

1 **TOWN OF CHESTER**
2 **PLANNING COMMISSION**
3 **August 22, 2022, Minutes**

4
5 **Commission Members Present:** Peter Hudkins, Cathy Hasbrouck, Barre Pinske, Tim Roper, and
6 Hugh Quinn at Town Hall.

7
8 **Staff Present:** Preston Bristow, Zoning Administrator/Town Planner, at Town Hall; and Susan
9 Bailey, Recording Secretary, via Zoom.

10
11 **Citizens Present:** Bill Lindsay, Arne Jonynas, Gene Czarnecki, Kathy Giurtino, Lori Quinn, and
12 Ian Montgomery at Town Hall; Leigh Dakin, Jen R., The Chester Telegraph, Joy Slaughter, Cara
13 Philbin, and M.H. via Zoom.

14 **Call to Order**

15
16 Chair Hugh Quinn called the meeting to order at 6:29 p.m.

17
18 **Decisions Made:**

- 19
 - The Short-Term Rental Ordinance was finalized and approved for forwarding to the
 - 20 Selectboard.
 - 21 • The next meeting will be held on September 6th, if available, with a backup date of
 - 22 September 12th due to the Labor Day holiday.

23 **Action Items:**

- 24
 - Tim will present a final draft of the community survey for approval to the next meeting.

25
26 **Agenda Item 1, Add or Delete Items on the Agenda, if necessary.**

27
28 None.

29
30 **Agenda Item 2, Review and Approve Minutes from August 1, 2022, meeting**

31
32 Tim moved and Hugh seconded to review and approve the August 1, 2022, meeting minutes and
33 Cathy seconded the motion. Tim noted on page 1, line 28 it should read Polly Montgomery and
34 not Molly Montgomery. A vote was taken, and the motion carried, and the minutes were approved.

35
36 **Agenda Item 3, Citizens Comments**

37
38 There were no citizens comments.

39
40 **Agenda Item 4, Finalize the Updated Draft Short Term Rental Ordinance**

41
42 Preston had tried to address the comments from the last meeting with the changes he made to the
43 ordinance. The previous version had used whole or partial rental and he had replaced it with hosted
44 and unhosted. There was a question about accessory dwelling units and cabins and is now clear if
45 the host lives on the premises, an accessory dwelling or cabin is treated as hosted. If the host

1 doesn't, then an accessory dwelling or cabin is unhosted. There had been confusion about group
2 of rooms so Preston changed the definition to eliminate any confusion. The only other thing
3 changed was fees, \$150 for hosted and \$300 for unhosted because hosted was more in keeping
4 with community values than unhosted. Preston had previously pulled the waiver fees and penalties
5 from his hometown, Woodstock's document. He has since gotten two tables which were provided
6 by the company, Host Compliance, which they felt was more consistent nationwide. He had been
7 asked to explain what a waiver fee was. A penalty is something a court imposes. If someone is in
8 violation, you write a municipal ticket and bring them to the judicial bureau and the court charges
9 a penalty. It's nicer for the town and for Preston, as administrator, if someone has a violation, to
10 offer them to comply, and do a waiver fee in lieu of a civil penalty. It's less money and something
11 the town can collect and be done with it. It is a way to make it easier to enforce. Preston would
12 likely write a letter letting them know they were in violation and in lieu of a civil penalty, they pay
13 the waiver amount. Preston didn't think he had made any other changes except what they would
14 call scrivener's changes.

15
16 Barre thought it was great they had Preston and the others agreed. Preston said they had a unique
17 administrator in that he had done this before. Barre thought it was well written and made sense.
18 He also read Hugh's letter. He thought their primary concern which they weren't addressing was
19 if a corporation came to town and bought a bunch of buildings. He wondered if the same principal
20 for formula businesses not coming to town could be applied to this and would it cover Marriott or
21 another corporation buying up houses. He knew he was making a leap and getting into another
22 topic, but he thought they weren't addressing the big problem while causing inconvenience for
23 people. Preston agreed with Barre that there was a lot of concern and hadn't seen yet how to do it.
24 He said many people own their land as LLCs and then they say they don't like foreign owners, but
25 they can find a U.S. address. He thought the crawl walk run approach was to start the program and
26 then as they find out the problems, figure out how to deal with them. Barre thought if there was
27 language that said it was their sole business to buy up properties. Preston said they did something
28 similar for formula business, but he wasn't sure how to do it.

