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TOWN OF CHESTER
SELECTBOARD MEETING
December 6, 2023, Minutes

15 **Board Members Present:** Arianna Knapp, Arne Jonynas, and Peter Hudkins at Town Hall.
16 Absent: Lee Gustafson and Heather Chase.

17 **Staff Present:** Julie Hance, Town Manager; Preston Bristow, Zoning Administrator and Town
18 Planner; and Kirby Putnam, Public Works Director, at Town Hall; and Susan Bailey, Recording
19 Secretary, via Zoom.

20 **Visitors Present:** Hugh Quinn, Lori Quinn, and Ruthanne Batchelder at Town Hall; and Cathy
21 Hasbrouck, Joy Slaughter, Barre Pinsky, Steve Mancuso, Josh Schroeder, Judy Hallberg, Tim
22 Roper, Travis, SAPA TV, and Chester Telegraph via Zoom.

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Call to Order

Chair Arne Jonynas called the meeting to order at 6:30 p.m. with the pledge of allegiance. He welcomed everyone to the meeting and noted there were only three members present as two members were absent due to illness. He wished them a speedy recovery.

Agenda Item 1, Cont'd Hearing re: Proposed Amendment to Unified Development Bylaws

Arne asked for a motion to reconvene the hearing that was recessed at the November 15th Selectboard meeting. Peter moved and Arianna seconded the motion to reconvene. The motion carried unanimously.

Hugh Quinn, Chairman of the Planning Commission, as well as members, Cathy Hasbrouck, Barre Pinsky, and Tim Roper, and Preston Bristow, Zoning Administrator, were present to go through changes put forth by the Selectboard at the last meeting and how they were addressed.

Hugh went through each bullet point on the memo by referring to the maps and/or the bylaw language. He thought there was tremendous value in public hearings and feedback from the Selectboard because as they work, having another point of view can help them go back and look at other things. Based on the last meeting, they made changes to the maps and the bylaws.

The first bullet of the memo was zoning map revisions. There were two maps: one dated December 6th, which represented the Planning Commission's proposals and a map dated October 18th which was from the last public hearing. The first bullet item reflected the discussion to take the water tank and quarry properties out of Neighborhood District. It had been included because of its potential for greater housing density but after reviewing it, they removed it so the quarry could be used for extraction, if necessary, and if it turned out to be an opportunity for housing, they could fold it into Neighborhood in the future. Those two parcels were now white, which meant they would stay in their current zone or be addressed during the next round of changes by the Commission. Everything that had a color on the map represented something already done or addressed at this meeting and everything in white was in different zones they had not yet gotten to in terms of recommendations. Preston added in terms of Neighborhood, it was only three parcels:

1 the town owned parcel where the gravel pit and water tank are, the high school parcel, and a parcel
2 north of the Pinnacle that has had quarrying use in the past.

3
4 Hugh said the area north of Stone Village was originally included in Neighborhood but was
5 switched it to Mixed-Use, because Mixed-Use was a better fit. It went up as far as the Jeffrey Barn
6 property. Hugh said if they looked at the maps, Village Green, Village Center, and Neighborhood
7 were concentric circles from the center out so having Neighborhood north of Stone Village didn't
8 make a lot of sense, so they switched it to Mixed-Use. If it ended up being good for dense housing,
9 Mixed-Use would allow that.

10
11 The third bullet was extending the Village Center out to Blue Hills Road. On the map, heading out
12 Route 11, it was originally Neighborhood and they changed it to Village Center which affords the
13 same level of density with similar uses. Once you get past Blue Hill, the road narrows and there is
14 a steep embankment on the right, so it didn't make sense to move it out further than that. They
15 would look at anything in white on the map the next round.

