

1 **TOWN OF Chester**
2 **PLANNING COMMISSION**
3

4 **June 21, 2021 Draft Minutes Executive Summary**

5 The following is a summary of the points raised during the discussion of Affordable Housing at
6 the June 21, 2021 meeting.

7 **Affordable Housing**

- 8 • Affordable housing is defined as housing costing less than 30% of the median household
9 income. The data about number of households, median income and housing costs cited in
10 the Chester Town Plan is about 20 years old. More current data is needed.
- 11 • 2019 data presented at the meeting was difficult to understand and appeared to have
12 incongruities. Chester’s median income was only slightly below the state average, but
13 the percent of households spending more than 30% of the income on housing costs was
14 much higher than the state rate.
- 15 • Three Planning Commission members agreed that Chester appeared to need more
16 affordable housing.
- 17 • Three Planning Commission members, Zoning Administrator Preston Bristow and RJ
18 Dourney agreed that affordable housing should be mixed with other types of housing and
19 not concentrated in a limited space. Twelve or fewer units in a project was desirable.
- 20 • There was uncertainty among the PC members about how affordable housing would be
21 organized and administered in Chester. Peter Hudkins and RJ Dourney both had
22 experience with affordable housing in Massachusetts. In Massachusetts affordable
23 housing rents were based on income. Anyone could live in an affordable housing project.
24 If their income was high, their rent would be high.
- 25 • Very low income housing is a federally funded program called Section 8. Low income
26 and moderate-income housing are state or local programs.
- 27 • The process of creating affordable housing starts with finding sites or properties which
28 may be converted to affordable housing. Communities may search for these sites
29 themselves or hire different agencies to do it for them.
- 30 • Often affordable housing is turned over to a non-profit management company which
31 maintains the property, finds tenants and collects rents.
- 32 • It was noted that some people are concerned that affordable housing attracts residents
33 who have problems with the law. The PC thought that having scattered small projects of
34 affordable housing would keep this to a minimum.

35
36 **Density**

- 37 • Minimum lot size is only part of what controls density. Some bylaws also require a
38 certain number of square feet of lot space for each dwelling unit.

- 1 • The adopted Chester bylaws do not have such a requirement, but the proposed bylaws do
2 at present.
- 3 • It is important that the bylaws are set up not to prevent high density development in the
4 village districts. Each district should be checked to see that it allows an appropriate
5 density.
- 6 • High density development requires municipal water and sewer.

7

8 **Shift in zoning philosophy**

- 9 • When zoning was established in the 1920s, it was all about the American Dream: a
10 single-family dwelling with a lawn.
- 11 • Having densely populated village centers with undeveloped spaces between them doesn't
12 fit the single-family with a lawn model and zoning philosophy is beginning to reflect that.
13 Less land should be devoted to individual housing spaces.
- 14 • Chester allows accessory dwelling units now.

15

16 **Possible tiny house cluster on St. Joseph's parcel**

- 17 • The church would like to set up a cluster of tiny houses which can be easily moved and
18 shotgun houses that are permanent structures and accommodate slightly larger
19 households.
- 20 • The church would like to retain ownership of the land.
- 21 • The church feels it is their mission to help their parishioners and others who are trying to
22 move to home ownership.
- 23 • Tiny houses retain more of their value than mobile homes and can be the beginning of
24 someone building personal wealth.
- 25 • Tiny houses can easily relocate to a new location if their owner needs to move to pursue
26 and opportunity.
- 27 • The best model structure for cluster housing available at present is a planned unit
28 development.
- 29 • The parcel in questions borders the Williams River. The church anticipates designating
30 open public space along the river as part of the cluster. This would also accommodate
31 the required riparian buffer.
- 32 • The church would appreciate help with planning if that is possible.
- 33 • A grant cycle for housing will be starting later in 2021.

34

35 **Planned Unit Development**

- 1 • Planned Unit Development can allow a 50% increase in density if 50% of the dwelling
2 units are affordable housing.
- 3 • The Planning Commission needs to carefully review the PUD bylaw to be sure it will
4 work for something like a tiny house cluster.

5

6 **Water and Sewer**

- 7 • Denser housing development requires municipal water and sewer to work.
- 8 • The Planning Commission needs to review a map of the current system to locate sites for
9 more concentrated housing projects.
- 10 • The Planning Commission needs to look into what it would take to extend the existing
11 system.

12

13 **Air B&B**

- 14 • Short term rentals offer financial advantages to owners over long-term rentals.
- 15 • When a property is converted to a short-term rental it reduces the available housing stock
16 and raises housing prices.
- 17 • Short term rentals are required to pay a 9% Rooms and Meals tax to the state.
- 18 • Short term rentals do not always obtain Fire and Safety inspections.
- 19 • Short term rentals can have problems with loud parties and over-crowding.
- 20 • Short term rentals can essentially introduce a hotel into a residential neighborhood
- 21 • Since there is no state registry for short term rentals, concerns about controlling COVID
22 19 exposure and contact tracing were an issue in 2020.and 2021.
- 23 • The Planning Commission resolved to consider if short term rentals were a problem for
24 Chester and if bylaw regulation is needed.

