

1 **TOWN OF CHESTER**
2 **SELECTBOARD**

3 **December 15, 2021 Minutes**

4 **Board Members Present:** Arne Jonynas, Jeff Holden, Heather Chase, Leigh Dakin, and Lee
5 Gustafson at Town Hall; and Lee Gustafson via Zoom (first part of meeting Lee Gustafson was via
6 Zoom but later arrived at Town Hall).

7 **Staff Present:** Julie Hance, Town Manager, Amie O'Brien, Assistant Town Clerk at Town Hall;
8 and Susan Bailey, Secretary via Zoom.

9 **Visitors Present:** Robert Mancuso, Shawn Cunningham, Kathy Pellett, Patty Goyette, Scott Blair,
10 Leslie Blair, Otis Nelson, William Lindsay, Vicki Thornton, Shawn Bika, Burleigh Sunflower, Jan
11 Moat, Andrew, Peletier, Scott Kendall, Sarah Yake, Hannah Mauer, Lee Herrington, Jack
12 Herrington, Polly Montgomery, Ian Montgomery, John Sawyer, Jimmy Sawyer, Renata Sawyer,
13 Kirby Putnam, Lee Whiting, Peter Isdo, John Herrington, John Langford, Galaxy Sgt., Marilyn
14 Manhusky, Nike Boke, Roy Spaulding, Mick Boke and SAPA TV at Town Hall; Chester
15 Telegraph, Janessa Purney, Barre Pinske, Carol's iPad, Robert Nied, Patricia Benelli, C. Prairie,
16 BM, Linda Diak, Cathlyn Matracia, Hayden A., Joel Nolan, Samantha Ward, Tim Roper, Steve
17 Crosier, James Goodfellow, Kirby Putnam, Jesse Bailey, Karen Rein Peletier, Shana McCarthy,
18 and 802.558.2808 via Zoom;

19 **Call to Order**

20 Chair Arne Jonynas called the meeting to order at a little after 6:00 p.m. with the pledge of
21 allegiance. He welcomed everyone to the meeting and asked that everyone sign the sign-in sheet.
22 He announced in addition to those present, there were also many Zoom attendees at the meeting,
23 and they would do their best to accommodate everyone.

24 **Agenda Item 1, Approve Minutes of December 1, 2021**

25 Lee Gustafson moved to accept the minutes from the December 1, 2021, meeting and Leigh Dakin
26 seconded. Leigh called attention to Line 22 that instead of grid, it was grit and she stated it had
27 been corrected. In addition, line 79 had a typo. Jeff Holden's last name should have been
28 capitalized. A vote was taken, and the meetings were approved unanimously, as corrected.

29 **Agenda Item 2, Citizen Comments**

30 Arne asked for citizens comments from the audiences at Town Hall and Zoom on items not on the
31 agenda.

32 *Scott Kendall* from the Selectboard in Andover asked if they had a contract for emergency services.
33 Julie Hance stated it was under old business. It was decided to be addressed then.

34 *Jan Moat* stated there was a lot of speeding on North Street. She said it was bad and they hadn't
35 seen police there much. She added children were there now. Arne said they could relay a message
36 to the police department about her concern and possibly do extra patrol. Leigh asked if there was
37 a speed sign there and Jan said there was, but they ignore it.

38 *Jerry Ucci* said there was an accident tonight pulling out of Church Street onto North Street. He
39 thought the speed sign would work better if it was on the other end. Arne asked him if he was
40 talking about coming into town and he was. Arne said there was one coming into town on 103

1 from Ludlow. Mr. Ucci suggested it should be further up. Because further up was state highway,
2 they couldn't place the speeding sign there. Arne suggested that the novelty of the signs had worn
3 off and that possibly a sign and enforcement would help.

4 **Agenda Item 3, Old Business**

5 Julie reported on old business.

6 Yosemite:

7 It has been put on the agenda for December 29th due to conflicting schedules.

8 Time Management System:

9 They won't make the change to a new payroll system in 2022 as it's taking more to get acclimated
10 to the new system. It will be a 2023 item.

11 Andover Contract:

12 It has been drafted and the solicitor is reviewing it. It will be on the agenda for the 29th. Chris
13 Plum, the Chair of the Andover Board, emailed Julie yesterday and asked if she could put together
14 a quick memorandum of understanding so there would be something in writing acknowledging
15 Chester will provide coverage since it won't be signed prior to January 1st. Julie is working on
16 something to send.

17 Arne asked Scott Kendall if that answered his question and he said yes.

18 Arne asked for any other old business.

19 Heather brought up how festive the Christmas lights looked in town. Jeff agreed. Arne thanked all
20 of those involved. Heather said it has put her in the Christmas spirit which she appreciated. Arne
21 recalled the naughty or nice statements on the radar sign. Julie said when it hit the Boston Globe
22 it drew the attention of the Federal Highway Administration and they received notice they may be
23 in violation, so they had to remove them.

24 **Agenda Item 4, Discussion re: potential Mask Mandate**

25 Arne announced there would be a discussion possible mask mandate in Chester. They have, over
26 the last few weeks, received phone calls and emails regarding it. It was a divisive issue in town,
27 and there were a lot of ideas, opinions, and thoughts associated with the issue. They wanted as
28 much input from the townspeople as possible. He welcomed comments and considerations that
29 they wanted the board to think about regarding the issue.

30 Lee asked for a time limit due to the number of people and Arne said they would allow 2 or 3
31 minutes.

32 Citizens Comments:

33 *Cathy Pellet* thanked the selectboard for opportunity to speak. She thought the mandate was the
34 right thing for the town to do. She said it would be great if a mandate wasn't needed and everyone
35 would wear a mask simply because masks work. They offer protection from COVID, flu, and the
36 common cold. The biggest reason she supports a mask mandate is as a society and a community
37 we do things not just for ourselves but the for the greater good of the greatest number of people. It
38 isn't just about us but everyone, including the most vulnerable living amongst us: people unable
39 to get vaccinated for medical reasons whose immune systems are severely compromised, and even
40 the vaccinated because they can be affected by the new variant. When she thinks of the hard

1 workers at Smitty's, who are also neighbors, and every business in town, why should they be
2 subjected to people's germs whether from COVID or a cold? They are there every day serving us
3 and putting themselves at risk. This winter our population will soar with skiers descending upon
4 us and how will we protect ourselves and others without restrictions that apply to all. Nobody
5 likes to be told what to do, but we comply because we are instructed to do so by laws, including
6 public health laws. We wear seatbelts, drive within the speed limit, put children in car seats, and
7 get our children vaccinated so they can attend schools. These are just some ways we comply
8 because we are compelled by laws designed to protect us. The system cannot succeed with only
9 compliance by some. When she was a state representative, she looked at bills they were going to
10 pass into laws and tried to view them as doing the greatest good for the greatest number of people.
11 She sees the mask mandate as the same, and maybe next year or sooner this conversation won't be
12 needed.

