

1 **TOWN OF CHESTER**
2 **PLANNING COMMISSION**
3 **September 6, 2022, Minutes**

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

7
8 **Staff Present:** Preston Bristow, Zoning Administrator/Town Planner, at Town Hall; and Susan
9 Bailey, Recording Secretary, via Zoom.

10
11 **Citizens Present:** None.

12 **Call to Order**

13
14 Chair Hugh Quinn called the meeting to order at 6:35 p.m.

15
16 **Decisions Made:**

- 17
 - None

18
19 **Action Items:**

- 20
 - Hugh will get something on the agenda to figure out a timeframe for the work with Jason Rasmussen.
 - Tim will meet with Julie about the community survey and report back at the next meeting.

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24
25 **Agenda Item 1, Add or Delete Items on the Agenda, if necessary.**

26
27 None.

28
29 **Agenda Item 2, Review and Approve Minutes from August 15th and 22nd, 2022 meetings**

30
31 Hugh moved and Tim seconded a motion to review and approve the August 15th and 22nd, 2022,
32 meeting minutes. Tim questioned getting the names in attendance on Zoom as they were listed as
33 M.H. and Jen R. and wondered if it was important enough to get their names. Cathy said it was.
34 Hugh wondered if they only needed to get names if they asked a question or commented. Cathy
35 said during a DRB meeting when someone questions a proposal, their names need to be part of the
36 record because it gives them rights and input to the decision. She didn't believe the Planning
37 Commission was the same. Preston said although nothing was appealable, his instinct was the
38 statutory definition of minutes is that it records all people that were present, so it was worth it to
39 try to know who was in attendance. Sue said when she asks people to identify themselves in chat,
40 they rarely reply. Cathy suggested Hugh could ask them vocally and he said he was happy to do
41 that. Preston added if someone refused to identify themselves, that was that. A vote was taken, and
42 the motion carried, and the minutes were approved.

43
44 **Agenda Item 3, Citizens Comments**

1 There were no citizens comments.
2
3

4 **Agenda Item 4, Finalize Draft Community Survey** 5

6 Tim thought he had captured everything that was talked about at the last meeting but had realized
7 he missed changing mobile home development to manufactured home development. On page 5 at
8 the top, it should have said clustered manufactured home communities and he would make the
9 edit. He was open to more feedback. He tried to streamline it more and broke out the environmental
10 concerns to a standalone question on page 5. Hugh asked if it would make sense to number the
11 questions and the pages. Tim said it was a good point and they should absolutely number the
12 questions for reference, but his next question was how they should format it and get it out there.
13 Hugh remembered at the last meeting Kathy Giurtino had wondered if they should allow the person
14 who responds to questions asking for the top three to rate them rather than just checking the top
15 three. Tim remembered the discussion and thought they wanted to keep it simple and asking people
16 to do more could be detrimental to getting complete surveys. Hugh was fine with that and thought
17 if someone had some passion about it, they would likely write it in.
18

19 Tim noted that he had included space for comments on some of the questions and wondered if it
20 made sense to include it for all questions. Hugh didn't think it could hurt. From a processing point
21 of view, allowing for other and writing in what they want can create more overhead, but he felt
22 like they would be looking at the completed surveys with their eyes and not a machine. Tim put it
23 in where he thought it was appropriate. Hugh thought they should leave it. Cathy said if they got
24 a lot of other answers, they would know the choices they had offered were not on people's minds
25 which would be important to know. Cathy suggested including other at the bottom of page 2, about
26 seeing more in the rural areas of Chester. She thought what was being asked was rural business
27 locations which wasn't the same as something other than scenic views or hunting. Tim thought
28 that was a fair point. Hugh said there was something he didn't like about the word locations
29 because what if they wanted some other type of business opportunity in the rural areas and they
30 thought they were just asking them about where. Tim suggested additional rural businesses and
31 Hugh responded it would be more open-ended and they would get more feedback. Tim suggested
32 adding other to the second question about commercial activities on page 3. Cathy agreed. Tim also
33 thought they should add other for the question at the bottom of 3.
34

