use.
16 Arne said they had two engineering studies done and their recommendation was that the town never
17 develop the well again because of certain situations and issues that surround the well. Some of it
18 being a 200-foot buffer zone that is not attainable and another being some sites in the area that had
19 leaks over the year. There had been a gas station on the corner not too far from there. Arne said if
20 the well ever came into play, it would be a boil water situation no matter what. The town does not
21 anticipate that happening because of the engineering studies that were done. The town is currently
22 looking for other options for a secondary well in town. One of the options was on the Jeffries well
23 site for a second site. Before they even got this far in the discussion, they had done their due
24 diligence to make sure the well would not be an option.

25 Alexandria Steele was concerned with the people who wanted the view of the field but didn't want
26 the extra foot traffic and they would either block off the field totally so they couldn't see into it or
27 make a path so people could potentially be walking through their properties. Cheryl Joy said she
28 could accommodate both as a landscape designer. They could have lower shrubs so they could see
29 through but not get through. Cheryl Joy thought it may be pretty than a bunch of houses going up.

30 Leslie, who was signed in as Stephen's iPad, who lived on Canal Street. She said there was a
31 community garden at the elementary school and wondered if anyone had considered expanding
32 that. She has noticed a lot of them aren't in use. She wondered if anyone had considered purchasing
33 the property to the left of the pedestrian bridge where there is a rundown house. Cheryl Joy said
34 they have considered other sites, and none have been appropriate except for this one and the one
35 near the Academy building. They were the two remaining sites that were the most appropriate. The
36 elementary school is not large enough for the gardens and the greenhouse and the gardens there
37 are small. Melody Reed said they spoke with a few people about the school site, and it becomes
38 complicated because they are a public school, and the Community Gardens is a non-profit
39 organization and there are regulations and restrictions. For people that weren't aware, they had
40 considered 13 or 14 sites around town over the past 2 years. They were also approached by the
41 people who own the condemned house by the bridge who were interested in selling it and they felt
42 they couldn't purchase a house when they were trying to raise funds to deal with the greenhouse
43 rebuild and there were other issues with the house. Cheryl Joy added that people aren't allowed on
44 the school property while it's in session so it would limit the time to use the site, so using school
45 land wasn't an option.

1 An unidentified gentleman knew they were in the infancy stage but questioned how they could
2 heat the greenhouse if they didn't have a lot of funding. He asked if there was a petition where
3 they had a lot of interest and if so, how would the traffic not affect it. Judy Hallberg said an
4 unfortunate fact was the project was named the Chester Greenhouse and Gardens, but the
5 greenhouse was not driving the project and was not the most important thing. The most important
6 thing was the garden plots so people could dig in the ground, plant what they want, and grow the
7 vegetables, flowers, and herbs that they wanted. If the greenhouse occurred, it was way down the
8 line. They need to prove by membership and participation in the garden plots that there's sufficient
9 interest. The greenhouse was acquired because it was donated. It was free to acquire but not free
10 to put up and was a huge hill to get over and they are interested in working with the neighbors in
11 terms of what they see happening and what works for them. The neighbors have an opportunity to
12 interact with the plan and they welcome new people as part of the committee. She said once they
13 were successful with the gardens, they would start a fundraising campaign for the greenhouse.

14 Cheryl Joy suggested they look at other gardens and to view the presentation from the prior
15 Selectboard meeting on June 15th. She thought it was the 6th presentation they've given since they
16 started two years ago. She thought a lot of them had been recorded.

17 Melody Reed added they had applied for some congressional funds. They were looking at a half a
18 million-dollar project and it would not happen overnight. They are working on the gardens first
19 and then could gauge interest in the other things.

20 Alexandria Steele was concerned that if someone was growing gorgeous vegetables and someone
21 wasn't, it could cause ruffraff with other people in the town. Judy Hallberg said when someone has
22 extra, they share.