13 *Andrew Pelletier* has lived in Chester his whole life. He thought when dealing with an emotionally
14 and politically charged topic, you should step back and view it with the lens of logic and
15 commonsense. When you do that, you realize something doesn't add up. The survival rate for
16 COVID-19 is very high – he thought somewhere around 99%. Most cases are mild or
17 asymptomatic. There are vaccines and therapeutics available to anyone 5 years or older. The
18 newest variant that seems to be driving a lot of the discussion is as mild as the common cold. The
19 guidance on masks has been very inconsistent from the beginning. The way the pandemic has been
20 dealt with felt unsustainable to him. He realized that a lot of the regulations have come because
21 people don't want to be liable for people getting sick. Recently, there was an opinion piece in *The*
22 *Commons* written by a retired respiratory therapist and author, Betsy Thomason. She stated during
23 her respiratory training that it was drummed into her students that surgical masks don't stop the
24 spread of germs but simply prevent large particles from a sneeze from entering the sterile surgical
25 field. She added that N95s are the only masks capable of blocking microbes but require annual
26 training on proper fitting, are not designed for continued use, are expensive, and are in short supply.
27 He could attest to some of it from his own personal experience having taken a 10-hour OSHA
28 certification class. He recalled there was a section on dust masks and respirators and about facial
29 hair breaking the seal. OSHA Standard 29 states employers shall not permit N95s to be worn by
30 employees with facial hair. Currently on the OSHA website it states cloth coverings are not
31 considered personal protective equipment and not an appropriate substitute for PPE. He said he
32 could go on all day. He felt the public health crisis went far beyond COVID-19. He said he can't
33 be responsible for others' behaviors. Coronavirus has been around for a long time, and we can't
34 eradicate it. We need to remember how to live with respiratory illnesses again. If it comes down
35 to it for him, it's about personal freedoms and the government shouldn't be instilling upon us how
36 to live. It's a very slippery slope. He doesn't have a Facebook account but has heard there's a lot
37 of rhetoric out there and postings against people in the community and it creates two different
38 classes and in history, that's not a good thing. He did not think masks should be mandated.

39 Arne said he would rotate between those in attendance on Zoom and those at Town Hall.

40 *Mike Alon* thanked everyone for their time. He knew it was a sensitive subject and people were
41 divided. If a small business owner gets COVID, a lot of business owners are the only people
42 running their businesses. It isn't just about dying but about livelihood and trying to survive in
43 what's been a difficult year and situation. Ludlow mandated it which was great. This summer, he
44 went to Portsmouth, New Hampshire and it was very unified to go into a town and know what to
45 do, which was wear a mask. He thought by having the town mandate it, it would take the pressure

1 off small business and allow them to make a living and to survive in our town. By having a
2 mandate, visitors will know what's expected of them. Whether people do it or not is another thing.
3 He thought people need to realize that it's still happening. Many had no idea the numbers were
4 rising again and thought Vermont was the safe place to go. It hasn't gone away, and people have
5 gotten very lax. Having a mandate may help people think twice about how they interact with
6 their fellow neighbors as far as distancing and trying to keep our community safe. Chester,
7 Vermont has a tagline, "The Vermont you've been hoping to find." He hoped the Selectboard will
8 make it "A safe place and the Vermont you've been hoping to find." He knew it was a hard decision
9 but would appreciate us being unified as a front and letting the message be clear that there are still
10 things out there that we need to deal with.

11 *Vicki Thornton* doesn't live in town but owns a business in town. She didn't think they should
12 mandate masks. Owners can put their own mandate on their business. They don't need someone
13 to tell them to put a mask mandate up. She thought it should be left up to them. It is their storefronts.
14 For those who want a mandate, they can easily put a sign up requiring them. She has a sign that
15 says masks strongly suggested. 99% of people wear masks who visit her store. She didn't think a
16 mandate was necessary.

17 *Steve Mancuso* said the OSHA passage was 1910.1030 which a mask was only part of. If you're
18 not addressing a whole protocol, a mask is really half a helmet. All sciences aside, he backed up
19 the last speaker and recommended the board be suggestive of medical advice instead of demanding
20 medical advice because he believed it would put the town in a bad position of liability. The medical
21 community and litigant community were very symbiotic in the sense that one follows the other. If
22 you demand a medical practice and it doesn't work out for people, it may not work out for the
23 town of Chester. He asked that they consider that.

24 *Lee Herrington* thanked the Board for providing the opportunity and giving it consideration.
25 Cavendish, Ludlow, and Weathersfield recently passed various forms of mask mandates. The only
26 argument he was really hearing was the freedom issue. He said if that was the case, let him drive
27 down Route 11 at 90 miles per hour instead of flashy signs saying he's going too fast. It is a public
28 problem that needs public solutions. If we say we are taking care of ourselves and our families and
29 that we hope our neighbors will, we are all each other's neighbor. Whichever variant it is, it spreads
30 through the air, and this helps. He hoped the board would take this truly minor step, which it is. It
31 is not an infringement of our freedoms.

32 *Renata Sawyer* lives and owns a business in town. Her biggest issue with the mask mandate is it
33 doesn't make sense to her. If she goes to Southern Pie Café with a mask, places her order, and sits
34 down to eat, the moment she sits down she can take her mask off. It's a small room and they are
35 all breathing. Her neighbor next to her is also eating without a mask. They are inside a small
36 establishment without a mask eating. If she gets up to go to the restroom, she will put on her mask.
37 But if she sits down, she takes her mask off. She is still breathing the same air. It doesn't make
38 sense. She also thinks freedom is a big thing and they should have the right to choose if they want
39 it or not. She has heard a lot about being respectful. If you're sick, don't leave the house. Stay
40 home. She thought that was the best way to show respect to your friends and neighbors. She
41 thought it really hurts the businesses. If she goes into her client's home and they ask her to put a
42 mask on and she must sweat for four hours cleaning their house, she tells them she can't do their
43 house, she can't breathe. If she doesn't feel well, she stays home. She expects the same from her
44 clients if they don't feel well. She thought respect starts with your attitude, not with a mandate.

1 *Burleigh Sunflower* doesn't live in town but owns Erskine's Grain and Garden just up the street.
2 He's conflicted on a personal level. He has respiratory issues and has asked his family and others
3 he knows to get vaccinated as soon as possible. He thinks vaccines should be mandated but not
4 masks as how it is written. He struggles with how it would be enforced, and the fines associated
5 with it, and how long it would last. He agreed with those who had spoken against the mandate but
6 was also conflicted because he hears arguments on both sides of freedom and personal health. He
7 falls into the camp of those who should wear a mask and be vaccinated but as a business owner,
8 he doesn't think it should be their responsibility. They worked hard at Erskine's to enforce the
9 state mandates and continued to enforce them after they went away because they had kids on their
10 staff that couldn't get vaccinated until long after the state mandate went away. When they felt
11 comfortable as a business, they decided to let that mandate go away. During that time, he was told
12 to eff off multiple times. He is tired of that. He trusts the people that come into his business do
13 what's right. As a business owner, he does what's right for his customers and tries to treat everyone
14 as they should be treated. He knew a lot of people trust them at his store and they trust them to do
15 what is right. He asked that they be allowed to continue doing that rather than having a mask
16 mandate.

17 *Tim Roper* has been vocal about the topic. His passion about it is coming from a place of caring.
18 He's heard divisive and bully thrown around and he doesn't feel that away at all. He cares about
19 everyone and hopes they care about each other, including him. The question of masking is only
20 coming up because they care. He wants to make sure everyone knows that's where he's coming
21 from and hopes everyone is coming from that position as well. He said wearing a mask wasn't to
22 protect the wearer but the other person. "My mask protects you; your mask protects me." That's
23 why it becomes a public health issue and the reason he is in favor of a mandate. He didn't think
24 everyone understood it, maybe because they didn't want to or couldn't. He didn't think wearing a
25 mask was a hard thing to do. You wear it in a store and when you come out, you take it off. They're
26 not asking a lot, yet they still need to prompt people to do it. Anyone can be asymptomatic whether
27 they are boosted or not. Anyone can carry the virus and not know it. So, to say if you don't feel
28 well, to stay home, well sure, but how do you know? You can spread the virus for days before you
29 have symptoms if you even have symptoms. One of the benefits of vaccinating is the symptoms
30 should be mild. You can still get the virus, but your symptoms should hopefully be milder. He
31 knew that wasn't the case for everyone. He asked the selectboard to step up and make the hard
32 choice and institute a temporary mask mandate in public buildings in Chester.