35 Peter said going back to the question asking which of the following commercial activities do you
36 believe Chester should try to encourage, one of the things they had was that there were 7 stone
37 quarries in town, and it seemed to be a big business currently. They agreed to add quarrying. Peter
38 wasn't saying they were going back into the talc business. He said the town owns a large talc
39 deposit and because it is town leased land, the town owns all the mineral rights. He said it was a
40 case settled in the 50's and that Johnson and Johnson was trying to develop at one time.
41

42 Tim went over the changes. They will add "other" at the bottom of page 2, add "quarrying" and
43 "other" on page 3 following commercial activities. They will add "other" to the top of page 4
44 referring to housing.
45

1 Tim will make those edits and his sense was to go to Amie, as she seemed to be town office
2 technical person, and ask her regarding the publication of it. They will need to print something to
3 stuff in envelopes or a folded stapled paper to go out. They also want to include it on the internet
4 and SurveyMonkey or something similar so both things would need to be created.

5
6 Cathy said when they did it before, they hadn't considered an internet survey and printed 1,000 or
7 more copies. Amie has a machine that folds, and they folded and stuffed them, but it still was an
8 undertaking. Hugh asked how they got returned. Barre asked if they were sent out with the tax bills
9 last time. Cathy said no because of the importance of the tax bill they didn't want to include
10 anything else.

11
12 Barre asked if they had partnered up with something or if it went out on its own. Cathy said it went
13 out on its own. She said they could send it out to registered voters. If they use the Grand List, only
14 people who own property would receive it. She said only about half of those on the Grand List
15 have a homestead in Chester. Barre asked if they should print it up and when people come to vote
16 they could get one. Peter said that wouldn't work because they are mailing out ballots to give
17 people the option to vote by mail for the general election.

18
19 Tim would schedule some time with Amy and/or Julie and get it figured out. Getting it to the
20 highest number of Chester residents was a good goal. He asked if they could cross reference voter
21 registration to the tax rolls, so they weren't duplicating. He asked Cathy if Amie would be a good
22 source for that. Cathy wasn't sure if she would know about cross referencing lists. Cathy asked
23 Preston if postage would come out of his budget. Preston wasn't sure but said the Commission
24 didn't have much of a budget. Tim said they have \$500 and probably haven't used any of it. Preston
25 said it was a good question, but they would find a way to do it.

26
27 Hugh understood the voter registration angle but that it would leave out anyone where Chester was
28 their primary residence. Cathy suggested she could pull people who have second homes in Chester
29 and their mailing address isn't Chester. Tim thought if they could get it all into Excel, they could
30 cross reference that way. Hugh asked if they should discuss if it was important to get not just the
31 voters but also second homeowners. Tim thought it was very important. Hugh thought they all
32 agreed. Tim thought they needed to figure out how to get it to renters who aren't registered voters.

33
34 Barre suggested when it goes out, leaving copies at Town Hall for people to pick up. Tim suggested
35 posting the Planning Commission email address so people could request one. Cathy suggested
36 putting it on the town website, which would provide the internet version. Tim thought that was
37 best they could do. Hugh asked the members if there was value in just doing a paper survey and if
38 they don't get the results they want, doing an internet version, or if they should be launched
39 simultaneously. Tim thought simultaneously because some people have a preference. Once people
40 fill one out, they're less likely to do another. Peter suggested paying The Telegraph to publish a
41 link to the online survey. Hugh thought that made sense and liked it. Preston said it was well known
42 that Generation X, Y, and Z prefer to do it on their phone. Tim hoped whatever platform they use
43 for the internet would work on a phone. Peter added that MonkeySurvey works on a phone.

44

1 Tim's next step was to reach out to Julie so she can guide him where to go. Hugh suggested a cover
2 letter explaining the survey. Tim suggested a press release doubling as a cover letter and Hugh
3 agreed.

