

1 **TOWN OF CHESTER**  
2 **PLANNING COMMISSION**  
3 **March 7, 2022, Minutes**

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

6 **Staff Present:** Preston Bristow, Zoning Administrator at Town Hall; and Susan Bailey, Secretary,  
7 via Zoom.

8 **Citizens Present:** Steve Mancuso, Scott MacDonald, Chris Kleeman, Arne Jonynas, and Cheryl  
9 Joy Lipton via Zoom. Bill Lindsay at Town Hall.

10 **Call to Order**

11 Chair Cathy Hasbrouck called the meeting to order at 6:32 p.m. (3:36 recording)

12 **Agenda Item 1, Add or Delete Items on the Agenda, if necessary**

13 Cathy was studying the rules of procedure and there's a formal way to do add or delete items, so  
14 she asked if anyone wanted to do that. If not, she wanted to add an item to discuss the letter to The  
15 Telegraph about the hearing on March 21<sup>st</sup>. There was agreement to discuss the letter.

16 **Agenda Item 2, Review Minutes from February 21, 2022, Meeting**

17 Cathy asked for a motion to review the minutes of February 21, 2022. Peter moved and Hugh  
18 seconded. Tim noted he couldn't vote on it because he wasn't at that meeting but did have a few  
19 questions. He thanked Sue for doing a terrific job, as always. He noted on page 4, line 39 it  
20 mentioned Jason and he assumed it was Jason Rasmussen. He asked that Jason's last name be  
21 inserted for clarity. Barre noted on page 7, line 12, that Bill Lindsay had commented, and the  
22 sentence didn't make sense to him and seemed to be missing some words. Cathy thought Bill was  
23 saying it wouldn't raise the value of the Grand List by very much if an accessory dwelling was  
24 added to an existing dwelling. Barre wondered if they needed to reword it. Preston said he wasn't  
25 there but suggested at the end of the sentence adding the impact on the Grand List would be small.  
26 Others agreed. Barre said there was a reference to his concern about the setback on page 4, line  
27 38, that read, "Cathy said Barre was excited about the dimensional standard of use." He thought  
28 he was concerned but not excited. He said it isn't his job to say what someone else should say but  
29 he didn't think it was the correct use of the word. Cathy thought it was likely she said excited.  
30 Barre agreed if that's what she said, it should remain. A vote was taken, and the minutes were  
31 approved with the two corrections.

32 **Agenda Item 3, Citizens Comments**

33 (9:01 recording) Cathy asked for citizens comments for anything not on the agenda.

34 Steve Mancuso asked if it was the place for him to ask about what to expect on March 21<sup>st</sup> and  
35 asked what she would like to see. Cathy hoped to see many of the business and property owners  
36 from the Village Green and other members of the town who may have questions to attend to get  
37 answers. She said she was speaking for herself and would be glad to hear what other people on the  
38 commission hoped for.

39 Peter hoped a lot of people would attend because it was going to be their property and should  
40 impact them in what he hoped was a positive way. He said the commission needed to listen to what

1 those in attendance had to say and that it was a lot about listening.

2 Cathy proposed they start the hearing with a quick summary of how bylaws work. When she spoke  
3 with people last Saturday about the proposal, many had a hard time understanding what it meant.  
4 Some were concerned they may be doing things that weren't legal and didn't want to stir the pot  
5 and make it correct. They were worried about things that didn't exist and didn't understand how  
6 bylaws work. Cathy didn't think the bylaws explain themselves well and wanted to start with a  
7 quick discussion of how they work. She hoped they would take testimony of what people liked  
8 about them and what they wanted changed.

9 Steve talked to Derek Suursoo who suggested simulations, which involves taking your business  
10 and presenting it to people in charge of writing the bylaws and have them walk you through all the  
11 specifics applicable to your business. He didn't know if it would fit in the workshop. If they saw  
12 them implement their bylaws in a simulation. Cathy said they could pretend a drug store was going  
13 to move onto The Green. She said the simulation was a good idea and would be helpful and thanked  
14 Steve.

15 There were no other comments.

16

17 **Agenda Item 4, Draft of letter Cathy proposed sending to The Telegraph.**

18 (13:15 recording) Cathy received one comment that they need to mention a parcel can have more  
19 than one principal use and more than one accessory use.

20 (The letter was shared on Zoom so it could be seen by those attending remotely.)

21 Hugh said there was a part of him that thought she should remove some detail from the letter and  
22 save it for the meeting but indicate they would discuss things like the relationship between  
23 principal use and accessory use. He wondered if there was a way to shorten the letter but still  
24 generate interest without going into a lot of detail. He said some people don't like to read and may  
25 not want to read that much but maybe they should. He was on the fence about it.

26 Cathy said Preston has a rule that it should be on one page, and she could shorten it more.

27 Tim asked if the letter would be in her name or the Planning Commission's name. She wanted to  
28 offer them participation with it and that's why they were discussing it. Tim asked if that was one  
29 of the questions they needed to decide. Cathy was happy to say it was solely hers but would also  
30 be glad if they wanted their names or she could say it was the Planning Commission. Tim said he  
31 understood the desire to have it published quickly. If it was going to come from the commission,  
32 he thought it should be redrafted which would take time. He suggested it just come from her. He  
33 seconded what Hugh said about eliminating detail and also thought they could be setting  
34 themselves up for a difficult time with the way it was worded and suggested it should be simpler.