33 *Garrison Smith* who owns Smitty's in town said he was not in support of a mask mandate. He
34 adopted a mask requirement two weeks before the state required it 15 or 17 months ago. He felt at
35 the time it was the right decision. They made the decision as a business in consultation with several
36 of his key employees. Right now, they are not requiring masks and have debated the issue. He was
37 there tonight after talking to several of his employees. Right now, they don't want to require it.
38 They want to encourage it and most of their employees wear masks but it is up to them as
39 individuals. He doesn't think it's fair to burden businesses with enforcing a mask mandate. He
40 thought it was right for each of them to make their own decision about what is right for their
41 business. There are differing views about whether masks work. To put someone at the register in
42 the middle of enforcing it is wrong.

43 *Patty Goyette* of The Fullerton Inn agreed on the aspect of all business owners present that it's not
44 a lot to ask someone to put a mask on who comes in but to ask an employee to wear one for 16
45 hours when it's not their preference or it's not good for them is a lot. Asking them to monitor

1 everyone who walks in was a lot. She was all for personal choice. She was not for a mandate.

2 *Ian Montgomery* who is a resident of Chester spoke very much in favor of a mask mandate for the
3 Town of Chester. He is part of the group that 1% has died. According to the New York Times
4 earlier this week, anyone who is over the age of 65, 1% have died of COVID. That means 80,000
5 extra people have died of COVID. He thought it was a significant statistic. He regarded it as an
6 item of caring for older people that a mask mandate would be put in. He knew young people were
7 not concerned about dying and maybe he wasn't because he knows where he is going. It seemed
8 to him if we were a caring community, we wear masks. If he had to choose between two stores
9 and he sees someone inside one with a mask he will go in that store and not the one where they
10 aren't wearing a mask. He received an email this week from member of the rotary club indicating
11 he wasn't coming to Chester anymore because our infection rate is far too high. This man is in his
12 80s without an underlying condition. He can hike up mountainsides. Mr. Montgomery thought the
13 question is whether we really care about the community or is it all about me and my freedom. He
14 ended by saying nobody had the freedom to give him COVID.

15 *Lee Herrington* is a resident and part-time employee in Chester. One of the points he heard
16 consistently from folks for the mandate is to protect the elderly and the people at risk next to them
17 in line at a store. He has researched a lot of the statistics around masks and there is a high failure
18 rate depending on the study. Some studies say cloth masks are only 20% effective at stopping
19 particles. Surgical masks are higher and N95 is very high but not 100%. When you enter a store
20 as an at-risk person, and you see everyone masked up you think you're safe but it's not necessarily
21 the case. If a mandate is adopted, there are no enforceable standards for masks. A mask could be
22 various types, even sequins. He believed a mandate would create a false sense of security for the
23 at-risk population. They need to have it reinforced for them whether a mask is worn or not, they
24 are not safe. They need to be vaccinated and take personal protective measures to protect
25 themselves. Anecdotally, looking at how our country has fared against COVID, we have had mask
26 mandates all over the place. He was in Springfield and Claremont today and mask use in both
27 places had upwards to 80/90% in the store, yet the virus is still flourishing. Is it only flourishing
28 because of the 10% of us who aren't wearing masks all the time? He doubted that. He has heard
29 reference to safety and speed limits. We don't set our speed limits to 20 mph in town everywhere.
30 That would be the safe thing to do. We set something more reasonable. We take an acceptable
31 amount of risk in driving our roads. He referenced older cars not being as safe as newer cars, if the
32 brakes work, they are legal on the roads here even though the car is much less safe. We don't make
33 people go out and buy new cars here. He moved to Vermont because it's a more libertarian society.
34 He appreciates those values and feels at home here. He is against mask mandates for all those
35 reasons.

36 *Gentleman Sawyer* – was against the mask mandate. He would respect any business that wanted
37 him to wear a mask. All they need to do is have a sign requiring it and he would abide by it. He
38 didn't think it should be required by the town. It's not required by the state or the federal
39 government. We talk about safety issues that are required by the federal government, but this is
40 not one of them. He was against the mask mandate.

41 *Patricia Benelli* was in favor of a mask mandate. There is absolutely no question that masks work.
42 Every doctor, medical persons, and the CDC say they work, and they stop the spread of this
43 disease. She has heard COVID compared to a common cold. It has killed over 800,000 people in
44 one and a half years in this country. The common cold and flu did not do that. This is going to
45 keep going until and unless we stop the spread. It will continue to mutate. We have the Delta

1 variant and Omicron. It can only survive if it spreads. If it doesn't spread, it goes away. It must
2 find a new host, it must keep going, it must spread. Masks stop the spread, not entirely but they
3 slow it down so much that it's a major factor. Vaccination is a major factor but that wasn't the
4 issue being talked about today. If you're not going to get vaccinated, you have a chance of getting
5 it, dying from it, and spreading it. If you're not vaccinated but you wear a mask, at least it will
6 help to protect others around you. You take your own risk by not getting vaccinated, but you are
7 spreading it to everyone else any time you go into public without a mask. We aren't asking that
8 people mask 24 hours a day. You don't have to wear it in your own home, your car, outdoors, but
9 when you go into public spaces with other people, public town government spaces, stores, the risk
10 there goes up dramatically. It's a simple thing to wear a mask. If there's a rule that says everyone
11 wears a mask when you go into town like our neighboring towns have done, people are going to
12 go there because it's a safer place to go. When someone like skiers come in, like after foliage,
13 Vermont had a surge in COVID. People from all over the country showing up here and sure
14 enough, Vermonters got sick. With ski season coming up, it's going to happen again. If someone
15 wants to come into Chester who is not vaccinated and doesn't want to mask because they feel free
16 to do that and wants to spread COVID in this town, we and our businesses don't need that person.
17 It isn't going to help Chester. It's a community effort. We can't do it one at a time. We must do it
18 as a group. It works. We are slowing it down dramatically with masks. It's the way to save lives
19 and stop this pandemic. She hoped the Town of Chester would impose a mask mandate.

20 *Jesse Bailey* said he had heard it mentioned masks aren't 100% and that should be enough reason
21 not to require them. In his view, seatbelts aren't 100%, but does that mean seatbelts shouldn't be
22 a requirement? If the governor left it up to towns to decide whether to require seatbelts, would
23 Chester not require them? He had heard someone remark that wearing masks gave people a false
24 sense of security and thought medical experts would disagree with that. Even if it gives that sense
25 of security and there's a chance it prevents something, he appreciates that. He likes having that
26 sense of security when he goes into a business or restaurant and doesn't have to worry because
27 there's not a mandate that his server is not wearing a mask out of eyesight because they don't feel
28 like it and therefore putting his health at risk. He has avoided a lot of restaurants because there's
29 that question in his mind. A mask mandate would alleviate that and make him feel more
30 comfortable in going out. Also someone said they would respect any business that would require
31 masks. There are plenty of videos on the internet where someone is told they should wear a mask
32 and they don't, they fight. Great for that person who would respect that, but a lot of people are
33 going to put up a fight. To have a mandate gives more legal ground to that business owner or
34 employee who wants to say it's not their decision but the government's if it makes them feel more
35 comfortable and confident saying please wear a mask in our business for their own health reasons
36 and the health reasons of employees. He didn't see a tangible downside to requiring masks. If
37 people want to say it makes them feel less free, it's just a feeling. To not have a mandate may
38 cause death or they struggle for the rest of their lives with complications just because some people
39 don't feel they should have to wear shirt, shoes, and a mask into a business.

40 *Cathlyn Matraccia* agreed with the previous two speakers wholeheartedly. We're not just talking
41 about people who are relatively young and in great health, we are talking about not only the elderly
42 but also children too young to be vaccinated. And not just talking about business, but she
43 understood the emphasis on business. A lot of economics is involved in it. The meeting they were
44 currently in is a public building and meeting, churches, any place where people are congregating,
45 masks, according to the CDC, according to all the medical evidence, masks work. Do they work
46 100%? Obviously not, but they help. We need help with this horrible virus that is killing people.