23 Emily Burkland said, as a business owner in town, she would love to see the greenhouse. She
24 wondered what would happen to the property if the garden and greenhouse weren't there and
25 would it remain a field. Julie Hance said there was no plan for the property unless another group
26 came to the town for a different project. She thought it would remain as is. Cheryl Joy remembered
27 not too long ago they were discussing getting a list of all the town properties and whether they
28 would keep or sell them. Arne added they had a list of the town properties, 25 to 30. A lot were
29 cemeteries, and a lot were parcels the town had acquired over the years. If this happened, it would
30 be a formal lease from the town to the organization stipulating how things would work and to
31 protect the town. Arne said this was just the first step and if it got to the point where a structure
32 was erected on the property, there would need to be legal documents signed and a hearing with the
33 townspeople. Gardens, orchards, and bushes are a concern but easily brought back to the way
34 things were. There is a process in place if it gets to the point where the greenhouse is a
35 consideration. They have attorneys to make sure the town is protected. The Selectboard had given
36 a letter of intent and stipulated all the reasons why they were in support of the project from about
37 a year and a half ago that was on file documenting the Selectboard's support. At this point, they
38 brought in people who abut so it's not a surprise if it goes forward. Arne's personal view was that
39 it went forward, and he hoped the board was still behind it as they were a year and a half ago.
40 Someday they may have a greenhouse and he hoped they did and thought it would be fantastic. He
41 mentioned the one in the center of Grafton village that was like the one proposed.

42 Khol Hitchcock wondered if they would just come in and do it or if the town would vote. Arne
43 said there was not a town voting system on this. Julie said there was a 1031 notice if the town
44 issues a lease of town property. The notice gives 30 days for taxpayers to file a petition. If he was

1 interested in that process, she would share the statutes with him. It would allow a petition and
2 could potentially petition to put it to a vote.

3 Janna Aldrich asked if there was any scenario with the garden plots or variation of the plan that
4 would impact the taxpayers or tax rate, including maintenance costs, that would fall back to the
5 taxpayers. Cheryl Joy said they would be entirely responsible for maintenance and wouldn't need
6 or ask the town to take care of it. Julie added the letter of intent issued a year and a half ago wasn't
7 site specific at the time. It was just the concept of a greenhouse. In the letter of intent, the
8 Selectboard put forth several conditions that had to be met and one of them was the
9 decommissioning fund. There must be a certain amount of dollars set aside in a separate account
10 that would decommission the building if it ever had to be abandoned. It was clear in the letter that
11 none of it falls to the taxpayers. The greenhouse committee has a road ahead of them to be sure
12 they maintain and have funds. There would be no issue of it coming back to the taxpayers. The
13 board took strict measures to make sure that wouldn't happen. Lee Gustafson confirmed with Julie
14 that utilities would not fall on the taxpayers either. Julie would make sure any lease in affect would
15 protect the taxpayers, so it didn't become a burden.

16 There were no further questions.

17 Arne thanked those in attendance for coming to the meeting and appreciated the comments and
18 concerns. It would not be the last time they would talk about it. They would make sure people had
19 the information they requested. He also encouraged anyone with questions to talk to the folks
20 involved with it and he was sure they would love to work with anyone.

21 Julie asked if the group would be going back with their conceptual plan and coming up with ways
22 to address the various concerns presented and resubmitting them back to Selectboard for review.
23 Cheryl Joy said for anyone living there, she would love to talk with them and work with them to
24 address their concerns for the potential site plan so they could be good neighbors. Cheryl Joy
25 would address them and come back to the board. There would be another meeting with the abutters.

26 Arne thanked Cheryl Joy and her group and wished them luck and thought it would be a fantastic
27 part of the community if it happened and he hoped it did.

28 (2-minute recess 1:12)

29 **Agenda Item 5, Acquisition of Property Through Tax Sale, Amsden Hill Road**

30 Julie had been working with Regional Planning with a relatively new state program called the
31 Hazardous Waste Contamination and Cleanup Program, which is monitored by ANR and ACCD,
32 allowing municipalities to purchase properties though tax sale and then cleanup the property during
33 the redemption period. After the redemption period or through a quit claim deed to end the
34 redemption period early, it is sold for the delinquent taxes and any cleanup costs. Regional
35 Planning has funds and have approved funding for a Phase I environmental assessment. Once they
36 have the assessment, the property can be listed for tax sale. The town can bid on it and take the
37 property. There is funding for Phase II and once that is completed, the town can receive funding
38 through the Brownfields program. Federal, State and Regional Planning have Brownfields money.
39 Most municipalities that have gone through it have not had to pay any taxpayer dollars but the
40 maximum amount they would be responsible for was 20%. The town would clean up the property
41 and sell it and get any money back they had spent. Heather questioned if they would sell it for
42 market value. They could or could sell it for what they had in it. Windsor has done it with several
43 properties and found the program easy to maneuver. The property on Amsden Hill has been an

1 issue for years and the property owners don't want anything to do with the property. They have
2 already given Julie consent for the environmental assessment. Once Phase II came, she suspected
3 they would issue a quit claim deed so they wouldn't have to wait the year redemption period. She
4 thought this was the perfect property to try out the program.