35 Cathy responded the hierarchy that exists is not explained in any bylaw document she has seen.  
36 There is a page in the bylaw that directs you to the different parts of Article IV, depending on what  
37 you're doing. She wondered if they should add an additional page to the bylaws but was advised  
38 it was complex enough that it would be difficult to put into legal terms that belonged in a bylaw  
39 document.

40 Peter said she had mentioned principal use and that could just be changing the definition in the  
41 back. Cathy said there was no definition for principal use. Peter said if he doesn't understand a  
42 term, he goes to the definitions in the back. Expanding the definitions would not be difficult. They

1 could have more than one definition for principal use and explain the terms. Cathy thought that  
2 would help. Preston and he searched for the word principal in the bylaws and could not find it.

3 Barre thought as a planning commission, if a member, especially the chair, made a choice to speak  
4 with people on The Green about what they were doing and represent the commission, he thought  
5 it should be discussed ahead of time. He thought drafting a letter for the newspaper to explain what  
6 they were doing would be discussed as a topic, then choose to draft the letter, then implement the  
7 letter. He felt this was backwards. He thought if Cathy was going to act unilaterally and go to The  
8 Green and draft a letter to the newspaper, it should be done by her as a person and not as the Chair  
9 because she wasn't representing the interests of the board but doing them on her own when they  
10 didn't agree to any of it. With respect to the concept of bylaws, anything with law is written in  
11 legal terms, so it's not easily understandable. A lot of times when people have a situation that  
12 involves the law, they hire a lawyer who helps them understand it. He felt their job helping the  
13 public came with their interactions with the Zoning Enforcement Officer who is supposed to know  
14 what it all means and translate it into layman's terms. He thought they were getting a little deep  
15 into the weeds trying to make sense of everything and communicate it. He wasn't certain it was  
16 their job or necessary. He thought their job as a planning board was to make decisions in the best  
17 interests of the community, present them as if they put thought and effort into them to achieve that  
18 goal, and then be confident that they did. He didn't think it was their job to explain everything to  
19 everyone in a way that they understood.

20 Steve Mancuso commented "Don't want to do things that people understand." Barre told Steve he  
21 knew he would understand what he was saying clearly and thanked him for that.

22 Hugh agreed Cathy should just be the author of the letter and it shouldn't necessarily represent the  
23 Planning Commission's view. He thought it was informational and she was trying to generate  
24 interest and get people thinking about it, read The Telegraph, and come to the meeting. If that was  
25 where they hoped to go, he thought it was a good idea and they should do it. He also agreed with  
26 Tim that she should remove some of the stuff regarding the bylaws. He suggested making it shorter  
27 by saying come to the meeting, we are going to go through a scenario and explain the relationship  
28 between uses and whatever it is she could do to share how they were going to talk about principal  
29 use, accessory use, and the hierarchy of home occupation to home business to business to  
30 commercial or industrial. He thought what she had written about the make-believe furniture  
31 business she could use as a discussion topic on the 21<sup>st</sup> to help ground people. Hugh agreed with  
32 Peter that if principal use wasn't a definition, they should consider adding it.

33 Cathy wanted to share with them the very first person she spoke with on Saturday was quite  
34 concerned about light industry. She said she had light industry and that she made a tool for making  
35 crafts and sold them out of her house, but she didn't have \$250 to get a permit for light industry.  
36 She named other businesses on The Green where people are making the products they sell in the  
37 building. She was very concerned about it and didn't have the faintest idea she had a home  
38 occupation, and she didn't need a permit for light industry and was entitled to a permit for home  
39 occupation. Cathy realized people were genuinely concerned and didn't want to discuss anything  
40 because they were so worried about what might happen if they did. There was a lot of lack of  
41 knowledge that she felt needed to be addressed. She didn't think it was fair to ask people to decide  
42 on something if they didn't have the faintest understanding. If you're asking for an opinion on  
43 something you were hired to build, you would educate them to make a judgment. She would be  
44 glad to take the example out of the letter and shorten it to do something to get people's interest  
45 going.

1 Hugh thought if she indicated that whoever came to the meeting, she would be walking them  
2 through a scenario. Cathy agreed. Hugh thought the example should be simple enough so that  
3 people don't get lost but have the important points she was trying to educate them on. He thought  
4 that would be before the details of what they put into the Village Green wording.

5 Tim said he just had a lightbulb come on. He was glad Cathy shared that example. It never occurred  
6 to him people may be afraid to speak up and view it as an attempt for the town to raise more money  
7 through fees. He thought they needed to be open about it.

8 Peter thought Cathy's folksy approach was they weren't out to get them but were their neighbors  
9 which was the way the zoning board used to work. He thought the approach of if you have a home  
10 occupation, this is what it is and don't worry, you're all set. When you look at light industry, that's  
11 not you, try to relax. The town needs to have people function and make money in their own home.  
12 If they have a good idea, they should be able to do it and feel comfortable they're not getting  
13 targeted. A lot of Cathy's personality is she wants to help them. We do have a bylaw but we're not  
14 out to get you. We're just trying to explain where we are and hopefully it will move us all forward.

15 Cathy liked Barre's statement that bylaws are there to help you be a good neighbor. She suggested  
16 reiterating that a few times.

17 Steve thanked Peter and thought it played on his definitions and wanting to put it definitionally.

18 Tim thought they should lead with the definitions and be prepared to explain to people what each  
19 of them are and use examples how it may or may not impact someone and what it would mean if  
20 they did need to apply for a permit. Maybe they didn't know they needed to but there is no penalty.  
21 It really resonated with him that person was concerned they would be charged \$250.00 if the board  
22 found out what they were doing in their home. Tim thought that was big and they needed to make  
23 sure they alleviated that concern.