1 Killing more than 800,000 people in our country. We also know that 15% plus of Vermonters are
2 not vaccinated. A lot of people coming into state for various reasons, we don't know if they're
3 vaccinated or not. We need to protect ourselves and we need to protect each other as a community.
4 She requested the Selectboard would vote to pass at least a temporary mask mandate that gets us
5 through the holidays, new year season, and ski season and protects us all as a community.

6 *Scott Blair* is owner of the Southern Pie Café and Down to the Roots, and a sports coach in the
7 community, as well as actively helping the community. He is very against having a mask mandate
8 in town because it should be the personal business owners' choices. If the business has a mask
9 mandate and he wants to shop in their store, he will. If he wants to put a mask on, he will shop
10 there. If he doesn't want to put a mask on, he won't shop there. When people come into his shop,
11 they will know whatever makes them comfortable and whatever they feel is safe is what they
12 decide. I'm not the one to decide that if they're coming to my business and that's what my choice
13 is. We've been told since COVID started: let's get vaccinated, let's get masked, let's get the
14 vaccination rate in our state above 80%. What are we at now? When is enough enough and we're
15 going to be able to live our life again? He has multiple business on The Green, helps the kids, and
16 coaches, so he must mask up to coach. He isn't against doing that because it's what he is asked by
17 the community he works for. He has staff in his businesses that will quit if they must mask. They
18 feel more comfortable being able to show their customers their smiles. They feel more comfortable
19 not having to deal with a customer not wanting to wear a mask, which has happened before. He
20 questioned the idea of calling the police every single time and then referred to nearby communities
21 who have implemented mask mandates and said they are unenforceable rules. He said he could go
22 to Ludlow and into a business and would not have to wear a mask if the owner didn't feel
23 comfortable about it. He thought it was all a waste of everyone's time. He said the Selectboard had
24 a lot more to worry about than an unenforceable rule. He said multiple business owners felt like
25 he did and said he was told to name those business owners but that wasn't his responsibility. He's
26 on The Green and is very active in the community and hears a lot of input from a lot of people.

27 *Robert Nied* said we have been in the pandemic for almost two years, and it's been hard on
28 everyone: individuals, communities, and businesses. But it's also been hard on young people. It's
29 been two years and if you're 10, 13, 18, or even 20, two years is a big piece of your life to put on
30 hold. Young people have been denied opportunities in socialization, recreation, and we've seen a
31 rise in depression and anxiety among young people. The thought of this two-year pandemic turning
32 into a five-year pandemic, or a ten-year pandemic is heartbreaking when you consider the children.
33 As a parent, he thought they had an obligation to the community to do everything they can.
34 Everything doesn't mean the parts of everything are perfect. It doesn't mean they work all the
35 time. The science is clear it helps. We have an obligation to do everything we can to slow the
36 spread of the virus and bring the pandemic to an end so our kids/young people can have a
37 reasonable shot at a decent quality of life and to be able to grow up in something closer to normal.
38 He would really support a mask mandate in the Town of Chester. He heard comments previously
39 and has seen them online concerning if there was a mask mandate and wondered when it would
40 end. He asked the Selectboard to consider a 30-day mask mandate trial and revisit it at the next
41 meeting. If it turned out that it didn't work, or help, or there was too much opposition, don't renew
42 it.

43 *Linda Diak* has a business in the village. She apologized to the Selectboard for having to do this,
44 as she thought the state should have done it. She knew it was difficult and appreciated their
45 willingness to take it up. She thanked Mike Alon for his point about small businesses. If they go

1 down, they go down. In the meantime, they shoulder an awful lot of cost. Every month they must
2 make, produce, and sell close to \$6,000 worth of goods just to pay their health insurance. Their
3 costs have risen a lot. This coming year they will pay \$22,000 out-of-pocket just for insurance, not
4 including deductibles and stuff. There is enough science and data that we know masks work. Mask
5 mandates work to raise compliance. They are unenforceable but that brings to the point everyone
6 is making about freedom of choice. It is unenforceable but it increases compliance and community
7 safety. The choice for many of us who believe in masks and protecting ourselves and neighbors is
8 removed when businesses don't require masks for themselves, or employees go out into the
9 community after having been exposed all day long to scores of people if they're doing well.
10 Without masking or protection, they're more likely to spread it amongst the community.

11 *Robert Mancuso* is fully vaccinated on the advice of his doctors and wasn't wearing a mask. He
12 thought it should be a choice. If he goes to Laomainn's or the hotel for dinner, he walks in and
13 takes the mask off and is there for hours with people coming and going. If you have exceptions to
14 mask wearing, you shouldn't have any. The bottom line is who will enforce it and what kind of
15 fines. And if someone takes us to court, how much will the town pay in legal fees? It is coming
16 down to a personal choice. If you want to mask and stay away from people, that's fine, but it should
17 be up to us.

18 *Polly Montgomery* lives in Chester and encouraged the Selectboard to craft something helpful for
19 businesses and the public to know that they believe masks help and want to work toward the health
20 of the community. She felt their leadership was so important, so if she was a business owner, she
21 would have the backing of the Selectboard for putting a sign on her door that they must wear a
22 mask to enter the establishment and she would be covered. She could say our town believes
23 wearing a mask is helpful. As someone who works in retail, she has a sign on her door requiring
24 masks. If someone doesn't want to wear a mask, she tells them sorry. It makes her feel protected
25 inside the establishment if masks are required. She encouraged the board to craft something that
26 will bridge all of it. She trusted them to do it and not be quiet.

27 *Jerry Husey* had listened to both sides and had been vocal on social media about this topic in
28 Chester. He and a lot of others feel if someone who owns a business feels comfortable with
29 someone not wearing a mask, that should 100% be up to them. If the state experts who we have
30 all been told since the beginning to listen to are saying that they already have tools in place to
31 combat COVID and that the numbers don't warrant mandating a mask, he wasn't sure why it
32 should trickle down to local government trying to make the decision. He believed in the town he
33 loves; people will make the right decision without being forced to do so. He thought Springfield
34 was a perfect example of what should be done. They compromised. In town buildings, they are
35 asking people to mask. They are putting out guidance and educating people on what masks will do
36 and how they will help reduce risks and giving each business the power to choose for themselves.
37 He thought everyone was right. It shouldn't be someone worrying about someone else giving them
38 COVID. When you drive down the road, you shouldn't have to worry about someone speeding
39 and smashing into you, but those are the risks we take every day. Until it makes sense across the
40 board, he didn't think we should be making it the businesses' problem to require it for everyone
41 to shop in their buildings. In addition, it will dump gas on an already raging fire. People will fight
42 amongst each other, self-policing, and he was sure the police department has better things to do
43 than getting 200 calls a week for no masking. He thought it was simple and should be left up to
44 the businesses and if you're not comfortable, you don't have to go in there.

45 *James Goodfellow* said he had listened very carefully. He thought it was a good point if citizens

1 and residents of Chester must go into a particular building like the post office or Town Hall or
2 buildings where they must conduct business and are required to go in, then absolutely masks should
3 be required. If he looks into the window of a restaurant and sees people not wearing masks, he
4 won't go into that establishment. Over Thanksgiving, he visited relatives in Manhattan and there,
5 every place requires proof of vaccination. They had to show their cards. New York has an app
6 where they could upload their information and show it on their phone to be allowed any access to
7 a building. Today Manhattan mandates masks unless the business also requires proof of
8 vaccination. Masks work and are an important weapon in this battle. It's not a perfect weapon, but
9 it does work, and he thought we should do whatever we can to fight the disease as effectively as
10 we can. If it is so important that people have the choice not to wear a mask in particular businesses,
11 then so be it. Many of us won't frequent those businesses anymore. He thought for a minimum,
12 any government building where people are required to go to get their business accomplished, they
13 should be required to wear a mask. He said the infection rate for COVID in Manhattan today is
14 about 1.1 or 1.2%. The infection rate in Vermont is over 4%. In Windsor County, it's surging and
15 in Chester, he thought it was well over 4%. Those are the facts and he hoped they made the right
16 decision and trusted in the board's management.

