

1 **TOWN OF CHESTER**  
2 **PLANNING COMMISSION**  
3 **February 21, 2022, Minutes**

4 **Commission Members Present:** Peter Hudkins, Hugh Quinn, and Cathy Hasbrouck at Town Hall.

5 **Staff Present:** Susan Bailey, Secretary, via Zoom.

6 **Citizens Present:** Steve Mancuso, Emily Beagle, Noel Corbett, and Arne Jonynas via Zoom. Bill  
7 Lindsay and Lillian Willis at Town Hall.

8 **Call to Order**

9 Chair Cathy Hasbrouck called the meeting to order at 6:30 p.m. (1:05 on recording)

10 **Agenda Item 1, Review Minutes from the February 7, 2022, Meeting**

11 Cathy asked for a motion to review the minutes of February 7, 2022. Peter moved and Hugh  
12 seconded. Cathy noted that on page 6, line 35, there was discussion about the Olive Branch  
13 Lodge/Masonic Lodge and the minutes said the Elks Club. A vote was taken, and the minutes were  
14 unanimously approved, as amended. Cathy added that Amie O'Brien was off last week and that's  
15 why the minutes weren't published.

16 **Agenda Item 2, Citizens Comments**

17 (3:34 on recording) Cathy asked for citizens comments for anything not on the agenda.

18 Steve Mancuso said the commission was doing a lot of business and should be applauded, and he  
19 thanked them. There was a lot going on and falling on their shoulders. He didn't know what to tell  
20 them regarding cannabis. The greenhouse on Route 11 is being sold and marketed as a place to  
21 grow it. He said it was getting kind of crazy but was sure they could do a good job. He wanted to  
22 make good about the bike racks. He was concerned about too many bike racks around town. It is  
23 something they should consider weeding out because it doesn't fit well for Chester. It was one  
24 example of 300 pages of extraneous ado. He was sure they could come to terms with it. He thanked  
25 them for having citizens comments and letting citizens, like himself, carry on.

26  
27 **Agenda Item 3, Review Proposed Village Green Zoning District bylaw amendment text**  
28 **with recent proposed amendments from 2/7/22 meeting and further suggestions from Tim**  
29 **Roper.**

30 Cathy said they would review the proposed Village Green Zoning District bylaw amendment text  
31 with recent proposed amendments that had been collected over the past two weeks. Tim Roper  
32 was in Florida on family business. Preston and Cathy had him come in before he left to go over a  
33 few things. Cathy sent out a copy of the bylaws with Tim's stuff that Cathy, Preston, and Tim had  
34 worked out in blue. She also had information she passed out to the two board members present  
35 with suggestions from Hugh for modifications and a short discussion with Jason Rasmussen about  
36 dimensional standards and setbacks in the one district. She had a list of things they could mention,  
37 and they had things to follow along with.

38 Peter said Tim's were marked and asked what Hugh's were. Hugh said his were simple and he saw  
39 one was something Jason may have brought up about the parking section, E.4.a, to move the word  
40 space before. Cathy said it was a typo. It should have read "one off-street parking space, either

1 public or private.”

2 Hugh said the second one was regarding the accessory use definition which, as currently proposed,  
3 didn't include other things that were part of the other zoning districts. Cathy said they were  
4 intentionally left off. She said Jason said the last sentence about accessory use had included home  
5 occupation and other uses that are considered accessory uses, so they removed them. She thought  
6 they decided the list wasn't exhaustive or complete. They decided to say group home because they  
7 wanted to be sure that people understood it was required by the state. Lots of people would like it  
8 not to be there but it needs to be.

9 Hugh said he remembered the discussion and it made sense. He said any of the other districts said  
10 accessory use and then as an example, in parenthesis, home occupation and the other things. It  
11 referenced it in the district specifications but wasn't included in the definition. He wasn't sure it  
12 was a problem but wondered. Cathy thought it seemed random what they mentioned or didn't  
13 mention. Hugh said when they looked at several zones, they were consistent. In every zone of the  
14 currently adopted bylaws, under accessory use, it called out home occupation, home childcare  
15 facility, but didn't mention group home. Hugh said he didn't have much passion around it, but the  
16 definition, as written, only referenced the group home but then all the other districts called out an  
17 accessory use as home occupation, and it was inconsistent. He thought if they wanted to make it  
18 consistent and all encompassing, the definition of accessory use would include those other things  
19 so when you were looking at one of the other zones, it would tie off.