16
17 Originally, they had talked about eliminating the Adaptive Zone out near the Armory. Preston said
18 it was originally created to provide flexibility without spot zoning. Now that they have adaptive
19 re-use and legacy provisions, they don't feel it's necessary. In hindsight, they decided to leave it
20 to the next round of discussions. They're leaving A-3 alone for now. In the next round in January,
21 they will address it and decide what to do with it.

22
23 Hugh asked if there were any questions about the maps or zones. There were none.

24
25 Hugh said the rest of the changes involved tweaking the language. They had included setbacks in
26 the Village Center which they changed from 15 to 5 feet. Preston spoke with the fire chief who
27 suggested they restore them to 15 feet to make it easier to fight fires. Preston said the bylaw has a
28 mechanism for granting waivers which must be for specific limited purposes, such as handicap
29 access, helping with solar collecting, avoiding floodplain, and affordable housing.

30
31 Hugh said it was an area where they discussed building and construction trades being removed
32 from Neighborhood. Previously in those areas, it was a conditional use. They chose to remove
33 building and construction trades as a conditional use because it wasn't consistent with what people
34 traditionally consider a neighborhood. Some of the bigger parcels were pulled out of
35 Neighborhood and put in other zones where building and construction trades may be a conditional
36 use in the future. Even though it wasn't a listed use, it was possible to have a building and
37 construction trades business as home occupation or home business which was more appropriate
38 for this part of town. An electrician, carpenter, or landscaper could run their business out of their
39 house as a home occupation. If it gets bigger, you can still run it as a home business with employees
40 and latitude for storage, so trades people can continue to have a business out of their property in
41 this zone but won't be able to get a business permit for a construction company, park, and have
42 contractor storage. Arne didn't realize there was a mechanism for a small business to begin without
43 having a huge overhead in Neighborhood. Preston said he had worked in other towns where it was
44 common that a contractor with construction equipment in a neighborhood isn't the right thing.

45
46 Adaptive 3 Zone will remain as it is, and they will address it in the next round of work in January.

1 Act 47, the Housing Act, doesn't allow them to regulate emergency shelters so they added it to
2 one of their exemptions which is along the lines of requirements for Act 47. Preston said although
3 state law takes precedence over local law, it still is good practice to include it in the bylaws. The
4 state is concerned people may not want an emergency shelter next to them, so they exempted it.

5
6 Arianna noted that four things were summarized at the last meeting: setbacks, school property
7 change, and she didn't remember the others. Julie said building and construction trades and the
8 Adaptive District.

9
10 Julie said Heather Chase was concerned about the Arts in Residences and the scenario she provided
11 was someone having a pottery wheel in their home as a hobby and they make stuff for friends who
12 want to buy something and next thing they're at a fair, and she wondered how it was measured and
13 if thought had been given to it. Preston said it was no different than any home business that begins
14 casually and gets bigger. Preston said if there were enough sales that you pay sales tax, you're a
15 home business. He added there was a definition of one of the uses being a gallery or artisan and
16 significant numbers of the public coming in and could be reasonably well-defined. Preston said
17 they are all judgment calls, and don't require them to hit a threshold. Arne said there were
18 mechanisms in place as it grows. Preston said they make their rules for home occupation easy and
19 home businesses must go before the DRB. Heady Topper began as a home business and eventually,
20 due to the amount of traffic their business brought in, they had to move because they were so
21 successful. Arne said it was important to provide incubation for businesses to start and welcomed
22 their success.

23
24 Arne noted they would address the adoption of these changes later in the meeting.

25
26 Steve Mancuso asked if a municipality had the legal authority to pause, stop, or otherwise impede
27 any legally registered business. Preston said a broad answer to his question was no, but he
28 suspected the question related to someone being told they couldn't do a short-term rental during
29 the pause. Steve agreed and asked if the town could stop the sale of ice cream. Preston said no but
30 the short-term rental seemed to be because it was an ordinance, which was a different beast.

31
32 Arianna moved and Peter seconded a motion to close the hearing. The motion carried unanimously.

33
34 (Hearing closed at 7 p.m.)