17 *Sarah Yake* from Andover who has been owner of Salon 2000 since 1992 had been cleaning the
18 salon between clients and wearing masks and following the governor's mandate for the last year
19 and a half. She felt they had learned a lot. They are smart people who want to stay in business and
20 don't have to be told to put a sign on the door. We respect every person who sits in their chair. If
21 they are more comfortable with them masking, that's what they do. If she feels uncomfortable, she
22 puts a mask on but that is her choice. They know how to clean and be extra careful. They don't
23 want to jeopardize what they're doing anymore than going to someone else's business, but they
24 don't need to be told.

25 *Marilyn Mahusky* said she had joined late so she hadn't heard everyone before her, only the last
26 few. She saw it as a public health issue. She thought when the governor ordered masks before the
27 benefit of being able to be vaccinated, they reduced the spread of COVID in the state and they
28 were leading the nation in the numbers. She respected those who had a different view than hers
29 but if there were local businesses not complying with a mask mandate, she would be less likely to
30 visit those businesses and would take her business where she felt there was a respect for public
31 health. She heard on the radio yesterday morning that over 800,000 people had died of COVID.
32 She also heard that every single one of those people had friends and family who were affected by
33 their death. She is one of those people who was affected by the death of someone who died of
34 COVID. She lost her twin brother to COVID this year on August 9th. He was not vaccinated and
35 didn't mask. She will experience that loss for the rest of her life. It's a horrible pain to watch
36 someone die of COVID. They cannot catch their breath. She didn't see it as a choice issue but a
37 public health issue and encouraged the town to view it in that vein and encourage people to mask
38 by having a mask mandate. She didn't think the issue was enforcement but that it was working
39 together as a community to protect the members of our community who we care about whether we
40 share their same point of view or not.

41 *Gentleman Terry* thought they were on the fence over safety and freedom. It is a divisive issue and
42 a decision everyone seems to have an idea about but it's just about a way of moving forward. You
43 can find statistics everywhere you go. Whatever side of the aisle you're on, it's just a matter of
44 knowing we all have different perspectives because of our upbringings, what news we look at, and
45 where we get things. At the end of the day if we can respect one another as a neighbor and our

1 personal decisions, that's all we can ask for.

2 *Sharon Baker* owns two businesses on The Green: Sharon's on the Common for almost 12 years;
3 and she opened a candy shop this last spring. She has people walking in her door every single day
4 with a face mask on and they peek around the door and ask if they must wear it. She tells everyone
5 to do what works for them. She's not going to enforce anything to make anyone feel
6 uncomfortable. 70% to 80% of the people who walk in her door wear a face mask and wear it the
7 whole time they're there. She's at least 6 to 8 feet behind the counter most of the time and it's a
8 very amiable situation. She is not going to feel comfortable telling people they can't come in her
9 shop if they don't mask. It's not her place to tell them how to live their lives.

10 28 people had spoken to the board on the issue. Arne said, as a board, they needed to decide
11 whether they were going to pursue a mandate or a recommendation. He welcomed comments
12 and/or concerns from any of the board member regarding the issue.

13 Jeff Holden wanted to be clear where he stood. He said he would not vote for a mask mandate nor
14 vote for putting a rule in place. He said they were totally unenforceable and could take on liabilities
15 for the town. They could put a sign on their door asking patrons to wear a mask. He would respect
16 that by either putting on a mask or not entering. It's his choice. If a business puts a sign on the
17 door that they don't want people in there with a mask, that's the only time it's enforceable. You
18 can ask them to leave and if they don't, you can call the police and they can be removed for
19 trespassing. That is the only time law enforcement can get involved. He lost his cousin to COVID.
20 He spent 12 years in the Air Force and came out with lung cancer and they removed part of his
21 lung. He was aware of his risks, and it was his choice, he knew exactly what he was doing. He
22 held up a box of the blue disposable masks that everyone wears. He said right on the box it stated
23 they filtered out dust, particulates, smoke, and pollen and on the back, it stated the mask does not
24 remove the risk of contracting any disease or infection. He then he held up one that he said was
25 more like an N95 and was more stringent and stated on the back it cautioned for patients with
26 severe respiratory diseases, COPD, cardiovascular diseases, and pregnant women should use the
27 mask with caution. He said anyone knows it reduces your oxygen intake and that's why those
28 people are cautioned not to use them. As a side note he stated that it was interesting all the masks
29 were made in China. He said there was another warning on a box he couldn't find to bring that
30 stated the mask would not protect you from viruses or infections. Jeff did not see them getting
31 involved in any mandates or rules that did not guarantee protection. He said he respects everyone's
32 opinions but one thing he was not happy about was that he has lived in Chester all his life and
33 someone saying they don't care because they're not making a mask mandate is downright
34 disrespectful in his book. None of them would be sitting up there if they didn't care about the
35 community. They must take a lot of heat and a lot of grief. They don't all see eye to eye and have
36 differing opinions, but they work together and try to do the best for the community. They are up
37 there because they care and are doing the best they can. He stated again he would not vote for a
38 mandate or rule.

39 Lee said the issue for him boiled down to their jurisdiction and what they could require as leaders
40 of the town. He didn't feel they could require businesses to do something, and they shouldn't be
41 in the business of telling them how to run their business. He thought it should be up to the business
42 owner whether they wanted to implement a mask requirement. He didn't think they had the
43 authority to tell someone in their town how to run their business. Lee said science aside, and there
44 is a lot of controversy out there, he didn't think that was the issue. He thought the issue was whether
45 as town leaders they could impose something on the town that the state wasn't willing to do. From

1 his perspective, he would be against any kind of mask mandate because he didn't think they had
2 the jurisdiction.

3 Leigh was glad so many people came out and showed interest in this issue. She wanted the board
4 to think about what Springfield had done. She wasn't prepared to bring information about it
5 tonight. She said it was a resolution and thought it answered a lot of the questions business owners
6 had in the respect of how they will respond to people coming into their businesses with or without
7 a mask. It wasn't a mandate but a resolution they came up with. Since they had heard a lot of
8 conversation tonight which she valued highly, she wanted to think about looking at it more closely
9 and coming back at the next meeting or have a warned special meeting. She said she was still
10 absorbing the good words she heard and the information she took in. She didn't want to jump yet.
11 She had thoughts of what she wanted to see.

12 Lee said someone had mentioned Springfield and the decision they came to requiring masks in
13 public buildings. Arne and Leigh, both said it was in their own town buildings. Lee added they
14 can't mandate state or federal buildings. They agreed.

15 Arne thought their recommendation was worded more like a suggestion than a mandate. He said
16 there was no enforcement but stated ideas they wished people would follow. Arne said they can
17 mandate and there are legal avenues to enforce it, but it was a whole other can of worms. It was a
18 whole other process involving the police, and fines, and civil authorities.

19 Lee said it sounded like they had the authority to require it and Arne confirmed. Lee knew other
20 mandates that had been thrown out as unconstitutional in the U.S., so he wondered where they
21 were getting their information from.

22 Arne said they were a Dillon state where the only authority they have is what's given to them by
23 the state government. He brought the legislature back into session as basically a compromise
24 because he didn't want to do the mandate but wanted to give the towns the authority to do it. In
25 the bill that was passed, they have the authority. They can do it civilly or criminally. He thought
26 there was a sunset of 45 days and then it could go for another 30 days. It gave the town the authority
27 if they want to do it. It was not a requirement, but a tool offered to towns if they want to take this
28 action.