4
5 Hugh asked if there was significance to the timing of the survey. He said if they were wrapping up
6 the community workshops that Jason was holding, maybe the survey should fold in the timeframe
7 over the next couple of months as opposed to next year. Tim thought sooner was better than later
8 and before everyone in Town Hall gets focused on election and budget. Barre thought it would be
9 worthwhile to include a deadline, so people don't set it aside and forget about it. Hugh and Tim
10 agreed. Preston added that if it didn't include a cover letter, people may think it's from a political
11 party. He thought to be safe, it should be titled Chester Planning Commission Poll. They agreed to
12 change the heading. Barre didn't want to give Tim more work but asked if they had discussed if
13 there really was an increase in housing development because it seemed to him that there wasn't.
14 Tim said there had been some back and forth on it but there had been permits. Barre pointed out
15 that increase didn't necessarily mean a massive increase. Tim agreed. Preston said before COVID,
16 it was five houses a year and now it was 10, so it had doubled but it was still a small number. Tim
17 said it had increased and driving around you could see new houses popping up here and there.
18 Preston said it was the third year since COVID and their permit volume has remained at around
19 10. Preston said it was an increase and they couldn't say it wasn't. Barre noted that 10 houses in a
20 rural area wasn't a lot in his opinion, but it was an increase. Barre said when you read stuff like
21 that, it gives the impression something is happening. Tim said that people recognize, and Arne had
22 pointed out at the last meeting that people were saying the town was busy and things were
23 changing. Tim thought it was the perception. Cathy asked if Preston knew how many of the 10
24 houses were second homes and if any were primary. Preston said anecdotally, most people who
25 can afford to build now are either second home or clearly well off. He talks to a lot of people who
26 are early retirees and are thrilled to move to town. They may be residents but are not the kind of
27 workforce housing that people are worried about losing. Preston noted he had recently spoken with
28 someone who was living fulltime on Flamstead Road and was building a 30-foot garage for his 6
29 Corvettes, so that's what they're talking about.

30
31 Tim would meet with Julie and report back at the next meeting. The others thanked him for his
32 work.

33 **Agenda Item 5, Sue Bailey shares about her ADU Project**

34
35 Hugh said they thought it would be a good idea to have Sue chat with the Commission about her
36 ADU project because they just had the Windham & Windsor Housing Trust give a presentation
37 about things that happen in village areas with larger buildings but also things that can be done in
38 more rural areas with ADUs.

39
40 Sue said when she bought her property 2 years ago, the realtor told her there was an existing water
41 and sewer line run to the garage and it would make a good Airbnb. Originally, Sue was considering
42 making it into an Airbnb. A woman posted on Facebook about something needed to be done
43 because mothers were sleeping on people's couches so that is what made her reconsider and lean
44 more toward the affordable housing. She added that when she first purchased her property, she had
45 contacted the Windham & Windsor Housing Trust because she knew of their grant program, but
46 they had exhausted their funding, so she signed up to be notified when the program opened again.

1
2 Sue said she didn't think it was a bad deal because it only required a commitment of 5 years. She
3 thought if the experience was good, you could continue to rent the apartment out and if it was a
4 terrible experience, after 5 years the apartment was yours to do with as you wished.

5
6 Sue said she is waiting to sign the official papers. She related that she had the most difficult time
7 securing a carpenter. Steve Mancuso is going to do the electrical and Arne Jonynas would be doing
8 the plumbing. She noted that she is on town water and sewer. She noted she has contacted several
9 carpenters and finally found one to work with. She said she had 18 months after the paperwork
10 was signed to complete it but didn't expect it to take the full 18 months. She thought she had 1
11 month after the project was completed to find a tenant.