25

26 **June 21, 2021 Draft Minutes**

27 **Commission Members Present:** Peter Hudkins, Hugh Quinn, Barre Pinske, and Cathy
28 Hasbrouck at Town Hall.

29 **Staff Present:** Preston Bristow, Zoning Administrator; and Susan Bailey, Secretary

30 **Citizens Present:** R.J. Dourney, Nancy Dourney, and Cheryl Joy Lipton

31

Call to Order

32 Chair Cathy Hasbrouck, called the meeting to order at 6:29 p.m.

33

Agenda Item 1, Review minutes from June 7, 2021 meeting

34 Cathy Hasbrouck introduced the members and staff to R.J. and Nancy Dourney, the only public
35 present at beginning of the meeting.

36 Cathy Hasbrouck said the first order of business was to review the minutes of June 7th. Peter
37 Hudkins moved to accept the minutes and Hugh Quinn seconded the motion. There were no

1 comments. Cathy asked Barre Pinske if he had any comments and he replied that he thought his
2 name was mentioned too much in the minutes. Hugh and Barre agreed that Barre determined
3 how often his name appeared. A vote was taken and the minutes were approved unanimously.

4 **Agenda Item 2, Citizen Comments**

5 Cathy Hasbrouck asked if there were any citizens comments on anything not on the agenda and
6 there were none.

7 **Agenda Item 3, Discuss Affordable Housing in Chester and How to Be Ready for Possible** 8 **Funding as a Result of COVID**

9 Cathy Hasbrouck announced the next order of business was the discussion of affordable housing
10 in Chester and how to be ready for funding as a result of COVID. Cheryl Joy Lipton joined the
11 meeting as a visitor and Cathy introduced her to the Dourneys.

12 Cathy Hasbrouck said the packet contained a copy of the housing chapter which contained a lot
13 of data. The definition of affordable housing was explained as housing which costs less than 30%
14 of the town's median household income. To determine the need for affordable housing, you
15 would need to know: the number of households in Chester; the median income; and how much is
16 spent on housing. The packet included a graph showing 17% of Chester households spent 50% or
17 more of their income on housing in 2019; while 59% of households paid 30% to 49% of their
18 income on housing, indicating that a large portion of Chester households pay more than the
19 affordable housing standard. Based on those statistics, Chester needs more affordable housing.

20 Cathy Hasbrouck said the packet also included information on the three affordable housing
21 complexes in Chester. They are managed by companies that manage affordable housing:
22 Pleasantbrook Apartments is managed by SK Management in New Ipswich, NH; Depot Street is
23 managed by Stewart Property Management in Bedford, NH; and Chester Apartments is managed
24 by THM Property Management in Manchester, VT. Cathy stated there are a total of 72
25 affordable housing units currently in Chester: Chester Apartments with 36 units; Pleasantbrook
26 with 24 units; and Depot Street with 12 units.

27 There was discussion among the board as to whether Rockingham Housing Trust had built the
28 Depot Street housing and whether they still owned it. Peter Hudkins stated that when it was built
29 in 2010, it was owned by the Rockingham Trust. Barre Pinske suggested that Rockingham Trust
30 may have built it because they could get grant money and then sold it after completion. Peter said
31 that wasn't the way they worked. Cathy Hasbrouck asked Peter if he thought it was part of the
32 Trust's process is to buy properties, fix them up, and sell them. Peter said they were a non-profit
33 and he had learned they needed to have 12 units for a property to break even. Preston Bristow
34 searched 517 Depot and determined that Chester-Gage Housing Limited Partnership of
35 Brattleboro was the current owner.

36 Hugh Quinn called attention to the graph and concluded that either Chester housing was too
37 expensive or people weren't making any money, or both. Cathy Hasbrouck agreed.

38 Peter Hudkins said to him it was clear more affordable housing was necessary, and that 72 units
39 were nowhere near enough. He thought it was due to the income level and the increasing
40 astronomical rents which he felt were a result of the Air B&B business.

41 Barre Pinske asked if there were statistics on the percentage of affordable housing in an average
42 town in the U.S. He thought Chester was at about 3.5% of affordable housing. Visitor R.J.

1 Dourney commented that it was 4.4%. Barre asked if he Googled what the average amount of
2 affordable housing for a community was, would the answer be in the statistics provided by Cathy
3 Hasbrouck. Cathy answered that the percent of households paying more than 50% of their
4 income towards housing was 15% for Vermont and 13% for Chester. Barre said what he was
5 asking was for the average number of affordable housing in communities within the United
6 States. Cathy told Barre if he Googled it, he should search the Northeast or Vermont for a better
7 comparison. Barre said a search of anywhere would work.

8 Peter Hudkins mentioned that the packet information indicated in the rest of Vermont, 26%
9 needed housing, while in Chester, it was 59%. Peter said Chester wasn't even close compared to
10 the rest of the state. Peter suggested they consider where they have opportunity to provide
11 affordable housing rather than how much is needed. Peter, having worked for developers, said
12 usually 75% to 80% of opportunities can be thrown out in the beginning.