35
36 Arne thanked the commission members and Preston for their hard work.

37
38 **Agenda Item 2, Additions or Deletions to the Agenda**

39
40 There were none.

41
42 **Agenda Item 3, Approve Minutes from the November 15, 2023 Selectboard Meeting**

43 This item was postponed as there were not enough members in attendance who had attended the
44 November 15th meeting.

1 **Agenda Item 4, Citizens Comments/Answers from Previous Meeting**

2
3 None.

4 **Agenda Item 5, Old Business**

5
6 Report given by the Town Manager, Julie Hance:

7
8 Flood Recovery

9 Projects are being submitted. To date, there are no projects in the state that have received funding,
10 so it will be a slower process than during Irene. At this point, the town has expended close to \$1.8
11 million in flood damage. There are still some projects totaling \$100,000 to \$200,000 that will take
12 place over the next couple of months. They will need to do a current expense note because cash
13 flow is getting tight. They have requested \$1.9 million that will carry them through to the spring
14 or further, depending on when FEMA money is released. The bond bank has opened a program
15 that has been approved and applications are due in January. Funding will be approved in February
16 and released in April or May with an interest rate of 1.3% so they want the \$1.9 million to transfer
17 over to the bond this spring which will allow 7 years for repayment. They don't expect prepayment
18 to take that long but would give them the opportunity to repay the bond as they get reimbursed
19 from FEMA so they would never hit the General Fund. Arne asked if FEMA would cover the
20 interest of borrowing and Julie said it was a submitted expense. Julie expected the Selectboard
21 would have it on the agenda at the second December meeting and noted it was only covering what
22 was expended for the flood and was done intentionally. They may not need to do a TAN because
23 this would help their cash flow enough. Peter asked what bank it was, and Julie said M&T who is
24 the current banker, and they can get it quicker. Peter asked about the line of credit and Julie said
25 for this program, they couldn't do it.

26
27 Wastewater Asset Management Plan

28 It is coming to an end and Naomi will present her findings within a couple of months at a meeting.
29 As suspected, she identified significant groundwater infiltration into the system, so there are leaks
30 which wasn't surprising because the system is old. They anticipate submitting a couple of things
31 for the priority project list, Depot Street force main and the First Avenue pump station being the
32 biggest project and the other will be related to the well, wellhouse, and generator. The two projects
33 will come to the board in January. They will apply for two projects; one is the design of sewer
34 upgrades, which will start in '24 with completion in '25. Julie said they would look at all the areas
35 where there is infiltration and the work necessary. It will involve an evaluation of the entire system
36 and where there is potential for expansion of the sewer. It will be looked at as two separate budgets.
37 Arne asked if the plan currently being done would provide information about what is needed for
38 the future. Julie said it will have some but doesn't provide a thorough analysis. They cameraed the
39 entire system and will use it to get them to the point of preliminary so they can skip another step.
40 Arne noted it was more from infrastructure and Julie agreed. She said the state has about half a
41 billion dollars of ARPA funding it still has not expended. She met with a gentleman from Regional
42 Planning who is trying to assess projects they want to do but can't get funded. One of the issues is
43 they took all the ARPA funds and dumped them into existing grant programs and a lot of the
44 municipal projects don't align with those programs, so they need to do something different. There
45 are two grants coming out for clean water and drinking water that have the first \$250,000 forgiven
46 and the second \$250,000 50% forgiven. Those are large funds when looking at a \$900,000 Depot

1 Street force main project and could go a long way. They want to get as much of that money as
2 possible and get on the priority lists for drinking water. Arne asked if they had to be shovel ready
3 projects and Julie said they could be engineering and design with the intent to go forward with
4 construction and that's when reimbursement would happen. They have a lot of money they don't
5 want to send back. Peter said shovel ready projects were instantaneous. Some projects could
6 involve fixes and not replacement.

