

1 **TOWN OF CHESTER**  
2 **SELECTBOARD MEETING**  
3 **August 17, 2022, Minutes**

4 **Board Members Present:** Arne Jonynas, Ben Whalen, Lee Gustafson, Leigh Dakin, and Heather  
5 Chase at Town Hall.

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

8 **Visitors Present:** Bill Lindsay and Jeff Holden at Town Hall; and SAPA TV, Chester Telegraph,  
9 Joy Slaughter, Robert Nied, Tim Roper, and Charles Baird via Zoom.

10  
11 **Call to Order**

12  
13 Chair Arne Jonynas called the meeting to order at 6:30 p.m. with the pledge of allegiance. He  
14 welcomed everyone to the meeting.

15  
16 **Agenda Item 1, Approve minutes from the August 3, 2022, Selectboard Meeting**

17 Lee moved and Heather seconded a motion to approve the August 3<sup>rd</sup> minutes. Arne asked for any  
18 changes, corrections, omissions, or errors and there were none. A vote was taken, and the minutes  
19 were approved.

20 **Agenda Item 2, Citizens Comments/Answers from Previous Meeting**

21 There were none.

22 **Agenda Item 3, Old Business**

23 Report given by the Town Manager:

24 Intersection of Grafton Road and High Street

25 Julie noted that Kirby had looked at the intersection regarding possible relocation of the stop sign.  
26 The reason the stop sign is there is because there is a huge section of ledge underneath that corner  
27 causing the stop sign to be backed up a little bit. Julie thought the sidewalk pain was in and they  
28 would be repainting those lines which should help. If not, they could potentially do some letter but  
29 moving the stop sign would be a much bigger deal. Also, for plowing, the way they come off the  
30 intersection would create an issue if the stop sign were moved. Leigh was bothered by the incident  
31 she saw with not even a brake, and she is worried someone would get hurt and they were on a  
32 bicycle. It's one thing to have an accident with a car but another to have one with a bicycle. Leigh  
33 asked if they had been able to increase patrols there. Julie said they have increased and getting the  
34 word out was important. Arne hoped the painting and lettering would help.

35 Police Department Assessment

36 Jim Baker will be at the September 21<sup>st</sup> meeting to present it. Julie would be meeting with him on  
37 September 2<sup>nd</sup> to go over the report. They will also discuss the job description and police search at  
38 the September 21<sup>st</sup> meeting.

39

1 Cannabis Board

2 They are still advertising. Julie hasn't had any interest at this point. Leigh asked if they were only  
3 planning on filling the open position and Julie said that one member resigned out of the 7-member  
4 board and that was the position they were looking to fill. Arne noted that the board had said no to  
5 a few of the original applicants and suggested reaching out to them to see if they were still  
6 interested. Julie said she would do that.

7 Water and Sewer

8 Julie said the state's intended use plan came out for both water and wastewater. There are a lot of  
9 grant opportunities, as the state had been flooded with ARPA money for their water and wastewater  
10 divisions. There are potentially some programs they have identified that may fit existing projects  
11 and as either low interest loans or fully funded. Chester has been selected to receive 100% funding  
12 for their lead inventory which is service lines which would be a huge expense so 100% funding is  
13 great. It is something they will be required to do in the upcoming years. There are several programs  
14 that could receive funding or low interest loans. The main on Depot Street is an expensive project  
15 and will be just under a million to replace that line. It will not be an agenda item until Naomi has  
16 reviewed the intended use plans so they can discuss funding options at the same time. Arne asked  
17 if there were any lead pipes in Chester.

18 Jeff Holden said there weren't complete service lines that were lead but what they call the  
19 goosenecks coming off the mains which are 2 or 3 feet. He said with all the water projects they've  
20 done replacing mains, every time they replace the main, they lose the lead, and it goes strictly to  
21 copper. He thought 7/8 of it had been covered so it would be quick, but it would be helpful to have  
22 someone do it with him and cover that stuff. Julie said they are going to be required to have it. It  
23 will be required by the state so it would be good to have it completely paid for. Jeff added it was  
24 passed five years ago and some towns have been slowly working on it, but it is required by 2024  
25 to be completed. Arne knew old farmhouses had lead spring lines, but he didn't realize about the  
26 gooseneck off the main feed that there were still some in town. Lee said they installed them with  
27 the old cast iron mains. Lee asked how they figure out which ones are lead. Jeff said some they  
28 must dig and some they may be able to test on the service line. Jeff said they had done 14 or 15  
29 water main replacements since he's been there which did away with all that. He said everything  
30 on South Main and Grafton Street was clear. He said there were questions on Depot Street and  
31 very few were questionable. Lee asked if they had sealed the cast iron joints with lead. Jeff said  
32 they did but that lead doesn't touch the water flow. Julie said Naomi will identify projects they  
33 know they need to do and see what funding they can get, or at least low interest rates.