29
30 Hugh thought Marriott wasn't buying the properties but wanted to be the broker. In the reading
31 Hugh had done, Marriott wasn't owning the properties and they were still owned by individuals.
32 Marriott was just the agency that facilitates the rental process. Barre said some companies are
33 putting an Airbnb concept in their portfolio where they'll buy up places and run them as a business.
34 The profitability is there compared to a traditional rental. He was just kicking the can around. If
35 they were going to be forward thinking, they needed to figure it out. Hugh said they should start
36 small but will provide the Selectboard with other information they found about other regulations
37 they've seen in Vermont or countrywide so they have information they can use should they need
38 to tweak the ordinance going forward they won't be starting at ground zero. He suggested to keep
39 it basic but arm the Selectboard with additional options should they need to be considered going
40 forward. He thought that would be a good compromise before they had the basic information of
41 what was going on in Chester.

42
43 Gene Czarnecki of Chester had heard of nationwide companies buying properties because it's a
44 profitable business. He was thinking there could be a limit of no more than 2 properties in town
45 by the same owner and then they wouldn't buy 10 properties. Hugh said in the attachment that will
46 go to the Selectboard outlines different strategies and that one was included.

1
2 Kathy Giurtino appreciated what they were saying but her concern was if some limits aren't put up
3 in the beginning, they may have legal fights down the road. A lot was said at the last meeting about
4 the tourists that come into the short-term rentals. She thought they may use them as a base and
5 don't necessarily spend all their money in Chester but go to Woodstock, Quechee, Grafton,
6 Weston, and Ludlow if it's in the winter. If it's a hosted short-term rental, the owner is here using
7 the hardware store, Erskine's, Benny's, getting their hair cut, and things the tourist isn't doing.
8 You would get the owner going to businesses in town, as well as the tourist, and they would likely
9 be directing the tourist to different things in town. At the last meeting, it was realized the number
10 of short-term rentals had increased by 50% over the prior year. It's now 80. If it increases another
11 50% this year, we're now up to 120. She wondered at what point do we talk about setting a limit.
12 She thought it was only the unhosted that needed a limit imposed because they are empty houses.
13 It was talked about capping it at 10% and she questioned whether they wanted more than 10% of
14 the houses in Chester empty. She felt not putting a cap on it now was a mistake. It could always
15 be raised later if it was okay. She thought waiting to put a cap on it would result in a fight. She
16 saw it as an ounce of prevention was worth a pound of cure. She thought everything looked good
17 in the draft except there was nothing about capping unhosted.

18
19 Barre knew of 3 houses on the road within 3 blocks that are owned by people who aren't here all
20 the time. He thought there were economic challenges they don't realize exist because it's bustling
21 when they're here. He agreed with Kathy that it was great if people rented out a room. He also
22 thought if we could get more affordable housing in town, this issue would be less of a factor. It
23 was a challenge to balance it out.

24
25 Hugh noted the draft was a recommendation to the Selectboard and as a body, the Planning
26 Commission doesn't get to decide whether it gets approved or not or whether the ordinance is
27 exactly right for Chester. The process is they take their best shot at what they think is a good
28 baseline to begin, it goes to the Selectboard and the Selectboard will likely engage the community
29 to get some feedback and ultimately, they will make the decision whether the ordinance is passed
30 or will say they need to do more or do less. He thought their primary objective to get something to
31 the Selectboard to get the ball rolling and start collecting some more community feedback. Hugh
32 thought the Selectboard may have more traction than the Planning Commission as more citizens
33 attend their meetings. Hugh thought once it got to the next level the landscape would change to
34 either leave it the way it is or collect the data and understand what's happening in Chester. He said
35 they will provide the list of additional regulation options that could be pursued. He didn't think
36 any of the regulation options were a slam dunk. It was an opinion of why they were tending to stay
37 with the lighter weight crawl, walk, run approach.

38
39 Cathy asked if their goal tonight was to make a final recommendation about the ordinance and
40 Hugh said it was. She thought the discussion about who could operate a short-term rental may be
41 appropriate in the zoning regulations rather than an ordinance. Hugh said the goal was the draft
42 ordinance as it stood was pretty close to what they all had been discussing about not putting a lot
43 of regulation upfront and understanding what it looks like in Chester and collecting the data. He
44 said there was a whole process associated with understanding where the short-term rentals are and
45 the pattern of use that they have. He said that was the basic proposal along with some health and
46 safety related matters. Everything else that is a higher level of regulation would just be a reference

1 for the Selectboard to have in their back pocket if they need to understand what else is happening
2 in Vermont and around the country because they've done a fair amount of research about what's
3 happening and put it down on paper so the Selectboard should benefit from that. His goal for today
4 was to decide on the short-term rental ordinance draft as it's written and take a vote on whether
5 it's ready to go to the Selectboard for their consideration.