24 Scott MacDonald mentioned the line about them being almost impossible to understand, he  
25 thought a lot of people felt that way. He thought if the commission felt they didn't like that  
26 sentence, to bring it down to the level where it was challenging to understand as it was easier to  
27 explain to people. The DRB has had meetings where they have had to explain things. He referred  
28 to what Barre had said and if they could make things as understandable as possible to people it  
29 would make the process so much easier as people would come into the meetings with the DRB  
30 knowing more and Preston wouldn't need to explain as much. Scott thought the more we were all  
31 on the same page and just making things simple for people to understand, they would be able to  
32 help them much more quickly. He wanted to share with the commission that 7 years ago he  
33 contacted the former zoning administrator before he bought his house in Chester. He told him he  
34 was going to put up a guitar workshop in his home and didn't want to purchase a property where  
35 it wasn't allowed, and the ZA told him it was just a home occupation, and he was fine. So, for the  
36 past six years, he's been doing his thing. It's low volume and isn't retail and he gets maybe 4 or 5  
37 people weekly, one at a time. As a member of the DRB, he realized he didn't have an approved  
38 business, so he contacted Preston and told him he never received anything official even though he  
39 got a verbal and he thought as someone sitting on the DRB, he should have more than that. Preston  
40 worked very easily and rationally with him and for a minor fee, everything was tucked into place,  
41 so everything was where it ought to be. He offered to share his story with others, so they knew it  
42 was easy. Preston made it easy for him to step up and do the right thing and he thought more people  
43 should know.

1 Barre thought what triggered the legality of a home occupation was when you apply for a sign  
2 permit. If you're just doing your own thing in your house, it's allowed by the state. He asked for  
3 confirmation from Preston. Preston said he doesn't know it's a home occupation until someone  
4 puts up a sign. The bylaw does say home occupation should have a permit. Because his predecessor  
5 was more casual, he doesn't police it, but it would be his goal that everyone who has a home  
6 occupation has a permit.

7 Tim was going to go out on a limb and thought it likely that Scott MacDonald wasn't the only  
8 town official who went through that and didn't have a permit for home occupation. Tim said when  
9 he built his barn, he was clear what he was doing, and nobody suggested he needed a permit. He  
10 was under the same impression as Barre that it was legal by the state.

11 Barre said it was triggered by the sign because you're creating traffic and it has more effect on  
12 your neighbor. He thought if they wanted to be more business-friendly and do a home occupation  
13 when they're not bothering anyone but now tell them they need to get a permit when they don't  
14 have a sign then they are making it more difficult for business. If they need to wrangle everyone  
15 who is making knitting needles in their house and tell them they have a business and they need a  
16 permit.

17 Scott said there was an element for homeowners and home occupation people that makes a permit  
18 a wonderful thing to have. He has a separate workshop on his property and doesn't have  
19 employees. If he decides to sell his home with his woodshop on the property and the new owner  
20 decides to use the woodshop for their home occupation, knowing he has a permit will make them  
21 much more willing to come here.

22 Barre said you can have a home occupation anyplace in the state and that is one of the good things  
23 about Vermont and why he moved here. When he was in Massachusetts, he had to have his gallery  
24 in a retail zone, his working in an industrial zone, and his living in a residential zone. There wasn't  
25 any place there where he could do all three.

26 Hugh sort of agreed with Barre that it may not appear friendly to require permits, but he also  
27 viewed it as an opportunity for that person to get an education from the zoning administrator about  
28 some of the things that are relevant for a home occupation, like having to run it in one of your  
29 buildings, and not violating all the performance standards, and there are some rules as to what is  
30 allowed. In his opinion, he thought it would be good for people with home occupations to  
31 understand the rules and try to follow them. If they never seek out the advice because they didn't  
32 apply for a permit, they are unaware, and you could have home occupations that are in violation  
33 of the bylaws, but nobody knows about it, and they don't think they're doing anything wrong.

34 Barre said if the trigger to having a legal home occupation was a sign permit, then they would need  
35 to change that trigger. Cathy asked Barre to explain what he meant by trigger. He said in most  
36 towns, the process of opening a business happens because people want to put up a sign to let  
37 everyone know they have a business. If there is no sign permit applied for, there is no reason to go  
38 to town hall and inform them of the business opening, because they're just knitting quilts and  
39 selling them on Etsy, and nobody cares. In reference to being good neighbors and you're not  
40 creating traffic because people aren't coming to your house and you're just doing your little thing,  
41 who cares because you're not affecting anyone? Scott isn't bothering anyone out in the middle of  
42 nowhere but because he wants to be above board, because he's on a board and feels like he must  
43 have legal documentation. He doesn't have a sign out on the road, he has an address people go to.  
44 If he came in and said he wanted to put his business on a sign, that would have triggered the

1 process. That's the trigger. In most cases, in most communities, that's what triggers it. If people  
2 don't need a sign because they're not that big, it doesn't really matter. That was the point.

3 Peter said he and Cathy had previously discussed making home occupation permits free so you  
4 could come and get one and you would be aware of what's going on. There are a lot of home  
5 businesses in town that are afraid to speak up because they feel they are going to get trapped.  
6 Having a permit to do it saves them. The current bylaw doesn't require a permit for everything.  
7 It's a state statute to be able to have a home occupation. It is not a state statute for a sign. Everyone  
8 should be able to have a home occupation without any trouble. He thought they should say a home  
9 occupation permit is free because it would help them know what is going on in the town. He didn't  
10 think it should be a penalty to have something allowed by state statute.

