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**TOWN OF CHESTER  
SELECT BOARD MEETING  
March 4, 2026, Minutes**

**Board Members Present:** Lee Gustafson, Arne Jonynas, Peter Hudkins, Tim Roper, and Lauren Fierman at Town Hall.

**Staff Present:** Julie Hance, Town Manager, at Town Hall; and Susan Bailey, Recording Secretary, via Zoom.

**Visitors Present:** Bill Lindsay and Shawn Cunningham of the Chester Telegraph at Town Hall; Carl Henshaw, Sharon Jonynas, Anne Henshaw, Kirk MacGinnis, Robert Nied, Joy Slaughter, Mark McKeon, Don Clark, Sarah (no last name given), and SAPA TV via Zoom.

**Call to Order**

Town Manager Julie Hance called the meeting to order at 6:30 p.m. She led with the Pledge of Allegiance.

**Agenda Item 1, Reorganization of the Board**

Julie accepted nominations for the position of Chair. Arne nominated Lee Gustafson for Chair and Tim seconded the motion. There were no other nominations and the motion passed, unanimously. Lee thanked them. Arne asked if when they nominate someone for a position and the person accepted it, if that was treated as a second to their motion. Shawn Cunningham said in Robert's Rules, a second to a motion wasn't necessary.

Lee noted they would discuss meeting times when they got to rules of procedure on the agenda.

Lee accepted nominations for a Vice Chair. Tim nominated Arne Jonynas as Vice Chair. Arne accepted the nomination, which was the second to the motion. The motion carried, unanimously.

Lee accepted nominations for Clerk of the Board. Julie noted there wasn't much to the position. If there's an executive session that Julie wasn't part of, then the clerk would keep track of motions to exit and time, which was mostly the extent of duties. Arne nominated Tim as Clerk, he accepted. The motion carried, unanimously.

**Agenda Item 2, Approval of Minutes of the February 18, 2026 Select Board Meeting and February 18, 2026 Special Select Board Meeting**

Peter moved and Tim seconded a motion to approve the February 18, 2026 minutes. Julie said she had received an email from Kirk MacGinnis who stated on page 1, line 35, it should have said a presumption is not a map boundary. Tim noted page 4, line 15 should be VSA. Lee noted page 5, line 27, the Town Manager was asked to insert a page into the Road Book and thought it should be the Land Book. Julie noted that the Road Book was correct. Peter asked if it had been accepted as public record and Julie said it had. The motion carried, unanimously, and the minutes

1 were approved, as amended.

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3 For the Special Select Board Meeting minutes for the same date, Arne moved and Tim seconded  
4 a motion to accept them. The motion carried and the minutes were approved, as written.

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### **Agenda Item 3, Citizen's Comments**

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8 There were none.

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### **Agenda Item 4, Old Business**

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12 Report by Town Manager:

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#### Attorney Expenses

15 Julie had broken the attorney expenses down in their packet.

16

#### ARPA Funds

18 Peter had asked for a summary of how the ARPA funds were used and that was included in the  
19 packet.

20

#### Local Options Tax

22 It failed and Julie wondered how they wanted to proceed exploring other options to help the  
23 Housing Commission folks. Peter thought the commission should come to the board and request  
24 a specific amount of money and what it would be used for. Arne said it should be an agenda item  
25 to discuss options and decide how to approach it, including a possible budget. Lee agreed and  
26 said they could incorporate Peter's idea into the discussion. Tim said they should have the  
27 expected timing. Julie would include it on the Housing Commission agenda and said she and  
28 Preston would discuss costs and include it on April's Agenda. Arne asked if any money from the  
29 STRs had gone into the Housing Commission's account and it had. The commission has money  
30 to start and to pay for the market study that will be under way soon. The next piece of funding is  
31 for a consultant to start bringing them to development, which they will have some proposals on.  
32 Once they have been able to thoroughly review those, they'll have more of a cost estimate and  
33 can discuss it in April.

34

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### **Agenda Item 5, Sharon Baker; Permission to Use Green**

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37 Sharon was unable to make the meeting and requested they postpone the item. Julie said they  
38 would push it to March 18th but it may not be addressed until April.

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### **Agenda Item 6, Review and Adopt Rules of Procedure**

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42 Lee hoped everyone had an opportunity to review them and asked for questions or clarifications.  
43 Tim noted for Article 2, paragraph 1, they had never allotted time for an item. Lee wondered if it  
44 was a specific time or whether there was enough time to address it and Tim said it was a fair  
45 question. Tim suggested including adequate time for each item. Lauren agreed and suggested  
46 they strike it. Arne said the only time he saw something similar is when there were a lot of

1 people who wanted to speak. They agreed to strike the words: time allotted.