13 Cathy Hasbrouck said the reason R.J. Dourney was in attendance was because the Catholic
14 Church was interested in having a tiny house park, so the commission needed to see if the current
15 bylaws would allow it; and in a future meeting, what the proposed bylaws would allow. Cathy
16 relayed that she, R.J., and Father Peter Williams had discussed the difficulties people faced
17 getting a tiny house established in a community. Cathy had examined the bylaws with respect to
18 what someone would need to do to get a permit to set up one. She believed Chester would view
19 several tiny houses together as a mobile home park, because they are mobile, as well as homes.
20 She said the state qualifies a mobile home as a minimum of 8 x 40, but tiny houses are not. She
21 said Preston Bristow and she discussed creating lots to fit tiny houses but not mobile homes. The
22 state agrees if a home complies with construction and safety standards under Title 42 of the U.S.
23 Code, it doesn't need to be 8 x 40, as long as HUD and another authority agree. She said if the
24 homes are bought from a manufacturer, she suspected there would not be an issue as opposed to
25 someone building it themselves.

26 Hugh Quinn asked why the size requirements wouldn't be the same as those for other dwellings.
27 Cathy Hasbrouck said the current bylaws didn't have a size requirement, but the proposed
28 bylaws did. Hugh thought the standards would be consistent with those of a tiny house, but Peter
29 Hudkins thought the square footage was considerably bigger than a tiny house. Cathy said she
30 saw some that were 8 x 20 or 10 x 20. Hugh asked what the typical tiny house footprint was. R.J.
31 Dourney asked if he could explain. R.J. Dourney said they run pretty small, but the construction
32 was radically different than that of a mobile home. He said they were more like a stick-built
33 home. He then asked to go back to Barre Pinsky's question about the average affordable housing
34 stock. He said when he lived in Massachusetts, he and his wife served on various boards that
35 addressed affordable housing, and there it had been 2%. He said the goal in New England is
36 10%. R.J. said Massachusetts had enormous success with a strategy called 40B which allowed a
37 developer not to deal with local ordinances, as long as they guaranteed that 10% of whatever
38 they developed would be affordable.

39 R.J. Dourney talked about St. Joseph's in Chester and St. Mary's in Springfield. He said Father
40 Peter Williams was the pastor. He said Father Peter was focused on being a positive influence in
41 the community and he recognized that not everyone was able to live in a \$300,000 house. R.J.
42 said the church had about 3.5 acres of land behind the church building that is not zoned for the
43 tiny house village they envision. He said a typical tiny house needs to be less than 8.5 feet wide
44 in order to travel on the road and that they are usually under 20 to 25 feet. He said for the tiny
45 house village they would aim for tiny houses that were 8 x 20 feet.

1 Hugh Quinn asked if they were that size because they were built somewhere else versus on site.
2 R.J. Dourney said part of the premise behind tiny houses is that they are mobile. He asked the
3 board to imagine for someone it was their first home. They would get help building it and rent
4 the dirt from the church and were able to save and buy some land and eventually move the tiny
5 home and someone would move in after them. R.J. said that was an ideal scenario. He said the
6 second type of development they would like to facilitate was shotgun houses in the 8-to-8.5-foot
7 range, but a little deeper than a tiny house. They could accommodate a mom, dad, and 2 kids. He
8 said the shotgun house would not be mobile. R.J. said it was deeply engrained in their faith that
9 they should be a positive addition to the community and they wanted the community to be glad
10 they were there. They would like to see access to the Williams River behind them and walking
11 trails through the tiny house development. They want everyone in town to drive through and see
12 the tiny house village as a natural extension of Chester. R.J. and his wife, Nancy, built a home in
13 Chester in 2005 and became full-time residents 2 ½ years ago. He said they are in Chester
14 because it's a good community and the tiny house development should be a natural extension of
15 that. He said it shouldn't look like an albatross, but rather a positive natural addition. Anything
16 people would need was within walking distance from the property location: coffee, wine,
17 Smitty's, everything except for a pharmacy. He joked that he had spoken with Preston Bristow
18 who promised he would find him a CVS.

19 Barre Pinske asked if this were to be done, could it be done as a PUD kind of thing. He
20 apologized for interrupting and said he loved the romantic idea of the housing, but the whole
21 point of zoning from his perspective was to help neighbors and put things in certain places and
22 so forth. He said the difficulty with doing something unique was the zoning board's job was to
23 do something that applied to everybody. Barre said it wasn't that he didn't want to hear R.J.
24 Dourney's whole story and it wasn't that he couldn't appreciate the romance of it. He said you
25 need to come from it looking at how it can possibly be done and not romantically. Barre said tiny
26 houses weren't necessarily affordable just because they were small. He said regulation would be
27 required, septic, etc. and it was a huge deal.

28 Cathy Hasbrouck said she wanted to hear R.J.'s entire story because there wasn't room in the
29 bylaws for what was being proposed. She said it seemed appropriate for Chester to modify its
30 bylaws to accommodate housing in little pockets here and there. She said she wanted him to keep
31 talking so they had the blue-sky approach and then they could get down to the realities of the
32 bylaws.

33 Cathy said the bylaws addressed mobile home parks and referred to 4.10, the PUD section. She
34 said she and Preston Bristow were trying to sort out the requirements: can a PUD be owned by
35 one person; was it necessary to subdivide into small lots and say it was something else. She said
36 it was necessary to hear what was being proposed before they got into the details of the bylaws.