6
7 Barre asked if the process of moving forward hinged on the consulting company so they could get
8 the data. His only problem with it is that the fees aren't that great. If they're not really putting any
9 teeth in anything and creating hurdles. He wondered if hiring the consultant company was part of
10 what was going to make it work and get their other data and Hugh said it was. He asked if the
11 Selectboard was aware of it and Hugh said they were. Barre did think it was written in their formal
12 minutes that it was part of the deal, but it was part of the deal. Hugh thought there was reference
13 to it in the cover letter to the Selectboard, but the idea was if you wanted to have an ordinance that
14 could be enforced, you could do all that work by hand and that work would fall on people like
15 Preston and it's probably not feasible or manageable to do that level of work as an individual so
16 you need tools and software to get the job done so they shared it as part of the proposal. At the end
17 of the day, it doesn't affect the ordinance in terms of its intent but would only affect how easy it
18 was to enforce. If they don't have the tools, enforcement would be difficult and one might ask, if
19 you have an ordinance you can't enforce, is it really meaningful?

20
21 Ian Montgomery of North Street thanked Preston and the board for getting it in writing. They had
22 talked about the number of short-term rentals, and it was a broad figure of 8% but there was no
23 distinction in that figure between hosted and unhosted. Hugh said in the information they had
24 received it was over 90% unhosted. Ian said that was a significant issue and that's why people like
25 Kathy and himself, and he assumed Barre, had a concern about an ever-expanding number of
26 unhosted rentals coming in and taking over the housing stock. Even though he jokingly referred to
27 someone that Chester was a retirement community, he wasn't sure they wanted to be. On public
28 radio last week, they said the number one state in the country where people have the most equity
29 in their homes is Vermont. He spent 9 months living in Grafton while he was working on his house
30 and Grafton has 600 year-round residents. The other homes are entirely vacation homes. He
31 thought it was frightening. It was interesting and fun being part of the 600 all through winter. He
32 wasn't sure he liked Grafton other than in the wintertime. He suggested that some of the comments
33 be included in an advisory letter. Barre said there would be a public forum with the Selectboard
34 and could address all his concerns with them. Barre said Hugh was the Chair and should speak to
35 it. Tim said they would have access to their minutes if they chose to look at them. Barre thought
36 anyone who had concern should address the Selectboard with their concerns. Barre said, as Hugh
37 had stated, they are making the recommendation but ultimately, it's up to the Selectboard. Ian
38 thought it was a great start and commended them for it and was 100% behind it. Barre thought
39 they were all on the same page. Barre said once it was in place, they could add to it if necessary.
40 He said if the company comes in, there would be actual statistics they could work with, and they
41 would have real knowledge of what was going on. They would be working with facts. Peter thought
42 it would be helpful to go through the table because they were the basic options available, and it
43 was being accompanied by a letter to the Selectboard. He suggested they go through it with the
44 people in attendance to see if it made sense.

45

1 Lori Quinn said she was related to Hugh and was there to speak about the impact on them as
2 residents. In the last 3 years she had been personally affected by short-term rentals in their small,
3 shared subdivision with a shared driveway. At the time, 2 of the 3 became short-term rentals. One
4 was out of state, and neither are hosted. There was a resident living there full-time. The other was
5 a weekender and second homeowner. A lot of the impact they felt began during COVID. What
6 they found was during COVID, it was upsetting to see all the out of state people and visitors even
7 though the state was shut down. They were put in an uncomfortable position having to speak with
8 the landlords of the homes about it. They have felt the negative impact and still are in a position
9 of no recourse of what happens in their backyard which is often noise, parties, and their driveway
10 getting blocked by a car in the winter and police coming. She didn't know if Fire had showed up,
11 but they heard about embers being left at a fireplace and fortunately a housekeeper found them.
12 She looked forward to other residents expressing how they've been impacted. She knew they're
13 not the only ones who had been negatively impacted. She understood a real plus with getting the
14 software to monitor was, as neighbors, they would no longer be the bad guy and have their
15 relationship with their neighbors degraded. There will be a hotline that can be called when there's
16 an issue. They have come to accept the short-term rentals are there. They would love to see the
17 negative impact taken care of. She was proud of the members for stepping forward to address the
18 issue and for doing it well and with intelligence. She was looking forward to more people coming
19 out and letting them know how they've been impacted.

20
21 Hugh said one resident expressed concern that it was a burdensome regulation and would have a
22 negative impact on the property owner. They had a question about the ordinance because it states
23 if they rent out their property for less than 14 days a year, it doesn't constitute a short-term rental.
24 But at the same time, this property owner advertises their property on VRBO. Her question was if
25 she advertises on VRBO and only rents it out for less than 14 days a year, is she considered a short-
26 term rental owner and would she have to register her property? Hugh thought the answer was no
27 if it was less than 14 days a year.

