

1 **TOWN OF Chester**
2 **PLANNING COMMISSION**

3 **June 21, 2021 Minutes**

4 **Commission Members Present:** Peter Hudkins, Hugh Quinn, Barre Pinske, and Cathy
5 Hasbrouck at Town Hall.

6 **Staff Present:** Preston Bristow, Zoning Administrator; and Susan Bailey, Secretary

7 **Citizens Present:** R.J. Dourney, Nancy Dourney, and Cheryl Joy Lipton

8 **Call to Order**

9 Chair Cathy Hasbrouck, called the meeting to order at 6:29 p.m.

10 **Agenda Item 1, Review minutes from May 17, 2021 meeting**

11 Cathy Hasbrouck introduced the members and staff to R.J. and Nancy Dourney, the only public
12 present at beginning of the meeting.

13 Cathy Hasbrouck said the first order of business was to review the minutes of June 7th. Peter
14 Hudkins moved to accept the minutes and Hugh Quinn seconded the motion. There were no
15 comments. Cathy asked Barre Pinske if he had any comments and he replied that he thought his
16 name was mentioned too much in the minutes. Hugh and Barre agreed that Barre determined
17 how often his name appeared. A vote was taken and the minutes were approved unanimously.

18 **Agenda Item 2, Citizen Comments**

19 Cathy Hasbrouck asked if there were any citizens comments on anything not on the agenda and
20 there were none.

21 **Agenda Item 3, Discuss Affordable Housing in Chester and How to Be Ready for Possible**
22 **Funding as a Result of COVID**

23 Cathy Hasbrouck announced the next order of business was the discussion of affordable housing
24 in Chester and how to be ready for funding as a result of COVID. Cheryl Joy Lipton joined the
25 meeting as a visitor and Cathy introduced her to the Dourneys.

26 Cathy Hasbrouck said the packet contained a copy of the housing chapter which contained a lot
27 of data. The definition of affordable housing was explained as housing which costs less than 30%
28 of the town's median household income. To determine the need for affordable housing, you
29 would need to know: the number of households in Chester; the median income; and how much is
30 spent on housing. The packet included a graph showing 17% of Chester households spent 50% or
31 more of their income on housing in 2019; while 59% of households paid 30% to 49% of their
32 income on housing, indicating that a large portion of Chester households pay more than the
33 affordable housing standard. Based on those statistics, Chester needs more affordable housing.

34 Cathy Hasbrouck said the packet also included information on the three affordable housing
35 complexes in Chester. They are managed by companies that manage affordable housing:
36 Pleasantbrook Apartments is managed by SK Management in New Ipswich, NH; Depot Street is
37 managed by Stewart Property Management in Bedford, NH; and Chester Apartments is managed
38 by THM Property Management in Manchester, VT. Cathy stated there are a total of 72
39 affordable housing units currently in Chester: Chester Apartments with 36 units; Pleasantbrook

1 with 24 units; and Depot Street with 12 units.

2 There was discussion among the board as to whether Rockingham Housing Trust had built the
3 Depot Street housing and whether they still owned it. Peter Hudkins stated that when it was built
4 in 2010, it was owned by the Rockingham Trust. Barre Pinske suggested that Rockingham Trust
5 may have built it because they could get grant money and then sold it after completion. Peter said
6 that wasn't the way they worked. Cathy Hasbrouck asked Peter if he thought it was part of the
7 Trust's process is to buy properties, fix them up, and sell them. Peter said they were a non-profit
8 and he had learned they needed to have 12 units for a property to break even. Preston Bristow
9 searched 517 Depot and determined that Chester-Gage Housing Limited Partnership of
10 Brattleboro was the current owner. Preston said he guessed the Trust created these corporate
11 bails which Peter was not surprised by.

12 Hugh Quinn called attention to the graph and concluded that either Chester housing was too
13 expensive or people weren't making any money, or both. Cathy Hasbrouck agreed.

14 Peter Hudkins said to him it was clear more affordable housing was necessary, and that 72 units
15 were nowhere near enough. He thought it was due to the income level and the increasing
16 astronomical rents which he felt were a result of the Airbnb business.

17 Barre Pinske asked if there were statistics on the percentage of affordable housing in an average
18 town in the U.S. He thought Chester was at about 3.5% of affordable housing. Visitor R.J.
19 Dourney commented that it was 4.4%. Barre asked if he Googled what the average amount of
20 affordable housing for a community was, would the answer be in the statistics provided by Cathy
21 Hasbrouck. Cathy answered that the percent of households paying more than 50% of their
22 income towards housing was 15% for Vermont and 13% for Chester. Barre said what he was
23 asking was for the average number of affordable housing in communities within the United
24 States. Cathy told Barre if he Googled it, he should search the Northeast or Vermont for a better
25 comparison. Barre said a search of anywhere would work.

