TOWN OF CHESTER
HOUSING COMMISSION
November 18, 2025, Minutes

Commission Members Present: Hugh Quinn, Julie Hance, Lauren Fierman, Caroline Morgan, Sharon Baker, Joe Karl, Preston Bristow, Bryan Santiago, Courtlandt Pennell, and Jason Rasmussen at Town Hall.

Visitors Present: Peter Hudkins at Town Hall.

Call to Order

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

Agenda Item 1, Approve Minutes from the Previous Meeting.

Lauren moved and Hugh seconded a motion to approve the October 21, 2025, minutes. The minutes were approved, as written.

Agenda Item 2, Citizen Comments

Peter Hudkins said Jessica from Erskine's really wanted to do a food donation rather than a fundraiser for the housing commission on Meatball Day, so she is going to choose a food shelf.

Agenda Item 3, Potential Market Study

Preston and Julie met with Gus Seelig of the Vermont Housing Conservation Board and Windham and Windsor had a couple of representatives. They suggested a marketing study which they can help fund. They have a Project Feasibility Fund that pays for appraisal and market studies and welcomes a match, though not required. Application is done by letter and can be funded at any time. The Commission still needs to decide what they're going to do. If they do the study for the water tank property, which is the largest, it would cover any other property they want. Preston spoke with Jill Appel in West Windsor who is trying to get a project for 30 units on 9 acres on Route 44, and they were not aware of the feasibility fund and paid for a market study. They contacted three appraisers, who are on the approved list, and their prices ranged from $7,500 to $10,000. Jason said West Windsor received a municipal planning grant, so they were okay. After signing the contract with the appraiser, it was completed in less than two months. Preston said the market study was done to Vermont Housing Finance Agency Standards but he was underwhelmed with it. After 116 pages, it concluded it appeared there was enough activity to support it, which is what they needed. Windham and Windsor Housing Trust requires that. Julie has spoken with a lot of developers and that is the first thing they ask for. Courtlandt wondered if they could set the parameters so they didn't get 116 pages of graphs and documents but only concrete information. Julie wasn't sure if they had to go out to bid and Preston had been told they only needed three quotes and knew the appraiser needed to come from an approved list. Lauren thought some developers wanted the charts included and were less interested in what the author of the market study concluded but wanted it for protection and also wanted to view the data. Preston would share a copy of the study he was given with the commission. Jason said they

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wanted to make sure the study had enough information for the developer and even if the commission doesn't care about the data provided, the developer may. Preston will reach out to find out if an official bid is needed. Caroline wondered if the study had to be attached to a specific property. Once the market study is completed, it can be applied to other properties in the same town, but the feasibility study applies to a specific property. Preston said they could hire an appraiser to do a market study for the water tank property but also to do an appraisal for the Allard property. Joe heard back from Pennrose, who was concerned for the size of Chester, why 60 units were needed as that is the smallest size project they'll handle. Joe added that they didn't have any data to back up the need for 60 units, yet, and a market study will support how many are needed. Joe wondered if they had interviewed businesses for the market study. Julie said maybe they could get Martin at a meeting to educate them about what is provided in a market study.

Agenda Item 4, Update from Windham and Windsor Housing Trust Site Visits

Julie and Preston went on a site visit with Windham and Windsor Housing Trust to four locations. They felt the property with the old funeral home was too small. They brought them to Cathy Hasbrouck's property and they had interest. Cathy had planned for 16 units and Windham and Windsor Housing would want more units so they were going to look at it more closely. The property is right across from the Public Safety Building. Cathy is interested in selling if it is to someone who is interested in having subsidized rental units. They brought them to Dennis Allard's and could see vision there and that could house a lot more units. Elizabeth was concerned about it being on the main highway and Peter was not. Elizabeth was also concerned about the Green Mountain Power poles, which they can be slow to remove but they still had interest in the property. They brought them up to the big parcel and they definitely were interested in that but it would need to be in three phases. 20 or 24 seems to be a good project size for them. They haven't done a project in Chester in a number of years, so Chester would be a candidate. They will run numbers and get back to Chester. 60 units is big for Windham and Windsor but that could be good news. Preston asked Peter Hudkins about doing housing on the road on the way up by the school and Peter said there was enough land on either side that it could be developed all the way up to the 12 acres. Julie said it was the school's property and was why they hadn't included it in the feasibility study. Peter said if the cost that prevents them from working on it was that they had to develop the road all the way up, it becomes different because they may not get to the 12.5 acres before they hit the 24 number. Windham and Windsor have to take their projects before their board so it may be a little time before Chester hears back but the Trust was interested. Julie said they tend to get funded because their projects are reasonable and well-thought through. Julie wanted to see one of the smaller projects get done. They did the building across from Smitty's a long time ago. Initially, they wanted to buy Cathy's property and she didn't want to sell her home but it sounded like they were open to other options.