20 Peter referenced what Hugh had said earlier that if it had to be everywhere, they shouldn't say it  
21 at all because it's what bothers people the most because it's required by the state. Peter suggested  
22 striking it from new accessory use. Hugh thought that made sense. Peter said Hugh thought before  
23 about things allowed everywhere and the state says they must be allowed. It gets everyone feisty  
24 but it's a state mandate, so Peter questioned why not just take it out? Hugh said he may be okay  
25 with it. Peter reminded him it was his rationale before so he hoped he would be okay with it. Hugh  
26 said if they looked at the other zones, would they then remove what's in parenthesis or leave it in?  
27 Peter said he would take it out. Hugh asked if he went to another zone and home occupation wasn't  
28 a permitted use, but Cathy said home occupation was always a permitted use.

29 Hugh said basically, group home, home occupation, and family childcare are pretty much allowed  
30 everywhere by state statute. As a result, he would suggest removing group home from the  
31 definition and ultimately take the stuff in parenthesis out from the other zones. Peter agreed. Hugh  
32 thought they should just remove group home from the definition for this. Peter agreed. Cathy was  
33 concerned it was consciously done by Jason and thought they needed to let go of the idea that it  
34 had to be perfect when they did the transmission copy. She was in favor of letting it go this way  
35 and getting the townspeople's reaction and consulting with Jason about it. She wasn't sure about  
36 the recollection of what happened in December.

37 Peter said when they met at the Pinnacle with the Stone Village people, 20 minutes of the  
38 discussion was that they didn't want to have group homes, which they had no call on at all. He  
39 said there was no reason to have people say they don't want group homes when it wasn't a choice  
40 they have. Hugh agreed. Hugh was trying to recall Jason's rationale for wanting to include it. To  
41 Peter's point, if it's required by state statute and you call it out, all it does is shine a light on  
42 something that would be contentious. Cathy agreed. Hugh's point was as a local planning board,  
43 they have no say where a group home goes. Peter compared it to cannabis and said they could list  
44 cannabis as an accessory use and then it would just aggravate everyone. Cathy confirmed he was

1 proposing they strike the entire last sentence of the accessory use definition as it was only there  
2 because it talked about group homes. Peter asked if they changed the definition of group homes in  
3 the section which is what it was saying. Cathy wasn't sure they could change it. Cathy wasn't sure  
4 if they meant Section 8, where the definitions are or Article 2, where the zoning districts are.

5 Hugh said one thing on the table was to strike the last sentence or just refer to Article 2. Hugh said  
6 Article 2 was all the different zoning districts. In parenthesis it said home occupation and family  
7 childcare home. Peter added that forestry and agriculture had to be in there. Cathy said forestry  
8 and agriculture had been removed. Hugh asked if forestry and agriculture would be considered  
9 accessories and Cathy said they were uses. Hugh said when you thought about accessory use and  
10 considered the definition, it was a portion of the thing, so they were saying if you have a home  
11 occupation, residential care, a group home, or family childcare, those are the things that constitute  
12 accessory use in any district in Chester. So, they either needed to be specific and name those things  
13 so people understood what accessory use is or leave the definition open and know that state statute  
14 will allow those things.

15 Peter thought maybe that was the better answer and suggested saying "for the purpose of permitted  
16 uses listed in Article 2 or state statute." Cathy agreed. By saying, "or state statute," they were  
17 covered. Peter added nobody wanted to have a group home next to them, but the state allows it.

18 Cathy asked if they needed a motion but they all agreed.

19 Hugh said they created the open market definition for Village Green and if they replace open-air  
20 market with open market, they need to fix the residential/commercial district because it references  
21 open-air market. Cathy said on the same document she gave them, a little further down, it  
22 referenced, in yellow, a discussion about accessory use. She looked at the two. Open market was  
23 in the proposed and in the proposal for this district, they have open market, and indoor or outdoor  
24 market where groups of individual vendors sell produce, food, services, art, or other merchandise.  
25 In the adopted bylaws, they have open-air market: an outdoor public marketplace where food or  
26 merchandise are sold. And that is the use that's referred to in the residential/commercial district.  
27 The proposed one was saying it was indoor or outdoor. The other issue was it said groups of  
28 individual vendors. The open-air market didn't even mention vendors or humans, it just said things  
29 are sold. She wondered if it could be machines selling merchandise.