26 Peter Hudkins mentioned that the packet information indicated in the rest of Vermont, 26%
27 needed housing, while in Chester, it was 59%. Peter said Chester wasn't even close compared to
28 the rest of the state. Peter suggested they consider where they have opportunity to provide
29 affordable housing rather than how much is needed. Peter, having worked for developers, said
30 usually 75% to 80% of opportunities can be thrown out in the beginning.

31 Cathy Hasbrouck said the reason R.J. Dourney was in attendance was because the Catholic
32 Church was interested in having a tiny house park, so the commission needed to see if the current
33 bylaws would allow it; and in a future meeting, what the proposed bylaws would allow. Cathy
34 relayed that she, R.J., and Father Peter Williams had discussed the difficulties people faced
35 getting a tiny house established in a community. Cathy had examined the bylaws with respect to
36 what someone would need to do to get a permit to set up one. She believed Chester would view
37 several tiny houses together as a mobile home park, because they are mobile, as well as homes.
38 She said the state qualifies a mobile home as a minimum of 8 x 40, but tiny houses are not. She
39 said Preston Bristow and she discussed creating lots to fit tiny houses but not mobile homes. The
40 state agrees if a home complies with construction and safety standards under Title 42 of the U.S.
41 Code, it doesn't need to be 8 x 40, as long as HUD and another authority agree. She said if the
42 homes are bought from a manufacturer, she suspected there would not be an issue as opposed to
43 someone building it themselves.

1 Hugh Quinn asked why the size requirements wouldn't be the same as those for other dwellings.
2 Cathy Hasbrouck said the current bylaws didn't have a size requirement, but the proposed
3 bylaws did. Hugh thought the standards would be consistent with those of a tiny house, but Peter
4 Hudkins thought the square footage was considerably bigger than a tiny house. Cathy said she
5 saw some that were 8 x 10 x 20. Hugh asked what the typical tiny house footprint was. R.J.
6 Dourney asked if he could explain. R.J. Dourney said they run pretty small, but the construction
7 was radically different than that of a mobile home. He said they were more like a stick-built
8 home. He then asked to go back to Barre Pinske's question about the average affordable housing
9 stock. He said when he lived in Massachusetts, he and his wife served on various boards that
10 addressed affordable housing, and there it had been 2%. He said the goal in New England is
11 10%. R.J. said Massachusetts had enormous success with a strategy called 40B which allowed a
12 developer not to deal with local ordinances, as long as they guaranteed that 10% of whatever
13 they developed would be affordable.

14 R.J. Dourney talked about St. Joseph's in Chester and St. Mary's in Springfield. He said Father
15 Peter Williams was the pastor. He said Father Peter was focused on being a positive influence in
16 the community and he recognized that not everyone was able to live in a \$300,000 house. R.J.
17 said the church had about 3.5 acres of land behind the church building that is not zoned for the
18 tiny house village they envision. He said a typical tiny house needs to be less than 8.5 feet wide
19 in order to travel on the road and that they are usually under 20 to 25 feet. He said for the tiny
20 house village they would aim for tiny houses that were 8 x 20 feet.

21 Hugh Quinn asked if they were that size because they were built somewhere else versus on site.
22 R.J. Dourney said part of the premise behind tiny houses is that they are mobile. He asked the
23 board to imagine for someone it was their first home. They would get help building it and rent
24 the dirt from the church and were able to save and buy some land and eventually move the tiny
25 home and someone would move in after them. R.J. said that was an ideal scenario. He said the
26 second type of development they would like to facilitate was shotgun houses in the 8 to 8.5 foot
27 range, but a little deeper than a tiny house. They could accommodate a mom, dad, and 2 kids. He
28 said the shotgun house would not be mobile. R.J. said it was deeply engrained in their faith that
29 they should be a positive addition to the community and they wanted the community to be glad
30 they were there. They would like to see access to the water behind them and walking trails
31 through the tiny house development. They want everyone in town to drive through and see the
32 tiny house village as a natural extension of Chester. R.J. and his wife, Nancy, built a home in
33 Chester in 2005 and became full-time residents 2 ½ years ago. He said they are in Chester
34 because it's a good community and the tiny house development should be a natural extension of
35 that. He said it shouldn't look like an albatross, but rather a positive natural addition. Anything
36 people would need was within walking distance from the property location: coffee, wine,
37 Smitty's, everything except for a pharmacy. He joked that he had spoken with Preston Bristow
38 who promised he would find him a CVS.