37 Barre said it was a simple idea: they had a piece of land that they wanted to put tiny houses on,
38 so what more was needed to know. Cathy answered the church wanted to retain ownership of the
39 land. Barre said what is most important was what hurdles were necessary to jump to do it. Peter
40 Hudkins said there was a real problem with just looking at it that way. Peter said with shotgun
41 homes, could they be turned into multi-family homes. He said when they are turned into multi-
42 family, the density can explode. He said if the lots are tiny, the density is limited. Peter said they
43 needed to hear the dream. Barre said he would listen.

44 Cheryl Joy Lipton spoke and said one of things discussed with the new bylaws was having the

1 density in the village center be 12 units per acre, which would accommodate tiny houses. She
2 said that it seemed to her that Father Peter could subdivide and retain ownership by renting each
3 lot to a tiny home owner. She said if that were approved, the 12 units per acre would only be in
4 the center of the village, but some of the Planning Commission members were interested in it
5 being a larger area.

6 Peter Hudkins said there was no density limit to a multi-family use in the adopted bylaws. Barre
7 Pinske said he wished to listen and his intention wasn't to be a jerk, but he had given a lot of
8 thought to people with mental illness and addiction requiring everything to be tiled because it
9 could be washed if they don't care for themselves. Barre referenced getting people off the streets
10 in cities and have better housing than tent housing. He said he didn't want to sound too much
11 like a politician, but if it looked like a duck, it was a duck. He said they were talking about a
12 campground or trailer park but framing it as tiny houses and giving it a low-income housing
13 angle. He said it was interesting and he was happy to listen, but he had a picture in his mind of a
14 campground or trailer park behind the church.

15 R.J. Dourney offered to dispel that idea, as he said it was the farthest thing from their intent. R.J.
16 said they weren't developers and had no interest in developing and if that was the road it went
17 down, he would get up and leave. R.J. asked the Planning Commission to keep in mind that this
18 parcel of land was the heart of their church and the presence of Christ was with them there.

19 He said the primary focus was housing for their parishioners and the community. Father Peter
20 was emphatic that the development was a natural extension of the community. R.J. said Father
21 Peter would have high standards with berms, landscaping, spacing, ambient light and all those
22 things. The Planning Commission would set those standards, since that was the whole point of
23 zoning.

24 R.J. said they were not asking for spot zoning. He was not an advocate of it and felt it was very
25 dangerous. He said he applauded the commission trying to determine how to attract more
26 affordable housing. R.J. said they were not interested in all the units being low-income housing.

27 He said there was an enormous amount of data which said that when people are economically-
28 disadvantaged and isolated bad things happen. The church had no interest in doing that. Peter
29 Hudkins and Cathy Hasbrouck agreed.

30 R.J. said if 6 people live in the cluster of tiny houses and one of them makes six times as much as
31 the others, nobody would know because it's just one community. but if people are isolated, there
32 are issues. Peter said that was a good point and that the housing needed to be disbursed
33 throughout the town. He was dead set against it being in one area. R.J. said when he and his wife
34 lived in Hopkinton, MA they promoted affordable housing in different neighborhoods. The
35 residents got along well and it was a nice addition.

36 R.J. Dourney said he wanted to address one of Barre Pinske's comments. He said he wanted to
37 be a resource and be helpful. He said he had no agenda. He thought the tiny house project would
38 be good for the community. Some of their parishioners could no longer afford to maintain a 4-
39 bedroom house and the smaller housing would be good for them.

40 Peter Hudkins said there was a difference between low-income and senior housing. He asked
41 R.J. Dourney if they were going to allocate a percentage of units for low-income housing and
42 senior housing. Cathy Hasbrouck asked Peter for clarification of what he was asking. Barre
43 Pinske said "Jesus Christ." R.J. spoke up and asked Barre not to use the Lord's name in vain to

1 which Barre replied “c’mon, man.” R.J. said he didn’t appreciate Barre using the Lord’s name in
2 vain at a public meeting and Barre apologized.

3 Barre Pinske said it was a problem that the agenda was about affordable housing and questioned
4 why the agenda didn’t mention this unique type of development. Cathy Hasbrouck questioned
5 Barre’s patience. Barre said it wasn’t about affordable housing anymore and it was two different
6 things. Cathy disagreed and said it was about housing in general and this was one part of it. Barre
7 said it was a friend that Cathy worked with and it should have been on the agenda that they were
8 going to talk about something from their church they were developing. He said it was a mess and
9 had happened repeatedly.

10 Peter Hudkins said they all needed to hear what the citizens had to say. Barre Pinske said if
11 something is going to be brought before the board, the members should have information about it
12 so they are prepared to talk about it at the meeting. He said that is how it would be done before
13 the Select Board. He said if Tim Roper was selling chicken coops to do good for the community,
14 he would need a business permit and it came down to black and white and just plain zoning and
15 not pulling on people’s heart strings.

16 Barre said you would have to deal with setbacks, the number of buildings on a piece of land,
17 parking, septage, and everything. He said what was being talked about was a campground or a
18 mobile park behind the church so if they were going to do something different, they would need
19 to be able to do it other places, and if someone wanted to do something on their 30 acres in the
20 forest, they would have to deal with that too.