5 Arnie said they have discussed properties like this before and the program the state offered was
6 helpful because it would safeguard the town against being liable for a major cleanup. It would have
7 positive results that would be helpful for Chester. Leigh agreed. Heather agreed and thought they
8 should jump at it.

9 Leigh moved and Heather seconded to approve Julie following through with the process. Lee,
10 having been in the remedial investigation and cleanup business for 25 years, was concerned what
11 funding limits there may be. He knew of programs where the limit was \$1 million and wondered
12 if Julie had heard of a limit to this program. She had not. Julie is now on the Regional Planning
13 Board so she sees more of this, and it is her understanding that there are so many sources they can
14 pull funding from. She had not heard of one yet where the funding wasn't available. She also
15 pointed out they complete Phase I first before committing and have opportunities to get out if
16 necessary. Julie said the program was run by the Agency of Commerce and Community
17 Development and the Agency of Natural Resources. Lee thought it was a great idea but wanted
18 them to go into it with their eyes wide open because there could be surprises down the road. He
19 appreciated Julie doing the due diligence to make sure it was something they could work with.
20 Julie said the town partners with Regional Planning, so they have the power of Regional Planning
21 who guides them through it.

22 Heather thought there was risk in doing nothing. Lee agreed. She thought they should pursue it.
23 Lee said the other thing to be aware of is if the property isn't salable, then they end up owning the
24 property. He agreed with Julie that it was a good property to cut their teeth on.

25 Arne asked for other comments and questions.

26 Gary Rapanotti, a neighbor, said there were others in attendance for the project and as a
27 neighborhood, they would do whatever they could do to help. If they got some dumpsters there,
28 they would fill them. They were in support and glad the board was acting. Arne said it was great
29 to have community behind them. Heather said they have heard their concerns and had done things
30 to try to address it and now that the vehicle was available to them, they should jump on it.

31 Dave Johnson commended the board for attacking the project and asked if there was a time limit.
32 Julie said not currently. She expected Phase I would be completed in August and then the timeline
33 would start, and she would have to sell the property at tax sale within 6 months. If that doesn't
34 happen, Regional Planning has assured her that they would fund a second Phase I. Because the
35 property owners agreed, was the reason she wanted to move forward because she didn't think they
36 would run into any barriers on the time. Mr. Johnson asked once the town owned the property,
37 who would clean it up. Julie said the town would have to hire someone. If it wasn't hazardous
38 material, they could provide dumpsters and the town guys could clean it up. The neighbors were
39 willing to pitch in and make it work. Ben thought it was great to see them all there. He pointed out
40 possible liability concerns once the town owns the property. Julie agreed.

41 Mike Reeb said in 2018, an ordinance was passed and asked if the owner was free of those
42 responsibilities by their willingness to let this process proceed. Julie said once it's acquired at tax
43 sale, they still have a legal obligation, but these owners have no resources to clean it up. They

1 started down the road of salvage yard violation and they could take it all the way to the courts and
2 the town would pay tens of thousands of dollars to get a judgment but there still is no resource for
3 them to clean it up which is why the state has adopted these programs. He wondered if they could
4 progress so far through it and then have the homeowner come back with some rights. Julie said
5 during the one year right of redemption after it's purchased at tax sale, the owner can come in and
6 try to redeem but they're going to have to redeem the amount of taxes and any funds spent to clean
7 up. It was the reason she was going to work with them on the owners issuing a quit claim deed to
8 the town thereby ending the redemption period immediately and the town owns it. So far, they
9 agreed to it. He asked how big the property was. Julie said it was less than an acre.