34 Julie said with the secondary water supply, the state has been giving them a hard time about using  
35 Jeffries Well. Naomi has identified some other sources. They will proceed with conducting the  
36 hydro and geo testing at one or two of the locations. They are waiting to get pricing and will get  
37 back to the board soon. Naomi may also attend and discuss what it all means. This is something  
38 they need to do soon as the water usage in Chester has grown dramatically over the past 2 years.  
39 Some of it may be due to COVID but the town is busier, and businesses are busier. Jeff said it is  
40 putting the reins on any future business expansion. Jeff said he tried to get the Canal Street well  
41 approved 20 years ago for regular well use and couldn't. The well only pumped 125,000 gallons  
42 in a 24-hour period. Ten or fifteen years ago, Chester's water usage was at 145,000 gallons per  
43 day. The month of July, Chester's usage was 195,000 gallons per day. We have one well with no  
44 backup. Jeff has been pushing for it for 6 or 7 years and hasn't gotten a lot of assistance. Arne

1 noted we would be close to capacity for the sewer plant if all the water going out is coming back.  
2 Julie said they would be looking at the sewer upgrade next year.

3 Arne asked if the potential well sites were town properties. One is a town property at the Pinnacle  
4 and is the least desirable. One property is privately owned, and the property owner is willing to do  
5 an easement. They have to consider all of them and the pricing. Arne asked who has the final say.  
6 Julie said the State must issue the permit. Julie questioned how much time they should spend  
7 fighting with them, so it was time to start considering other locations and having a backup plan.  
8 She said they're getting close to capacity so it was time to look at another site and at the end of the  
9 day, it may not be that much more money. Leigh asked if Canal Street is completely out of the  
10 picture. Julie said it was because it didn't have anywhere near the capacity they need and would  
11 only be in an emergency. It would also need a lot of improvement to be used and would not provide  
12 what they need. There are all kinds of issues. Jeff said it was 70,000 gallons a day short of the  
13 current needs.

14 Lee was concerned about the State being able to throttle the development as Chester as they see  
15 fit. He didn't want to start a fight with the State but wasn't sure he was ready to just give up. He  
16 understood the politics of pick your battles. On principal, it bothers him. The fact that Chester has  
17 a site they feel that is best for them that they can develop, and they probably have the hydrologic  
18 studies to show it will meet our needs. The infrastructure is there. It seemed to him Chester would  
19 spend a lot of money to try to come up with another site that may or may not meet our needs and  
20 it would cost money to complete the necessary studies. He questioned why they have to talk to the  
21 one guy at the state who is saying no and was there anyone else at the state they could talk with or  
22 was it poking the bear with the stick. Julie thought it would be poking the bear with the stick and  
23 Scott was the permanent guy. Lee asked who he was accountable to and who he worked for. Julie  
24 didn't know but that it was Water Resources.

25 Heather didn't understand his full logic but thought it was worth looking at the other sites and  
26 getting an idea. Julie said it may be appropriate to have Naomi come to a board meeting and explain  
27 Scott's reports and what the issues are. Lee had read some of his emails and reports and Lee is  
28 trained in the same area and doesn't agree with Scott. The point wasn't they would be doing  
29 something stupid but doing something they see best for Chester. He understood but wanted to go  
30 on record that they should look for ways to work with Scott or work around him if necessary to  
31 make it work. He agreed that having another separate site that had a different water source made  
32 a lot of sense but at what cost. Heather thought they should pursue their options since it's been  
33 three years and they aren't any closer.

34 Jeff said everyone is preaching to bringing business in and growing but they don't have the water  
35 and he was concerned they need to do something soon. Jeff understood the concern if the water  
36 source became contaminated with having both wells at the same site. He didn't care where the well  
37 was, but they really needed to get something going. Julie hoped Naomi would have something  
38 assembled in September and she would have her come and update the board. Julie noted that they  
39 weren't giving up on the Jeffrey Well site, but they needed to know their options.