7 8 Budget

9 A special meeting is necessary sometime between January 19th and 24th. The meeting will set the
10 budget, but the warning can't be signed until the 19th. It could be a meeting that only requires a
11 signature, depending on how quickly they move through the budget beforehand. Arne said they
12 could decide the meeting date at the next meeting when more members were present.

13 14 Signs

15 The signs are designed and are being constructed with installation in the spring.

16 17 **Agenda Item 6, Adopt Amendment to Unified Development Bylaws**

18
19 Arne thought they needed to decide if the changes were major or minor. Preston did his homework
20 and when it gets sent back to the Planning Commission, the commission makes the changes, not
21 the Selectboard, so it meant if the board has no further changes, they could adopt it without another
22 hearing. Preston had confirmed it with Jason Rasmussen. Arne thought that was interesting
23 because minor changes were spelling errors, but a boundary line on a zoning district would affect
24 people. Julie thought the difference was because the Planning Commission made the changes and
25 were reintroducing them to the board, so they were not the board's changes but the commission's.
26 Preston thought it was done that way so Selectboards couldn't rip things apart. Arne said it was
27 why they had recessed the hearing at the last meeting rather than closing it. Hugh thought because
28 there was discussion in the public hearing about the board's concerns, there wasn't a need for
29 another public hearing. Preston added it was about public perception and transparency.

30
31 Arne entertained a motion to adopt the amendment to the Unified Development Bylaws as
32 presented. Arianna moved and Peter seconded the motion. Arne commented that they ended up
33 with a better product by tackling one area at a time. The motion carried unanimously.

34
35 Preston said they would probably consolidate all the amendments and thought they would receive
36 an extra \$1,700 bonus from the state for completing them before the end of the year.

37 38 **Agenda Item 7, Short Term Rental; continued discussion re next steps**

39
40 Preston was pleased that they had gotten this far without any serious violations where they needed
41 to become unpleasant. There are 54 STRs registered. At Preston's recommendation, Julie informed
42 Granicus that their contract would not be renewed because of performance. Preston has narrowed
43 the search down to one provider that would do a good job but charges more than \$20,000 annually
44 and another provider who is less experienced but charges less, who Julie has recommended trying
45 for a year. Granicus continues to do monthly scraping of ads, so they continue to learn about new
46 people and that's why they're awaiting the response to the first letter sent to four, and the second

1 letter sent to three. Preston provided a picture of a pushpin map depicting where the STRs are, but
2 it also included ones that are exempt because they rent for less than 14 days per year, and inns and
3 B&Bs who already have had a higher level of approval. Cathy Hasbrouck has done the lion's share
4 of the work putting it all together. Julie thanked her. Preston said they hadn't yet totaled the amount
5 of Cathy's time or cost, but the income received for the 54 rentals was \$14,000. The company they
6 are considering would have a \$6,000 outlay and the rest would cover the cost of Cathy's time.
7 Preston noted he forgot to include two Airbnb listings that are campsites on the map and don't
8 meet the state's definition of a STR. He said although there may be 85 ads, some are cobwebbed
9 or exempt and there aren't as many short-term rentals as they had thought. Preston said they had
10 over 60 properties in Chester that should be registered and the breakdown of STRs by districts
11 applied to the old districts and not the ones the Selectboard had just approved. The R-120 District,
12 which is the biggest district in town, is the one that has the most STRs. There had been concern
13 about Stone Village, but it only had six STRs. Because two board members were absent, Arne
14 thought they should postpone it.

15
16 Peter said Cathy could provide opposite the districts the number of dwellings per area. Preston
17 said for this meeting, it seemed too much to do. Cathy said the Lister Database was at the tax bill
18 level and provides records for dwellings. She was having a hard time assigning records to different
19 zoning districts and it would be a manual process. Peter thought if she did the Village Center and
20 Stone Village, that's where they needed to look at. Cathy found it interesting that Residential
21 Commercial and Commercial/Industrial zones both had STRs. She said they were small districts,
22 and she could label them and provide statistics. Cathy said there were two parcels in the Stone
23 Village that would almost certainly both be unhosted STRs, but the transfer of ownership was not
24 going smoothly.