39 Barre Pinske asked if this were to be done, could it be done as a PUD kind of thing. He
40 apologized for interrupting and said he loved the romantic idea of the housing, but the whole
41 point of zoning from his perspective was to help neighbors and put things in certain places and
42 so forth. He said the difficulty with doing something unique was the zoning board's job was to
43 do something that applied to everybody. Barre said it wasn't that he didn't want to hear R.J.
44 Dourney's whole story and it wasn't that he couldn't appreciate the romance of it. He said you
45 need to come from it looking at how it can possibly be done and not romantically. Barre said tiny

1 houses weren't necessarily affordable just because they were small. He said regulation would be
2 required, septic, etc. and it was a huge deal. Cathy Hasbrouck said she wanted to hear R.J.'s
3 entire story because there wasn't room in the bylaws for what was being proposed. She said it
4 seemed appropriate for Chester to modify its bylaws to accommodate housing in little pockets
5 here and there. She said she wanted him to keep talking so they had the blue sky approach and
6 then they could get down to the realities of the bylaws. Cathy said the bylaws addressed mobile
7 home parks and referred to 4.10, the PUD section. She said she and Preston Bristow were trying
8 to sort out the requirements: can a PUD be owned by one person; was it necessary to subdivide
9 into small lots and say it was something else. Barre said that was his point. She said it was
10 necessary to hear what was being proposed before they got into the details of the bylaws. Barre
11 said it was a simple idea: they had a piece of land that they wanted to put tiny houses on, so what
12 more was needed to know. Cathy answered the church wanted to retain ownership of the land.
13 Barre said what most important was what hurdles were necessary to jump to do it. Peter Hudkins
14 said there was a real problem with just looking at it that way. Peter said with shotgun homes,
15 could they be turned into multi-family homes. He said when they are turned into multi-family,
16 the density can explode. He said if the lots are tiny, the density is limited. Peter said so they
17 needed to hear the dream. Barre said he would listen.

18 Cheryl Joy Lipton spoke and said one of things discussed with the new bylaws was having the
19 density in the village center be 12 units per acre, which would accommodate tiny houses. She
20 said that it seemed to her that Father Peter could subdivide and retain ownership by renting each
21 lot to a tiny home owner. She said if that were approved, the 12 units per acre would only be in
22 the center of the village, but some of the planning commission were interested in it being a larger
23 area. She said if expanded, it could happen. Peter Hudkins said there was no limit to a multi-
24 family on density. Barre Pinske said he wished to listen and his intention wasn't to be a jerk, but
25 he had given a lot of thought to people with mental illness and addiction requiring everything to
26 be tiled because it could be washed if they don't care for themselves. Barre referenced getting
27 people off the streets in cities and have better housing than tent housing. He said he didn't want
28 to sound too much like a politician, but if it looked like a duck, it was a duck. He said they were
29 talking about a campground or trailer park but framing it as tiny houses and giving it a low-
30 income housing angle. He said it was interesting and he was happy to listen, but he had a picture
31 in his mind of a campground or trailer park behind the church.

32 R.J. Dourney offered to dispel that idea, as he said it was the farthest thing from their intent. R.J.
33 said they weren't developers and had no interest in developing and if that was the road it went
34 down, he would get up and leave. R.J. asked them to keep in mind that this was the heart of their
35 church and the presence of Christ was with them there. He said the primary focus was housing
36 for their parishioners and the community and that Father Peter was emphatic that the
37 development was a natural extension of the community. R.J. said Father Peter would have high
38 standards with berms, landscaping, spacing, ambient light and all those things and said the
39 planning commission would control, since that was the whole point of zoning. R.J. said they
40 were not asking for spot zoning and that he was not an advocate of it and felt it was very
41 dangerous. He said he applauded the commission trying to determine how to attract more
42 affordable housing. R.J. said they were not interested in all the units being low-income housing.
43 He said there was an enormous amount of data to support when people who are economically-
44 disadvantaged are isolated that bad things happen, and they had no interest in doing that. Peter
45 Hudkins and Cathy Hasbrouck agreed. R.J. said if 6 people live on the street and one of them
46 makes six times as much, nobody would know because it's just one community, but if people are

1 isolated, there are issues. Peter said that was a good point and that the housing needed to be
2 disbursed throughout the town and was dead set against it being in one area. R.J. said when he
3 and his wife lived in Hockington, MA they promoted affordable housing in different
4 neighborhoods and everyone got along great and it was a nice addition.

5 R.J. Dourney said he wanted to address one of Barre Pinske's comments. He said he was not
6 there with a strategy saying they had to do it but wanted to be a resource and be helpful. He said
7 he had no agenda but that it would be good for the community and that some of their
8 parishioners could no longer afford to maintain a 4 bedroom house and the housing would be
9 good for them.

10 Peter Hudkins said there was a difference between low-income and senior housing. He asked
11 R.J. Dourney for a percentage of parishioners for low-income housing and senior housing. Cathy
12 Hasbrouck asked Peter for clarification of what he was asking for and Barre Pinske said "Jesus
13 Christ." R.J. spoke up and asked Barre not to use the Lord's name in vain to which Barre replied
14 "c'mon, man." R.J. said he didn't appreciate Barre using the Lord's name in vain at a public
15 meeting and Barre apologized.