12
13 Sue said Preston was a huge help when she applied to get a permit. She said because it's an ADU,
14 there is no limit on the bedrooms. Preston agreed and said they had changed the bylaws and there
15 was no limit. Sue said she was initially thinking about an efficiency or 1 bedroom and then was
16 considering 2 bedrooms with a loft because it would provide more space and she could charge
17 more rent per HUD guidelines. She noted that water, sewer, and electricity would be included in
18 the rent. She said her only fear was if something happened and they didn't pay rent, she would be
19 responsible for their utility bills. She said the lease would be for 12 months and if she had a tenant
20 that didn't work out, when the lease was up, she could get a new tenant. Barre asked if because it
21 was an ADU, the utilities couldn't be put in the tenant's name. Sue said it would cost more upfront
22 to set it up that way. She also noted that if utilities aren't included in the rent, she would have to
23 lower the rent. She thought currently a 1 bedroom was around \$900 a month including utilities.
24 Barre asked if the additional cost would be the meter. Sue said Steve had looked at it and said it
25 would cost a lot more if they had their own electric. Hugh thought it was part of the expectation
26 of the grant that you rent your place and include utilities and the rent would be this much but if
27 you have the tenant pay their utilities separately, the amount of rent that could be collected would
28 decrease, in Sue's opinion, enough that it would be almost better to include it. Sue agreed. She
29 said if she had a lot of money to work with, she may be more apt to separate the utilities.

30
31 Sue said although initially she was thinking efficiency or 1 bedroom and then was considering
32 more, she decided to go with 1 bedroom. She can always go larger down the road and that way
33 there would be less people residing there and using less water and other utilities. It would provide
34 an opportunity to see how it works before deciding to go with more bedrooms. She noted that just
35 because someone is eligible for HUD rent or in a bad situation doesn't mean they're not going to
36 be a good tenant. She noted there was a time in her life where she qualified for government
37 assistance. She added someone could make a lot of money and be a terrible tenant. She said during
38 COVID there was a period, rightfully so, that landlords couldn't evict people who weren't able to
39 pay their rent and it could be tough for a landlord who isn't in a great place financially.

40
41 Tim asked what the amount of the grant she would be receiving was. Sue said because it was a
42 garage and had never been housing, it would be eligible for up to \$50,000. She would need to
43 match 20% of the grant. Some would be money she would need to pay but some would be sweat
44 equity. She said it wouldn't mean she would need to come up with \$10,000. Tim asked if there
45 was a rent table she had to work within. She said whatever the going rate for HUD was. She had
46 searched it online and thought a 1 bedroom was high 800s. She thought an efficiency was 7

1 something and a 3 bedroom was \$1,400. Tim asked about heat and Sue said she was going to do a
2 heat pump so it would be electric. She noted that she could rent to the same tenant for 5 years but
3 the lease would be for 12 months so possibly the tenants would change. Tim asked if the HUD
4 rates were national, state, or regional. Sue said regional. She mentioned she could end up with a
5 refugee from another country as a tenant and she thought that was cool. Tim said he had worked
6 with a group trying to bring in some Afghan refugees and from the sounds, they would be a good
7 risk. Sue said that's the country that was mentioned to her. Sue searched the HUD rental rates for
8 Vermont for 2021 during the meeting and read them as follows: \$761 efficiency, \$845 1 bedroom,
9 \$1046 2 bedrooms, \$1350 for 3 bedrooms, and \$1475 for 4 bedrooms. Tim asked how the process
10 had been working with Windham-Windsor Housing Trust and Sue said good so far and that Paul
11 Martorano had done 2 site visits so far. She said they check the building to make sure it's
12 structurally sound. She thought the contractors would be paid in increments and some people may
13 not want to be paid that way.

14
15 Hugh asked if the work would come under the \$50,000 and Sue said it would be over by the time
16 the contractors, appliances, and heat pump were purchased. Barre wished her luck. Hugh thought
17 it was amazing she was doing it. She said she figured what did she have to lose and that hopefully
18 she would be helping someone out. She even mentioned the program to her neighbor hoping to
19 generate interest. Barre thought it was nice that with the grant, she had a chance to create some
20 equity in her property and that was the carrot. He thought if she could make it through the five
21 years, she could then charge the going rate. Barre had considered it but wasn't sure he could deal
22 with neighbors so close. Sue told him he brought up a good point and she would erect a fence
23 between the ADU and her house, so they had their separate spaces.