25
26 Arne asked when Granicus' contract ended, and Preston said it was the end of January. The
27 contract was \$10,000 plus and renewal was \$11,000 plus and Julie said they would not be
28 participating. Arne said they had received some information from Granicus that they could use,
29 and Preston said even though he was amazed and disappointed, they did get some value from
30 Granicus. Julie pointed out they had only paid about half the \$10,000 as a deposit and they
31 wouldn't pay anymore when they realized they weren't producing a product.

32
33 Lori Quinn said the zoning districts were just one way of looking at a neighborhood. She was
34 aware Stone Village was a tight neighborhood and had been vocal and respected the architecture
35 and history there. It has a major highway going through it and there were smaller compact
36 neighborhoods that were impacted or potentially impacted in village neighborhoods where the lot
37 sizes were small and there was one road and cul-de-sacs. Lori said in her neighborhood, which
38 was a planned subdivision, about 50% were STRs and was impactful to them with cars driving on
39 private driveways and maintenance and it was a difficult thing to evaluate but didn't want the
40 Selectboard to ignore the fact there were other neighborhoods. She didn't want them to isolate or
41 choose one neighborhood as special because they would send a message that other neighborhoods
42 were not. Arne said they always appreciate input and thought between the Planning Commission
43 and Selectboard, they could come up with a product that would serve the purposes for everyone in
44 town. He thought with a full board, they could delve into it further but was open to anyone with
45 comments and concerns. Arne noted they were approaching April 1st to come up with a decision.

46

1 Julie spoke for Heather, who was absent, and didn't want STRs to be on their agenda at every
2 meeting but rather send it back to the Planning Commission and ask them to consider everything
3 said and propose a solution. Arianna reminded them they had an ordinance in place and were on
4 pause and that they could decide not to do anything and the ordinance in place was one possible
5 outcome. Arne agreed. Arianna said they must decide, but it may be to stick with what they've
6 done so far. Arianna didn't think they had a clear enough directive to give the Planning
7 Commission to solve something. Julie said she was only relaying Heather's comments. Arne
8 thought the whole board should be present to discuss and decide and he appreciated the input.
9 Arianna suggested that it be on the agenda at a future meeting to discuss what to send to the
10 Planning Commission or if action was necessary. Arne agreed. Preston added with the registration
11 they had, they now have phone numbers and emails to contact people, they are limited by the
12 number of renters allowed by their septic, and that act has caused some of them to tone down, so
13 it wasn't like nothing happened since the registration. Arne asked if anyone had tried to register
14 during the pause. Preston said they received three checks and applications and were asked if they
15 wanted them to hold or return their check. Preston thought Steve Mancuso's comment from earlier
16 in the meeting was triggered by someone who spoke with Cathy about the hold, expressed outrage,
17 and said they were contacting their attorney. Julie would include STRs on the next agenda.
18

19 **Agenda Item 8, Chester Snowmobile Club annual request for use of town lands**