21 Cathy Hasbrouck pointed out that the adopted bylaws allow for a mobile home park in R40 and
22 R120. She said there is a mobile home park on Depot Street that was grandfathered. Cathy said
23 the possibility of using land so visible from the main road for something attractive and helpful
24 should be listened to by the Planning Commission. The Planning Commission should consider
25 how the current bylaws support it and how the proposed bylaws would interact with it. She said
26 it seemed like a wonderful opportunity to consider how to achieve the goal of bringing more
27 housing into the town’s center.

28 Cathy Hasbrouck told Barre Pinske if he just wanted to say yes or no to some bylaws, the
29 meeting was not for him. Barre said it wasn’t that but that his point was it didn’t matter if it was
30 the Catholic Church, the Masons, or Jesus himself, but that it all comes down to real rules. He
31 said it wasn’t that he didn’t care about the romance.

32 Cathy said the Planning Commission was the body that made rules. Barre agreed. Cathy said
33 they should consider if rules could be adapted so these things were possible. She didn’t want the
34 rules to stop the town from filling in the empty spaces with people living happily in a
35 community. She thought they should look at the rules more to make these things happen. Barre
36 said he felt the same way but asked how they would possibly do that.

37 Peter Hudkins moved to hear R.J. Dourney and the others out and said the Planning Commission
38 Rules of Procedure that Tim Roper had passed before, which Barre Pinske voted for, were what
39 they were doing now.

40 Barre Pinske suggested that he leave because he had a hard time listening to what was being
41 presented and Cathy Hasbrouck agreed. Before he left the meeting, Barre apologized and added
42 that at a previous meeting, people attended who wanted the forest to blossom and spoke about
43 animals traveling from Vermont to Canada and he was upset about having to listen to them

1 because he felt he was being manipulated by hearing it from their perspective. He said he had
2 difficulty listening to people who want to do something for good reasons when he doesn't really
3 buy it. Barre then left the meeting.

4 Hugh Quinn said he would love to hear more from RJ Dourney. He said if they all agreed they
5 wanted more affordable housing in Chester and there were creative options, he wanted to hear
6 about them and see if those plans collided with the current and proposed bylaws. Hugh said he
7 looked at it less as the church has some property and wanted to do something with it but more as
8 it was idea that they had not yet considered and maybe should. R.J. Dourney said as a member of
9 the community he was thrilled to hear Hugh say that.

10 Cathy Hasbrouck asked Cheryl Joy Lipton if she wanted to say something. Cheryl Joy said this
11 was where higher density came into play with 12 units per acre or 6 units per acre, instead of
12 traditional neighborhood development.

13 Peter Hudkins said the adopted bylaws have no limit on the number of dwelling units in a multi-
14 family use. He said the limit is the lot coverage, and the building code. As such, the adopted
15 bylaws would allow more now versus the proposed bylaws. Cathy Hasbrouck confirmed with
16 Peter that a multi-family is one building and would not apply to R.J. Dourney's proposal of
17 separate houses. Peter said with the shotgun style house it was possible. R.J. Dourney said they
18 have zero interest in doing multi-family units. Hugh Quinn asked for clarification that a shotgun
19 home isn't multi-family. R.J. said it is one family but bigger than a tiny house and not mobile.

20 R.J. Dourney said with a tiny house he wasn't aware of a square footage limitation, only a width
21 limitation because it had to travel on the road. Cathy Hasbrouck said she and Preston Bristow
22 had discussed mobile homes being at least 40 feet and difficult to move. She said the tiny house
23 could be moved with a pickup truck.

24 R.J. Dourney asked that the mobile home option be taken off the table because they did not want
25 to allow mobile homes in the cluster. Cathy Hasbrouck said the only reason she had mentioned
26 mobile homes was they were the closest structure to a tiny house in the current bylaws.

27 Preston Bristow thought they could still explore a planned unit development (PUD). Peter
28 Hudkins said the bylaws referred to the ability to increase density by up to 50% for a PUD, and
29 Cathy said increased density required a certain percentage of low-income housing in the PUD.

30 Preston said they hadn't run the numbers to see if they could get the density they were looking
31 for, but he would rather not call it a mobile home park. He said it wasn't mobile homes. He
32 thought the PUD was the way to go and they could tinker with the language if necessary. He
33 added the DRB needs to have a hearing and make it work.

34 R.J. Dourney said the benefit of an economically diverse development would not work with a
35 mobile home park. People with higher incomes would not want to live in mobile homes. Cathy
36 Hasbrouck asked if PUD was a tool and Preston responded that the PUD was a tool which
37 allowed for greater densities in exchange for affordable housing or to set aside land for
38 conservation. Preston said Killington had a lot of PUDs there but not for affordable housing. He
39 said the PUD bonus was either for open space or affordable housing. Since they were in the
40 midst of talking about bylaw, they could explore other bonuses. Preston said it could even be that
41 the church building itself and its surrounds were part of the open space.

42 Cheryl Joy Lipton offered they could also work open space into it because of the Williams
43 River's location behind the property meeting the riparian buffer. Preston Bristow said it was the

1 sort of thing the DRB would want to be creative about and he thought it was the better way to go.

