TOWN OF CHESTER
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION MEETING
September 23, 2026

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

Guests: Sharon Baker and Michael Alon

Call to Order

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

Agenda Item 1 – Approve Minutes from Previous Meeting

Phil Perlah moved, and Bob Flint seconded, a motion to approve the minutes of August 26, 2026, which was approved without changes.

Agenda Item 2 – Citizen Comments

Shannon Baker reported on the first Chester Celebrates Special Vermont Foods event held at Chester Green on Saturday, September 19. She had 18 vendors in total and 4 vendors sold out of food. She estimated 2500 to 3000 visitors. The $50 per vendor fee will be donated to the Town for support of the Economic Development Commission. They have set a cap of 25 vendors which they hope to meet next year. The 52nd Annual Chester Festival, which moved from the Green to Gateway Field this year, was also a success and there was no clash between the events.

Agenda Item 3 – Design for Survey Rack Card and Facebook Post

Preston Bristow circulated his "Help Shape Chester's Future: Take A Survey" rack card which he formatted with Word software and printed in B&W on bright green card stock on the town's photocopy machine. Michael Alon commented that "Take A Survey" was not the best lead and suggested "Tell Us Your Opinion" or "Give Us Your Thoughts" or "We Want Your Feedback" would get a better response. Bryan Santiago will create a more professionally designed ad that can be posted on Facebook and reproduced on post card stock and mailed to the Chester Grand List and Chester Voter Checklist. Julie Hance confirmed use of the town's photocopier to make color postcards and use of town staff and postage meter to mail them.

Agenda Item 4 – Schedule Coffee Meetups

The Business Directory now lists 157 businesses which include nonprofits, professionals, schools and churches. Preston Bristow will compile email addresses and invite them to attend one of six Coffee Meetups, which will be held in the first-floor meeting room at the Town Hall. Coffee and light refreshments will be provided. The meetings will be moved to the big hall upstairs if attendance is high. The following table of Meetup groups, facilitators, and dates was agreed upon.

Coffee Meetup Group	Facilitators	Meetup Date	Invitees
Retail, Farms & Local Food	Preston, Bob & Damon	Wed Oct 21 – 8am	43
Lodging, Restaurant, Arts & Culture	Julie, Bob & Bryan	Wed Oct 28 – 9am	25
Construction, Trades & Automotive	Julie, Preston & Carl	Wed Nov 4 – 8am	36
Legal, Financial & Professionals	Preston, Bob & Phil	Thu Nov 5 – 8am	35
Community Organizations, Schools & Health Facilities	Julie, Preston & Carl	Thu Nov 12 – 8am	19
Village Green Specific	Julie, Preston & Damon	Wed Nov 18 – 8am	22

Michael Alon suggested that the three lead questions at each Meetup should be:

- "How do we make Chester a destination?"
- "What are your challenges?"
- "What do you need?"

Julie Hance suggested that each Meetup should be no longer than an hour, that honest discussion be encouraged, and that the goal of each Meetup be to conclude with 1-3 follow-up actions. Preston Bristow will prepare the invitations and review them with Julie before sending them. It was decided that the Commission did not need to meet again before the Coffee Meetups begin.

Agenda Item 5 – Continue Discussion of Gap Analysis

It was decided to hold this discussion at a future meeting.

Agenda Item 6 – Next Meeting

The next Commission meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, October 28 at 6 p.m., and two of the Coffee Meetups will have been completed by then. The agenda will be to review how those two meetings went and to make recommendations for the next four meetings.

Agenda Item 7 – Adjourn

Bob Flint moved to adjourn, and Carl Henshaw seconded the motion. The motion carried, and the meeting was adjourned at 7:05 p.m.