20
21 Arne thought it was only roads because they never reapprove the town forest and Julie noted it
22 was public land. Peter said they park at the Pinnacle and Julie said it was public, so permission
23 wasn't required. Arne said they ask every year to make sure it's legal. Arne wished they had
24 snowfall this year. Arne asked for a motion. Peter said they have Class 4 roads that the Snowmobile
25 Club has put culverts on. By installing culverts on those roads, they made the town liable. Peter
26 thought for any culvert they've installed; they should be responsible for the maintenance of it.
27 Arne didn't know the answer but said they could have a motion. Arne said they're always trying
28 to improve their trail system with the goal of having it safe and accessible with low maintenance
29 and had put up some serious bridges and Peter agreed. Peter said they had put in culverts on Bailey
30 Road and before the July 11th storm, they were all washed out. Peter said if the state went through,
31 the town would be required to fix the culvert. Peter thought if the club made improvements to the
32 road by putting a culvert in, they would need to be responsible. Peter was amazed by the amount
33 of work they had done after the storm, and he had been on the trails. Peter said two years ago the
34 roads were kind of washed out and they pushed the groomers over and packed snow around the
35 culverts. The culvert works for the winter but there's a washed out culvert the rest of the time.
36 Peter had no problem with them being on the trails and had helped them with the bridges but
37 thought they were putting a burden on the town to improve the trails for the snowmobiles and
38 would need to take the time to take care of the places where the culverts were added. Peter told
39 Dick and June last spring and Dick had put water bars in all along Bailey Hill. Peter thought if the
40 state was holding the town responsible, even though they weren't enforcing it, they would need to
41 share the burden. Arne said it seemed like the club was carrying most of the burden and Julie
42 agreed. Arne understood there was a requirement coming down the pike to maintain the Class 4
43 roads which was another conversation to convert them to something else like a trail. Arne said it
44 would be another conversation coming up after the new year about the town's responsibility and
45 thought the Snowmobile Club should be included in that conversation. Arne didn't think they did
46 much with the Class 4 roads. Peter said if they put a culvert in, they must maintain it and it wasn't

1 much to ask. Julie said it was a good discussion to have when someone from the club was present
2 and prepared to speak about it.

3
4 Ruthanne Batchelder from the Snowmobile Club said they absolutely agree with them and will
5 take care of them because they are the trails. She wanted the trail master present when they talked
6 about them, who was currently Mr. Jewett, and said they would be present when it was discussed.
7 She thanked the Board for allowing them to use the trails rather than be stuck at home. Arne added
8 that a lot of pedestrians enjoy the trails.

9
10 Arne asked for a motion to authorize use of town roads by the Snowmobile Club. Arne said it
11 included Smokeshire Road past the fourth bridge 150 yards to the snowmobile bridge on the left;
12 Blue Hill Road 150 yards from Ken Getter's field over the bridge to Sarah Vail's, 100 feet of Ethan
13 Allen Road, all of Williams Road, and rolling acres from the turnaround at the far end 600 yards
14 to where the trail turns right, and the town turnaround across Old Forge Road about 50 to 70 feet.
15 Peter noted they were all Class 3 roads, and the Class 4 roads were not listed. Arne said for Class
16 4 roads, they often have the landowner's permission. Julie said they were also not maintained, and
17 Class 3 were. Arne said all those issues would be addressed when they discussed the Class 4 roads.
18 Peter moved to accept the Snowmobile Club's request for use of public lands and the Class 3 and
19 Class 4 roads, and Arianna seconded it. The motion passed unanimously. Ruthanne thanked the
20 board members. Arne signed the agreement so Ruthanne could take the form with her.

21 22 **Agenda Item 9, Andover Emergency Services Assessment**

23
24 Julie said it was their third time doing it. How they arrive at the numbers is written in a contract
25 with Andover which included a formula that had been approved. Capital expenses are broken down
26 by parcel and calls are broken down by population and number of calls. Capital expenses include
27 equipment, Emergency Services Building, and anything that hits the capital plan. For REC and the
28 EMS bond, those are also the facility expenses are within the numbers. Because operation is based,
29 Andover pays for their number of calls which is the total expense divided by the number of calls
30 and Andover pays for theirs and Chester pays for theirs, which includes fire and ambulance.
31 Dispatch is a number that is split. Arne noted the first year was \$51,358. Julie said the second year
32 was around \$78,000, and this year is \$94,000. Peter asked how long the contract was for and Julie
33 said three years so next year they would revisit it. The contract was based on calls and equipment
34 that is ready when they have a call. Arne thought they previously had a small error in the
35 calculation, so this was more reflective of the cost to the town. There was no action necessary. It
36 was only for informational purposes. Arne asked if there were any questions and there were none.