11 Barre wanted to go on record being a very business-friendly person on the board and thought unless  
12 you were going to draw traffic and needed a sign to let people know where you're located, he  
13 didn't think it applied to people who are knitting doilies and selling them on Etsy.

14 Cathy said when she and Peter spoke about making the home occupation permit free, the piece she  
15 liked about it was it would be a way to show how industrious Chester is and how many people are  
16 doing things in their homes to earn a living. She thought it may surprise people to learn how many  
17 had something going on the side. She was proud of the town for working so hard.

18 Hugh suggested maybe it shouldn't be a requirement. He thought there was a scenario where  
19 someone wanted a permit, like in Scott's example. And if someone didn't want to get a permit,  
20 maybe it should be optional.

21 Preston said home occupations were a protected right by state, but towns were allowed to require  
22 a permit. They couldn't turn it down if it met the state exemption, but they could require it. He  
23 thought if they looked in each category of the permitted uses in the district that require a permit,  
24 one says home occupation. He just says that's what it says. Getting the permit is certainly a way  
25 to document the file. They have seen some historical uses and they don't see when they began or  
26 how they morphed because it often wasn't Michael's practice to require a permit.

27 Hugh asked Preston if he had knowledge of what other towns did. Preston said he thought more  
28 towns required it than didn't so that they had a paper trail in the file. Preston said you start a  
29 relationship with someone explaining a home occupation and if they expand and hire people, then  
30 it's a home business which is another world. It's a phenomenon that people start something in their  
31 home that becomes successful and then suddenly their neighbors start complaining and they realize  
32 they can't do it in their home anymore. Preston added that even Heady Topper started that way.

33 Hugh thought even if they required a permit at no cost, enforcement could be difficult. If someone  
34 starts a thing in their house, never says anything, and doesn't put up or want a sign, it's like they're  
35 invisible.

36 Barre understood what Cathy was talking about with having pride in the community. Their job as  
37 a planning board wasn't to document this sort of thing. He thought it sounded like more of a  
38 business type of group. Their job as a planning board was to make sure they had land zoned where  
39 someone could put up an industrial building to grow their business that started in their garage. He  
40 thought that was their job more than counting who's knitting doilies. There are a lot of things:  
41 ARPA money and all kinds of things coming down the pipe and they're supposed to be planning  
42 for the future of the town. He thought their time and energy should be spent more on that rather  
43 than worrying about these smaller things. He thought it was nice, but he wanted to put time and

1 energy into things that were going to make a difference.

2 Peter asked if they could get back to the letter.

3 Cathy said she would sign the letter as a private citizen, and it would be shorter. She would cut  
4 down on the example and talk about the hearing coming up and letting them know they would run  
5 simulations at the hearing and to bring anything they wanted simulated, and they would work them  
6 out then. She asked if they needed a motion or if they were okay with the summary she just gave.  
7 They were fine with it.

8

9 **Agenda Item 4, Discuss our Presentation at the March 21, 2022, Village Green amendment**  
10 **hearing.**

11 (49:07 recording) A list of the items they wanted to cover at the hearing was displayed on Zoom.

12 Cathy added simulations to the list.

13 Tim thought definitions should be included early in the presentation.

14 Cathy asked if there were any other great ideas.

15 Peter thought architectural standards should be included for anyone considering an addition or new  
16 structure. Cathy thought they fell under Special Criteria at the end of 4.8. Peter agreed. It was on  
17 page 66. Peter thought if there was Special Criteria, it should be understood.

18 Hugh asked if Cathy had the written summary of the change, and she did. He asked how it would  
19 become available to people and she said it was on the town website, but she could also print some  
20 copies. Hugh thought that was a good overview, so he wanted to make sure it didn't get lost. Cathy  
21 said they had heard back from one property owner at 34 School Street with the new gallery and  
22 the salon at the bottom. He was concerned about the parking issue.

23 Peter said parking was a pretty big change. Cathy said she should put the parking study on the  
24 website. Hugh asked if the owner felt there wasn't enough parking or if the parking standards had  
25 been relaxed too much. Cathy said 34 School Street had no parking on the parcel. It is covered  
26 with building and walkway. This off-street parking requirement for tenants and staff was  
27 concerning to him. He wasn't impressed with Preston informing him it would only be enforced if  
28 a new use came in and a permit was needed. Preston told him the goal was to have parking for his  
29 customers and merchants available. They want their employees and apartment dwellers to park  
30 elsewhere. Preston thought from the owner's point of view, it was like throwing himself at their  
31 mercy and he didn't quite understand it. Preston and Cathy planned to follow-up with him. He  
32 also would be unable to attend the hearing. He owns the building as an investment and everything  
33 in the building is a tenant to him.

34 Cheryl Joy thought the direction planning was going was to not require parking so much or at all  
35 in certain places. She thought it was better to consider not requiring so much parking.

36 Peter said on their list of future uses, they need to come back to one of Barre's questions and  
37 address what a municipal lot is. Cobleigh is a municipal lot, and they don't really have a parking  
38 definition of what a town road and municipal lot are and how it varies due to snow plowing, but  
39 that they are thinking of them and an alternative.