16 Barre Pinske said it was a problem that the agenda was about affordable housing and questioned
17 why the agenda didn't mention this unique type of development. Cathy Hasbrouck questioned
18 Barre's patience. Barre said it wasn't about affordable housing anymore and it was two different
19 things. Cathy disagreed and said it was about housing in general and this was one of them. Barre
20 said it was a friend that Cathy worked with and it should have been on the agenda that they were
21 going to talk about something from their church they were developing. He said it was a mess and
22 had happened repeatedly.

23 Peter Hudkins said they all needed to hear what the town had to say. Barre Pinske said if
24 something is going to be brought before the board, the members should have information about it
25 so they are prepared to talk about it at the meeting. He said that is how it would be done before
26 the Select Board. He said if Tim Roper was selling chicken coups to do good for the community,
27 he would need a business permit and it came down to black and white and just plain zoning and
28 not pulling on people's heart strings. Barre said you would have to deal with setbacks, the
29 number of buildings on a piece of land, parking, septage, and everything. He said what was
30 being talked about was a campground or a mobile park behind the church so if they were going
31 to do something different, they would need to be able to do it other places, and if someone
32 wanted to do something on their 30 acres in the forest, they would have to deal with that too.

33 Cathy Hasbrouck pointed out that the adopted bylaws allow for a mobile home park in R40 and
34 R120. She said there is a mobile home park on Depot Street that was grandfathered. Cathy said
35 the possibility of using land so visible from the main road for something attractive and helpful
36 should be listened to by the planning commission and considered how the current bylaws support
37 it and how the proposed bylaws would interact with it. She said it seemed like a wonderful
38 opportunity to consider how to achieve the goal of bringing more housing into the town's center.

39 Cathy Hasbrouck told Barre Pinske if he just wanted to say yes or no to some bylaws, the
40 meeting was not for him. Barre said it wasn't that but that his point was it didn't matter if it was
41 the Catholic Church, the Masons, or Jesus himself, but that it all comes down to real rules. He
42 said it wasn't that he didn't care about the romance. Cathy said the Planning Commission was
43 the rule makers and Barre agreed. Cathy said they should consider if the rules could be adapted
44 so these things were possible. She didn't want the rules to stop the town from filling in the empty

1 spaces with people living happily in a community. She thought they should look at the rules
2 more to make these things happen. Barre said he felt the same way but asked how they would
3 possibly do that.

4 Peter Hudkins moved to hear R.J. Dourney and the others out and said the rules that Tim Roper
5 had passed before, which Barre Pinske voted for, and what they were doing now were perfectly
6 alright.

7 Barre Pinske suggested that he leave because he had a hard time listening to what was being
8 presented and Cathy Hasbrouck agreed. Before he left the meeting, Barre apologized and added
9 that at a previous meeting, people attended who wanted the forest blocks and spoke about
10 animals traveling from Vermont to Canada and he was upset about having to listen to them
11 because he felt he was being manipulated by hearing it from their perspective. He said he had
12 difficulty listening to people who want to do something for good reasons when he doesn't really
13 buy it. *Barre then left the meeting.*

14 Hugh Quinn said he would love to hear more. He said if they all agreed they wanted more
15 affordable housing in Chester and there were creative options, he wanted to hear about them and
16 see if those plans collided with the current and proposed bylaws. Hugh said he looked at it less as
17 the church has some property and wanted to do something with it but more as it was idea that
18 they had not yet considered and maybe should. R.J. Dourney said as a member of the community
19 he was thrilled to hear Hugh say that.

20 Cathy Hasbrouck asked Cheryl Joy Lipton if she wanted to say something. Cheryl Joy said this
21 was where higher density came into play with 12 per acre or 6 per acre with zero lot line on one
22 side or traditional neighborhood development like they were talking about.

23 Peter Hudkins said if a multi-family was done in the town, there currently was no density or
24 limit. He said the limit is the lot coverage, BOCA, and the building code. As such, a group of
25 housing would allow more now versus the proposed bylaws. Cathy Hasbrouck confirmed with
26 Peter that a multi-family is one building and would not apply to R.J. Dourney's proposal. Peter
27 said with the shotgun it was possible, but R.J. said they have zero interest in doing multi-family.
28 Hugh Quinn asked for clarification that a shotgun home isn't multi-family. R.J. said it is one
29 family but bigger than a tiny house and not mobile.

30 R.J. Dourney said with a tiny house he wasn't aware of a square footage limitation, only a width
31 limitation because it had to travel on the road. Cathy Hasbrouck said she and Preston Bristow
32 had discussed mobile homes being at least 40 feet and difficult to move. She said the tiny house
33 could be moved with a pickup truck.

