TOWN OF CHESTER
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION MEETING
August 26, 2026

Board Members Present: Bryan Santiago, Phil Perlah, Bob Flint, Julie Hance, and Preston Bristow at Town Hall; Carl Henshaw via Zoom.

Members Absent: Damon Tyler

Call to Order

Preston Bristow called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m.

Agenda Item 1 – Approve Minutes from Previous Meeting

Bob moved, and Phil seconded, a motion to approve the minutes of July 29, 2026, which was approved without changes.

Agenda Item 2 – Citizen Comments

There were no citizens present for public comment.

Agenda Item 3 – Review Survey Results to Date

Prior to the meeting, Damon supplied an email summary of the survey results. A total of 89 surveys has been received, mostly submitted when the survey website was first launched in late July, with very little response since then. This is not surprising since the Commission is waiting until a new logo is adopted to fully promote the survey website. The discussion, therefore, quickly turned to the new logo options.

Agenda Item 4 – Review and Approve New Logo

Bryan presented three logo designs for consideration. The original design had generally been well received at the previous meeting, but members had asked to see some alternatives. A second design incorporated mountains rather than hills, based on a suggestion from the previous discussion. After reviewing it, members generally felt that the mountain version had too many angles and was visually more complicated than the original concept. The group compared several typography options as well, including a clean sans-serif style and a more traditional serif style. Members noted that the sans-serif option had a cleaner and more contemporary appearance, which could communicate that economic development is forward-looking, while the serif option conveyed a stronger connection to history and tradition. The third design received greater support because its lowercase lettering and combination of modern and traditional elements gave it a more distinctive and less overly computer-generated appearance.

The Commission also discussed whether the logo's typeface should coordinate with the typography already being used by the town on its new Wayfinding signs and gateways. Members

felt that having a common visual appearance across town communications would be beneficial. The Wayfinding signage uses a subtle serif style, and the group agreed that identifying that existing font (Bryan identified it as Colombia-Serial-Light) would provide a reasonable compromise between the competing design preferences. The Commission agreed by consensus to adopt the third logo design with a font consistent with the town's Wayfinding signs.

Bryan will finalize the logo and Preston will draft an engaging social media post that would direct people to complete the survey site. The post could be shared through the town's Facebook presence and potentially boosted to reach a broader audience. Members also discussed getting the survey into local businesses and hospitality establishments through printed materials containing a QR code. The QR code would lead to the general survey page rather than to separate surveys for individual business categories, making the material simpler to produce and easier for people to use. The Commission wanted these materials available to local hospitality businesses as soon as possible, ideally before Labor Day and the beginning of the fall foliage season, when visitor activity would increase.

Agenda Item 5 – Plan Targeted Business 'Coffee Meetups'

In addition to surveys, the Commission would like to host informal focus group meetings with targeted business which are tentatively called 'Coffee Meetups.' These meetups would be held in the Town Hall conference room at 8 or 9 a.m. with coffee and simple refreshments provided. It was agreed to hold five such meetups in November with the category of business and the Commission members to facilitate each meetup listed below:

Hospitality, Arts & Culture	Julie, Bob & Bryan
Retail, Farms & Local Food	Preston, Bob & Damon
Construction, Trades & Automotive	Julie, Preston & Carl
Legal, Financial & Banking	Preston, Bob & Phil
Community Organizations	Julie, Preston & Carl

The 'Coffee Meetup' organizational details and invitations to individual businesses will be discussed at the September Commission meeting.

Agenda Item 6 – Discuss Implementing a 'Gap Inventory'

The final major discussion centered on developing a "gap inventory" for Chester and the surrounding region. Julie clarified that the goal should not simply be to create a list of things residents say they wish Chester had, such as a pharmacy or hardware store. Instead, the more useful question is what the broader region is missing and whether Chester can provide something distinctive that would attract residents, visitors, or investment. Chester should not try to duplicate successful attractions or businesses already available in nearby communities. For example, Weston has a successful playhouse, and the goal should not be to create another theater or playhouse in Chester, but rather to identify an opportunity to fill a "gap" that exists in the region.

Possible "gap" brainstorming included promoting Chester as a wedding destination, creating self-guided historic village strolls highlighting the Lovers Lane Brook pedestrian bridge and

School Street swinging bridge, expanding or supporting Vermont's Inn to Inn Walking Tours (Chester's Inn Victoria participates), even establishing a major family attraction like an indoor splash park or trampoline park. The Village Green and Stone Village were mentioned as potential assets that could be protected, enhanced, and used as part of the community's economic development strategy.

The Commission discussed using survey results, business conversations, consumer information, and potentially outside data to inform this analysis. The discussion suggested that the eventual gap-and-opportunity analysis should combine community input with objective market information, which may involve a paid consultant, so that the Commission can distinguish realistic economic development opportunities from ideas that may sound appealing but are unlikely to succeed.

Agenda Item 7 – Next Meeting Agenda for September 30

Prior to the next meeting, the immediate priorities are for Bryan to finalize the logo design and create a QR code, and for Preston to draft and distribute a social media post that directs people to the survey website.

The September 30 agenda will include planning for the November 'Coffee Meetups' with local businesses and continued discussion of a regional 'Gap Analysis' economic development plan.

Agenda Item 8 – Adjourn

Phil moved to adjourn, and Bob seconded the motion. The motion carried, and the meeting was adjourned at 6:58 p.m.