#### 40 Brookside Bridge

41 They started construction today.

42 Bill Lindsay liked the idea of poking the bear. He said the state was extremely uncooperative in  
43 getting someone to come to the property and understand the problems of the property. The

1 contamination wasn't from a gas station but old oil tanks from many years ago that were way back  
2 by a little pond. He said Lee was involved at the time in environmental cleanup and testing and  
3 Lee said he was easily there three years. Bill said people who inquired to buy the property were  
4 told by the state that it was contaminated. He encouraged them to stay with it and they would  
5 finally find someone who would listen to them. He told them not to be ashamed to poke the bear  
6 and they would get results.

7 The historical society had dropped off quite a few new artifacts and there was still another piece  
8 coming. Arne thanked the Historical Society for all the work they do and wanted to get more  
9 people involved, especially younger people, to preserve the town's history. He had attended some  
10 of their meetings where he found their presentations and meetings interesting. When he saw the  
11 Readex sign he didn't think it was old history because he remembered when the sign was up.

12 Arne asked if anyone else had anything else for old business and there was none.

13 **Agenda Item 4, Police Chief Search Process**

14 Julie included in their memo the process she went over with Jim. It is a standard process and is  
15 like the Town Manager search they had conducted. Jim was aware that Julie wanted it to be as  
16 public of a process as it can be. Job one is to prepare the job description and ad. The assessment  
17 will dictate what the community has said they are looking for and the officers have talked about  
18 what they would like to see so she expected it to be easy as the research has been done. It will be  
19 advertised nationwide which is what they're asking towns to do at this point. The plan is the  
20 advertisement will go out by October 1<sup>st</sup> and they will advertise for 30 days. Jim and his team will  
21 go through the applications and narrow them down to 5 to 7 applicants who will then go before an  
22 oral board. There will be a panel of not more than 7, including the town manager, a selectboard  
23 member, and a union representative. A lot of people use Trevor Whipple from VLCT, as he offers  
24 an unbiased neutral position with a lot of law enforcement experience and New England and  
25 national perspective. He is the law enforcement guy at VLCT and understands the ins and outs of  
26 hiring a police chief and is a good person to have on an oral board. Both Springfield and Hartford  
27 used him and found him to be helpful. A lot of the boards have a member from the business  
28 community or school. She suggested they could say two citizens or someone from the business  
29 community or the school and they could design it how they wanted and who would be good  
30 representatives from the community on the oral board. Once the oral board narrows it down to one  
31 or two, they are introduced to the community informally. If they're not local, they would want to  
32 introduce them to the area. She hoped there would be a strong opinion about which one stands out.  
33 The last step is a follow-up interview between the Town Manager and the two applicants because  
34 the responsibility of the hiring is on Julie, and she doesn't want it to only be her. Arne asked if it  
35 was by state statute and Julie said it was. She wants it to be very well informed and to hear from  
36 people. It's a critical decision for the town and should not be made by one person. Heather thought  
37 as chair for the search committee for the Town Manager, they weren't so rigid. She thought if there  
38 were 9 good ones, to take the extra time to interview them. The Town Manager search had 2  
39 Selectboard members which she thought was good. She thought it was okay if it was a larger group  
40 when they got to the interviewing and to have more input. She wanted to make sure the Selectboard  
41 and town were well represented.

42 Ben thought having Trevor Whipple on the board would be good with his history in law  
43 enforcement and what he does for VLCT. He thought they should be cautious against having too  
44 many on the board and seek guidance from people like Jim and Trevor on how many is too many.

1 He thought as long as they were grabbing the questions from the community that was important.  
2 Julie said Jim would not be on the oral board but only guiding it. Julie thought once you have over  
3 7 people, it was too many. Arne thought Trevor was a valuable resource and should be on the  
4 board but asked if it would be a voting position or strictly advisory. Julie said the oral board would  
5 narrow it down, so he would have the same authority as anyone else on the board. Ben asked if  
6 there would be a cost for Trevor to do it and Julie said no, that it was part of their fees. Heather  
7 asked when he was used in other towns if he had been a voting member and he had. Ben thought  
8 Trevor would have the most in-depth knowledge of law enforcement in Vermont at the current  
9 moment. It was nothing they needed to vote on today, but Julie wanted to let them know the  
10 process.

11 Julie said they could advertise and see who they get. Lee asked if it would be the Selectboard who  
12 appoints the committee and Julie didn't know. It was up to the town. She noted that in Springfield,  
13 they weren't involved at all and in Hartford, they had very little Selectboard input. The oral board  
14 isn't appointed but is volunteers. Julie didn't think they had a controversial Selectboard, and they  
15 were united on what they were looking for and where they were headed. Heather said it was a huge  
16 position for the town and they wanted more community involvement and thought it was important  
17 who was on the selection committee.