2

3 Tim said in the same article under Section 3 regarding additions or deletions as the first act of  
4 business, and noted he had raised before but didn't remember the outcome, that due to open  
5 meeting law, unless it was an emergency, they weren't permitted to add to an agenda that wasn't  
6 warned. Julie thought there were emergency options. Shawn recalled they were loose about it.  
7 Lauren said they could, as long as there was a line item on the agenda for additions or deletions.  
8 Julie would verify that. Lauren said it wasn't good practice to do but as long as something came  
9 up, they could and she didn't recall it being prohibited. Lee said regardless of the law, they didn't  
10 necessarily have to include additions. Lee suggested that if it wasn't an emergency and wasn't  
11 included on the agenda, that they just say no. Arne wondered if it made a difference if the agenda  
12 item being added was going to be action taken or non-action taken, because an item for  
13 information or quick discussion was a lot different than an action item. Lee said that was a good  
14 point and couldn't recall where the emergency section was. Tim remembered reading it and  
15 recommended they strike it but if Julie wanted to verify, that was fine.

16

17 They agreed on the first and third Wednesday at 6:30 for meeting times.

18

19 Tim noted Paragraph 9 said responses to voice votes when provided must be expressed as either  
20 yes or no, and they always say yay or nay. Lee suggested they could indicate in the affirmative or  
21 negative. Lee appreciated Tim calling attention to it but didn't think it required changing.

22

23 Under Organization, number 2, Lee wanted it clarified that the board could remove the Chair  
24 from the position and not the board. The others agreed.

25

26 Under 5-1 Public Participation, Lee thought it should be worded differently.

27

28 For 6 and 7 regarding time limits, they decided to leave it as worded. Lauren wondered if they  
29 had too many people wanting to speak. Lee didn't think time needed to be changed. Lauren  
30 shared that the school board's attorney had advised them the time limit shouldn't be under 3  
31 minutes so she was concerned with 2 minutes. Lee said they could make it 3. Lauren noted they  
32 would have discretion and could allow people to speak longer.

33

34 For 6, Lee said as they were discussing things, the board and audience shouldn't interrupt  
35 members.

36

37 The same went for 5, comments should be addressed to the presiding officer.

38

39 For 9, Lee questioned addressing someone as Mx., as he was not familiar with the term. Tim said  
40 it was non-gender specific.

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42 Lee said if they were satisfied with the recommended changes, Julie would modify them and  
43 present to them next time

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## Agenda Item 7, Review and Adopt Conflict of Interest Policy

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Julie said she had not made any changes since its original adoption. Tim said 5(c) didn't mention Housing or Economic Development Commissions and wondered if Select Board members could serve on them. Julie thought the Planning Commission and Development Review Board were intentional and specifically called out. The Select Board could get involved in a DRB appeal and the Planning Commission was the same, because they were writing the document being adopted, so those two boards were intentionally called out. Julie wasn't sure their intention was that board members couldn't serve on any advisory commission. Tim saw approving expenditures as a possible conflict. Julie said for the Planning Commission and DRB, at the time it was discussed, it felt there shouldn't be overlapping between the three groups. Lee noted Tim had a good point and wondered if there would be enough of a conflict that they wouldn't want a member to serve in both roles. Lauren noted she was the current Vice Chair of the Housing Commission and could see ways around it but could also see the concern. Tim questioned public perceptions regardless of the pure intent of a board member. Arne said maybe Lauren shouldn't be on both boards especially if the board was going to address monetary issues. Peter noted he attended both the housing and planning meetings, and wasn't a voter but offered his opinions. Lauren said appearance was as important as reality and she wouldn't feel uncomfortable with the idea that a board member shouldn't serve. Lee said it would be the prudent thing to do. Julie could change it to say prohibited from being a member on any. Lee asked Julie to explain the difference between commission and committee. She said there was a difference in statute but couldn't remember. Arne said at the CCC, they chose the committee because it was less formal with minutes and open meetings. Commission requirements are similar to boards. Bill Lindsay said there was a concern a while back with items being appealed with the DRB. There was discussion about serving on subcommittees. Lee thought a commission was more formal but the same responsibilities didn't apply to a committee. Julie read the definitions for committee and commission. Based on that, Lee didn't think they should serve on a board or commission. Lauren would resign from the Housing Commission. Peter invited Lauren to join him in the audience at the meeting and Arne reminded them that if more than 2 board members attended, it would need to be warned. Lauren said that was only if they talked to each other. Lee asked if there were any other concerns for the conflict of interest policy. Julie will advertise for a replacement for Lauren on the Housing Commission.

Under Article 7, Arne thought when someone recused themselves having a discussion why was a good idea. Peter said they should update it to include the state statute re putting it in writing and attaching it to the minutes. Julie said that was a good point and she would update it. Lee pointed out there was something about stating it but the statute included putting it in writing and Julie agreed. Arne didn't think there was any action they could take if they didn't recuse themselves and Tim said they could be removed from office but didn't think they could because it was an elected position. Julie reminded them they were adopting a policy for not only the board but all municipal officials. Lee agreed with Arne that they couldn't easily remove someone from their board. Arne and Tim pointed out that not all boards or members would be introspective and the policy encouraged the conversation in a public meeting. Lee agreed and said it was a good reminder of how they were supposed to conduct themselves.

Julie will update the policy.