40 Barre said the Canal Street well property was a little bit of a walk for them. He said when he was  
41 on the Downtown Master Plan Committee, they discussed trying to utilize it in some way. Being

1 forward thinking in planning and with what they're trying to do with parking, he thought everyone  
2 should realize they're trying to be helpful and create spots for customers by encouraging renters  
3 and tenants to park elsewhere. For someone way on the corner of The Green, it may be easier to  
4 get down to the Canal area if it were gravel or paved and considered a public parking space. It  
5 would also be convenient for Fall Festival if it were available. They aren't trying to make these  
6 people's lives miserable but were trying to be helpful.

7 Cheryl Joy said another thing to consider was street parking and alternate side parking in the winter  
8 for snow removal.

9 Cathy wasn't sure they would want people parking too close to the well. Barre asked if it was still  
10 active. Preston said Jeff Holden talked to the state about possibly putting the greenhouse on that  
11 property and even though Jeff can't imagine the town relying on that well, it is the official backup  
12 on the state permit and the state said no, it is an active well and must remain protected. Preston  
13 said there could be runoff from a parking lot, and it may be an issue. Barre said there were ways  
14 to mitigate that, but it costs money.

15 Tim thought they were off topic with parking lots and wells.

16 Cathy asked if anyone had any other ideas.

17 Steve asked about the past Main Street Parking Alliance. He thought it was an effort at the time to  
18 let the business owners who existed to work it out. He asked how much ground they gained, if they  
19 were still around, and could they help. Cathy said they still existed, and Sue Ash handled it even  
20 though she was retired. The members of the Alliance Cathy has spoken with are very open to  
21 people using their space. She wasn't sure what it would take to make it into something you could  
22 put a sign up indicating to park there. St. Luke's parishioners use it on Sunday mornings. Inn  
23 Victoria has their guests park there when it's going to snow. Since it's private, it's hard to figure  
24 out how to bridge the public need and the private sector. She would be happy to see merchants  
25 from The Green get together and come up with a plan for parking and to say, as a group, we think  
26 tenants shouldn't park from 8 a.m. to 6 p.m. on The Green so the customers get the parking, or  
27 something like that. She thought they would be better served if the merchants came to an agreement  
28 and informed the town of that agreement, and they could put it into an ordinance. That is her  
29 personal view. She hoped if people attended the hearing, they may talk with one another. The Main  
30 Street Parking Alliance is a happy organization that nobody is upset about and who are there for a  
31 lot of people. It's been there since 1977.

32 Steve suggested it could be a simulation. She asked if anyone wanted to join her in working out  
33 plans for the simulations for March 21<sup>st</sup>. Peter and Tim were interested in doing that. Peter said he  
34 would back out and be an alternate and then Tim and Cathy could do. Preston thought if the board  
35 sets up a subcommittee, attendance didn't matter, and minutes would need to be taken. Cathy said  
36 if they came to an agreement on time, she would post it.

37 Barre asked if they set up a subcommittee to review the procedure for the hearing, would they need  
38 to post it. Cathy said they must post the meeting and write minutes. Preston said they had the same  
39 situation with the earlier subcommittee consisting of two members, Jason Rasmussen, and Preston  
40 and they didn't think they needed to post it, but the town's attorney said because it was a planned  
41 meeting rather than a chance meeting, it fell under the open meeting law and posting was required.  
42 Preston said if he and Barre and Cathy sat in his office and talked, it wasn't a meeting but because  
43 this was a planned meeting, attendance didn't matter, and it still fell under the open meeting law.



1 Barre wasn't opposed to setting up a subcommittee with Peter, Cathy, and Tim. Peter moved that  
2 they have a subcommittee and Tim, Cathy and he would work on simulations for the March 21<sup>st</sup>  
3 hearing about the Village Green bylaws. Tim seconded the motion. There was no further  
4 discussion and the motion passed unanimously.

5 Barre wanted to be clear that when the bylaws are redone and new rules are implemented, they  
6 only go into effect if there is a change of use or property owner doing something different so they  
7 would not affect anyone there now doing what they're doing. From that prospective, he thought it  
8 should be the first thing they communicate to everyone that they're planning for the future and  
9 have reasons they chose to do these things. It doesn't affect them now, so they should keep that in  
10 mind when they revolt.

11 Preston rephrased it to say if anyone is legally operating under today's rules if the rules are  
12 changed, they are still okay. It's not until the next person comes along that they need to fit those  
13 rules. Tim added and that person wants to fit the use. Preston said Tim was absolutely correct and  
14 that if someone wanted to take over Barre's job of carving bears, they could keep doing it.

15 They agreed to schedule the subcommittee meeting via email.

16 **Agenda Item 5, Discuss Draft 2022 Project List and news of progress on the Housing Study.**

17 (1:08 on recording) Cathy said the last thing she wanted to discuss was a draft project list that she  
18 and Preston hammered out in January. People wanted to know what they would be doing next, so  
19 it looked to her as if they had several administrative changes to the adopted bylaws to put through.  
20 Preston thought Brandy's list of exemptions was good. Cathy thought given Preston's zoning  
21 administrator experience that he should look through it. The first set of bullets on the draft  
22 document were things they wanted to fix and ought to be fixed in the bylaws. Separate from that  
23 project, Cathy included in the packet the announcement for Requests for Proposals from people  
24 for the housing study. She thought the proposals are due March 18<sup>th</sup> and that Julie would decide  
25 who got the contract. The study would begin sometime after March 18<sup>th</sup>, and she imagined it would  
26 take a while to get the study off the ground. In the gap between the March 21<sup>st</sup> hearing and the  
27 housing study, they would look at administrative changes to the bylaws. As the projects continue,  
28 if the housing study were to have a hiatus, they have the administrative changes to push through.  
29 The last piece of the Village Green would be to transmit the proposal to the abutting towns and  
30 have the hearing, and then submit the final version of the Village Green to the Selectboard who  
31 then holds hearings and decide how it would be voted on.