18 Jeff asked if there would be a contract. Julie said there would be a contract and it would likely be  
19 2 or 3 years.

20 Leigh liked that people could be involved and ask questions. Arne thought the community response  
21 would be interesting and would tell them a lot about the involvement citizens want.

22 Arne thought it was looking like a 7-member oral board and one or two Selectboard members?  
23 Heather thought it would depend on who the second member would bump off the competition. If  
24 there wasn't a great deal of public interest, she thought two Selectboard members would be fine.  
25 Arne suggested they keep it at one for now and if it seemed like they may need a second to help  
26 because there aren't enough people interested. Leigh added if there was a deep interest from  
27 another Selectboard member. Lee said the Town Manager has jurisdiction, but the Selectboard is  
28 right there, and it made sense to him to have the Selectboard have a significant amount of input in  
29 the process and the selection of the final candidate. He wanted to think about it more about what  
30 the number should be. He was concerned that there would be a selection they are ultimately  
31 responsible for but didn't have the input not that he didn't trust the committee but wanted to make  
32 sure they were thinking clearly about how much input they should have. Heather agreed. Arne said  
33 they would discuss it in the future after the advertising and everything gets rolling. Heather said  
34 they are all unique and the board has had a lot of input and understands the importance of the role  
35 and thought for the community policing it would be better for the community to know they are  
36 supporting Julie in the process. Arne thought the assessment would help a lot and guide them  
37 where they want to go.

38 Arne asked for any other comments or concerns and there were none.

### 39 **Agenda Item 5, Financial Update**

40 Julie said for fuel lines they were already at 100% spent and they were halfway through the year.  
41 The end of the third quarter would tell them where they're headed. Department heads are cutting  
42 spending in areas that make sense. She wasn't sure how they wouldn't end in a deficit for 2022  
43 but they were doing everything they can to not or be as low as they can. She is starting the work

1 on building the 2023 budget. She didn't think going from 22 to 23 without an increase would be  
2 possible given the current times. She questioned what they will view as acceptable. The general  
3 fund is holding but what will happen in the next half. Tax bills went out in July. Tax collection is  
4 down. Normally by now they would have collected about \$200,000 more than they have at this  
5 point. It could be due to several things such as people are just waiting to pay closer to the due date.  
6 She wasn't nervous about it, but they watch it daily. She hoped they didn't end up with a large  
7 delinquency rate come September 15<sup>th</sup>. There wasn't much they could do about it at this point.  
8 With the Homeowner Assistance program through the state that's helping with delinquent taxes  
9 and mortgage payments, they've had a lot of collection on some very large delinquencies which  
10 has been great. Delinquency is lower than it's ever been. They are below \$200,000 which is great,  
11 but their current collections are down.

12 Jeff thought a lot had to do with people worried about home heating this year. Julie thought people  
13 were just being cautious. She hasn't received any calls from people unable to pay. Banks that  
14 would normally have paid by now from their escrow accounts have also not paid.

15 Water and sewer budgets are steady, along with revenue. Pump repair that has been long overdue  
16 is getting completed. Having Wayne Wickens in water and sewer and being a master electrician  
17 has served them well. A lot of stuff is getting done that would have been very expensive to have  
18 done. Having him and the addition of Steve on staff has been amazing.

19 Jeff said they had just upgraded their Pleasant Brook pump station. They had to wait for parts, so  
20 it took a while. They didn't change pumps but updated some of the conduit. In is set for future  
21 expansion. If someone else had updated it, it would have cost \$20,000 more. Jeff noted they just  
22 put a pump in at First Avenue and it cost them \$13,500 for a rebuilt pump. Five or six years ago it  
23 was the price of a new pump. The price of a new pump now is almost \$24,000. He believes in  
24 rebuilding because the older stuff holds up better. Arne thought he was a great asset to have. Jeff  
25 agreed. Heather agreed with Julie that it was hard to tell. Next quarter they would start seeing a  
26 better picture. Arne noted that people got a break this year due to the education budget. He thought  
27 we would be starting off at a better place than last year.