30 Hugh said the reason he brought it up was one proposal was to only have a single definition. He  
31 wondered if one definition called open market could apply to both the proposed Village Green and  
32 work in the residential/commercial district. If the answer was yes, then all that was necessary was  
33 to go in and tweak the wording in the residential/commercial district and remove the reference to  
34 open-air market. And if they didn't want to do that, they would need to maintain two definitions,  
35 one for open market and one for open-air market until they were able to address  
36 residential/commercial and figure out what to do. It made no difference to him.

37 Cathy had a lot of thoughts about it. One thing that bugged her was it was a use, but pretty much  
38 an ad hoc use and you would likely be doing it on a parcel that already had uses assigned to it and  
39 it was temporary. It isn't likely Chester would have an open market that ran 365 days a year. She  
40 found the indoor versus the outdoor thing confusing, as well as mentioning or not mentioning  
41 vendors. She thought it made sense to put it into the administrative pile of changes that would be  
42 coming as soon as it got launched.

43 Peter mentioned Stone House Antiques where space can be rented, already making someone an

1 individual vendor. Cathy agreed and said it had a permit for retail space. Peter said the  
2 indoor/outdoor thing happening was covered under a retail permit but was doing an open market.

3 Noel Corbett, a new owner of the former Free Range, said one of the reasons her sister and she  
4 had joined the meeting was to understand the open-air market. In the summer, the Artisan Alley  
5 was popped up with tents and things on a recurring basis on the weekends and they wanted to  
6 understand if it fell under this jurisdiction and what it would mean for them for the upcoming  
7 season. Cathy said Artisan Alley didn't have a permit from the DRB or the zoning administrator  
8 that she knew of. Peter said originally, they took it to the Selectboard because they had talked  
9 about having it on The Green and the selectmen said they couldn't have it there, so they decided  
10 to have it in the alley. Peter said what they were trying to do was allow it to be on The Green and  
11 it was a possibility but still up to the selectboard because it's town property. Noel asked if they  
12 needed a permit to operate it on their property. Cathy said, currently, they couldn't give them a  
13 permit because it wasn't a permitted use. This change would make that possible. Cathy said she  
14 wasn't sure where the property line was in the alley, but they could sort it out. They were trying to  
15 make it possible because they thought it was a good idea. Noel said she would follow more closely.  
16 She asked about the draft bylaws she got online from December 2, 2021, and thought it sounded  
17 like they were talking about a different document. Peter said they didn't get them posted. Cathy  
18 said the packet was up and if she went to the Planning Commission web page and scrolled down  
19 past the subcommittee minutes and packets to the Planning Commission minutes and packet, there  
20 should be a copy. Noel said she would track it down.

21 Hugh liked the new definition of open market. Cathy wasn't sure about it. She asked Hugh why  
22 he liked it. He said because one of the discussions that came up was food and merchandise might  
23 be too specific. They wanted to expand the definition to reflect the reality of what you might find  
24 at these markets. They also said they didn't want to have it just to have to be outside. He  
25 remembered they tweaked the definition to be flexible for indoor and outdoor and different kinds  
26 of services, not just food and merchandise. For that reason, he recommended they use the definition  
27 for residential/commercial, as well.

28 Cathy said she could change residential/commercial to say open market instead of open-air market.  
29 Peter and Hugh agreed. Peter said if air was deleted, it would allow it to happen and eliminate  
30 confusing redundancy.

31 Cathy said they had worked it out that landscaping and screen was required between residential  
32 uses and commercial uses. It wouldn't happen on The Green unless someone bought a property  
33 and turned into a private home. It had almost happened with the building at one end of the  
34 bookstore. The compromise was they could require landscaping to screen it where it was practical,  
35 because in some places, it wasn't practical. On 4.d she had copied some bylaw code from 3.20, the  
36 off-street parking and didn't copy it correctly so there was a correction. Those were the two things  
37 Tim had talked about.