37 38 **Agenda Item 10, 2024 General Fund Budget; Highway**

39
40 Kirby Putnam, Public Works Director, was present. Julie said it was the highway, parks, and
41 cemetery budget. Actuals for highway for 2023 would show a surplus primarily due to the flood.
42 Expenses from highway that are flood related were pulled out into the flood fund for
43 reimbursement by FEMA, which will cause a surplus. The state also paid an extra state aid payment
44 of \$53,000. They won't know the total surplus in Highway until the end of the year. Arne
45 questioned why there was an extra state payment and Julie said it was due to the ARPA funds and
46 the state also had made an extra payment last year. She would love to budget it for next year but

1 wasn't sure if it would happen again and nobody was willing to confirm. Capital expenses this
2 year will be a dump truck and they are asking for a chipper, as the current one is on its last leg and
3 a vital piece of equipment for Highway. Cemetery is showing an increase due the addition of tree
4 removal and there will be more removal next year. There was extensive work done in Brookside
5 Cemetery this year. The two old trees next to the Academy came down today. They were falling
6 apart and every time a piece falls, they break the old 1700 stones and cause damage. Arianna asked
7 if they would plant new trees. Julie said it would need to be heartier and not in that section because
8 the falling limbs damage the old gravestones which are fragile. Arne reminded Arianna there was
9 a tree assessment and Arianna said there was also a meeting coming up, but she didn't know if
10 there was a plan for the trees in the cemetery. There was no plan to replace the two trees taken
11 down. The Cemetery will need to replace a mower this year which will cost \$15,000. Julie has not
12 decided if it will come out of the general or capital. Julie noted the budgets were up and most of it
13 was due to the increase in prices. Payments are up slightly. Julie said gravel dropped \$10,000 this
14 year, but they still need to crush it which is material that came from the rivers from debris clean
15 up that comes back into the pit, and they will use it in later years but there is an expense in crushing.
16 Depending on whether there is a surplus in flood fund, they may be able to bury the expense for
17 crushing in the flood fund and not use the general fund. Vehicle maintenance and equipment
18 maintenance are up due to older vehicles and the cost of doing business.

19
20 Tim Roper asked about the materials removed from the rivers and if ANR managed it or AOT. He
21 saw a lot of material come out of the river. Tim also asked about Andover Road paving because
22 he thought it was supposed to be paved this year and thought it was postponed due to contractor
23 bandwidth after the flooding. Julie said debris removal from the river was directed by ANR and
24 Scott Jenson who was the Rivers Engineer. They had five locations throughout town where the
25 height of the gravel berms in the river was going to cause a problem even in spring thaw because
26 the berms were so high and, in some cases, level with the road. They have allowed removal in 5
27 locations and guided Kirby. Three locations remain that are very large, and they were waiting for
28 funding and learned they will be funded. If FEMA denies, the state will support their appeal and
29 they have it in writing so they will proceed, and Kirby has been out to bid, which are due next
30 week. They hope Kingsbury Road will be completed this year. The other two will not be until after
31 the spring when the river lowers. All the debris removal has been directed by ANR. Arne asked
32 Kirby where the 5 locations were. Kirby said they were Popple Dungeon, Route 35, Sweat Road,
33 flood property, and Potash. Julie said the flood property was 895 Vermont Route 11 West was the
34 town property. The other 3 remaining are Route 11 West by Frasier's, 1001 Route 11 West,
35 Kingsbury Road just above Pat Gordon's land, and Laurens' on Andover Road. Julie said the
36 paving of Andover Road was postponed because of flooding but the good news is they were
37 notified this year that they are recipients of a paving grant. It is a \$500,000 project and \$200,000
38 will be paid for through the grant. The voters approved the bond last year but the issue they had
39 last year was, due to a misunderstanding in the office, their warning was not published which is
40 required for bonds, so it will need to be re-voted this year. It will be put up at \$300,000. Julie said
41 for the fourth Route 35 project, there was a 1200-foot section that was the worst and required
42 removal of the road, underdrain installed, road rebuild, and stacked stone wall, all very expensive.
43 They got approval and were awarded a grant for the last 300 feet of Route 35; they bid last year
44 and rejected them all due to cost. They bid this year and are rejecting all bids, because the lowest
45 was \$430,000 and they just can't afford it. They have a \$200,000 grant which would only cover
46 around half. Naomi and Kirby both said the project can wait. Julie has let the state know they won't