28 Arne asked if there were any questions or comments and there were none.

#### 29 **Agenda Item 6, Public Safety Building/Town Garage Cost Overruns**

30 Julie said they were wrapping up projects and the town garage had a little bit more to be done.  
31 They were working though punch list items. They've known right along that there would be cost  
32 overruns. She thought it was somewhere around the \$250,000 mark for both buildings combined,  
33 which is what they thought partly due to COVID and in addition, things were added to the highway  
34 garage while it was under repair. Julie wanted to know how they wanted to handle the cost overrun.  
35 They could borrow, pay it back through capital, or use ARPA funds. She and Arne had spoken the  
36 other day and it would fit the intent of the ARPA funds and there would still be a big chunk left in  
37 the ARPA funds. They would not decide until Julie knew the final number. Arne said it was  
38 directly related to what was going on and the monies were originally allocated for something like  
39 that and then it was broadened. It was something to consider. Jeff asked if paving the town garage  
40 was part of the cost overruns. Julie said no that it was a bond they did separate of this project. Jeff  
41 thought having a clean paved driveway would be helpful. Julie said they had received the price  
42 and it came in just under \$100,000 to pave. Ben was happy to discuss it in the future, but he would  
43 rather they use the ARPA funds to cover it as opposed to borrowing. Lee agreed. Arne said the  
44 consensus of the board seemed to be heading in that direction but once they got the final number,

1 they could decide. It would still leave \$600,000.

2 Heather asked where they were on the solar project. Lee said he and Julie had spoken with Green  
3 Lantern and were dancing around each other as far as the price. The current contract requires an  
4 assessment from an independent third party. They couldn't find anyone and when they finally did,  
5 Julie suggested them to Green Lantern who said maybe they didn't need an assessment. They sent  
6 them a model that is a huge spreadsheet and Lee was trying to go through it in his spare time to try  
7 to understand it. Lee said they were anticipating a significant amount of money and based on their  
8 model, they came up with a number. Lee said they were still trying to work through it. He  
9 suggested to Julie that they have a phone call with the people who understand the spreadsheet  
10 because it's very complicated. Lee said when he changed the deratement factor where it needed to  
11 be changed, it didn't change the bottom line, so he wanted to make sure he understood their  
12 assumptions. Heather thought it may be it worth it to get an assessment rather than save the money  
13 by not doing an assessment and then pay twelve times what they would have for them. Lee said  
14 the valuation they had in the contract that they could have purchased at year 7 was a shade under  
15 a million dollars. Lee wondered how it increased in value over that amount of time because energy  
16 costs hadn't increased that much. That made him question how they arrived at the numbers they  
17 had. Heather wondered if they should spend the ARPA on the cost overrun or the solar panels. Lee  
18 didn't want to give up on it because it would be a huge benefit to Chester to have all their energy  
19 costs paid for and then some as it was a 750-kilowatt system which meant it made about 925,000  
20 kilowatt hours a year. Their allocation from this model was around 32%. They aren't taking the  
21 majority of the power at present. If they bought it and had access to all the power, they would have  
22 more than enough to run the town and then some to sell. They needed to figure out if they could  
23 buy it and then be set for their energy needs for 40 or 50 years. If they make their own electricity,  
24 they would be prebuying it for the next 40 or 50 years. Heather agreed there were other benefits  
25 from using solar. Arne said it would make Chester a green town. Jeff said he has solar and has  
26 never regretted it. His bill is \$8 or \$10 a month for administration. He remembered there being an  
27 issue about the contract when it was installed. Jeff asked if the price was set at that time for them  
28 to purchase it in 7 years. Lee said there was a recommended price and that's what they were  
29 banking it would be worth after seven years, but the contract says they will get an independent  
30 assessment of the value and that's what they're going to use to negotiate the purchase. It would be  
31 discussed at the September 7<sup>th</sup> meeting. Arne thanked Lee for all his work on it.

32 It was decided they should do the assessment anyway as they had previously approved the  
33 assessment being done. Julie would reach out to Mike Gammal to do the assessment.

#### 34 **Agenda Item 8, New Business/Next Agenda**

35 Ben noted that he had heard AFG awards were coming out. Julie said they were and said they have  
36 never had this happen, but they had not received a rejection and Senator Sanders' office had called  
37 and asked for their information, so it was likely they received an award. Their two applications  
38 were for a compressor system and a new tanker truck. She was hopeful. Everyone agreed it was  
39 very exciting.

40 Ben asked if they would have a grand opening of the town garage and Julie said they would when  
41 it was done, which she hoped was in October. Heather asked if they wanted to all attend the town  
42 fair. Julie is on the board and last year she acted as their voting member, and she would be there.  
43 She could get them the other tracks and thought there may be something they would be interested  
44 in. It would be held on a Thursday and Friday.

**Agenda Item 9, Adjourn**

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- 2 Lee moved and Heather seconded to adjourn the meeting. A vote was taken, and the motion passed
- 3 unanimously, and the meeting was adjourned at 7:43 p.m.

DRAFT