10 A vote was taken, and the motion passed unanimously.

11 **Agenda Item 6, Coin Drop Approval, Ruck Up**

12 George Legace from Ruck Up, Inc. was present to speak in favor of a coin drop on August 6th.
13 Arne noted he had been there before and had done a coin drop last year and was back to request it
14 again this year.

15 George, Vice President on the Board of Directors of Ruck Up, Inc., a non-profit organization based
16 out of Keene, New Hampshire. They are veterans helping veterans. They are all volunteers. They
17 have a food shelf and outreach program helping veterans maintain or get housing. They have a set
18 limit they give each veteran, but they work with other organizations to help veterans get what they
19 need. They don't help with vet or car bills because they are never ending. Last year they had a coin
20 drop on Route 11 and were there for 4 ½ hours. They had to leave early last year due to the weather,
21 low on manpower, and he was sick and became hospitalized. This year they were hoping for a
22 better day. He lives in Londonderry, Vermont. He hoped to be able to hold another coin drop and
23 was appreciative of the help they've been given. They have helped about 120 veterans maintain or
24 get into housing this year. Their advocacy program they have been able to recoup about 1.2 million
25 for different veterans in VA benefits. They're a small organization and this is what helps keep their
26 doors open. They don't receive any money from the State of New Hampshire or the federal
27 government. A.J. Page, their president, does all their grant writing and is their full-time counselor.

28 Ben thanked him for his service and moved they approve the coin drop for Ruck Up on the date
29 requested and Lee seconded the motion.

30 Heather thanked him and asked if they kept statistics on how many people they help in Chester.
31 They did not. Heather knew they did great work. Off the top of his head, he thought there were 7
32 or 8 men that have been helped by Ruck Up who live in the area. There were 3 or 4 in the
33 Rockingham area. Heather said the only reason she asked was their coin drop policy they agreed
34 on last year was that it had to have an impact on Chester. She was just doing that for due diligence
35 and knew they did great work. He couldn't give their names, which Heather didn't want, but he
36 knew they were in his platoon when they went to Desert Storm.

37 Arne confirmed that if any veteran in Chester went to their organization, they would help them.
38 Mr. Legace said any veteran who needed help could call Monday through Friday and they would
39 get back to them within a day or two. Arne thought it was important they get the word out as some
40 people may not even be aware. George said he has 3 cans around town: Dr. Fauver's, Smitty's,
41 and Sunoco.

42 A vote was taken, and it was approved for August 6th with a rain date of Aug 7th.

43

Agenda Item 7, Ambulance Approval

1
2 Amanda Silva, Ambulance Chief, assembled her team and they had worked the past several
3 months on designing and building what they need for the next ambulance. They had worked with
4 Vander Molen Fire Apparatus and went through a project Julie found intriguing. The project had
5 been put out for bid. The final project which seemed to be the best cost which was through P.L.
6 Custom for a price of \$301,299. To save \$1,000, they would need to put down a \$60,000 deposit.
7 She wasn't inclined to do that since they would need to borrow the funds. They will begin building
8 without that deposit. When the chassis is delivered the price is locked. There's a \$10,000
9 contingency built in but once the locked price is set, if it's gone up, they have an option to back
10 out. They're not anticipating a jump that will exceed \$10,000 but given the volatility in the market,
11 it's always possible. The total and complete construction is 18 to 24 months out which is why
12 they'd like to start it as soon as possible. If they authorize Julie to sign, it will get the project going.
13 When they deal with the capital plan next year, they can get authorization for funding from the
14 voters. If they bond it, the first payment won't be due until 2026. If they want to borrow, they
15 wouldn't borrow until it was ready. In either case, they wouldn't get the money until the ambulance
16 was delivered. That would put them into 2024. Julie wanted to at least have authorization from the
17 voters in 2023. 2025 would be the earliest first payment but likely in 2026. Amanda and her team
18 felt they could get more money if it was sold outright. Julie added they were looking into possible
19 savings with the Ford Fleet Program for all the departments.