28
29 Preston said any renting for 14 days or less a year is not a short-term rental. When he was in
30 Killington, they had maybe a dozen people who would rent their house for two weeks during
31 Christmas and charge a very high rate. They did advertise it, so they informed the monitoring
32 company to leave them alone unless it appeared they had more rentals than 14 days per year.

33
34 Tim asked if it made sense to finish that and Hugh said it did make sense to see if there was any
35 additional feedback on the proposed ordinance itself because that was the thing that mattered at
36 the end of the day.

37
38 Tim asked about Section 3a that defined a host as a person who operated a short-term rental. The
39 host may be the property owner or a tenant. Tim asked if the host could be someone other than the
40 owner or tenant, such as a management company or a local designee. Preston said the older drafts
41 said the host could be a management company but when they started defining hosted and unhosted,
42 it didn't make sense, so he changed it. Then he later included under item C2 on page 2 language
43 that recognized a property management company could be the contact number. Tim asked if the
44 challenge was because they were defining hosted and unhosted. Preston agreed and Tim said it
45 made sense.

46

1 Ian Montgomery said when they lived in Grafton, they lived in a guest house on a property that
2 they managed on behalf of an out of state owner as a short-term rental so he thought this would
3 count as hosted. Barre and Hugh agreed. Barre has a friend who is doing it. They're a tenant in the
4 house and when they rent it out, they go stay with their parents. Part of their job is to clean and
5 maintain the property and interact with the guests.

6
7 Kathy Giurtino made a comment from the audience but was not captured over the microphone.
8 Shawn Cunningham noted this.

9
10 Preston said policy goal was to make it easier for people to be residents.

11
12 Tim wanted to summarize Kathy's comment for Shawn Cunningham who wanted to capture it.
13 Tim said she was saying if someone moved out of the house to allow a short-term renter in the
14 house, it was no longer a hosted rental and that's what Preston was addressing. He hoped that
15 helped Shawn. Tim thought Ian's example may help if there were two or more dwellings on a lot,
16 it may incentivize having someone there as a long-term renter. He saw it as a positive. Hugh
17 agreed. Barre had spoken with someone who had property here and lived elsewhere and he
18 suggested that to them. Tim noted under C5, posting of the contact information as required by 18
19 V.S.A. § 4467. He understood that they may not want to define outside of the statute because it
20 could change but he wondered if it would be a benefit of someone reading the ordinance to actually
21 have the basics of what's required there. He questioned how it would be handled. Preston said it
22 would either be a handout or when the management company has the application available, the
23 option is on the form to check off the necessary parts and sign. Preston admitted it said it had to
24 be posted in the room, but he knew what the form looked like, and it asked for name, address,
25 phone number, and the form the state uses questions whether you have CO2 detectors and fire
26 extinguishers, and it asks where the nearest fire station is and similar things. Tim confirmed with
27 Preston that the purpose to post it was so the renter would know who to contact if they had issues.
28 Tim just wanted to make sure owners or hosts were clear what needed to be posted on the property.
29 Preston encouraged not getting too specific in the bylaw but just trust that they would make that
30 information clear to people. Preston said he and his wife had used Airbnbs before and sometimes
31 there are questions when you arrive, such as what to do with the trash or if the driveway is shared
32 with the next unit, which space is yours? Preston said there were instances where people are in a
33 short-term rental and need to call 911 and don't know where they are. Posting these items, such as
34 where you are, next to the phone would help. Tim thought it would be good to do everything they
35 could to encourage having the stuff posted because both VRBO and Airbnb frequently don't have
36 the information posted.

37
38 Hugh went through attachment, Short-Term Rental Regulation Landscape, that would accompany
39 the cover letter to the Selectboard. The attachment outlined some of the competing objectives of
40 short-term rentals and why they're good for the community but why they need to be regulated in
41 some way and then it just lists the different sorts of things based upon research by looking around
42 the country and other towns in Vermont to see what is happening. It was a high-level summary of
43 some of the things they've seen. Peter thought they should call out the first option as the baseline.
44 Hugh agreed. Tim said suggested adding as proposed and Hugh said he would amend it.