2 Hugh Quinn asked if affordable housing was a synonym for low-income housing and if you
3 made too much money, would you not be able live there. R.J. Dourney said no and that they
4 were strictly talking about what it costs to live in a residence. Hugh asked if he made an endless
5 amount of money if he could go and live in an affordable house and R.J. told him he didn't think
6 so. Peter Hudkins said usually the difference is an income variable and that he could live there
7 but the rent would be astronomical because it is income based. R.J. said he wasn't sure.

8 Peter Hudkins said that was how it worked in Massachusetts. Preston Bristow said there were
9 different models depending on the funding source. He said there was very low income known as
10 Section 8, and there was low-income, and then moderate income for working class which is what
11 teacher and policemen are. He said a lot of moderate-income people couldn't find housing.

12 Preston Bristow told R.J. Dourney he was talking the right language by trying to mix the
13 housing. Preston said the idea of having pockets within the town fit well. R.J. told the board he
14 applauded them for getting ahead of this and that there were examples of what they wanted to do
15 around the country.

16 Peter Hudkins said it looked like there will be cash coming and Chester should get some money.
17 The members and R.J. Dourney were in agreement that they should take advantage of what was
18 available. Cathy Hasbrouck said the town manager, Julie Hance, has done a lot for Chester by
19 getting in line for grants. Peter said he wasn't opposed when Cathy mentioned it and said they
20 should see what the town has and what can be done and hire a management company.

21 Preston Bristow said money would be available for public water and sewer systems expansions
22 and that affordable housing could only occur on properties that have those utilities. Preston
23 stated there were so many regulations required to maintain a private water system that affordable
24 housing wasn't practical on a private system.

25 R.J. Dourney said they would be happy to be a resource in this process. He said he and his wife
26 had experience in Massachusetts and had seen it done the right way. He said you can create
27 what you want when you shepherd it. He said he loved the fact that Julie was already seeking
28 available funding.

29 Preston Bristow said there were two approaches: one, that the town was proactive and seeks
30 likely sites for affordable housing; and the second was that the town got out of the way and let
31 them occur. He said, at the very least, they should do the second and have flexibility in their
32 regulations to let them occur. Several people agreed.

33 Cathy Hasbrouck said right now there were limits where some things can happen. R.J. Dourney
34 asked if they knew whether if Julie was successful in securing monies, the money could be used
35 towards the planning process. Cathy answered that it was still nebulous as to what the money
36 was available for, but Julie was telling them to look at the housing chapter in the town plan and
37 at what the bylaws said.

38 Preston Bristow stated there was a grant cycle coming up for the municipal planning process. He
39 suggested that wanting to make changes for affordable housing may fit the grant criteria and the
40 commission should consider it.

41 Cathy Hasbrouck confirmed with R.J. Dourney that he would like help with planning. He said he
42 serves as the chair of the finance committee in his church and he doesn't have a say in what the

1 church actually decides. Father Peter Williams would bring the project to their bishop who
2 makes the decision. R.J. believes the more buttoned up it is, the better and if they can get help
3 with the planning process, it would improve the project's chances.

4 Preston Bristow said he didn't think the church would want the headache of being a landlord, but
5 they must have felt it within their mission. R.J. Dourney confirmed that it was. Preston said at
6 least 3 of the planning commission members agreed it was something the commission wanted to
7 do.

8 Hugh Quinn asked how they would begin to identify areas in the bylaws that may be an issue. He
9 said if they went the PUD route and money was available and the bylaws were in the way, how
10 would they foresee that and get in front of it. Cathy Hasbrouck responded she didn't believe
11 Chester had ever had a PUD and they would need to look at it.

12 Peter Hudkins said the PUDs depended on having water and sewer, so they could draw a circle
13 around the water and sewer lines in town and easily identify properties that could work. Cathy
14 Hasbrouck said they could also talk to the water and sewer people. Peter and Hugh agreed that
15 once you had the properties you could see which zones they were in and they could figure out
16 where the hard spots were.

17 Preston Bristow suggested they could either look at sites themselves or hire someone to do it. He
18 also mentioned the concept of a planning charrette where people who have done it have a tour
19 and experts give input. Peter Hudkins said they have a lot of base ability in town to identify sites.
20 Preston said he hated to always bring in an outside source, but if the board was going to clash, it
21 may be easier to bring in someone from the outside. Peter believed the majority thought they
22 should look at it.

23 Cathy Hasbrouck asked if they wanted to talk to Jeff Holden about water and sewer at the next
24 meeting and they agreed. R.J. Dourney asked if there was anything he could help with, and the
25 members said no but thanked him for attending.

26 Peter Hudkins said he wasn't interested in calling a lot of people until they determine where the
27 housing could be. Hugh Quinn said if there was a possibility of some funding, they shouldn't
28 wait but get ready for it. The members agreed they should be proactive.

29 Peter Hudkins said the data in the housing Chapter of the town plan was 20 years out of date.
30 Hugh Quinn said there was a lot of information but he couldn't figure out how to interpret it in a
31 meaningful way as it relates to affordable housing. Hugh understood that there were 72 units of
32 affordable housing in Chester now and it was 4.4% of the total of 1611 households in town.