38 Cathy said Barre was excited about the dimensional standard issue. She gave them a copy of an  
39 email conversation with Jason Rasmussen about what could they do about it. Jason suggested they  
40 could drop the requirement, keep it as originally coded with zero as a minimum front yard setback  
41 and 16 as a maximum, and the Development Review Board could still make changes to that  
42 standard where appropriate to match the surrounding parcels. The issue was most of the parcels  
43 had six inches between the edge of the pavement and the beginning of the building. That's how  
44 things were built 160 years ago. The exceptions were St. Luke's Church, the Inn Victoria, and to

1 some extent, the house on the corner of Cobleigh and Main. Barre was concerned with a zero  
2 minimum; someone may want to build out Inn Victoria to the road and that would allow it. Jason  
3 said they would look at the character of development clause stipulating new buildings or  
4 modifications of existing buildings shall be of a similar building mass and orientation as buildings  
5 in the district and shall not unduly detract from the existing character of the building. As far as  
6 Jason was concerned, it would take care of any problem.

7 The issue was should they drop the 16-foot maximum or leave it and say there were good. Hugh  
8 thought they should leave the zero and take out the 16, because those two properties would not be  
9 non-conforming and understanding if they needed to mitigate some kind of a risk where either the  
10 Inn Victoria or another property wanted to put an addition on the front of their building, either  
11 because it was covered under the fact there would be a DRB review, or it was covered under the  
12 character of development clause, and it would probably be fine. Hugh was still good with that  
13 strategy. Peter and Cathy were also.

14 **Agenda Item 4, Set date for Village Green Zoning District bylaw amendment public**  
15 **hearing.**

16 (36:15 on recording) Cathy asked for a motion to transmit the proposed amendment and send  
17 copies of the amendment to the nine surrounding towns, someone at the ACCD, and the Regional  
18 Planning Commission and they would schedule a public hearing. Peter moved that they certify the  
19 minutes and what they adopted in the definitions as part of the Village Green District amendment  
20 to the Chester Unified Development Bylaws. Cathy clarified that he was saying they certify the  
21 changes made today and accept them. Peter agreed. Hugh seconded the motion. A vote was taken,  
22 and the motion carried unanimously.

23 Peter wanted to know if they should pick a date for the meeting. Cathy moved to transmit the  
24 amendment to Chester Unified Development Bylaws to have a Village Green District and Peter  
25 seconded. A vote was taken, and the motion carried unanimously.

26 The earliest date they could schedule was March 21<sup>st</sup>, so that Cathy could send out notice to the  
27 newspapers on Friday who would publish the following Wednesday, March 2<sup>nd</sup>, and schedule  
28 hearing for March 21<sup>st</sup>. Hugh said he would Zoom into the meeting.

29 Peter moved to have the public meeting on March 21<sup>st</sup> and Hugh seconded the motion. The motion  
30 carried unanimously.

31 **Agenda Item 5, Review Reporting Form and Citizen Summary documents.**

32 Cathy said they had a reporting form, and a summary and Hugh had a proposed amendment to the  
33 summary. Hugh didn't understand why there were two summaries and Cathy said one summary  
34 was intended to go with the reporting form to the ACCD, Regional Planning, and the abutting  
35 towns. The other was less technical and down to Earth, which she thought would go out with the  
36 copy they post. Hugh had pointed out that light industry was a conditional use in the Village Center  
37 District now and Cathy had lost track of that fact. Light industry was not included in the Village  
38 Green District, as proposed in the proposed bylaws. She thought they were breaking ground but  
39 by including it, they were honoring history. She was up for removing the sentence that referenced  
40 it. Some people had been startled by the thought of light industry on The Green. Hugh said they  
41 had a good rationale and Cathy agreed. Peter said it was a square footage issue and there was a  
42 limited number of things you could do there because of the square footage. Cathy added the rules  
43 regarding light industry were extensive.

1 Bill Lindsay asked if light industry would be included, and Cathy said it would. Peter added it had  
2 been there before. Cathy thought there had been four permits issued over time for it.

3 Cathy said Preston and she had worked on the reporting form and Preston felt that the forms he's  
4 known in the past were odd, difficult to read, and didn't make a lot of sense. They tried to be  
5 realistic and down to Earth about it. Hugh had read through the reporting form, and it seemed fine  
6 and to Cathy's point, it seemed formulaic, and he asked Cathy where the form went. Cathy said it  
7 had to accompany the copy of the bylaws, with the amendment included. She was going to include  
8 the summary and it had to be sent, which could be done electronically, and have confirmation that  
9 they read or opened the email. It had to go to the nine abutting towns, The Regional Planning  
10 Commission, and the ACCD. Hugh had read through it and thought that anyone looking at it,  
11 would look at the document itself and the summary to figure out what their plans were.