24
25 Sue asked if the Planning Commission had considered proposing to the Selectboard that people
26 who do it don't see a tax increase for the five years. Tim said he had thrown out the idea of tax
27 abatement for some period for people who do it and he had heard some people repeat it recently.
28 He thought it may be a good sign and it would be good to bring it to the Selectboard because it
29 was up to them. Barre thought the taxes came from the state and questioned if they could do that.
30 Cathy said a third of the taxes go to Chester to pay for roads and two-thirds goes to the State to
31 pay for education. Chester gives veterans who are on disability a \$40,000 break on their valuation.
32 Barre asked if it was the State or Chester. Cathy said the State allows it and the town supports a
33 \$40,000 abatement. She said it's about \$1,000 worth of taxes per year. The town knows it's decided
34 to abate taxes by that amount, so they have a third tax rate which is .0054 and is a tiny amount and
35 is in the plan. They need to know the town has agreed to give the abatement. She didn't think they
36 charged the Rod and Gun Club or the Grange. There were reasons to do it, and some were votes
37 at Town Meeting. She thought it was called the local fund. Tim thought as they looked for ways
38 to encourage exactly what Sue was doing, he thought carrots, such as what Woodstock was doing
39 and had the funds to do it, and for Chester, it looked like a tax abatement would be the equivalent
40 because they're not charging money they don't charge now for a period of time. He thought it
41 would be great to bring it to the Selectboard and bring it out as they're having this discussion of
42 how they create more housing for working people in town. Cathy thought Bill Lindsay would warn
43 them if they created accessory dwelling units and there are multiple bedrooms, they may bring
44 more children into the school system. Tim said that would actually lower the cost of school. Cathy
45 thought that was hard to tell. She thought Bill would point out there would be more students in the
46 school system and it would have an impact but then there would be workers in town. Peter added

1 they could waive the water and sewer connection fee which would help. Barre and Preston thought
2 it was a really good idea. Barre said they need to come up with an incentive. He thought the
3 supplies from hooking up to the water and sewer were where the costs came from. Peter said it
4 was just a flat rate to hook up and didn't count the excavation and hooking into the system. It
5 wasn't like that was a big user that would create a huge impact. Barre thought water and sewer
6 was expensive in Chester. He resented that they pay for \$900,000 culverts in the middle of nowhere
7 and they don't help pay for water and sewer in town. Tim said they don't want taxpayers to be
8 responsible for people's wells and septic. Barre thought a \$900,000 culvert for 10 people on a
9 road was a lot of money and if they contributed to the water and sewer, it would make it less. Barre
10 said there's a base rate and he tries not to use much water but still has to pay a flat rate that's more
11 than he uses. Tim said it then opens a can of worms: if he doesn't have any kids in schools, why
12 does he have to pay for schools? Peter thought the bigger thing was there were design errors done
13 in the last upgrade, so the upgrade didn't really happen. He said it needed another digester which
14 would be a big hit. Barre asked how many people were on it – he thought 325 or 350 on town
15 sewer. Cathy thought more than that. She said there were 10 pages of accounts. Peter said there
16 were a lot more water users than sewer users. He said the sewer system wasn't as distributed as
17 the water. Barre thought the town as a whole, in overall fairness with the plowing, the bridges, and
18 the gravel, if they really looked at it in a fair way to have the water and sewer separate, it was
19 unfair as a cost.

20
21 Hugh asked Sue if she would have to park in the snow now and she said they would have to park
22 in a line in her driveway as there were no other viable options.

23
24 Barre suggested they include any incentives for voting at the Town Meeting.

25
26 Peter thought they should make any recommendations to the Selectboard because they would have
27 their backing. Barre asked if Peter thought they would stick their neck out because it had to do
28 with taxes. Peter said they were about to put it out for them on short-term rentals. Barre agreed
29 and asked Peter if they did their homework and present it to the Selectboard, they can present it to
30 the public as the Planning Board's solution and Peter agreed. Barre thought that was a good idea.
31 Peter compared it to reducing the home occupation permit.