33 Hugh Quinn said he wanted to make sure he understood and asked for clarification on some of
34 the data in the packet for the meeting. It said that 59% of Chester residents were paying between
35 30% and 49% of their income for housing; whereas, in Vermont at large it was only 26%. Peter
36 Hudkins said yes. Hugh said 25% are paying 50% or more. Hugh felt that was where it was a
37 little bit skewed because when he looked at Vermont at large only 25% are paying more than
38 50%, while in Chester it was only 17%. Cathy Hasbrouck said she would be talking to Jason
39 Rasmussen the next day and he would be able to get them meaningful numbers.

40 Hugh Quinn tried to make sense of some of the data about housing costs and median incomes
41 sent in the packet. He saw several inconsistencies and felt the Planning Commission needed to
42 clarify the information.

1 Peter Hudkins said a lot of rental housing had gone the way of Air B&B. Peter said because there
2 was money coming available to expand housing, he would be proactive.

3 Hugh Quinn said what he interpreted Peter saying that someone who had a home they used for a
4 long-term rental which had been affordable was now an Air B&B, which was a trend that is not
5 going to be reversed.

6 Peter Hudkins proposed that since it was needed, they find the places that work with zoning and
7 then stand out of the way of the developer.

8 Peter Hudkins said he knows of several houses that have been taken off the long-term rental
9 market and made into Air B&B's. Hugh Quinn questioned whether they should be managing
10 houses that have gone from traditional rentals to Air B&Bs. He said communities are trying to
11 figure out how to understand the change or at least control or limit it. He said he read articles
12 about towns creating registries of short-term rentals.

13 Preston Bristow spoke up and said Killington was the leader of registering short-term rentals.
14 Hugh asked what the goal was for some of the efforts in trying to understand short-term rentals.
15 Preston said everyone had different goals and in Killington's case, because they were a resort
16 community, their view on short-term rentals was not negative. Preston said the problem was
17 there were a lot of out-of-control party houses that exceeded capacity and also resulted in
18 parking issues. He said Killington's goal is making sure the rentals complied with their building
19 inspection and septic approval. He said other communities have different views. He said in
20 Woodstock, where he lives, short-term rentals are viewed as basically allowing hotels in
21 residential neighborhoods and they feel short-term rentals destroy residential neighborhoods so
22 they have restrictions such as they can be rented no more than 180 days a year and also require
23 conditional approval from their neighbors. Hugh said that was great background and they should
24 discuss them in the future.

25 Peter Hudkins questioned whether the state had just passed something applying to short-term
26 rentals and Preston Bristow said it didn't pass, which was a big disappointment to some people.
27 Preston said the state had wanted to set up a rental registry but didn't think it had happened.
28 Preston said there were different legislations regarding short-term rentals. He said they thought
29 they had a good shot at establishing a registry this session due to COVID 19. The state was
30 unable to track COVID cases in short-term rentals because they didn't even know who they
31 were, unlike hotels. He said the Vermont Tax Department got money from short-term rentals but
32 they received it directly from the host platform so they didn't know who the individual guests
33 were. Peter added his family had one and the state knew exactly who they were. He said some of
34 the companies they used took the money and some didn't. He said he would bet the tax
35 department knew who the rentals were. Preston said the tax department knew but there was no
36 central database to send a message to the owners.

37 Preston Bristow said once the state requires registration, will they have to be inspected and meet
38 fire codes and be handicapped accessible. He compared it to the internet being unregulated, at
39 first it was great and then it wasn't. He said short-term rentals for extra money sounded good at
40 first but had turned into something different.

41 Hugh Quinn said if the notion of a registry caught on, He wouldn't want it to be taken to an
42 extreme. He wouldn't want a registry which made the lives of everyone who had a short-term
43 rental miserable and put their income at risk. He said something between a free for all and a

1 complete lockdown of short-term rentals was probably attainable. He said he read an article
2 about a person was looking to buy their retirement home in a desirable place and bought it in a
3 community that didn't allow short-term rentals because he didn't want to live around them, yet
4 the irony was he was able to retire because he had a short-term rental. Peter Hudkins said he
5 could understand that.

6 Peter Hudkins said the state needs the 9% Rooms and Meals tax from short-term rentals.

7 Cathy Hasbrouck asked if they also wanted to talk with Kirby Putnam about roads when Jeff
8 Holden talked about sewers. Peter Hudkins replied they should get a map from Jeff of the water
9 and sewer system and develop questions. Hugh Quinn said the map should help identify possible
10 locations along the water and sewer lines.

11 Peter Hudkins said the way he read the bylaws, when you have a multi-family there is no
12 specified limit. It is the lot coverage and the septic that limit.

13 Cathy Hasbrouck said in the mid-2000s the bylaws required a certain number of square feet of
14 lot space per dwelling unit but that requirement no longer existed. Peter Hudkins said that was
15 what would be reinstated in the proposed bylaws. Peter Hudkins said the square footage
16 requirement per dwelling outside the village would work, but inside the village it wouldn't.

17 Hugh Quinn asked when people thought about affordable housing. What were the top 3 reasons
18 against it? Hugh said he thought there was a lot of passion around affordable housing – some
19 people were for it and some people didn't want it in their town. He said the Planning
20 Commission had heard from people in favor of Affordable Housing, it but what about people
21 who were against it?