1 Tim had shared an interesting article with Hugh from the Vermont Digger about Woodstock. It
2 was an incentive and not a regulation. Woodstock is proposing to provide homeowners \$10,000 if
3 they build or refurbish an accessory dwelling unit on their property and make it available for a
4 long-term rental for three years. Another aspect was different incentives. One was \$3,000 and one
5 was \$7,000 for converting a short-term rental into a long-term rental. The \$3,000 was for one year
6 and \$7,000 was two years, he thought. Preston added it was Woodstock's own money which they
7 get by imposing a 1% options tax. For lodging, food, and alcohol, they charge an extra 1% which
8 is allowed by the State. Chester could choose to levy the 1% option tax as well. Woodstock
9 generates \$200,000 to \$300,000 annually from that tax, which is supported by the merchants
10 because the bulk of it is used to support the town. They are using money from that fund for the
11 long-term rental incentive as opposed to a state program. Hugh proposed adding the information
12 about Woodstock to the attachment as another vehicle before it goes to the Selectboard.
13

14 Peter thought, with respect to short-term rental capacity under impact assessment, there was
15 feasibility of a lottery system. He tried to compare it to other things. A lot of towns have a limited
16 number of liquor licenses. If you had a limited number, you wouldn't build another pub. He
17 thought by the time you make an Airbnb; Peter mentioned his parents' house which he's trying to
18 hang onto that is used by family, he's done everything for that, and the lottery number doesn't
19 come up, he didn't think it made a lot of sense. Hugh said it may not make sense but said he was
20 just sharing what he read and that it was what San Diego does. He wasn't saying they should do it
21 but sharing other towns around the country have used a lottery system for capacity. Barre thought
22 that was the hard part because the goal was not to create hardships but when you're trying to
23 regulate something because there's a cause and affect and the affect has a negative impact on
24 everyone, then there's a certain number of hardships someone needs to absorb. He thought they
25 were all clear that the bigger problem they want to solve has to do with the unhosted places. Barre
26 thought Peter's property would be considered hosted. Peter wasn't sure because they don't live on
27 the parcel, and it was in a corporation's name. Barre said it was a family property. Peter wondered
28 how to tell them apart. Peter thought he would pay the higher rate because that's where it applied.
29 He didn't think he should be excused because everyone knows him in town. Barre said ultimately
30 the corporation was a legal structure for whatever benefit he wanted but when it came down to it,
31 it was still a family dwelling that turned into a corporate thing because of laws. He didn't know if
32 it needed to be defined. It was different than Marriott buying it. Just because it's in a corporate
33 legal structure doesn't mean it's owned by a bigger corporation. A donut shop might be in a
34 corporation but its not a formula business like Dunkin' Donuts and wouldn't fall under a formula
35 business. All formula businesses are corporations and because he opens a donut shop doesn't make
36 it a formula business. Cathy said it would be hard to invent a rule to help situations like Peter's
37 where family lives in town, they're right there, but they don't live on the property. They could
38 modify the capacity limit to apply only to unhosted. Hugh thought many of them would be for
39 unhosted. Hugh shared that the attachment was general research and was not vetted. If anyone had
40 any interest in pursuing any of the other options, there would be a fair amount of work to craft it
41 properly and Preston knew how much work it would take so it could meaningful and enforceable.
42 Hugh said generally when it was put together, most of the things that look like a regulation were
43 intended for unhosted because they are trying to not penalize those who are living on their property
44 and short-term renting part of their property to make ends meet. Most of the things that look like
45 they will create hardship are generally for unhosted. They are learning there would be so much
46 more work to be done if they wanted to implement one of these, so they thought the best approach

1 was to provide the information in the form of a reference document in case they need to investigate
2 any of them further. Hugh said they don't know the right level of regulation yet, so the proposal is
3 to keep it simple and figure out what they're doing. If it's not regulated enough, there will be
4 additional discussions to pick something off the list that makes sense and then do the work to make
5 it meaningful and enforceable. Tim asked if it was just informative for the Selectboard, and Hugh
6 said it was. They were not recommendations. Hugh said the first one was the essence of the current
7 draft ordinance and everything after that was just information. He thanked Peter for bringing
8 attention to that.

