TOWN OF CHESTER
CHESTER HOUSING COMMISSION MEETING
October 21, 2025, Minutes

Present: Hugh Quinn, Lauren Fierman, Caroline Morgan, Sharon Baker, Joe Karl, and Jason Rasmussen of MARC at Town Hall. Preston Bristow, Town Planner, and Susan Bailey, Recording Secretary, via Zoom. Absent: Courtlandt Pennell and Bryan Santiago.

Visitors: Peter Hudkins.

Call to Order

Joe Karl called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m.

Agenda Item 1, Approve Minutes from the Previous Meeting

Hugh moved and Lauren seconded a motion to approve the minutes from the September 16, 2025, meeting. There were no changes. The motion carried and the minutes were approved unanimously, as written.

Agenda Item 2, Citizen Comments

Peter Hudkins noted they would be doing Meatball Day at Erskine's the second Saturday in December. They've helped the Family Center and Library and suggested the Commission could participate as a fundraiser if they were available. They thought it sounded great.

Agenda Item 3, Pennrose Meeting Update

Joe reported they had Zoomed with Carmen, which opened their eyes to new topics. Lauren said Carmen made it sound possible, and it was nice to hear from someone doing the work. Joe said they're only interested in owning the building and having rentals. Hugh suggested they leave the door open to that. The developer has been around 50 years and only does mixed-income development. They hadn't analyzed the SE Group study but sounded committed to digging a little deeper and exploring the possibilities. Hugh said they would have a follow-up meeting. Joe found it encouraging that they were only looking at shovel-ready projects. Caroline found it encouraging that whatever develops, they are providing a checklist. Caroline thought a lot of developers would rather rent to get a tax credit and then, after 15 years, re-invest. If that was true, Caroline said they may need to shift. Joe said they don't get involved unless it's a larger number of units. Joe said they were trying to encourage properties to develop more in the backyard. Hugh didn't get the impression that all developers had to do rentals and would be interested to hear what is said about viability. They are meeting with the Windham & Windsor Housing Trust in early November who will walk the site and offer their point of view. With multiple inputs, it will help determine what they might do next. Joe mentioned that Vermont Public showcased where someone in Fairlee converted family properties into affordable housing. Joe thought he was willing to share information and would reach out to him. Hugh found it interesting because he was doing small properties, such as converting a post office into 8 units. Hugh felt the state was ignoring infill

work, and if there was a way to approach it like this person had, it would give them another option. Infill is finding a building that no longer serves its original purpose and is rehabilitated into apartments. Jason said Woodstock and Upper Valley both had housing groups which this person had spoken to. Preston said installing water and sewer lines was expensive, so being able to have ADUs and other uses in town, as well as rehabilitating older buildings was making better use of the infrastructure and made infill appealing. Preston said Alpine had said some companies don't make their profit from building but from renting them out over time, and Preston thought Penrose was on the same page. Jason thought most people wanted a duplex or house rather than a rental, and it was something they should consider. Lauren saw the feedback they had received was largely from an older demographic and people who were unlikely to live in the housing the developers spoke about. People want their own home with a white picket fence but don't want to pay the cost. Lauren said there were many ways to configure 60 units that could look like the townhouses, and similar things. Sharon said they could have phases: a phase for rentals, a phase for sales, a phase for incomes such as first-time buyers, and senior citizens who were looking to downsize. Hugh agreed and said developers spoke about phasing and that they started with rentals and then sales.

Agenda Item 4, Fall Festival Debrief

Preston was there all-day Saturday and thought it was worth doing but only had 6 Chester residents who he had a conversation with, but most people who attended weren't Chester residents. Lauren was there for the last 3 hours on Sunday and had a similar experience to Preston's, and it was good to answer their questions, and the networking was useful. Joe said Bryan had sent an email to the group, and they had 3 or 4 older people who wanted to get out of their bigger homes but couldn't find anything. Caroline thought it was good to be out there and saw the event at Erskine's another opportunity to make people aware of their efforts. The Fall Festival was well worth it, and it was good to be in public.

Agenda Item 5, Homes for All Update

Hugh had included this because it was in the previous minutes for this agenda, but Julie wasn't present, and Hugh had no update. Preston had circulated an email regarding the 802 Homes Project he applied for. Chester was a finalist and was interviewed, but the state has a catalog of pre-approved designs, and they are looking for a quick place to build them, and Chester didn't meet that criteria, so someone else got it. Preston said they are applying for a municipal planning grant to update the town plan because it was time to. The state wants them to focus on housing and flood resiliency, so they will be discussing housing a lot through the town plan update. A class at UVM has selected Chester for students to conduct a community event and engagement survey with housing. Hugh and Preston will be interviewed by the students on Friday. They have even said a partnership could continue with them providing an intern. They will address it on the next agenda.

Agenda Item 6, New Business

- Joe will send materials to Pennrose again.
- They will work together to figure out an idea for fundraising for December 13th. Peter said they just need to collect donations for housing.
- Jason will follow up with Jonah Richard's contact information and suggested they invite

Kevin Purcell from Lebanon who has expressed some casual interest in doing a project down toward Chester.

- Update on the Windham & Windsor Housing Trust site visit taking place in early November.

Agenda Item 7, Adjourn

Lauren moved and Hugh seconded a motion to adjourn. The motion carried, and the meeting was adjourned at approximately 6:27 p.m.