20 Lee asked Amanda why a new ambulance was needed and what it would give them that the old
21 one didn't. Amanda said they usually trade in the ambulance every 10 years, so it was already 10
22 years old, and they are seeing wear and tear. The chassis wouldn't arrive for 18 months, and then
23 it takes a 6-week build. The new ambulance is not much different. It's a different brand, a Ford
24 F550 and already has the 4-wheel drive in it. If they had gone back to a Chevy, it would have spent
25 a lot more to make it 4-wheel drive. The layout is the same inside and was basically 3 inches
26 different. It's everything that's currently in there but different size and locations. It isn't much
27 different. Lee pointed out one of the selling points for the new building was they didn't have to
28 get a custom-sized truck and Amanda agreed.

29 Heather thought it was detailed and she didn't know ambulances but as far as bare bones versus
30 deluxe where was it. Amanda said it was bare bones. The only upgrades were mandatory ones that
31 the state had adopted. The stretcher must be autoloader and the seatbelts must be a four-point harness.
32 There was nothing spectacular. Heather said they want their ambulance to work. Amanda thought
33 they would be able to keep in good condition for possibly 12 years. She said the trade-in value
34 right now was \$10,000 and if they sell it outright, they were hoping to get \$30,000. Arne wondered
35 what the old one cost and Julie thought it was \$240,000. Arne didn't think it seemed like that big
36 of a jump compared to everything else. He said if you wanted to make sure a piece of equipment
37 worked and worked well, an ambulance was the priority. Amanda said they brought some samples
38 and demos, so they had hands-on designing it.

39 Lee asked where it would get serviced as the closest Ford dealer was in Claremont. Amanda said
40 general maintenance could be performed at ATG in Rockingham and then they could go to
41 Newport.

42 Arne noted the contract, he thought numbers 9 and 10 said if something went wrong, that basically
43 they had nothing to do with it. He thought maybe he was reading it wrong, but he couldn't
44 understand what the wording meant. Julie said before they accept the ambulance, Amanda and her

1 team will go view and once they accept, they are hands off as far as they're not liable anymore.
2 That's why the inspection is so critical. She said fire had done the same thing. Ben thought Rutland
3 City Fire had recently taken purchase of a brand-new platform truck that ended up backing into a
4 building by the delivery person. When you're looking at a \$1.5 million vehicle, it takes them out
5 of that damage. Ben added they were saying 3 inches, but they didn't have 3 inches to spare in the
6 old building. He also had an opportunity to do some training and randomly sat next to their
7 salesperson who had nothing but high praises to say. It sounded like they had done a fantastic job.
8 Arne said it seemed like a lot of work to put something like that together and it's an expensive
9 piece of equipment and you don't want to mess it up. Ben added the number of hours the vehicle
10 runs versus the plow trucks that are done after 5 years and the emergency vehicles are out in the
11 same conditions and we're getting 10 plus years. When considering Vermont weather and getting
12 10 years out of the vehicle by the time they have delivery, they would be pushing the maintenance
13 cost recovery as an issue. It was good this was occurring.

14 Heather moved and Leigh seconded a motion to authorize Julie to sign the contract. A vote was
15 taken, and the motion passed unanimously.

16 Arne thanked Amanda and her team for their work.

17 **Agenda Item 8, ARPA Funds Update**

18 Julie gave an update. She compiled the department heads' lists and comments that were either
19 emailed to her or given at the public meeting and assembled them into one gigantic list. Some
20 things were not currently attainable. She highlighted in green where they had committed: painting
21 at the tennis courts and Brookside. In blue, the windows at Yosemite and possibly the fence at the
22 public safety building. ARPA funds cannot be used to lower taxes or directly pay operating
23 expenses out of the general fund. If there are projects in the general fund that can be pulled out
24 and paid with ARPA, then money could be freed up in the general fund. Given the volatility of
25 pricing, trying to free up any of the general fund dollars budgeted in 2022 would be helpful. It
26 would give them a little more of a cushion. They have cut some things, but the price of diesel fuel
27 was scary. She wondered if they wanted to identify several projects across all departments and
28 accomplish multiple things or use it for one project. She thought Scott Wunderlee made a good
29 point at the public discussion about being careful taking on one large project and being mindful
30 that those large projects as they've seen with the Depot Street project can take multiple years to
31 complete and by the time you're done, you end up not having enough money. She suggested they
32 discuss where they'd like to go. Arne asked what the amount was. Julie said a little over \$900,000
33 and \$20,000 to \$40,000 was committed. Julie said they know there will be cost overruns from the
34 Emergency Services and Public Safety building. They were about \$120,000 over with the
35 Emergency Services Building due to COVID. The highway garage will have cost overrun but some
36 things have been cut. She wasn't sure where they would land but thought with everything
37 combined, they would be \$200,000 to \$250,000. They can borrow or use ARPA funds. She didn't
38 know how the board felt about it.