9
10 Barre moved and Tim seconded a motion to forward it to the Selectboard. Hugh asked for all in
11 favor of forwarding the draft short-term rental ordinance, along with the cover letter and reference
12 document, to the Selectboard for its consideration. Tim suggested Barre amend his motion to say
13 as adjusted on the regulation options to include as proposed. Tim asked if that was the only thing
14 they were changing in any of it. Peter said Hugh's letter needed to say the costs were for the
15 consultant, the reason they're charging is the cost of the consultant. Hugh noted that the last
16 sentence of the letter said the administration of the ordinance could be budget neutral through
17 charging of annual fees and contracting of the short-term rental compliance monitoring provider.
18 That was the software. Cathy asked Arne Jonynas, who was in attendance, if he would explain the
19 meaning of the last sentence to the Selectboard. Arne said he would and that he thought it was a
20 great start and gave the board something to work with. Arne also thought it would help with the
21 conversation with the town for the warned meetings and hearings that would follow with it. Arne
22 thought the list of other items for informational purposes, but it was directly related to how far
23 they wanted to take the issue and options to pursue it further either making it more strict or less
24 strict. Arne thought the work they did was great. He was hearing from a lot of people that the town
25 was changing so fast and so quickly and a lot of it was because of housing, the availability and
26 affordability of it, and a lot of issues with what they were trying to address with the ordinance.
27 Arne suggested hosted on premises or hosted in town. Tim saw the problem where someone could
28 buy a place and start buying up properties opening the door for someone to make their full-time
29 living off buying properties and renting them only short-term. Arne said when there's a monetary
30 amount associated with ordinances, such as a junkyard or dog ordinances, it's hard to collect. He
31 wasn't saying they shouldn't have it but was thinking about the process to enforce items like it.
32 Preston agreed but asked him to imagine a bylaw that had no enforcement mechanism at all. People
33 would ignore it. It's there for the nuclear option when someone is being a bad player and you're
34 willing to spend the legal dollars and court time to carry it out. Arne said a lot of their ordinances
35 are like that and they often get tacked onto the title so when it changes hands you have to catch up
36 with all the loose ends. Preston said he did mention that they include the property owner must
37 provide their date of birth, driver's license, and military status because that's what the court wants
38 on the municipal ticket. It seems intrusive but he put an explanation that the information is needed
39 to enforce a municipal complaint. They don't usually have that option for things like a junk
40 ordinance but here, where they actively must apply, we can ask for the information. He thought it
41 may be a little easier to enforce. Hugh thought, unlike other ordinances, the belief is the annual
42 registration fee of either \$150 or \$300 represents less than 1% of the amount of revenue short-term
43 rental brings in in a year. It will be hard to argue a hardship with respect to the annual registration
44 fee. As long as they register and follow the rules, the penalties don't really apply. Arne expected
45 some interesting conversations with the rest of the Selectboard members and the town when it
46 comes down to making some decision on it. He thanked them for their work.

1
2 Hugh said they were back to Barre possibly amending his motion to include the fact he will make
3 an update to it. Barre and Tim agreed to the change. A vote was taken, and the motion passed
4 unanimously.

5
6 Barre wanted to thank the citizens, he himself having been on that side of the fence and nobody
7 ever listened to him. Peter thanked Kathy for her research and said he and she had talked a couple
8 days on her porch. She was the one who pointed out hosted and unhosted and had done a lot of
9 research that he was able to bring forward and share with Preston and the rest of the board. Barre
10 mentioned that Kathy had come to a meeting, and the video wasn't working, and they had a little
11 chat and he had suggested any effort they would be grateful for. He thanked her for doing her
12 homework. Hugh told everyone they should stay plugged in and watch the Selectboard agenda.

13 14 **Agenda Item 5, Draft Community Survey Review and Next Steps**

15
16 Hugh turned the meeting over to Tim who was glad they finally had an opportunity to discuss it.
17 It was a second draft he had dated August 1st because it was the meeting, he had hoped they would
18 review it, but it got pushed back understandably. The amendments were based on their discussion
19 of the first draft so some of the things that were asked then were to limit to either 3 or 5 as the
20 number of items that someone would check off. He had made them 3 max and thought it was a
21 good suggestion and would make it easier to sort the data and take the survey. He pointed out there
22 was one question that seemed redundant. At the bottom of page 2 it asked, "Which you would
23 want to see more of in the rural areas of Chester?" and then at the bottom of page 4, "Which of the
24 following recreational opportunities do you think would be beneficial to our town?". Tim said they
25 were two different questions. He was happy to hear feedback. His goal was to mail it out to
26 property owners and residents from the voter rolls or the tax rolls. He asked Cathy where they
27 would get the addresses to mail them. Cathy thought they had used the tax rolls, but the voter rolls
28 would be much more democratic. Tim thought they would reach more people. Cathy wondered if
29 they could use the voter rolls and would find out. Tim said they had discussed also putting online
30 with SurveyMonkey or some other free or low cost online survey. His only objection to it initially
31 was he read where it had skewed data feedback and the rest of the commission didn't see that as
32 an issue here. Tim wanted to see it move forward and feedback was welcome.

33
34 Bill Lindsay believed he had raised the question about adding not only affordable housing but
35 senior housing. Tim said from Bill's suggestion, it was the second question on page 4, "includes
36 accessory dwelling units, assisted living facilities, independent living, senior developments." Bill
37 thanked Tim and Tim thanked Bill for his good suggestion.