32 Cathy said she wanted to hear from others if that had pet peeves about the adopted bylaws because  
33 she wanted to fix them.

34 Tim asked if Cathy was suggesting rather than looking at the next district and the next district,  
35 which was what they had discussed before working on the Village Green, that they were not going  
36 to do that and just make corrections to the existing bylaws. Cathy said they would go to the districts  
37 once they finish the housing study.

38 Peter said there was a big piece missing in the way of going to the next district. There was no  
39 electronic version of where the sewer was located. When Bud Barnes retired, they lost a lot of  
40 information. They need to know where the sewer is and where it can be in order to do the next  
41 district.

42 Tim understood that had been discussed before. Peter said if he was still there, it would probably  
43 take him two months because he must go through each of the legs. Once that's done, he didn't see

1 any problem going to the next district without any trouble. Knowing where the water and sewer  
2 are located would control the next district. Peter said Baba A. Louis had water and sewer, but it  
3 was never included in the district right next to it.

4 Tim understood it controlled the density. He wanted to throw something out he was thinking about  
5 on vacation. He wondered if drafting a survey and sending it to property owners and renters asking  
6 them what their lists of concerns were for the future of Chester as far as planning uses, concerns,  
7 and visions for the town. He offered to draft something up to get them started if it was of interest.  
8 He knew it had been done a long time ago when they were reworking the energy chapter and  
9 thought Barre and Cathy may remember doing it. He recalled getting more than a 10% response  
10 to the survey, which is a huge response. He thought they could probably increase it more with  
11 publicity, especially since it has been such a highly discussed topic over the last couple of years.  
12 He put it out for discussion and wondered what other thoughts on it were. It seemed like a very  
13 helpful tool to guide their work.

14 Cathy asked if he wanted to ask residents what uses they wanted to see and where they would like  
15 to see them. Tim said no, but what their vision for Chester was in 5 years, 10 years, or 25 years  
16 and what were their concerns. It would help give them some cohesion. They all have different  
17 perspectives, experience sets, and different sets of friends who maybe have different leanings one  
18 way or another. He thought one of the good things about the makeup of the commission was the  
19 diversity. It has hurt them some but could also be made into a tool to help them if they had an  
20 overarching set of guidelines that came from the taxpayers and the citizens of the town.

21 Hugh's point of view on that was anything they could do to gather feedback in terms of concerns  
22 or priorities from the community was a good thing. He couldn't see a downside other than the  
23 work required to craft such a survey in a way to generate meaningful results. It sounded like Tim  
24 already had some ideas and he thought it was a great idea. Tim thought they had a window to do  
25 it now.

26 Barre said they hadn't discussed the requirements from the state, which he thought was much of  
27 their impetus when Brandy was originally hired and then when they were going through all the  
28 districts and things they did under her tutelage, he was also surprised at how many aspects of it  
29 were regulated by the state. He is on several organizations and two of the planners from  
30 Townshend are involved in arts and they were advocating for arts and culture in their town and  
31 utilizing the ARPA money for things like that. He was feeling confused about whether they had a  
32 timeline with respect to the state and had it changed. From his perspective, he felt we lacked from  
33 places to gather and were not benefitting from the billions of dollars that drive down Route 103.  
34 He has his place dark because he has no inventory and doesn't want people bugging him. He  
35 thought there was a lot of opportunity in town that they weren't taking advantage of. With respect  
36 to planning, he wanted to know what aspects were their job and how could they focus their energy  
37 on it. He wondered if they were supposed to do something through the state so they could figure  
38 out they were supposed to create forest blocks and have bigger land blocks which seemed to be a  
39 primary issue before or could they focus on some of the issues to make their town more vibrant.  
40 He went to the selectboard when he first moved to Chester. He wanted to do an ad in Paradise City  
41 magazine to get people to put stores along Route 103 the way it was like 6A. He still believes that  
42 could be the case. He got his Paradise City magazine in the mail the other day and thought it would  
43 have been nice if they had been in it the last 13 years and thought they have 5 or 6 galleries on that  
44 road. Barre thought they needed a clear vision of what they wanted moving forward because there  
45 seemed to be some gray area about it.

1 Peter thought the survey would be interesting but to target it to the next district they were going to  
2 do rather than make it a big broad picture. For him, he thought allowing a free home business  
3 would help gather data about what people are doing. If the survey was targeted, it would be helpful.  
4 They are talking about housing and maybe nobody wanted a low-income housing complex  
5 regardless of what the sewer is. At the meeting, the Stone Village indicated they weren't interested  
6 in that, so Peter wanted to see the survey targeted to the next area they were going to do and then  
7 you could take that data and put it where you're going and not get lost in doing the whole town.  
8 Stick to the area you're going to do and fix the details and stay with that plan and then get lost in  
9 the big picture. He said there was also the ARPA money but had no idea how the ARPA money  
10 worked.