29 Heather said she respected everyone's time, energy, and perspective for coming on Zoom and to
30 Town Hall to let them know. She sensed a lot of frustration. She too was frustrated with the long-
31 term pandemic. She was respectful of everyone's opinions. She comes from it as a nurse and
32 someone with a master's in community health. As a politician, she understands they want to listen
33 to everyone and make the right decision. Her basic early on education is as a nurse with a master's
34 in community health. She feels it's a public safety issue and there is an arsenal of things they can
35 use, and one is a mask. We now have a vaccine which is good. She said it was emotional for her.
36 She said there had been a great deal of suffering for them individually and physically and for the
37 country and the world. You knew something was going on when Italy closed. It's been a hell of a
38 ride in economics. She is a small business owner and respects where they are coming from. She
39 thought government serves a purpose in this world. She calls Jeff when she wants to burn because
40 if it's dry, he tells her she can't do it. But if it's wet, she can do that. During the recent 272-mile-
41 long tornado, the government stepped in to tell people there's a warning. Her problem is we have
42 businesses and tell them it's their choice. She believes in free choice and that people should be
43 able to make decisions for their families and themselves. She thought government needed a way
44 of letting people know the infection rate. She had heard that 10% of Chester's population was

1 positive. She wished the governor who has an epidemiologist at his disposal took more action. She
2 thought he abdicated his responsibility so that they are here, and she didn't like where they were.
3 She thought they needed to send up a flag to people over the holiday. She told Lee she didn't agree
4 that they could kick it down the road for two weeks. They need a way of telling people COVID is
5 prevalent in our community and it's high. The risk you have and the decisions that follow should
6 be made with the best information you have. At the very least, she thought they should have a
7 recommendation and she thought they were in it for the long haul. She said they tell people about
8 the quality of the air, and they tell people about weather. These are ways the government tells
9 people a storm is coming may they not want to go down freeway. She thought as a government
10 they should be able to tell people their prevalence is high now. She recommended they have a
11 recommendation because she didn't think a mandate would pass. She wanted a recommendation
12 that they put signs up saying they recommend a mask because prevalence is high right now. She
13 thought they needed to do something to let people know and then they can make the decision
14 themselves. The government has that right and power. The nurse, public health, and government
15 person in her wanted people to know and that's how she felt. She thought they needed to honor
16 the amount of suffering that each one of us has experienced in different ways over the last year
17 and a half and she didn't think their suffering was over.

18 Arne thought they all agreed with the statements Heather made. He has a hard time sometimes
19 with some of the discussions he's heard about anti-maskers and anti-mask mandate and said there
20 was a big difference. He is not anti-mask but is against the government telling him he must wear
21 a mask.

22 Heather said it's the time of year that most religions celebrate our fellow man. To just have us
23 come together more as a community and let others know our prevalence is high, she thought the
24 mask mandate is what people see. If you're going down the road too fast, we have the flashing
25 light that lets you know. We need a flashing light to let visitors in town know. As a nurse, she talks
26 about underlying conditions. She knows she has a few underlying conditions. She said everyone
27 does but may not know it. We all have vulnerabilities as humans and as we age, we have more.
28 But she thought they needed to let people know.

29 Lee was confused what Heather's recommendation would look like.

30 Heather said the governor and legislative session had left it up to them. She said they abdicated
31 their responsibility. She felt in her seat, she had the responsibility to let our community know our
32 prevalence is high.

33 Lee asked how she would do that.

34 Heather mentioned Michael's suggestion of having signs on every door that the Selectboard
35 recommends you wear a mask because our prevalence is high. Business owners can say, "C'mon
36 in." But at least it would be something to make people aware. She would do it for a month.

37 Lee asked who would pay for it and who would enforce it and if they were going to recommend
38 that everyone puts a sign in their window.

39 Arne said no that it was up to the business owner if they wanted to put the sign in their window to
40 reinforce whatever policy they have. Arne said if they pass a resolution and business owners want
41 to use it, fine. It will give them backup if they want to use it. If they don't, they don't have to.

42 Lee suggested if someone wanted to crank out a bunch of signs and put online and be respectful
43 of others who may not be aware the prevalence is high.

1 Arne thought a statement like that would carry weight because it was from town government. It's
2 not required, but here's a recommendation. This is what we think and whether you use this tool or
3 not, it's up to the individual.

4 Lee questioned the impact it could have on the small business owner if someone came into town,
5 and he wasn't sure where the first sign they would see would be. He asked if they would be posted
6 on the town highways and website because his concern was it would stop people from coming to
7 Chester because the prevalence was high and skip the small business owner who is struggling to
8 make ends meet. He was curious how it would affect the small business owner.

9 Arne said the wording could be something different than the prevalence is high. He thought there
10 was a way to make it serious and clear without scaring people. He added if it is high, they were
11 just being honest.

12 Heather said if they prevent one person's death or profound suffering, she thought they would all
13 want to do that. She didn't think there was anyone in the room, on Zoom, or the lovely town we
14 live in who wanted another individual to be harmed. It would just prevent people from suffering
15 more from this horrific pandemic.

16 Leigh added that it would remind people where we are, and Heather agreed.

17 Jeff asked where they were getting the information that the prevalence was high. He thought in the
18 last two years that the information had been all over the place. He said the gentleman on Zoom
19 said he went to New York City and said their transmission rate was down to 1% and in Vermont
20 it's 4%. We're a community of 3,300 people, not 8.5 million, so how does that figure in there?

21 Leigh told him if he went to Vermont.gov, he could see on a daily or every other day basis where
22 the numbers are by town, county, and throughout the whole state. They also keep track of schools.

23 Jeff said we were still getting infected, but he hadn't heard of any deaths lately.

24 Leigh said there were deaths. Jeff said not like there had been to which Leigh responded thankfully
25 that the earlier deaths were before vaccinations and boosters existed.

26 Lee didn't know that they should be chasing the science into things. He thought there was an
27 impact, but the question came down to how as a board would they address the question before
28 them: do they implement a mask mandate or something else? Regardless of how they felt about
29 why they should or shouldn't do that, he thought that was the question before them. He said they
30 could spend all afternoon or the rest of the evening talking about how each of them interpreted the
31 science. He thought the issue was what to do about the suggestion that has been made about
32 mandating mask use in town.

33 Arne asked Lee if the question was whether they mandate masks.

34 Lee said what was suggested to them was Chester implement a mask mandate and that's why they
35 were there discussing the issue. Either they issue a mask mandate or not, or something in between.

36 Heather said or they make a recommendation.

37 Lee agreed or a recommendation which wasn't a mandate.

38 Heather added it could be re-evaluated in a month at the second meeting in January.

39 Lee was still having an issue with it because they were requiring a business or strongly
40 recommending something. It goes against what he thought personal responsibility was all about.

1 He said he understood where they were coming from, but he is taking a different approach.

2 Heather said there weren't two ways of looking at it, but hundreds. Lee joked it was 28 so far.

3 Heather said they have a town of over 3,000 so they probably have that many different opinions.

4 She asked what they could do to make people safe in their community while respecting other

5 people's perspectives that are a little different than hers.

6 Arne said the issue has always been framed as two sides: us or them. It wasn't that straightforward

7 or easy. When we do that, it divides everyone and gets ugly and is two different camps. That's not

8 who we are or how are town is. We are a lot more diverse than two issues that pop up. They're

9 serious and scary. He didn't think it was going to go away. He didn't think it would go away with

10 a mandate or anything. He said he could start ranting and raving about the medical system and

11 how it's money bound and the pharmaceuticals are making bookoo billions of dollars in profit at

12 the suffering of the people of the world and not sharing their intellectual property with the rest of

13 the world. He said it wouldn't go away if everyone in the country was vaccinated because some

14 other variant would roll in there and they would go through it next month. He said it scared the

15 hell out of him sometimes.

16 Lee reiterated his question of what they were doing there at the meeting.

17 Heather offered to make a motion.

18 Heather moved that the Selectboard recommends mask wearing in public places until January 19th

19 to be re-evaluated at that time. It was seconded by Leigh. Arne asked if there was discussion.

20 Lee said the motion sounded very unclear to him. He asked for clarification on public places and

21 Heather said indoor public places. Lee said he wasn't sure what it would look like and asked if it

22 was a poster or sign and would it go on the town's website.