Agenda Item 5, Board Member Tasks/Old Business

- Joe had mentioned Pennrose earlier in the meeting.
- Joe reached out to two new companies involved with the new project in Rutland and when he gets feedback, he'll update the commission.

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- Peter provided them with an update on the December 13th fundraiser earlier in the meeting and as a result, the commission will no longer be collecting donations for housing then.
- Jason will follow up with Jonah Richards. Jason provided town staff with contact information but ended up reaching out to Kevin Purcell, a smaller developer in Lebanon, who mentioned interest in the past about doing a project in the Chester area. Kevin is willing to speak to the commission. Jason was happy to set something up. Jason said he had smaller 4-6-8 units in and around Lebanon. Jonah does similar smaller-scale stuff with 10-12 units. He is busy and doesn't get as far south as Chester but Jason thought Jonah would be willing to speak with them. Jason said they could start with Kevin and thought he and the town should meet with Kevin first before the commission.

Agenda Item 6, New Business/Next Agenda

Peter said there was an income ceiling and by accepting money for a project, they would be stuck with that ceiling. There is town property that has town water and town sewer is fairly close, though something would need to be done with storm water. Peter said with the current zoning, 10 lots could have 4 units and the lots could be sold individually. Peter said the town could build the road and sewer and they would have 10 lots they could sell and put strong caveats in the deed regarding what could be built there and they wouldn't be stuck with the income ceiling. Peter was concerned that if they put in 24 units with Windsor and the income limit was $55,000, they would be limited. The town could take their land and make 10 individual parcels and set the rules. Courtlandt loved the idea. Peter said developers take 20% and this project wouldn't be that difficult. The basic criteria was a survey would be needed, which had already been done. Caroline asked if it would be market rate. Peter said sewer and water stuff would need to be done, along with a ring road where parking could be on the road year round. Peter said it would be similar to what they had discussed for tiny houses. Peter thought they would get a much better product if they put their ideas in and he suggested a ring road for the Allard property, too, because it would separate them from the highway. Caroline wondered if there were some old school buildings on the property that Peter suggested and there were. Preston said the neighbors were not happy about the community garden and thought they may not be thrilled about this either. Julie said it would need to go before the Select Board first. With the 10 lots, there would be 40 units. The town would not build it. It would be sold with restrictions on the type of homes that could be built. Peter said with the income limit of $55,000, they wouldn't be able to sell to a teacher. Lauren added they would have brand new teachers at that amount and they wouldn't be able to buy a house but could rent an apartment and currently, they won't come to work for Chester because there are no apartments. Preston said the $55,000 limit would be a clerk at Smitty's or at Jiffy Mart. Teachers and policemen would make too much. Jason liked the idea and mentioned Up End This, in Barre, is looking for a spot for 6 or 7 tiny house units and wondered if this would work for them. Jason suggested the commission talk to them to see if there was any interest. Preston mentioned D.J. Donovan wanted to put a 6 unit tiny home park on the Catholic Church property a few years ago but the church's bureaucracy was a little hard to deal with. Courtlandt mentioned 20 tiny homes in Mount Ascutney and Jason said they were short-term rentals. Joe said he gets people looking to put tiny homes up regularly for tiny home parks. Courtlandt wondered whether the institutional tax credits that Windham and Windsor Housing Trust would receive were mission critical to the project. Courtlandt mentioned projects

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that happened in the past where 90% were deed restricted and included triplexes, duplexes, and single family homes. Peter mentioned the town property was not in the flood corridor. Joe was looking at the tiny homes from Up End This and said their square footage price was good. Caroline was concerned they may be too small for some people and was concerned with them spilling out because of the lack of space but said she had looked at several tiny homes and they were cute. Joe said covenants help keep people from spilling to the outside.

Courlandt talked about developing the homes and selling them and Peter thought the town should stay out of the development. Sharon said pre-construction was the way to go and she spoke with the new manager at M&T Bank who wants her to speak with Art Randolph in Ludlow; they will after the first of the year. Sharon said owner occupants were needed first for the bank to finance it. Jason said 802 Credit Union was flexible with financing. Preston has spoken with Art Randolph and he's very supportive of affordable homes.

Agenda Item 7, Adjourn

Joe asked for a motion to adjourn and Hugh moved and Lauren seconded the motion. A vote was taken and passed unanimously. The meeting was adjourned at 6:49 p.m.

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