34 R.J. Dourney asked that the mobile home option be taken off the table because that was not what
35 they were doing. Cathy Hasbrouck said the only reason she had mentioned mobile homes was
36 they were the closest structure in the current bylaws. Preston Bristow thought they could still
37 explore a planned unit development (PUD). Cathy said the mobile home bylaws stated it was a
38 PUD. Peter Hudkins said the bylaws referred to the ability to increase density by up to 50% for a
39 PUD, and Cathy said if it was for low-income housing. Preston said they hadn't run the numbers
40 to see if they could get the density they were looking for, but he would rather not call it a mobile
41 home park. He said it wasn't mobile homes and he thought the PUD was the way to go and they
42 could tinker with the language if necessary. He added the DRB needs to have a hearing and make
43 it work.

1 R.J. Dourney said the benefit of an economically diverse development would not work with a
2 mobile home park because it would only be people on the lower end of the spectrum, because
3 people on the higher end would not want to live in mobile homes. Cathy Hasbrouck asked if
4 PUD was a tool and Preston responded that the PUD was a tool which allowed for greater
5 densities in exchange for affordable housing or to set aside land for conservation. Preston said
6 Killington had a lot of PUDs there but not for affordable ones. He said the bonus was either for
7 open space or affordable housing but since they were in the midst of talking about a different
8 bylaw they could explore something. Preston said it could even be the church and its surrounds
9 were part of the open space but that he did not know.

10 Cheryl Joy Lipton offered they could also work open space into it because of the Williams
11 River's location behind the property meeting the riparian buffer. Preston Bristow said it was the
12 sort of thing the DRB would want to be creative about and he thought it was the better way to go.

13 Hugh Quinn asked if affordable housing was a synonym for low-income housing and if you
14 made too much money, you would not be able live there. R.J. Dourney said no and that they
15 were strictly talking about what it costs to live in a residence. Hugh asked if he made an endless
16 amount of money if he could go and live in an affordable house and R.J. told him he didn't think
17 so. Peter Hudkins said usually the difference is an income variable and that he could live there
18 but the rent would be astronomical because it is income based. R.J. said he wasn't sure.

19 Peter Hudkins said that was how it worked in Massachusetts. Preston Bristow said there were
20 different models depending on the funding source. He said there was very low income known as
21 Section 8, and there was low-income, and then moderate income for working class which is what
22 teacher and policemen are. He said a lot of moderate income people couldn't find housing.

23 Preston Bristow told R.J. Dourney he was talking the right language by trying to mix the
24 housing. Preston said the idea of having pockets within the town fit well. R.J. told the board he
25 applauded them for getting ahead of this and that there were examples of what they wanted to do
26 around the country.

27 Peter Hudkins said it looked like there will be cash coming and Chester should get some money.
28 The members and R.J. Dourney were in agreement that they should take advantage of what was
29 available. Cathy Hasbrouck stated the town manager, Julie Hance, has done a lot for Chester by
30 getting in line for grants. Peter said he wasn't opposed when Cathy mentioned it and said they
31 should see what the town has and what can be done and hire a management company.

32 Preston Bristow said another thing that did not apply to the Catholic church, specifically, but that
33 money would be available for public water and sewer systems expansions and that affordable
34 housing could only occur on properties that have those utilities. Preston stated there were so
35 many regulations required to maintain a private water system so they don't attract affordable
36 housing.

37 R.J. Dourney said they would be happy to be a resource and had no ulterior motive and only
38 wanted to do the right thing. He said he and his wife had experience in Massachusetts and had
39 seen it done the right way. He said you can create what you want when you shepherd it. He said
40 he loved the fact that Julie was already seeking available funding.

41 Preston Bristow said there were two approaches: one, that the town was proactive and gets sites;
42 and the second was to get out of the way and let them occur. He said, at the very least, they
43 should do the second and have flexibility in their regulations to let them occur. Several people

1 agreed.

2 Cathy Hasbrouck said right now there were limits where some things can happen. R.J. Dourney
3 asked if they knew if Julie was successful in securing monies, could they be used towards the
4 planning process. Cathy answered that it was still nebulous as to what the money was there for,
5 but Julie was telling them to look at the housing chapter and the town plan and what the bylaws
6 said.

7 Preston Bristow stated there was a grant cycle coming up for the municipal planning process. He
8 suggested that wanting to make changes for affordable housing may fit the criteria and the
9 commission should consider it.

10 Cathy Hasbrouck confirmed with R.J. Dourney that he would like help with planning. He said he
11 serves as the chair of the finance committee in his church, so he doesn't have a say. Father Peter
12 Williams would bring it to their bishop who makes the decision. R.J. believes the more buttoned
13 up it is, the better and if they can get help with the planning process, it would be a huge help.