11 Barre said the ARPA money was available for the community and Jeff Holden talked about  
12 needing another backup well. Barre suggested if they wanted a brew pub in town and couldn't do  
13 it because they didn't have enough water, it would be something as a planning commission they  
14 could discuss and figure out. What it comes down to is the citizens have a voice and the Selectboard  
15 decides it. They had the lady from the League of Cities and Towns talking about it which sounded  
16 like a great opportunity because you could do those things. He wanted a place to gather that wasn't  
17 a bar or church. He didn't have anything against either but that they came with a certain kind of  
18 culture. If they could buy a church in town that wasn't utilized or put a place to gather in the  
19 firehouse or renovate part of the academy building for a senior center or place to gather. He thought  
20 part of what communities have is a place to gather and Chester doesn't have one.

21 Cathy thought the town manager oversaw the ARPA money and Preston said they would need to  
22 work with her. Cathy asked if it would help if Julie gave them a quick explanation about how that  
23 would be handled and when the money would show up.

24 Barre was glad everyone was willing to discuss it and apologized for not being more schooled. He  
25 was in on the Zoom meeting and one of things the arts and culture people discussed was they  
26 wished more people like them were on planning boards. Arts and culture people want arts and  
27 culture which create rich communities so when they have money, they should utilize some of it so  
28 the arts and culture can benefit along with the town planning. He suggested reaching out to the  
29 League of Cities and Towns. Zon Eastes is the person in charge of that and it may be something  
30 they can do as a planning board which may be more beneficial to the town in the big picture. The  
31 way Barre saw what they did with the downtown area was comparable to taking a painting off the  
32 wall and dusting it off, putting it in a new mat and hanging it back up. It's nice we did that but it  
33 doesn't do a lot to make the town more vibrant, interesting or more culturally viable. Having things  
34 to gather, theaters, things like that and things for people to do that aren't necessarily associated  
35 with bars and churches are a structure for that to happen in would be something nice for our  
36 community and to encourage more people to move here and be part of our community. If there's  
37 money available, it may be something to put some effort into that would be beneficial to Chester  
38 for a long time.

39 Cathy asked if it would make sense to have Julie explain this. Tim said it would be the topic of  
40 upcoming Selectboard meetings and had been touched upon at recent meetings. It has been  
41 included by all the Selectboard members and everyone has said they want to further discuss how  
42 the community would want to use the money, including getting community input on it. Tim  
43 thought Barre's idea of a community center certainly had a role in that discussion. He thought  
44 maybe it wasn't necessary for Julie to speak to them but rather they pay closer than usual attention  
45 to Selectboard meetings over the next few months to see where the conversation goes.

1 Barre also mentioned places that have band and theater shells, although seasonal, which would  
2 create another venue for people to gather and add to the character of the town. Barre said his  
3 biggest gripe is that we lack deeply in arts and culture in this area. For people who go to Okemo,  
4 he thought if there was theater in Chester, it would be a draw which would translate into seats in  
5 restaurants and so forth.

6 Cathy asked if Barre would be willing to watch the Selectboard agenda and minutes and report to  
7 the commission on how it progresses, and he happily agreed to do that.

8 Bill Lindsay said Julie would be having public hearings regarding requests and it behooves people  
9 to attend these meetings. There were wants, needs, and suggestions, but there didn't seem to be a  
10 turnout of people coming to request. He said now is a good time for people to attend with their  
11 good ideas. He often sees where there is a lot of community input on the street but not at the  
12 meeting where it's needed.

13 Cathy thought what Peter and Tim were discussing in terms of surveys, she was thinking of how  
14 successful the talk with Stone Village was and that they were heading into a season with warmer  
15 weather and possible outdoor gatherings. She thought maybe the survey idea would work out well  
16 with groups of people gathered. She said they could invite a big chunk of people to a gathering  
17 and talk it over. They could try out methods of engaging people at the hearing. Tim said the more  
18 they can engage people, the better. He would be in favor of putting a lot of effort into an e-survey  
19 or multiple surveys or sending the survey out piecemeal if it made the most sense, including asking  
20 people to come and discuss the survey with them. Tim said their job would be so much easier with  
21 public input instead of working in a vacuum, which is what they tend to do. Then they rely on  
22 hearing from a couple of people, which isn't really the town. He was all in favor of putting in effort  
23 into getting as much participation as they could.

24 Barre said from his perspective, running his own business and heating with firewood, and time and  
25 energy and he doesn't even have kids. He thought it was great they ask for input and continue to  
26 do that but also thought they should have confidence in the fact they are appointed to their positions  
27 to do a job for the community and should work together the best they can to come up with the best  
28 ideas and solutions because that's what they're hired to do. He didn't want people to think he  
29 doesn't want or care for people's input because he does. But he thought it was part of their jobs as  
30 leaders to do these things and come up with ideas and put it forward and put them out for review.  
31 Both were important but he didn't see a lot of people turning out for this stuff. To Bill's point,  
32 people don't show up for the opportunities and they couldn't rely on them and had to move  
33 forward.

34 Both Peter and Cathy said they had a good turnout for the Stone Village. Barre said they had a  
35 good turnout when they were working with Brandy. Tim agreed the workshops very well attended.