39 Heather thought the solar fields would be beneficial to the town but wondered when they would
40 know how much it was. Julie thought they would have the appraisal in a few weeks. The \$910,000
41 would not pay for everything Julie had highlighted, so she wondered what other way they were
42 going to pay for it. Julie said they would need to bond.

43 Lee tells his customers when they're looking at a big bill for a solar array that they're just
44 prebuying their electric for the next 30 years. The solar panels will keep producing power for

1 another 30 or 40 years easy unless something catastrophic happens and they break. The inverters
2 are 10-year devices and aren't expensive to replace. He wondered if they should use ARPA funds
3 and buy it outright or if they should just take out a loan and prebuy it that way. Heather asked if
4 they had 3 years to spend it and Julie said they must obligate the funds by the end of 2024. Heather
5 liked all the projects but wanted to wait until the solar field assessment was done. She would like
6 to put a bike path on Church Street, but it costs \$2 million. She suggested if they put a large chunk
7 towards the solar fields, they would save the taxpayers from buying the solar fields and pay for the
8 electricity going forward. She wanted to see some of the funds go there. Arne wanted to spend it
9 in the places originally intended like the COVID related expenses for cost overruns on projects
10 they've already done. The ARPA funds were because of what was happening, and he wanted to
11 see a good portion go to that instead of putting the burden on the capital fund or burdening the
12 taxpayers. It wasn't the glory stuff but the practical stuff. Heather said if that was done, there would
13 be \$500 and some to put toward the solar or possibly not do the solar. Leigh had a thought and
14 said they had done some good work on Yosemite and made great progress with it. She wanted to
15 see it finished up by doing the windows, doors, and painting. Arne said the windows and doors
16 would be \$30k and the painting would add another \$30k. Lee agreed with Arnie about using the
17 funds for the original intent. He thought using the funds would benefit both the taxpayers and
18 community. He wondered what they could do to reduce the burden on the taxpayer as well as bring
19 the community some satisfaction. To Leigh's point, he thought Yosemite was one the town should
20 be proud to own and putting some money into it would be a great draw to Chester. He thought that
21 the overruns to Chester and the solar field would be good use of those funds.

22 Heather asked Lee if he liked the fencing, and he did. Arne thought things that weren't that
23 expensive but visible were important because people would see it, unlike the overruns. Pride in
24 the Yosemite building, the tennis courts, Brookside Trail would be things used and seen by the
25 public and would be a good place to use the money.

26 It was agreed using the money for the cost overruns would help the taxpayers.

27 Tim Roper wondered if it made more sense to take out a loan for the solar field purchase or paying
28 for it in cash. If the town knew how much electricity would be generated by the solar fields and
29 comparing it to the cost of electricity monthly could be enough to make the loan payment. If the
30 town were to buy the solar field outright, it may open some budget space because they wouldn't
31 be making the electricity payments every month. Arne thanked him and thanked him for the
32 appraisal connection.

33 Ben asked if they knew what their expenses over budget were for fuel. Julie would provide it at
34 the next meeting. Julie had been waiting for June to end so she could work on the spreadsheet and
35 finetune and cut things if necessary. They know there will be huge overruns. Ben agreed with Arne
36 on using the money for its intended purpose. Ben wanted a sidewalk on Church Street, but the cost
37 was huge. As much as the Yosemite building was close to his heart, there was a plan to move
38 forward with it. Some people may love to see a community garden but not everyone. The engine
39 company building was a symbol of Chester that everyone would see but at the same time, the rec
40 department and community development stuff was important to him. He thought they were things
41 they needed to consider. He thought it was great they continued to have open discussion about it.
42 He thought once they had the solar appraisal, they would have a better idea of how to move
43 forward. If the return on it was more than the loan plus some, it would give them different ways to
44 think about it. Arne noted the appraisal would give them a history of what the solar field has
45 produced and would give them a reference point for future production, and they would have

1 options. Heather said they have been talking about the scoping study for the sidewalk to the high
2 school and may be a good thing to get started. Julie thought on the bigger projects like the sidewalk
3 on Church Street was much like the Depot project and had the potential to get grant funded. She
4 thought some of the bigger projects could receive grant money. Heather thought they may need
5 the \$15 grand seed money for it to push it forward and said they had been talking about it for close
6 to 20 years. Arne said it would help to have the document in hand because if grants came up, they
7 would ask if they had a feasibility study.