14 Preston Bristow stated he didn't think the church would want the headache of being a landlord,
15 but they must have felt it within their mission and R.J. Dourney confirmed that it was. Preston
16 said at least 3 of the planning commission members agreed it was something the commission
17 wanted to do.

18 Hugh Quinn asked how they would begin to identify areas in the bylaws that may be an issue. He
19 said if they went the PUD route and money was available and the bylaws were in the way, how
20 would they foresee that and get in front of it. Cathy Hasbrouck responded she didn't believe
21 Chester had ever had a PUD and they would need to look at it.

22 Peter Hudkins said the PUDs were hooked to the water and sewer, so they could draw a circle
23 around where the water and sewer was in town and easily identify properties that could work.
24 Cathy Hasbrouck said they could also talk to the water and sewer people. Peter and Hugh agreed
25 that once you had the properties you could figure out what zones they were in and they could
26 figure out where the hard spots were.

27 Preston Bristow suggested they could either look at sites themselves or hire someone to do it. He
28 also mentioned the concept of a planning charrette where people who have done it have a tour
29 and experts give input. Peter Hudkins said they have a lot of base ability in town to identify sites.
30 Preston said he hated to always bring in an outside source, but if the board was going to clash, it
31 may be easier to bring in someone from the outside. Peter believed the majority thought they
32 should look at it.

33 Cathy Hasbrouck asked if they wanted to talk to Jeff Hogan about water and sewer at the next
34 meeting and they agreed. R.J. Dourney asked if there was anything he could help with, and the
35 members said no but thanked him for attending.

36 Peter Hudkins said he wasn't so interested in calling a lot of people until they determine where
37 the housing could be. Cathy Hasbrouck said they need to work and think as a group. Hugh Quinn
38 said if there was a possibility of some funding, they shouldn't wait but get ready for it. The
39 members agreed they should be proactive.

40 Peter Hudkins said the town plan on the data is 20 years out of date. Hugh Quinn said there was
41 a lot of information but he couldn't figure out how to interpret in a meaningful way as it relates
42 to affordable housing. Hugh understood that there were 72 units and it was 4.4% of the total of

1 1611. Peter said the one that was interesting was they don't have a paid household cost to the
2 percentage of income. He said in 26% of Vermont that was low, but 59% of Chester – he went
3 on to say they talk about an affordable housing crisis in Vermont but Chester was double the
4 normal.

5 Hugh Quinn said he wanted to make sure he understood and asked for clarification that 59% of
6 Chester residents were paying between 30% and 49% of their income for housing; whereas, in
7 Vermont at large it was only 26%. Peter Hudkins said yes. Hugh said 25% are paying 50% or
8 more. Hugh felt that was where it was a little bit skewed because when he looked at Vermont at
9 large only 25% are paying more than 50%, while in Chester it was only 17%. Cathy Hasbrouck
10 said she would be talking to Jason Rasmussen the next day and he would be able to get them
11 meaningful numbers.

12 Hugh Quinn said one thing he noticed was the median income in Chester was not much different
13 than for Vermont. He said it wasn't like Chester's median income was \$20,000 and the state's
14 was \$40,000. He said the median income was \$39,000 in Chester and the median was \$40,000 in
15 Windsor, so he guessed he was unsure of the state income. Hugh wasn't sure if they should look
16 at the statewide income or stay at the county level. Cathy Hasbrouck asked him if it would
17 matter. Hugh said it would not. He said the only thing he was interested in seeing was if the
18 median income for Chester residents was 40% less than everyone else which would say a lot to
19 him. It would help him understand the problem they're attempting to solve. He said they could
20 be paying more for their housing for two reasons: it was expensive; or they made so much less
21 than the average person. Hugh said hypothetically if someone's median income was the right
22 ballpark and an affordable house was under \$100k and the median income was much lower, that
23 would mean the house needed to be \$50k. And that begged the question was it even realistic. He
24 felt they needed both sides of the equation.

25 Peter Hudkins said he went about it differently. He looked at the people he knows. He said a lot
26 of rental housing had gone the way of Airbnb. Peter said because there was money in the shoot,
27 he would be proactive.

28 Hugh Quinn said what he interpreted Peter saying that someone who had a home they used for a
29 long-term rental which had been affordable was now an Airbnb, which was a trend that is not
30 going to be reversed.

31 Peter Hudkins proposed that since it was needed, they find the places that work with zoning and
32 then stand out of the way of the developer.