32
33 Sue mentioned that Smitty's and the bank had closed early because they didn't have workers. Peter
34 said Erskine's also closed. Barre said he can't get any help either.

35
36 Tim asked Sue if it was \$20,000 if the ADU had been a residence and Sue said it was \$30,000.
37 Peter said they were \$30,000 for 0 to 2 bedrooms and 3 bedrooms were \$50,000. A new unit with
38 no minimum bedrooms was \$50,000.

39
40 The board thanked Sue for her input.

41
42 **Agenda Item 6, PC Roundtable**

43
44 Preston said the Sugar Bob purchase has had some bumps in the road but thought it would happen.

45

1 Peter asked if they had a schedule from Jason. Hugh said it was a great question and he was
2 thinking about what was next and he planned to chat with Jason and Preston on what the next thing
3 they would be working on was. He was giving Jason some latitude because they were working on
4 the workshops, but they would be wrapping up and it was time to start putting together the plan.
5 Preston said on the schedule, the next item was the administrative section and he had done his part
6 to provide Jason with the changes he wanted in the administrative section. Preston had spoken
7 with Jason at the Z.A. roundtable and Jason apologized for not following up yet. Preston
8 understood Jason is busy in his new position as director. Hugh said they would get something on
9 the agenda to figure out a timeframe.

10
11 Tim asked about the next workshop. Hugh said it would be a Keys to the Valley presentation on
12 September 19th. Jason would present the findings of the study. A press release would go out this
13 week. Hugh would not be available for the meeting, so Tim would act in his absence. Tim
14 mentioned they would have open meeting law training on September 14th from 6 pm to 8 pm at
15 Town Hall.

16
17 Cathy reported that she had been digging around the lister database which would eventually be
18 useful but required some work. She said there hasn't been much to shepherd. The 21st would be
19 the Selectboard's discussion of legacy use and adaptive re-use. Hugh said he would not be there
20 but assumed they would handle it. Cathy said she would be there. Cathy asked when the proposal
21 for short-term rentals would be. Hugh and Peter said it would be October 5th. Hugh asked Preston
22 if it was on the agenda or if it was something more formal. Preston said it was a hearing as they
23 were required to hold at least one hearing before adopting an ordinance and it was their hearing,
24 so it was formal. Preston said the Selectboard wasn't having a general discussion, but rather it
25 went right to a hearing. Peter said that's what he was talking about. As a Planning Commission, if
26 they make ideas and do the legwork and forward it to the Selectboard, they can just go with it.

27
28 Barre, with respect to the housing deal, asked who was living here with what Jason was doing with
29 the housing study. Barre made some new friends who live out by Peter and in the past, he assumed
30 people who lived there were there year-round. Since Barre moved here in 2007, he said he's had
31 ideas about things that aren't based on any truths. He assumed people lived in the houses. With
32 respect to the housing issues, he wanted to know how many people are full-time residents. He
33 thought what they were up against with Airbnbs, ADUs, and potential new housing was they're
34 trying to keep workers in town. Without really knowing where the people are and what they need,
35 if they could figure it out, they would have a clear need they could address and do some recruiting.
36 Tim thought the survey would help with that. Cathy said there were about 850 homestead
37 declarations in Chester, which meant someone owned their house and lived in it. She said there
38 were about 2,000 parcels of land, so 1,150 of those parcels were either rental, commercial, second
39 homes, or vacant. Barre thought they could break it down even more, but it was more than half.
40 Barre said if there were 850 who were living here, there may be more than half that weren't living
41 here. Cathy added they could be renters. Hugh thought it would be interesting to figure out the
42 rental population. Hugh said once you take commercial out, you have people who live here, rent
43 here, and have second homes and wondered what that would look like. Cathy said currently the
44 lister database doesn't distinguish that. Barre said he may be naïve about certain things because
45 when something is defined as something, that's what he thinks it will be. He said when Jason got
46 the grant for the housing study, he thought the issue he was raising would be part of that because

