TOWN OF CHESTER
CHESTER HOUSING COMMISSION MEETING
September 16, 2025, Minutes

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

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 to approve the minutes from the previous meeting and Lauren seconded the motion. There were no changes. The motion carried and the minutes were approved, as written.

Agenda Item 2, Citizen Comments

There were none.

Agenda Item 3, Fall Festival Preparations

The festival is this weekend: Saturday and Sunday. All slots have been filled for volunteering, except 11 to 1, which Bryan then volunteered for. The sign-up has 1 person per shift, but people are welcome to come and help and stay longer. It is 9-5 on Saturday and 9-4 on Sunday. Preston welcomed input and was trying to figure out how the booth would work. Joe will supply the tent; the town will supply a table; Jason has made a poster to hang from the tent; and the displays from the open house will be mounted on corkboard. Julie suggested someone be there at 8:30 on Saturday.

A new brochure is being worked on. They discussed the term affordable housing and replacing it. The term affordable housing below the pictures wasn't viewed as negative. Preston asked the Town Clerk if she could do a QR code and she could. One QR code will be for donations, and one will take them to the feasibility study. They will have an email address sign-up. Sharon wondered if anyone objected to changing housing to home because home was a warmer word and one everyone can identify with. Preston said they couldn't change it in the title but could in the write-up. The commission name will remain the same. The booth will be in front of the Academy Building.

Agenda Item 4, Potential Land Offer

Julie was contacted by an individual who has connections to the person who owns the former funeral home property owner who would like to sell the property to the town for $150,000. Julie was only just contacted by them. He only paid $75,000 for it. If there is interest at the Select Board

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level, it would be a good property for development but should also be considered for access to the elementary school as Main Street is becoming hazardous and unsafe when school is dismissed. The property already has water and sewer and easily accessible. The lot is .53 acres and there was a very large structure there. Before it burned, they had planned to put 4 units there. Lauren noted the school had discussed it before. If the town owned it, they could grant an easement to the school. Joe wondered about soil studies being a former funeral home. Jason pointed out it could be used for Phase I and Julie agreed. This is an example of what the funds received from the local options tax could be used for. Julie will continue having conversations with the property owner and talk to the school.

Agenda Item 5, Homes for All

Preston said the state offered the program and he was convinced it is offering technical assistance and not money. A lot of people have been telling Chester they're a leader. He completed the initial form. They are only picking 3 statewide and Chester is a possibility. Julie said they are making a lot of connections, which is why Chester is becoming known for this. Erin spoke to the state, and they received the application.

Agenda Item 6, Board Member Tasks/Old Business

- Joe reached out to the builder from Connecticut and asked for some blocks of time during the day so anyone who has a free minute can join a discussion online.
- Julie and Preston were at a Let's Build Homes meeting and had a good conversation with Miro Weinberger. Bob Flint had names of contractors and Julie will reach back out to Bob to get the names so they can have preliminary conversations. For a large development, that is their next step.
- Lauren wanted to thank Julie and the town for the volunteer appreciation dinner and appreciated the thought. It will be an annual event.
- Preston said there is a workshop in Wilmington about transitioning religious property to meet housing needs. There is a New Hampshire publication which had drawings on how to convert. Currently, there isn't a religious building available but there may be at some point. The publication had ideas on how to preserve steeples. Caroline mentioned a property on Simonsville Road that had an old church on it.
- There will be a raffle at the table for Fall Festival.
- The town ordered a piggy bank shaped like a home and should arrive in time for the festival. Sharon has a jar in her shop collecting money for the housing fund.
- Sharon will continue to look for financing options for housing.
- Bryan will continue with the marketing work.

Agenda Item 7, New Business/Next Agenda

- Joe hoped to have the timeslots for a Zoom meeting with the contractor, Penrose Housing Specialists. They have the study and the build and manage similar properties.
- Homes For All update.
- Debrief on the Fall Festival.
- If Julie gets answers on the proforma stuff, she will update the commission.

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Agenda Item 8, Adjourn

Lauren moved and Hugh seconded a motion to adjourn. The motion carried, and the meeting was adjourned at approximately 6:31 p.m.

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