33 Hugh Quinn questioned whether they should be managing houses that have gone from traditional
34 rentals to Airbnbs. He said communities are trying to figure out how to understand it, or at least
35 control or limit it. He said he read articles about towns creating registries of short-term rentals.
36 Preston Bristow spoke up and said Killington was the leader of registering short-term rentals.
37 Hugh asked what the goal was for some of the efforts in trying to understand short-term rentals.
38 Preston said everyone had different goals and in Killington's case, because they were a resort
39 community, their view on short-term rentals was not negative. Preston said the problem was
40 there were a lot of out-of-control party houses that exceeded capacity and also resulted in
41 parking issues. He said Killington's goal is making sure the rentals complied with their building
42 inspection and septic approval. He said other communities have different views. He said in
43 Woodstock, where he lives, short-term rentals are viewed as basically allowing hotels in
44 residential neighborhoods and they feel short-term rentals destroy residential neighborhoods so

1 they have restrictions such as they can be rented no more than 180 days a year and also require
2 conditional approval from their neighbors. Hugh said that was great background and they should
3 discuss them in the future.

4 Peter Hudkins questioned whether the state had just passed something applying to short-term
5 rentals and Preston Bristow said it didn't pass, which was a big disappointment to some people.
6 Preston said the state had wanted to set up a short-term rental registry but didn't think it had
7 happened. Cathy Hasbrouck said she thought they were waiting for model language about short-
8 term rentals. Peter said there was separate legislation for the state regulation. Preston said there
9 were different legislations regarding short-term rentals. He said they thought they had a good
10 shot at establishing a registry this session due to COVID because they were unable to control
11 short-term rentals because they didn't even know who they were, unlike hotels. He said the
12 Vermont Tax Department got money from short-term rentals but they received it directly from
13 the host platform so they didn't know who the people were. Peter added his family had one and
14 the state knew exactly who they were. He said some of the companies they used took the money
15 and some didn't. He said he would bet the tax department knew who the rentals were. Preston
16 said the tax department knew but there was no central database to send a message to the owners.

17 Preston Bristow said once the state requires registration, will they have to be inspected and meet
18 fire codes and be handicapped accessible. He compared it to the internet being unregulated, at
19 first it was great and then it wasn't. He said short-term rentals for extra money sounded good at
20 first but had turned into something different.

21 Hugh Quinn said if the notion of a registry caught on, it wouldn't want to be taken to an extreme
22 where a registry was created and made the lives of everyone who had a short-term rentals
23 miserable and put their income at risk. He said something between a free for all and a complete
24 lockdown of short-term rentals was probably attainable. He said he read an article about a person
25 was looking to buy their retirement home in a desirable place and bought it in a community that
26 didn't allow short-term rentals because he didn't want to live around them, yet the irony was he
27 was able to retire because he had a short-term rental. Peter Hudkins said he could understand
28 that.

29 Peter Hudkins said the bait for the state is that it receives 9% from short-term rentals and the
30 budget is not even close this year.

31 Cathy Hasbrouck asked if they also wanted to talk with Kirby Putnam about roads when Jeff
32 talked about sewers. Peter Hudkins replied they should get a map from Jeff as to where the water
33 and sewer was and develop questions. Hugh Quinn said the map should help identifying possible
34 locations by figuring out the water and sewer and what zones the property candidates were in.

35 Peter Hudkins said the way he read the bylaws, when you have a multi-family there is no
36 specified limit. It is the lot coverage and the septic that limit.

37 Cathy Hasbrouck said in the mid-2000s required a certain number of square feet per dwelling
38 unit but it no longer existed.

39 Peter Hudkins said that was what would be reinstated in the proposed bylaws. Hugh Quinn said
40 that when they go through the exercise they would look at both the impact against the existing
41 bylaws and the proposed to see where they were headed.

42 Peter Hudkins said the per dwelling outside the village worked, but inside the village wouldn't,
43 as you wouldn't be able to build the senior housing or the Pleasantbrook apartments because it

1 would be too many dwellings per square foot of lot space. Hugh Quinn said that would be an
2 example of something they should look at. Peter said it was one of the screwy things that
3 required comparing with what currently exists and what is proposed to see how it would work.

4 Hugh Quinn asked when people thought about affordable housing, what were the top 3 reasons
5 they were against it. Hugh said he thought there was a lot of passion around affordable housing –
6 some people were for it and some people didn't want it in their town. He said they had heard
7 from people for it but what about people who were against it. Hugh asked Preston Bristow when
8 affordable housing came up why people were against it. Preston replied he thought the biggest
9 reason was either a misconception or depending on the project, the reality. He said a lot of
10 people thought of a Section 8 place like the Windsor Armory when they heard affordable
11 housing. Many people there don't work. He told Cathy Hasbrouck there was a 34 unit affordable
12 housing project in Woodstock that was managed by the Twin State Housing Trust and very
13 attractive. He said there were a lot of critics but he supported it but it was a common place the
14 police are called to. Preston said that was why he said it was good to want mixed housing; good
15 to want workforce housing, and not only workforce because everyone needed a house. There
16 were a lot of people you can bring to the community: policeman, waitress, store clerk, or teacher
17 that all need a place to live and can't afford a \$350,000 house. Hugh responded that was
18 probably a better way to sell it and it made sense. With Section 8, someone could say the town
19 didn't have enough social services to support it.