23 Heather thought they could put it on the town's website, and they could do a poster that businesses

24 could print out and put in their window. She offered to do the poster if they wanted and then there

25 would be no charge, only a printing cost if people print it out.

26 Arne said he didn't want to wait two weeks to do something like this but wanted a day or two to

27 research and word something that was crafted a little more formal with their approval on it and

28 then come back.

29 Lee agreed and said he couldn't vote for the motion because it was too unclear to him of what the

30 ramifications would be.

31 Arne suggested they craft something in the next couple of days and come back for a special

32 meeting on Friday or Monday and table it until the next meeting. Leigh said it was too far out and

33 Arne clarified they could table it until the next special meeting with only this item on the agenda.

34 It was an idea, or they could stay with the motion as stated and vote.

35 Lee called for a vote on Heather's motion.

36 Heather asked if he wanted to see the poster in the next two days and Lee said he wanted more

37 details on what it would look like. He said the poster would be great to see what the wording is.

38 He also wanted to see how it would get disseminated.

39 Jeff said he had total respect for what Heather was trying to say or do but at that point, he was a

40 nay. They had the information for two years and everyone was aware. Like Lee, he was afraid it

1 was going to adversely affect their businesses.

2 Heather said everyone didn't know. We were the best managed state with COVID and now they're
3 vaccinated a certain amount and seeing surges. She asked how they would communicate with
4 people in their community and people visiting the community that the rates are up.

5 Lee answered Vermont.gov. where they could see what the rates are. He said from his perspective,
6 he saw them putting extra work out there to do it when the information is readily available.

7 Heather thought they should be more proactive.

8 Arne said the information was readily available, but it seemed like it was more of a personal
9 statement from the board specific to the town, specific to those five.

10 Lee said he wasn't against it but wanted to see details. He said he, like Jeff, couldn't vote in favor
11 of the motion as it stood because there wasn't enough information. If Heather withdrew it and they
12 tabled it and recommend that they meet in two days with specifics, he was happy to do that.

13 There was discussion about postponing until a specific time and they decided to table it until Friday
14 at 6:00 p.m.

15 Arne welcomed brief comments about the discussion.

16 *Burleigh Sunflower* of Erskine's, as a member of the business community, said the
17 recommendation piece which wasn't part of the earlier discussion was okay. He could get on board
18 with it. He didn't want to enforce a mandate but would love to put up a sign that said the Chester
19 community recommends you wear a mask because of XYZ.

20 *Scott Blair* said division has been an issue and doing this if you don't agree with the
21 recommendation will divide him from other businesses putting it up. If they have their personal
22 preference to put up a sign that recommends it is completely different than the town supporting it.
23 From his perspective, if the board is recommending to him to put it up in his window and his
24 neighbor puts it up and he doesn't, they're telling the customers going to their business and coming
25 to his.

26 Arne interrupted Scott and told him that they weren't recommending what their business should
27 or should not do. The board told Scott it would be available to him whether he wanted it. Scott
28 said what that was doing in his eyes was setting a line of division between the people who wanted
29 to print it off saying they're taking the support of their Selectboard, and the next-door neighbor is
30 not. He said those were his personal feelings.

31 *Scott Kendall* said he thought a sign saying they would support a business who opted to have a
32 mask mandate in their business.

33 Heather mentioned the legalities of someone catches COVID and they said they don't need a mask.

34 *Scott Kendall* asked if someone decided someone couldn't come in their business because they
35 weren't wearing a mask it was trespass.

36 Jeff said whether COVID was happening or not, if a property owner asks someone to leave and
37 they don't leave, it's trespass.

38 Arne said it wasn't any easy decision and they weren't in an easy place.

39 Leigh said they were not trying to do the enforcement piece but something they can be with - the
40 community, the businesses, and the people who live there and help everyone stay safe. If she

1 handed out a poster or flyer and the business owner chooses not to put it in their window, it's fine,
2 but it's there for them. It's something they support as a town governmental body and hope it would
3 work for all of them.

4 *Garrison Smith* asked them to be careful with the wording of the sign. They talked about infection
5 rates in Chester being prevalent and then someone threw out a 10% threshold. He honestly didn't
6 believe there were 300 people in Chester who currently tested positive. He said there was a 10-day
7 quarantine period, and they threw out 6 weeks until mid to late January when the next meeting will
8 be when they're going to have the sign up. The infection rates today are different than what they
9 will be in 10 days, 15 days, and in 30 days. If you come up with a sign that says stay out of Chester
10 because our infection rates are high, he promised he wouldn't put it up. If they came up with a sign
11 that said the Town of Chester strongly recommends wearing a mask in our community, he was
12 100% supportive. He said if they were careful with the wording, he would be 100% supportive. If
13 it was a big red sign that says please don't come to our town, he would not be supportive.

14 Heather said it was a discussion and thought they had a responsibility to let visitors and people in
15 the town know.

16 *Garrison* agreed. He said it was part of the Vermont.gov website. He wants a sign that says be
17 safe. He thought listening to the conversation that there was a road they could go down that
18 infection rates are high, therefore we want you to wear a mask. He would not support that. He
19 would support a well-worded sign 100% and would be happy to come back to the next meeting
20 and listen to that debate and offer his thoughts.

21 *Mr. Goodfellow* wanted to clarify that the 10% remark he thought one of the Selectboard members
22 had made. The Chester Telegraph reporting Vermont statistics just a couple of days ago said there
23 were 367 residents of Chester who have had COVID. Since the population is about 3,600, that
24 means about 10% of the town has had COVID, not currently, but has had COVID. He thought that
25 was where the 10% number was coming from.

26 *Roy Spaulding* of Gassetts asked if they were going to vote tonight on whether it was a mask
27 mandate.

28 Arne said there would not be a mask mandate.

29 Leigh said they would be having their next meeting on Friday at 6:00 p.m. to discuss
30 recommendations.

31 Jeff thought they had beat it to death and agreed with tabling until Friday and maybe they all would
32 be able to gather their thoughts better.

33 Arne thanked everyone for coming.

34 (Brief recess.)

35 **Agenda Item 5, General Fund Budget Review: Parks and Recreation, Public Works**
36 **(Highway)**

37 Arne announced the next item on the agenda. He asked if Kirby had stuck it out, but he was unable
38 to due to the sleet and freezing rain.

39 Julie said parks and recreation began on page 7 and ended on page 9. She said not much had
40 changed but Matt was there to give his report.

1 Matt McCarthy agreed with Julie that not much had changed. He called attention to page 9 and
2 said the tennis courts were getting redone. They allotted \$16,000 for the project.

3 Arne asked if it would be torn up and completely repaved. Matt said they fill the cracks in and
4 repaint it with two coats including all the lines. Arne asked if he was going to include pickle ball
5 lines. Matt said he was, but he wasn't sure if they would do it after it was finished or if the company
6 would.

7 Julie mentioned the \$16,000 could potentially get pulled out and put into the ARPA money.

8 Matt said not much had changed from the last couple of years.

9 Arne asked what the final verdict was on the skateboard park. Matt thought they had received a
10 50/50 matching grant. Julie said the skate park would be eligible for ARPA money also because
11 it's an outdoor space. An argument would have to make about the use of public space. She said a
12 lot of towns were using it for those types of things and they were getting the blessing.

13 Arne asked if there were any questions from board members or concerns about the budget and
14 recreation.

15 Leigh asked if the plumbing issues at pool from last summer had been resolved.

16 Matt said not 100%. The guy who had done the work in the past had died unexpectedly. They have
17 the parts but don't have a maintenance person. Arne came in last year and plugged what they
18 needed to get them through the summer. The pool is running on 3 filters instead of 4. They have
19 the 4th filter, but it's just not installed. Arne asked and Matt explained what area of the pool was
20 going to be redone.