1 to him, that's what a housing study is. Cathy said they mine the lister databases but as far as she
2 knew, they didn't do separate studies of a town's residents. Barre wondered if they would want to
3 do it themselves or how it would work but it seemed to him it was something they would want to
4 know. Cathy said the Keys to the Valley data was available online and he could look at it online.
5 The Keys to the Valley database would be presented by Jason on the 19th but it was available
6 online now. She said it could be accessed by putting Keys to the Valley in a search engine. Barre
7 asked if it would tell him what he wanted to know, and Cathy said it would tell him all sorts of
8 stuff.

9
10 Peter said he lives in Smokeshire and has a good handle about what is going on there. He said that
11 although they have built 2 houses in the last 15 years, their full-time population in the last year has
12 dropped by 20%. There are less full-time people living in Smokeshire and they have no school age
13 children. There are only 6 full-time residences in the whole valley.

14
15 Barre remembered when all the houses around him were for sale and how long it took for the
16 Lindsays' house to sell and the place next to him. There was a chance because he knew people
17 were getting called back to work now, including a friend of his who has a place in Weathersfield
18 and got called back to work and doesn't have a place to live in Manhattan because he got rid of his
19 apartment. People are getting called back to work and some of it may change. Barre said they were
20 in a bit of a conundrum with not having employees. In his opinion, it would be good that they
21 figure it out. Since he has lived here, he's been involved in economic development and gaining
22 ground, as Peter has mentioned, and it seems like they're doing the work and putting stuff together,
23 getting respect, and things are starting to happen. It was complimentary to all of them. With respect
24 to planning, he thought if they had a budget to do something economically for town, it would be
25 cool to have some of their time to go for something like that, like bringing in Jason with respect to
26 housing and other things going on which gets Sue to build her auxiliary apartment. If they
27 recognize that businesses like Barre's were sustainable and they don't take extra employees and
28 have a person in a home and because Chester has tourism, it can help to give something for tourists
29 to do, and it may be a way to fill out their town. If someone has to put effort into it and they're
30 able to, it might be a good thing. He wanted to put that out there. Peter said that was what Steve
31 Mancuso is trying to do. To say they're part of Okemo Valley is like saying they're part of the
32 Springfield Development Community, money goes there, and little comes back. Barre said when
33 he did his Big Buzz thing he got involved with Bill Dakin. He thought the economic group could
34 do more for the town. He thought if they were closer with town government and got more
35 community input, it wasn't just so-called community leaders deciding what comes into town and
36 what doesn't. Tim thought it was interesting the discussion about the 1% rooms and meals and
37 alcoholic beverages. He found it interesting that Preston told them that was how Woodstock funds
38 their promotion and it sounded like it worked well there. Tim wondered if it would work in Chester,
39 and it would have to be administered. Preston said they basically hire a PR firm that promotes the
40 town. Tim added they use the money from the tax to do it. Peter said one problem with Chester is
41 that you're too far to go to the White River Junction area and it doesn't fit in with Brattleboro or
42 Rutland. They have Okemo and Ludlow next door but they're their own world. The same applied
43 to agriculture. Springfield has a prison and that's what they have for industrial development. Barre
44 agreed with Peter 100%. He said when he talks with Julie and Arne about having a theater in town,
45 they say Weston has a theater. He said they're not Weston and they're not going to have a
46 playhouse but if they had a little theater for music or something. Barre said the point he was trying