38
39 Barre saw where Tim was going with it and the concepts of what people may want were kind of
40 lumped together. He saw arts and culture in one area where it referenced Village of Chester Art
41 Studios and Galleries. Tim said it showed up twice and Barre asked where. From Barre's
42 perspective, he thought the town would be more vital with more arts and culture. With respect to
43 the question, "Do you believe Chester should try for the following commercial activities:" he
44 wondered if arts and culture would apply there. He questioned for the top three in short-term
45 things they want. It seemed to him that arts and culture was like the streams and forests, and he
46 wondered if it wasn't a choice and people wanted it, they wouldn't know. If arts and culture was

1 only in one spot but the others were in more spots, would they outweigh the survey when arts and
2 culture might be something people want that they might not hear about? Tim asked Barre if he
3 wanted to see arts and culture added to other places. Barre thought if they would agree it would fit
4 in the other categories, to have it recognized as something people value, it would be added. He
5 was just trying to give it an opportunity to be there because if it wasn't an option for people to
6 choose, they couldn't and then they wouldn't know if it was wanted. Tim wasn't opposed to it.
7 Lori Quinn stated it was on page 4 all by itself as a question. Barre said it didn't compare to
8 something else. Tim proposed changing the question to, "Which opportunities for arts, culture, and
9 entertainment would you like to see in Chester?" Barre wished that there would be a lot of people
10 in town hoping for arts and culture and the survey would show that and therefore they would put
11 more effort into it because they do. He just wanted to make sure it was an option in enough places
12 so it could be recognized and reflected. He wasn't trying to create more work for Tim. Tim
13 proposed changing the question on page 4 from, "Would you like to see more opportunities for
14 seeing arts, culture, and entertainment in Chester?" to "Which of the following opportunities
15 related to arts, culture, and entertainment would you like to see in Chester?" and then list them.
16 Barre suggested doing yes or no first and then adding the list. That way they would know whether
17 they wanted arts and culture. On second thought, he decided maybe it was fine there. Tim
18 suggested adding to the question "such as" and then examples like film festivals, live theater,
19 dance, music performances, fairs were suggested.

20
21 Peter thought arts and entertainment should be added as a general category on page 1 under the
22 question, "Which of the top three are important to you?" Hugh agreed. Tim said he could do that.
23 Barre agreed with Peter. Barre had marked it on the top 3, short-term plus minus 5 years as arts
24 and culture, he put it under the top 3, long-term 25 to 30 years as arts and culture and he put it
25 under top 3 strive for the following commercial activities on the bottom as arts and culture. Tim
26 noted the top 3 for longer term were broader. Tim thought it fit great on the short-term. Barre said
27 Tim had it as a specific question and he was happy with that. Tim said he would add some examples
28 such as film festivals, live theater, musical performances, and art shows.

29
30 Kathy Giurtino took the survey and found herself wanting to not just check the box but also rate
31 them. Tim said the first draft was set up that way and they discussed it briefly and thought it might
32 be an obstacle to getting complete surveys and he also said it had top 5 and that may have been
33 more of an obstacle. Hugh thought there was a happy medium. He agreed with ranking them but
34 if he asked Kathy to rank 1 through 15, she would likely opt for the top 3. Kathy agreed. She said
35 she would love to see art shows but there was no gallery. She thought the auditorium at town hall
36 would be great if they could use it. She said they were having one in November at the U.U. Church.
37 She thought they needed more venues. Barre said that was part of his goal with the survey. He
38 thought they would be in line for some grant money for some sort of gathering facility that would
39 have a theater and some gallery space if they could get some momentum behind it. Kathy thought
40 if they could use the Town Hall auditorium, they would have a stage. She said if it could be used
41 for an art show, The Vermont Watercolor Society may be interested, as they're always looking for
42 places for their shows. Tim wasn't going to speak for the Selectboard, but he knew something in
43 motion was moving meetings back downstairs where they were held years ago so the room could
44 become available for community use. Kathy said that would be great. Cathy mentioned that kids
45 were wrestling in the room and there was basketball so it could conflict. She didn't know how

1 much it periled the things on the walls. Barre suggested putting the walls on wheels so they can be
2 rolled out of the way to make the space available.