36 A public hearing should bring the people out.

37 Steve Mancuso listened to everyone being concerned where and what Chester wants to be when it  
38 grows up and it was very interesting. He asked them to please come to the business owner meeting  
39 on March 28<sup>th</sup> at the American Legion and they could have a voice in that direction as business  
40 owners, as well as seats on the Planning Commission. To back up Peter's point, he brought up a  
41 serious infrastructure concern that would facilitate all of it. He thought it was interesting telling  
42 him the sewer is all in the mind of Bud Barnes. Peter said it was in pencil and drawing and the  
43 town has chosen over the years to pave over manholes so when they start the survey, they don't

1 know where it is. Regional Planning put something up, but it didn't quite agree. It was like when  
2 you're looking for a manhole in the Stone Village, go for the potholes. It will need to be figured  
3 out from there. Steve said it facilitates business in Chester and asked if Jeff was left in town. Peter  
4 said Jeff probably knows and it would be easier because he has the paper drawings to find the  
5 manholes and locate it on a map so they can transfer it. Cathy from where the last manhole is they  
6 can probably figure out who is attached to it. If the asbuilts are any good, you know what the invert  
7 is in the bottom of the manhole, and you know what the rim elevation is and it's 5/8 of an inch per  
8 foot forever after that. Either it expands there, or it doesn't, and you go with a pumping station. It  
9 will take some time.

10 Barre asked if the Planning Commission was responsible for coming up with a map or if it was the  
11 town. He thought it was cool Peter was offering to do it and it sounded like he was doing it on own  
12 his own time, which was commendable, but he questioned if it was their responsibility. Barre asked  
13 if Julie asked him to do it. Tim knew it was on Julie's radar for spending the ARPA money to get  
14 the water and sewer maps into a GIS system. Tim didn't think it fell on them to answer Barre's  
15 question. Barre thought it was great if Peter wanted to do it, but it wasn't their job. Peter said it  
16 wasn't their job, but it controlled the density of the next village. Barre asked if he was putting  
17 himself in a position that he shouldn't. He asked if Julie asked him to do it. Peter said it was the  
18 data needed to expand the village and where they would have the density. Barre asked if it was  
19 appropriate for a member of a planning board in a town to take on a task like that unilaterally. He  
20 thought maybe Peter was overstepping and the town should contract with a company that does it.  
21 Peter said he could look at it that way, but he was viewing as the information needed to proceed  
22 to the next district. Barre said they hadn't voted on what district was next, so someone was making  
23 that decision without voting. Peter thought they had discussed working out from the center of town.  
24 Tim said they had talked about it, but they weren't bound to it and if water and sewer was an issue,  
25 they could work on another district. Cathy said Peter had spoken with Jeff about it and they also  
26 have talked to Julie about what resources are available. There are maps of the water system. Tim  
27 thought they had enough information, and it wasn't on the board to get the information. Peter said  
28 he was doing it on his own time as a volunteer. To make a serious plan, you need data. Peter had  
29 volunteered to do the parking study, and this was the same as the parking study. Tim moved to  
30 adjourn.

31 Barre thought it was great Peter was doing these things, but they were a town appointed board and  
32 there were guidelines they were supposed to work under. A therapist would call it boundaries back  
33 when he was in therapy, and he didn't mind mentioning that. He wondered if it was within their  
34 boundaries to say as a member of the planning board that he was going to take on the sewer and  
35 water study. He wasn't saying it was a bad idea but there was formality as a town board.

36 Peter said he wasn't doing the GIS mapping or a big digital study to make a perfect plan. There is  
37 a perfect water plan that's already done but it doesn't have the sewer.

38 Hugh was hearing that they knew there was prerequisite work required before they could move  
39 on, including the housing study and sewer work and other things that constitute prerequisites and  
40 they would all agree with that. They only thing he had heard was if those prerequisites aren't met  
41 yet, should they go do another district that doesn't have any prerequisites. He didn't have a strong  
42 point of view if they defer the village districts and go off into a rural district. They should decide  
43 if they're going to skip over to a rural district or not.

44 Barre's goal was to move forward and thought Jeff knew where the water and sewer ended. He

1 wondered if it was true everything hinged on it. Hugh said there was also the housing study and it  
2 made sense to let that work finish before they try to update the village district.

3 Tim agreed and thought it was a great topic to lead the next meeting with since it was 8:15. It was  
4 a new area they haven't visited in this detail. They need to decide what their priorities are and what  
5 the timeline is.

6 Barre said didn't really care but wanted to know what they were doing and why and a legitimate  
7 reason behind it.

8 Cathy said the next meeting was the hearing on March 21<sup>st</sup> and the next meeting was April 4<sup>th</sup>.  
9 Barre asked if they had a restructuring meeting in between and Cathy said whenever the  
10 Selectboard decided and makes an announcement. The restructuring meeting is usually a half hour.  
11 Barre asked if they vote on the Chair at the next meeting whether the Selectboard had decided or  
12 not. Cathy thought the vote on officers would take place once they know the composition of the  
13 board for the next year. Tim agreed.

14 Barre wanted to know if there was precedence for when it happened. Cathy said last year it was  
15 April 5<sup>th</sup>. Tim said it couldn't happen until the Selectboard made their decision and it would be  
16 one meeting that was probably 15 minutes. Cathy said April 4<sup>th</sup> they would reopen the discussion.

17 Tim suggested the agenda be kept light since obviously there would be discussion on this, and  
18 there would be follow-up from the hearing.

19 Cathy thought by April 4<sup>th</sup> they would know more about the housing study and when things might  
20 be scheduled. She said the applications were due by March 18<sup>th</sup> and she wasn't sure when the  
21 decision would be announced but hoped by April 4<sup>th</sup> they would have some idea.

22

23 **Agenda Item 6, Adjournment**

24 Tim moved to adjourn, and Hugh seconded the motion. A vote was taken, and it passed  
25 unanimously. The meeting was adjourned at 8:29 p.m.