12 Steve Mancuso asked Cathy what the ACCD was, and she replied it was the Agency of Commerce  
13 and Community Development.

14 **Agenda Item 6, Discuss Draft 2022 Project List and accompanying documentation of**  
15 **Housing Study Municipal Planning Grant.**

16 (47:20 on recording) The last item on the agenda was to discuss the work plan/project list for the  
17 foreseeable future. They could discuss it now, but she suggested discussing it more when the full  
18 commission was in attendance. Between now and the March 21<sup>st</sup> hearing they would go over the  
19 justifications for the decisions they've made and visit the next group of changes they would like  
20 to put through the bylaws. They were calling the group administrative changes. They wanted to  
21 correct problems with subdivisions. There should be both a major and a minor subdivision, but the  
22 way the bylaw is coded, there is only major. It seemed to be an oversight, but someone should  
23 have said if there are fewer than five lots, it isn't necessary to go through two hearings, etc. Cathy  
24 said there were several corrections and changes they wanted to do. They would work on that and  
25 start looking at housing and the other village districts to see what they could do to make it easier  
26 to have more housing in the village. Once sorted out, they would figure out what districts are  
27 needed in the village and what will be following the water and sewer lines and help them figure  
28 out the next bunch of changes for whatever district they think they might want or need for housing  
29 in the village.

30 Bill Lindsay asked about the municipal planning grant for housing. He wondered if the study was  
31 just being done for the village. He was aware a grant had been applied for and there would be  
32 money for the town and some for the grant study. In doing that, he noticed any change to the grand  
33 list was not monumental. He said the impact of housing to the grand list should be considered. He  
34 went to the Listers' Office and got information for 4 or 5 of the housing projects, the value of the  
35 projects and what they had contributed to the grand list, as far as taxes. Cathy asked if he was  
36 talking about Pleasant Brook and the Senior Circle. He was. He brought up the years he served  
37 Chester in various ways and one of his great concerns was the grand list. He thought it was easy  
38 to spend money but quite difficult to increase value of the grand list. He said it would either come  
39 out of another property that produced tax revenue, or your bill for your house. He hoped in the  
40 discussions they didn't forget the impact of housing on the grand list. He's heard discussions about  
41 apartment renters paying a good percentage of the taxes. He thought there was some truth to that  
42 but there was also truth to the fact that if you looked at the individual tax bill on a house, converting  
43 a garage into housing would likely not increase that tax bill sufficiently to pay for the services of  
44 that house. What he was asking is they think of the grant as a broader scope and what the benefit

1 will be to the whole community, meaning residents in town and out of town. He thought they  
2 seemed to have a driving force by the state again telling them what they need and how to do it and  
3 here's a little money to study it. He said he pre-studied it by going to the Listers' Office and doing  
4 some homework which told him if he had a nice senior housing unit, he could add substantial  
5 amount of money to his grand list. Where if he developed three garages, the impact on the system  
6 of the needs of the town to provide services to those additional residents would not be as great as  
7 having a large senior housing project.

8 Peter asked him if he was saying ADUs weren't as impactful as a senior housing unit. He asked  
9 Bill if he was saying it was better to have a complex of multiple housing instead of ADUs. Bill  
10 said yes to some respects. He said it didn't mean they shouldn't have it but if they were going to  
11 study it, understand the needs of the community. He thought a single mom with a job that didn't  
12 pay well also needed to have a home but the total impact on the grand list would be small. He said  
13 we need to look at the composite of housing the community needs to make it healthy and vibrant  
14 but shouldn't focus it on one area. He said there was a need for mature residents to have housing.  
15 He recently visited a housing project near Dartmouth that didn't have garages but had a  
16 multipurpose carport. He thought there were other ideas when they have studies and people needed  
17 to ask questions. He asked the commission how many places they had available to put up complex  
18 housing. He said there were areas that aren't too far from The Green that may be suitable. It would  
19 be up to the property owners, and he thought they may need to bring some of these ideas to the  
20 Selectboard to see if they were interested to get something of this nature going. He thought the  
21 best way to talk to the Selectboard was to tell them they would be able to buy another cruiser or  
22 fire hoses without a big impact.