20 Peter Hudkins suggested that spoke to why 72 units should not be built. He preferred the 12 units
21 on Depot Street. He said if they were small and housing disbursed throughout existing
22 neighborhoods would go better. Hugh Quinn agreed.

23 Preston Bristow said the 3 projects already in town because they are managed are clean and the
24 trash doesn't accumulate. He said nobody would complain about the one next to the new fire
25 station. Like the one on Depot Street, he said converting big houses into 6 or 7 apartments is a
26 great way to go because they are interspersed in the community and it eliminated the ghetto like
27 experience. He thought the federal housing projects of the 1950s were a complete disaster
28 because they put too many people in one place resulting in segregation and ghettoizing.

29 Cheryl Joy Lipton said she found a document that addressed changes in zoning to encourage
30 affordable housing and thought it applied to what the board was doing. Cathy Hasbrouck said
31 they were trying to make sure the zoning bylaws didn't get in the way. Cheryl Joy offered to read
32 the document to the board and Cathy asked if she could send an email with the document
33 information. Cathy added there was training available on Thursday via Zoom about the same
34 topic.

35 Preston Bristow said since zoning was established in the 1920s, it has all been about the
36 American Dream: a single-family dwelling with a lawn. He said there was an interesting national
37 trend pushing back against that saying it was an exclusive attitude saying it was not affordable
38 and not good land use. He said at first he didn't understand, but now he was beginning to get it.

39 Cheryl Joy Lipton said a lot of zoning in the 60s through 80s has been detrimental and as a
40 result, there is a push to change it. Preston added that there are still R1, R2, and R3 districts with
41 1 or 2 family homes and they are now saying they should not be limited. Preston said Chester has
42 these neighborhoods and he wasn't sure when or how they would be changed. The trend now
43 questions 3 acre lots for a house and whether it is good land use. If you can fit a house on a
44 smaller lot, why make it public policy that you want it bigger. He said the state planning goals

1 which are still compact communities surrounded by open space, but why 1, 2 and 3 acres, that
2 that was the question. He said there were a lot of things to consider. He added state guidelines
3 currently dictate lots with water and sewer should basically allow up to 4 plex without a public
4 hearing, but only administrative approval. Cheryl Joy said that encouraged affordable housing.
5 Preston said the current town plan said nothing about affordable housing, only that it should be
6 reviewed and watched, except accessory dwellings. He said accessory dwellings are helpful but
7 require the septic capacity.

8 Hugh Quinn asked if the spirit behind the accessory dwellings was for a family member or to
9 rent out. Preston Bristow said they are used by kids and parents, one staying in the house and the
10 other in the accessory dwelling which is usually the parents. Preston suggested a fair number of
11 single people or single parent moms could rent an apartment over a garage. He said they used to
12 call them mother-in-law apartments but for many reasons, don't use that term anymore.

13 Cathy Hasbrouck said she would try to get a map from Jeff for the next meeting. Peter Hudkins
14 said they could get the water and the sewer from the map but said Jeff should definitely be there
15 to give his input regarding extending the water and sewer. Cathy said she could get the most
16 current demographical information from Jason regarding number of households, income, and
17 housing costs, but wasn't sure where he obtains the information.

18 Hugh Quinn suggested instead of only looking at places with water and sewer that they consider
19 certain districts that have septic. He wondered why it needed to be a single-family home and
20 instead be something the septic could support. Peter Hudkins said it would have to be a treated
21 well. Hugh questioned if a septic system could support 8 bedrooms, why couldn't the structure
22 be divided into 4 apartments. Peter said potable water with the well would be an issue. Hugh
23 asked if it was an issue of the well providing enough water and Peter said it was bacteria count
24 and inspection requirements.

25 Cheryl Joy Lipton said because it was affordable housing, being close to amenities should be a
26 concern, so it should be in town because not everyone has a car. Hugh said that would make it
27 pretty easy - wherever the water and sewer was would determine the areas they could consider.
28 Preston Bristow said they could consider where the water and sewer could expand but it should
29 stay around the village center. Everyone agreed that made sense. Preston said he agreed car
30 ownership was expensive and there was a class of people in Vermont who functionally could not
31 get their license and if they weren't working, everyone would be hurt by it.

32 Cathy Hasbrouck said it was a good discussion that needed to be continued further.

33 **Agenda Item 4, Discuss Agenda and Set Date for Next Meeting**

34 Peter Hudkins made a motion to adjourn the meeting and Hugh Quinn seconded it. The meeting
35 was adjourned at 8:00 p.m.