22 Hugh asked Preston Bristow when affordable housing came up in his experience, what
23 objections were given? Preston replied he thought the biggest reason was either a misconception
24 or, depending on the project, the reality. He said a lot of people thought of a Section 8 place like
25 the Windsor Armory when they heard affordable housing. Many people there don't work. There
26 was a 34-unit affordable housing project in Woodstock that was managed by the Twin State
27 Housing Trust. It was very attractive. He said the police were often called there. Preston said he
28 thought mixed housing was less likely to have the problem. Workforce housing, and not only
29 workforce housing was needed because everyone needed a place to live. There are a lot of people
30 in the community: policemen, waitresses, store clerks and teachers who need a place to live and
31 can't afford a \$350,000 house. Hugh responded that was probably a better way to sell it and it
32 made sense. With Section 8, someone could say the town didn't have enough social services to
33 support so many needy people.

34 Peter Hudkins suggested that spoke to why 72 units should not be built. He preferred the 12 units
35 on Depot Street. He said if they were small and housing disbursed throughout existing
36 neighborhoods would go better. Hugh Quinn agreed.

37 Preston Bristow said the 3 projects already in town are well-managed, clean and the trash doesn't
38 accumulate. He said nobody would complain about the one next to the new fire station. Like the
39 one on Depot Street, he said converting big houses into 6 or 7 apartments is a great way to go
40 because they are interspersed in the community and it eliminates the ghetto like experience. He
41 thought the federal housing projects of the 1950s were a complete disaster because they put too
42 many people in one place resulting in segregation and ghettoizing.

43 Cheryl Joy Lipton said she found a document that addressed changes in zoning to encourage

1 affordable housing and thought it applied to what the board was doing. Cathy Hasbrouck said
2 they were trying to make sure the zoning bylaws didn't get in the way. Cheryl Joy offered to read
3 the document to the board and Cathy asked if she could send an email with the document
4 information. Cathy added there was training available on Thursday via Zoom about the same
5 topic.

6 Preston Bristow said since zoning was established in the 1920s, it has all been about the
7 American Dream: a single-family dwelling with a lawn. He said there was an interesting national
8 trend pushing back against that saying it was an exclusive attitude, not affordable and not good
9 land use. He said at first, he didn't understand, but now he was beginning to understand how the
10 philosophy didn't work very well.

11 Cheryl Joy Lipton said a lot of zoning in the 60s through 80s has been detrimental and as a
12 result, there is a push to change it.

13 Preston added that there are still R1, R2, and R3 districts with 1 or 2 family homes. Now they
14 are saying dwelling units should not be limited. Preston said Chester has these neighborhoods
15 and he wasn't sure when or how they would be changed. The trend now questions 3 acre lots for
16 a house and whether it is good land use. If you can fit a house on a smaller lot, why make it
17 public policy to make it bigger. He said the state planning goals are still compact communities
18 surrounded by open space. Why str 1, 2 and 3 acres, still required?

19 He said there were a lot of things to consider. He added state guidelines currently dictate lots
20 with water and sewer should basically allow up to a 4-plex without a public hearing, but only
21 with administrative approval. Cheryl Joy said that encouraged affordable housing. Preston said
22 the current town plan said nothing about affordable housing, only that it should be reviewed and
23 watched, except accessory dwellings. He said accessory dwellings are helpful but require the
24 septic capacity.

25 Hugh Quinn asked if the spirit behind the accessory dwellings was for a family member or to
26 rent out. Preston Bristow said they are used by kids and parents, one staying in the house and the
27 other in the accessory dwelling which is usually the parents. Preston suggested a fair number of
28 single people or single parent moms could rent an apartment over a garage. He said they used to
29 call them mother-in-law apartments but for many reasons, don't use that term anymore.

30 Cathy Hasbrouck said she would try to get a map of the water and sewer system from Jeff for the
31 next meeting. Peter Hudkins Jeff should definitely be there to give his input regarding extending
32 the water and sewer. Cathy said she could get the most current demographical information from
33 Jason regarding number of households, income, and housing costs, but wasn't sure where he
34 obtains the information.

35 Hugh Quinn suggested instead of only looking at places with water and sewer that they consider
36 certain districts that have septic. He wondered why it needed to be a single-family home and
37 instead be something the septic could support. Peter Hudkins said it would have to be a treated
38 well. Hugh asked if a septic system could support 8 bedrooms, why couldn't the structure be
39 divided into 4 apartments? Peter said potable water with the well would be an issue. Hugh asked
40 if it was an issue of the well providing enough water and Peter said it was bacteria count and
41 inspection requirements.

42 Cheryl Joy Lipton said because it was affordable housing, being close to amenities should be a
43 concern, so it should be in town. Not everyone has a car. Hugh said that would make it pretty

1 easy - wherever the water and sewer was would determine the areas they could consider. Preston
2 Bristow said they could consider where the water and sewer could expand but it should stay
3 around the village center. Everyone agreed that made sense. Preston agreed car ownership was
4 expensive. In addition, there was a class of people in Vermont who functionally could not get
5 their license and if they weren't working, everyone would be hurt by it.
6 Cathy Hasbrouck said it was a good discussion it needed to be continued further.

7 **Agenda Item 4, Discuss Agenda and Set Date for Next Meeting**

8 Peter Hudkins made a motion to adjourn the meeting and Hugh Quinn seconded it. The meeting
9 was adjourned at 8:00 p.m.