8 Arne asked if Julie needed a consensus from the board on how to proceed or if she needed a motion.
9 Julie asked if they agreed to pull the fencing at the Public Safety Building and any window and
10 door work for Yosemite out of the 2022 budget and to pay for them out of ARPA. That would be
11 \$47,000 out of the budget. They are trying to build a little buffer when the budget comes through
12 and diesel fuel costs twice what it did last year, and they hadn't budgeted enough for it. Ben was
13 in complete agreement. Arne was for painting Yosemite. Discussion followed about painting the
14 building. Lee added that amount of money would be 7800 gallons of diesel fuel.

15 Arne said the consensus was for the fencing at the emergency service building, the cost overruns
16 for the emergency service building and the Town Garage, and the Yosemite windows.

17 They agreed to line someone up for next year to paint the Yosemite building whether it was paid
18 out of the budget or with ARPA funds, and to get it scheduled. Julie will use ARPA funds for any
19 items without the board's approval.

20 **Agenda Item 9, Set 2022 Tax Rate**

21 The municipal rate is 0.8627 and the local agreement rate is down 0.0044. The nonresidential
22 education rate is 1.5174 and residential education 1.4592. What that leaves them with is a
23 combined non-residential tax rate of \$2.3845 which is down six and a half cents from last year.
24 The residential tax rate is \$2.3263 and that is down three and a third cents. Unless your grand list
25 value went up, your tax bill will go down this year. Part of it was a legislative decision based on
26 the gigantic surplus found in the education fund. The board members signed.

27 **Agenda Item 10, Sign Cemetery Deed**

28 The board members signed a cemetery deed.

29 **Agenda Item 11, New Business/Next Agenda**

30 Julie said there was nothing for the next meeting and she would not be there. She wasn't sure they
31 needed a meeting unless something came up. She could participate via Zoom. Leigh would not be
32 there either. Heather and Leigh thought it was a good idea. They agreed that unless something
33 came up that needed their attention, they would not meet.

34 Julie said there was a grant opportunity that opened for park and ride facilities along a state
35 highway. She reached out to her VTrans contact regarding the Cobleigh Street parking area and
36 what would be involved to make it an official park and ride. They meet all the criteria to make it a
37 park and ride. The only thing required is signage which they have parking signage coming as part
38 of the Way Finding plan. The grant would pay for the paving and striping of the parking lot which
39 is what the Planning Commission had spoken with them about. In order to apply for it, Julie just
40 needed to make sure the board didn't have an issue with it being labeled a park and ride. It could
41 be discussed more at their next meeting in August, but she wanted to make them aware. It would
42 also get listed on the state map which may draw people into The Green. Ben asked if there were

1 any conditions on the use. Julie said it could be public parking and didn't have to be designated
2 and only had to have a minimum of 10 spaces. Arne asked if it would include a walkway from the
3 parking area to the back of the buildings behind the church. Julie would find out. Arne thought it
4 would be nice to incorporate it. The town would maintain it. Arne thought it would be a great
5 project.

6 There were no other comments for future agenda items.

7 **Agenda Item 12, Executive Session: Personnel Matter**

8 Heather moved and Lee seconded to go into executive session at 8:59 p.m. A vote was taken, and
9 the motion passed unanimously. Shawn Cunningham from The Chester Telegraph asked if they
10 planned on taking any action after the executive session and they did not. The board went
11 downstairs to meet in executive session.

12 Lee moved to exit executive session and Heather seconded it. A vote was taken, and the motion
13 passed unanimously. Executive Session ended at 9:25 p.m.

14 **Agenda Item 13, Adjourn**

15 Ben moved and Lee seconded to adjourn the meeting. A vote was taken, and the motion passed
16 unanimously, and the meeting was adjourned at 9:25 p.m.