1 **Agenda Item 8, Review and Adopt Public Records Policy**

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3 Julie noted public record requests were becoming an issue. Statute allows municipalities to adopt  
4 a policy. For example, anything recorded in land records has already been produced and is  
5 public. Currently, if someone requests them, Amie has to go into the vault, pull the records, and  
6 make copies, which takes time. Under Vermont law, the first 30 minutes are free. Julie said they  
7 receive many requests that aren't local, such as from data companies, which can take a lot of  
8 time. They have to comply with the public records law but the policy will define how they  
9 provide the information. Currently, some people want the town to do a lot of data research and  
10 that isn't something they must comply with and the policy would lay that out. Julie added they  
11 want to give public access to records but need parameters. Julie said one month they had 48  
12 public records requests. Tim wondered why there were so many and Julie didn't know. Lee asked  
13 if they could modify the fees and Julie said the state sets parameters; these are at the high end.  
14 They cannot recoup legal fees and some requests require the attorney to respond. Police  
15 Department related requests go through the attorney. Lauren echoed that the files were available  
16 to the public who could access them. Julie noted some requests are actually title searches and  
17 they are not certified for that which puts the town at risk. Shawn Cunningham was concerned the  
18 policy didn't discuss fees and he wanted to take some time to review it and wondered if they  
19 could postpone approval. Lee said given the amount of money they spend, it was imperative to  
20 adopt as soon as possible to help them recoup some of the costs. Shawn asked if he could come  
21 back and request an amendment, if needed. Tim said they could amend next week, if necessary.  
22 Julie said it would be nice to have something on the books. Arne said it would explain to people  
23 how it works and thought it was geared more to raw data. Shawn didn't see a Vaughn index of  
24 things denied. Julie said it was included but not labeled as a Vaughn index and if they denied  
25 something, they had to provide a reason. Tim wondered if Julie's time was billable and it wasn't.  
26 Julie said they typically don't require fees because they don't want to hinder people's access and  
27 most don't take an hour to put together but the ones that have a list of 35 items or requests that  
28 require multiple departments do. That statute leaves it to the discretion of the municipality as to  
29 charges. The forms are something new and would eliminate AI generated requests. Julie said  
30 many towns throughout the state had adopted the policy. Shawn asked if the town required the  
31 form. They would, per this policy.

32  
33 Lee entertained a motion to accept the policy as presented, minus any modifications to the form,  
34 if needed. Lauren moved and Petered seconded the motion. The motion carried, unanimously.

35  
36 Arne asked if the policy had been in place, how much would they have saved on the \$7,000  
37 record request. Julie said it would have hindered some of the requests because it was a series of 8  
38 different requests, one right after the other. There was a lot of back and forth and each would  
39 have been a separate incident and they would have been able to charge more.

40  
41 (7:28 p.m. - brief recess)

42  
43 **Agenda Item 9, Review and Adopt Town Road Policy**

44  
45 Not addressed at this meeting.

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1 **Agenda Item 10, Approve License:**

2 **Tobacco License - J.W. Sandri**

3 **Tobacco Substitute Endorsement - J.W. Sandri**

4 **Second Class Liquor License - J.W. Sandri**

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7 Tim moved and Arne seconded the motion to accept the applications. The motion carried,  
8 unanimously.

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10 **Agenda Item 11, New Business/Next Agenda**

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- 12 ● Lee noted appointments, paper records, school director recommendation, use of town
  - 13 property ordinance, and local emergency operations plan.
  - 14 ● Town Road Policy
  - 15 ● Request for use of Town Green.
  - 16 ● Update on Rules of Procedure and Conflict of Interest.
  - 17 ● Housing Commission money request in April, so the Commission can meet on March
  - 18 17th.
  - 19 ● April 15 - Jim Carroll will attend; updated training on roles and responsibilities between
  - 20 select board members, town manager, and form of government
  - 21 ● Peter asked about Tier 3 and Julie said the Land Use Review Board was making a round
  - 22 of changes. Once they have their next draft, they will come and present - circulate a date
  - 23 when known. There is a new round of draft changes. Tim said questions had been raised
  - 24 about how long Tier 1(b) is enforced and he wanted it addressed by someone who was an
  - 25 expert. Shawn noted it was said they get a temporary exemption with Tier 1 and a
  - 26 permanent with Tier 3.
  - 27 ● Tim researched what Tom said about reintroducing mountain lions to Vermont. There was
  - 28 a bill introduced that was not co-sponsored on January 26, 2025; it has never left
  - 29 committee.
  - 30 ● Peter said the town has mineral rights that will end up in Tier 3. Julie thought the last map
  - 31 showed that. Lee noted most of Popple Dungeon, part of Route 121 and part of Route 11
  - 32 near Simonsville would be subject to it. Peter said the town owns mineral rights that run
  - 33 parallel to the power lines. Peter said they sold the rights but thought they had talc
  - 34 royalties. Shawn said Tier 3 was along there and had asked Jason who said the rest of the
  - 35 town in that area would have more road rule. Julie said it would be discussed when the
  - 36 expert came. The town will invite the landowners to the meeting so they're well-informed
  - 37 about the impact to their land and suggested they use the opportunity to obtain feedback.

38  
39 **Agenda Item 12, Adjourn**

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41 Peter moved to adjourn, and Arne seconded the motion. The motion carried and the meeting was  
42 adjourned at 7:39 p.m.