1 to make was he thought it was hard for people in Chester to understand they're a community and
2 have a culture and they don't have to be like Manchester, Woodstock, Grafton, or Bellows Falls
3 and can be who they are. He thought they could invest in their own community because they have
4 resources and people will come here like they go to other places. He thought they were missing
5 out because they have interesting things around them. When people come here and ask him what
6 they do, he suggests going to Bellows Falls and look at the petroglyphs because they're amazing.
7 People tell him there's nothing to do in Chester. He thought they could sustain more of the arts
8 and culture-oriented things and embrace what they are in its own way. They could be unique and
9 interesting in their own way and tout what they have and enhance and add to it without comparing
10 it to anyone else. Tim referenced Barre's idea of being more art-oriented and didn't know of any
11 towns that had that at their cores. Tim said Chester has always had antiques and they attract people
12 and art studios attract people. Barre said he spent 5 years trying to find a place and had looked in
13 New Hampshire and couldn't find a relationship with the lakes and skiing that he wanted. He
14 wanted a year-round business, so he didn't have any down time. He has considered moving, but
15 he didn't think there was anywhere in Massachusetts, Maine or New Hampshire that has the
16 amount of money on it that Route 103 has coming through it. He compared himself to a grizzly
17 bear along a river of salmon. When people ask him why there's not more business in town, he tells
18 them because people in Chester don't want to eat salmon. He said there's so much money coming
19 through town and people who come into his gallery and that they aren't taking advantage of it in
20 a way he thought wouldn't be too hard to do. He said there were billions of dollars driving down
21 the road. One of his friends who works for JP Morgan Chase manages 4 trillion dollars and other
22 friends who are art collectors work for hedge funds. They have a lot of money. The money is
23 driving by every day.

24
25 Hugh suggested Barre get Zon to come in and educate them on how to expand the arts. Barre
26 thought whatever it was they need driving by, they are on the road and what would be interesting
27 for them. He said it's difficult to get them to stop but they stop. Peter said all the things Barre
28 suggested aren't government administrated. Hugh agreed and wondered why someone with a good
29 idea doesn't start a business on Route 103 and start raking in all the salmon. Barre said because
30 nobody knows. Peter said where they work out isn't because the town did it but because people
31 did it. He said a town like Chester is like a good duck hunting spot, people only know about it if
32 you tell them. He said there are a lot of gems around Chester that nobody knows about.

33
34 Hugh was going to try to keep track of some things. He said there was a group trying to build a
35 30-unit housing development in Windsor. He was watching it to see how it turned out. Barre
36 thought the difficulty for Chester was it has so many historic buildings and if something modern
37 was put around it, it would look funny. He thought it was interesting and may be the kind of thing
38 needed in Chester to help with housing and if it was on the end of town where it fit architecturally.
39 Hugh thought the 3-year micro-transit pilot in Windsor was interesting. It was a point-to-point ride
40 system like Uber but not individuals with cars and the app but a way for people to have an app and
41 if they need to get from A to B, the program will provide free transportation. They received a grant
42 and were going to give it a go for 3 years. Hugh wanted to see how it turned out. There was a
43 whole study done to see if it was a good fit. Barre thought Windsor may be a good town to mirror.
44 He said the whole development on the edge of town was interesting and functioned well, but they
45 still have the heart of their downtown, and a beautiful bridge, and nice museum. He thought they
46 could absorb a more modern structure. Barre pointed out that people from the city don't have cars

1 and can't live here. Not only do they have high rent here but also need a functioning car. He thought
2 if Chester had a loop that went around at certain times, it would help, and suggested people could
3 pay a buck to ride it. Hugh had brought it up because he was encouraged that other towns were
4 trying to solve the transportation issue. He said we would never have Uber here like in the city and
5 if they could create something viable in a rural area, it would be great. Barre said by doing so, they
6 would allow a whole other group of people to afford to live in Chester because they could get
7 around. Tim said sometimes employers will pay a subsidy to a transportation system because it
8 helps them get employees to work. Tim's own kids worked at the rental shack at Okemo and after
9 a while of Tim transporting them, they figured out there was a bus and he thought Okemo
10 subsidized that. Barre was glad Hugh brought them up and they had a chance to be forward
11 thinking for their community. If they can do some of these things, it could help Chester. He thought
12 planning was the proper place.

13

14

Agenda Item 7, Adjournment

15

16 Tim moved to adjourn, and Hugh seconded. A vote was taken, and it passed unanimously. The
17 meeting was adjourned at 8:10 p.m.