1 accept the grant, which she's never done. That section was already submitted in a larger Route 35
2 FEMA application, and they are awaiting notification from the state who is awaiting notification.
3 That grant from FEMA would be 95% funding with only a 5% match from Chester. It's the most
4 expensive road in Chester.

5
6 Peter asked if Kirby would do the underdrain on the upper section of what Peter calls Weston
7 Road. Kirby said they were replacing 13 culverts out of 15 and would not do the underdrain. Kirby
8 said two of the culverts were in really good shape with no depressions. Arne questioned if it was
9 the full length of the road for paving and Kirby said it was. Julie said they would bid over the
10 winter and hoped for decent prices. Bids would not be awarded, nor construction take place until
11 after they know the bond is awarded. Arne asked Kirby about the grader, and he said it was in
12 reasonable shape but over 10 years old and had 9,000 hours on it, so the vehicle maintenance line
13 would reflect that. Arne wondered how much a machine like that costs and Kirby wasn't sure but
14 knew when it was purchased in 2013 it was around \$225,000. Kirby thought with a reasonable
15 trade-in, a new one would cost \$400,000 to \$500,000. There is a second grader that is only used
16 for springtime to bring the dirt roads to reasonable travel conditions. Kirby uses it in the wintertime
17 for plowing on occasion. It still runs well and is easier to maintain. Arne asked Kirby if the flooding
18 put him behind on some projects in addition to the paving. Kirby said regular scheduled
19 maintenance and a grant project they received an extension on. Kirby said they're still discovering
20 spots affected from the flood but expected they would get caught up.

21
22 Arne thanked Kirby for the job well done. Julie said Chester is third in the state for dirt roads per
23 capita and first for the number of bridges per capita. Kirby appreciated the town garage which
24 helped with the Jewett Bridge that had to be quickly rebuilt and the extra space came in handy
25 with the beams. Arne said it helps to have the right building and equipment to do the job and most
26 of the time the Selectboard has been supportive of requests for equipment because they have
27 always been frugal and a good use of the resources they have which is helpful. Julie didn't think
28 people understood that the guys can build absolutely anything which isn't common for
29 municipalities. People are in awe when they learn Chester builds its own bridges, which is unheard
30 of in many times. Kirby said the warmer weather this winter makes everything difficult. The
31 members thanked Kirby for his presentation.

32
33 Julie pointed out the members had a copy of the preliminary budget, which Arne had asked Julie
34 to include in the packet to give the members time to digest it. Peter was pleased with the budget
35 and pleasantly surprised but questioned the bond. Peter said because they hadn't done the paving,
36 they didn't issue any bonds last year and Julie agreed. She said 2024 was the year they begin
37 paying principal on the public safety bond, so they automatically are out \$200,000. She said
38 pushing some other projects off and bonds would help.

39
40 Peter asked if anything from the project list was in the budget and Julie said some were and she
41 would line them up for the next meeting.

42
43 Julie said at the next meeting she would have what is anticipated for capital expenses and what she
44 calls the debt repayment plan. Fire would like a rescue truck, but they are postponing getting one
45 this year, as it's not a priority expense. Kirby is looking at replacing a plow truck next year and
46 one this year.