3 Hugh recommended on the top of page 3, when he saw control of invasive species, it didn't feel
4 like it fit. He thought it was very specific and wondered if it was at the same level. Tim thought it
5 was a valid point. Tim sees invasive plants taking over the roadsides and fields and it was a
6 problem most people aren't aware of. And if they are aware, they don't realize how big of a
7 problem it is. Barre asked if the solution was to change the topic from See More of in Rural Areas
8 to What Environmental Issues Concern You? Peter said when he and Cathy were working on it on
9 Sunday, they were going through his pasture and pulling invasive weeds, he thought it was a
10 reasonable question. He didn't know how, as a Planning Board, they could control it. He said there
11 were a lot of things in the survey questions that they have no control over. Tim said the survey
12 results could be used for more than just bylaws. Barre said it wasn't so much about them but things
13 that matter to the town, grant funding down the road, and the future of the town plan. Barre
14 wondered if Tim would want to break something into more environmental issues such as how they
15 are doing with arts and culture, "Do these environmental issues concern you, and if they do, which
16 ones are most concerning to you?" Tim confirmed Barre was suggesting a question on
17 environmental issues and Barre said it was just like the arts and culture. "Do environmental issues
18 concern you, yes, or no? If so, which would be your top 3?" Peter noted on page 4, the second
19 question down regarding mobile homes on single lots being considered dwellings. He asked if they
20 had to be considered a house. Peter said they couldn't be called out whether you wanted them or
21 not. Cathy said the state was emphatic about it. Peter suggested striking it. Tim had been reading
22 about the housing issues and said they were no longer mobile homes but manufactured homes.
23 Cathy said the State calls them manufactured homes. Peter thought it wasn't so much clustered
24 mobile homes but what could you do for tiny houses. A mobile home has a specific definition and
25 a minimum square footage in the State of Vermont. Cathy said it had a whole section. Hugh asked
26 if mobile home and manufactured home were the same now. Peter said they were considered the
27 same thing but there was a minimum size. If you wanted to have a tiny house, they fall under the
28 state requirement for a mobile home. Peter suggested clustered housing. He said the current
29 regulations call for a specific size for a mobile home lot. He said mobile homes are pretty well
30 regulated. He thought going to the tiny house was the step they needed to go to. Peter watched
31 someone who had a rental property build a house in the front yard and when they finally could
32 afford to buy a piece of land, they rolled it out. He thought there were more people interested in
33 doing it that are in the class that he was that you built your house when you had money. Peter
34 suggested clustered housing that went to tiny house development. Tim wondered if it was two
35 separate items: clustered manufactured home developments would be one and clustered tiny house
36 community would be the other. Peter and Tim agreed.

37

38 Hugh recommended on page 3 that hunting and fishing be combined. He also thought the same for
39 hiking and biking, as well as combining mountain biking and biking. Cathy pointed out that
40 mountain biking was in the woods on a trail and biking was on a road. Hugh thought they should
41 just ask if people wanted more biking as opposed to mountain biking. Tim said they were very
42 different sports and that there were places in Vermont that had big businesses going from mountain
43 biking specifically. Hugh didn't want to remove it but didn't see a lot of references to biking and
44 he agreed with Tim that mountain biking was a much different animal. Tim asked what they would
45 do for road biking. Cathy said bicycle friendliness in the village was mentioned on page 1 which
46 was close to what they were after.

1
2 Tim said, as an outdoors person, hunting and fishing were very different things, but he wasn't
3 opposed to combining it to hunting and/or fishing opportunities. Hugh thought if he was trying to
4 keep the list smaller, it would be helpful.

5
6 Hugh thought additional business locations should be changed a little. He asked Tim what his spirit
7 was for it and if it was more business in the rural areas. Tim said what drove it was when they
8 were thinking about legacy uses and adaptive reuses and some of the discussions involved
9 someone wished a store that was located on Route 11 East toward Springfield was back there.
10 Hugh suggested it be broadened to additional businesses opportunities unless it wouldn't be in the
11 spirit of the intent Tim had. Tim suggested zoning for additional business locations. Cathy wanted
12 to see a question that addressed infrastructure issues like water, sewer, three phased power, and
13 roads. She thought they could also talk about housing density there. Hugh and Tim liked the idea.
14 Hugh noted they had an environmental question and could have an infrastructure question. Hugh
15 thought he was channeling Steve Mancuso when he mentioned changing the additional business
16 locations, as he is constantly making sure they're not wanting to relegate all business opportunities
17 into the Village and encouraging business in other parts of the town.

18
19 Tim asked Cathy if she would have water and sewer together or separate under infrastructure.
20 Cathy thought separate because the lines go to different places. Peter said a lot of people who have
21 water don't have sewer. Cathy added three-phase power in support of business because it's not
22 universally available. Sidewalks and bicycle paths would also be added, as well as cell service to
23 infrastructure.

24
25 Tim said he would come back to their next meeting with the goal of getting it through. He thought
26 it was great feedback.

27 28 **Agenda Item 9, Adjournment**

29
30 Hugh said before adjourning they needed to decide if they wanted to meet on September 6th or
31 another day that was not Labor Day. Preston said September 12th was available and September 6th
32 which is a Tuesday. Cathy would check the calendar for availability the next day. They would
33 meet September 6th instead of September 5th and if not, September 12th. The consensus was the
34 6th was better because meeting on the 12th would make back-to-back meeting weeks.

35
36 Barre moved to adjourn, and Tim seconded. A vote was taken, and it passed unanimously. The
37 meeting was adjourned at 8:05 p.m.