21 Arne said it was a mess down there and Jeff said it needed to be gutted out and put in reasonable
22 form. Matt agreed. Arne said it was a disaster waiting to happen.

23 Arne asked Matt how everything else was going. He said it was going well and was fortunate to
24 use the schools and wanted to thank them. He said it was good to see the kids. They discussed
25 painting the Sysco trailer, as it seemed like an advertisement and billboards aren't allowed in
26 Vermont.

27 Julie updated the board. The numbers didn't include the warrant that was just signed and there
28 were 2 payrolls. They also have another 2 ½ weeks of revenue. Things could fluctuate
29 significantly. The highway has deficit of about 50,000 but an overall surplus of 124,000 so it has
30 helped. Their budget will see an increase in 2022 mostly due to the bond plan. Line 7401 was up
31 from 155 to 219 and was simply because of the bonds now becoming due. Line 7600, capital plan
32 transfer, the 199.9 includes paying 40,000 cash for one of the pickup trucks. The town is looking
33 at a \$120,000 deficit. 50,000 of it being highway and the rest to the general fund. The largest
34 contributor to the deficit was the cost overrun from the EMS building that they weren't anticipating
35 but at end of day, they've done well. They put security systems in all the buildings which wasn't
36 anticipated, cost overruns in emergency services into 6 figures, and to end up in COVID year with
37 pricing at this deficit, the auditors said was lucky. Julie was comfortable with it. She asked the
38 auditors how to handle the deficit. After running numbers, they thought if they let the deficit fall
39 into the fund balance, at end of 2021 the fund balance would be about \$340,000. Arne asked if that
40 was with the deficit and Julie confirmed. She and Josh had discussed the issue and agreed that's
41 why you have a healthy fund balance. Again, she said it was an unaudited number because 2021
42 had not been audited. That was another reason not to always raise taxes when there's a deficit or

1 surplus. Currently, she felt comfortable letting it fall into fund balance.

2 They know they will have cost overruns in 2022. Russell is doing an estimate of how much the
3 cost overrun will be on the highway. She said they needed to think about how they will handle it
4 in 2022. The project will be about \$1 million. Originally the cost overrun was \$140,000. No change
5 orders have been necessary, so she thought things were going well. She has asked them to do an
6 assessment about what they were anticipating. She said if they financed a pickup truck for four
7 years, that would free up \$40,000. Another option was to not budget it at all.

8 Arne asked what the goal was for the fund balance and Julie said 500.

9 Jeff asked if it would help eliminate any need for a TAN note. Julie said the fund balance is what
10 allowed them to only borrow \$200,000.

11 Julie said in the current day they would probably have an increase in taxes. Currently, it was about
12 \$50,000 or just over a penny. She said the board should consider what is an acceptable amount.
13 That would determine how they handle the cost overrun in highway that they know is coming. If
14 a penny is it, and they want to budget \$100,000 for the town garage, then something needs to get
15 cut.

16 Arne said the issue was that the town needs a certain amount of money and how do they want to
17 raise it. Julie agreed.

18 Jeff asked where they were at on the gravel pit. Julie said they were poking around up there and
19 should have an idea next year what material they have. She is budgeting conservatively because
20 they're not in the ground yet. For 2022, they had planned to budget conservatively, but it was up
21 to the board. Her plan was to budget conservatively for a couple years until they're really in there
22 and see what they have for material.

23 Arne asked what the reaction was when they scraped the surface. Julie said they were finding
24 material in some places and not in some places. Kirby was not necessarily concerned about finding
25 material, but where on there is the largest supply. It will take some time. She told him he needs to
26 find enough material to pay for what it cost to get the permit. He assured her he would.

27 Arne asked if they were going to do anything about some of the glitches that came up that cost
28 them money. He said it may be a different topic, but it was related to the budget because it cost
29 them money. Julie agreed.

30 January 5th, they must have the numbers because town meeting is early this year on February 28th
31 because of the way the calendar falls which is set by the state.

32 There was discussion about what the numbers were last year. Currently, this year it's \$50,000
33 which equates to a penny. Jeff said that was pretty good considering the past year and a half.

34 Arne added the way inflation has gone; he was worried it may not be enough.

35 Heather didn't like when a buffer was added to the budget so that it looked good at the end for no
36 reason but given this uncertain atmosphere, she felt uncomfortable not having a buffer. Jeff agreed.

37 Heather suggested more than a penny.

38 Julie said the auditors' suggestion was unless you significantly cut a service that you're offering
39 or take a dramatic hit to your budget, there's no way to level the budget this year.

40 Lee thought while it's a good idea to have some surplus built into the budget, most people who are

1 paying the taxes don't have that built into their budget. He thought they should be as frugal as
2 possible in the next year or two when things are so uncertain.

3 Julie had talked with the department heads and it was a needs only budget this year.

4 Lee said he appreciated Julie having those conversations.

5 Julie said they would have some cushion in highway if she took the truck out and put it into the
6 capital plan. She was hesitant to do it because they would just have to pay it later.

7 Lee asked how much more it cost when they finance. Julie said the current bank rates were 2%.
8 2% of 40,000.

9 Jeff said the capital plan had its place but didn't think they should load it up with budget items.

10 Heather thought it was okay if the used it for things they pay over time, especially when interest
11 rates were low. Arne said especially for big ticket items.

12 Jeff said it had been a rough year for things breaking because they're getting old.

13 Julie said in 2022 when they discuss ARPA funding, there may be things in the budget that ARPA
14 would cover. She has been applying for every grant that is rolling out, so some of the items may
15 also get funded by grant money which will lessen what they spend and give more flexibility.

16 Julie said sidewalks would start next year and Popple Dungeon would be done next year.

17 There wasn't a lot being added to the capital plan this year. The big addition was the paving budget.
18 Kirby and Julie had gone back and forth about doing Andover Road this year, but they won't be
19 eligible for the two for one paving money this year. The first year they would be eligible is 2023,
20 so they will postpone doing that. At the same time as Andover Road is paved, they will replace all
21 the culverts on the road because many are deteriorated. This year it would be minor paving with
22 the town garage being the big piece. They would add into that bond the remainder of Popple
23 Dungeon and the remainder of Route 35. She felt comfortable adding them because they were
24 originally funded by a bond.

25 The capital fund wasn't looking too bad.

26 Arne asked for questions and there were none.

27 Julie announced the next meeting would be library facilities.

28 **Agenda Item 6, Cell Tower Lease: T-Mobile resign lease**

29 Arne said there were changes on the lease from T-Mobile's attorney. Julie said she was thoroughly
30 annoyed because after the board signed it, it still had to go to their attorney which wasn't protocol.
31 The changes were minor. The biggest involved notifications of relocating the tower. The board
32 needed to sign the lease again because of the minor changes. Julie said Jim was good with
33 everything. Julie said what signing their legal department already signed. Jeff said it was getting
34 busy up there and Julie agreed.

35 Heather moved to sign the T-Mobile lease regarding the cell tower. Lee seconded the motion. The
36 motion carried unanimously, and the lease was signed.

37 **Agenda Item 7, New Business/Next Agenda**

38 Julie said the next meeting on the 29th would have budget and hopefully updates on Yosemite. If
39 not, at the following meeting. Jeff asked if they wanted to address parking issues regarding The

1 Green. Julie said the Planning Commission met and discussed recommendations regarding
2 Cobleigh Street parking they would like to see the board address. It would be discussed on a future
3 agenda. She was thinking mid-January when the budget was set and off the table. Julie thought the
4 other needed parking would be part of ARPA funding. Arne said idea of changing the street and
5 making more parking was a good idea when it was first presented. Jeff said Avon Street in front
6 of Salon 2000 would be one-way. Julie said it would be on a future agenda.

7

8

Agenda Item 8, Adjourn

9 Lee moved to adjourn, and Leigh seconded it. The motion passed unanimously. The meeting was
10 adjourned at 8:46 p.m.