23 Hugh thought what Bill was saying made perfect sense and there had been several discussions that  
24 there was no one solution to the problem. He said it needed to be a combination of a lot of things  
25 to help people find housing. Bill spoke to the town manager and one of his concerns was there are  
26 areas where they could use an extension of water and sewer. He wanted to be first in grabbing  
27 some of that money and not last. All the little things the town does are nice, but they don't have a  
28 big financial impact on the tax bill. Peter had started looking ahead and had a good layout of the  
29 water, but not the sewer. What is currently laid out in the ground is not digital and will require a  
30 lot of legwork to get it set up. Hugh remembered when Jeff said the mapping of the sewer system  
31 was antiquated. Hugh said they need to do a better job if they map it out. Peter said to make a  
32 timeline with the grant, he can figure out where it is, and Cathy can figure out the users and then  
33 they can get the basis for it. Every 250 feet you must have a manhole and it's about \$50,000. That  
34 price is within the last 3 years. It was also a matter of the pumping station. The current plant can  
35 take more residential users but also needs more water to keep mixing with it. He didn't know if  
36 anyone had ever done a complete study to determine if storm water was separated from it. Cathy  
37 said they were working on Flamstead Acres on separating the two. Peter said a lot of the problem  
38 with Flamstead is people pump their basement out into the sewer. Peter said in the early 90s, they  
39 were still doing sewer overflows into the river. You would set a manhole and if you were near a  
40 river, you would go four feet above the outlet and put that to the river because the stormwater that  
41 abutted it. It would just flood into the river when the sewer became overwhelmed. Unless you poke  
42 in every manhole, nobody wants to talk about it because of the state, it could still be there. Cathy  
43 knew they had a project that was going to deal with that part of town. She also had some maps that  
44 were stormwater separate which could help sort out.

45 Steve Mancuso said it was interesting they were talking about Chester's infrastructure, just

1 opposed to doing business in it, and the effects on the grand list. He said if they wanted to be bored  
2 to tears, to invite him sometime for the electrical end of it. He had a lot of history with Green  
3 Mountain and its predecessor, CVPS, and things that were going on in Chester pursuant to the  
4 electrical infrastructure. Cathy asked if he could talk to them about things they should consider for  
5 electricity. He said they were welcome to call him on the carpet anytime. He could give them a  
6 recent history.

7 She thought they focused on water and sewer because the town builds and maintains it. She asked  
8 what they would do if they thought something should be happening with the electric supply and  
9 who should they contact. Steve said there was a lot of conjecture about being self-serving with  
10 solar fields. That was a whole other kettle of fish. He said Chester has a World War II electrical  
11 system that wasn't cutting the mustard for everyone. Cathy said she and Steve should talk about  
12 it, as it wouldn't do a lot of good to have houses that couldn't get a decent power supply.

13 Peter said one of the things when they started the DRB was there could be impact fees and they  
14 have never done anything with them. The possibility of imposing impact fees on developers was  
15 one of the big selling points to implementing the DRB and he never heard anything about them.  
16 Peter wanted to pick up some education on that. Cathy asked if he wanted to know other towns  
17 that had impact fees and how they assessed them. Peter said the DRB is supposed to allow them,  
18 so yes. Hugh wanted an example of impact fees. Peter said you would go in front of the DRB, and  
19 if you were developing 10 lots on a class 3 dirt road, but the town would need to widen the road  
20 and put it up to a spec would be an example.

21 Cathy said a subdivision of 30 houses brought 30 kids into the school system. Peter said it was the  
22 same thing because you would have to increase your sewer plant capacity. Cathy added or build  
23 another classroom. Peter said it was a big selling point for the DRB. Cathy wondered if Jason  
24 would be able to address it with housing. Peter thought it was a question they certainly should be  
25 asking, and Hugh agreed.

26 Hugh said while they were on the project list, another thing he read in the ACCD document that  
27 looked appealing, was in some cases, you can allow the Zoning Administrator to have a certain  
28 amount of latitude to make adjustment to things. He didn't think they called it a variance and it  
29 wasn't a waiver but may have been a variance process. He had read in some cases you can allow  
30 the Zoning Administrator to give some latitude in something insignificant and almost a no-brainer  
31 so that something which is a good idea can move forward. Cathy clarified that it was the Better  
32 Places document.

33 Peter thought it was part of the plan review process that the DRB didn't want to do. Hugh said it  
34 was something else. Cathy thought Preston was clever in finding ways through the bylaws to get  
35 things done but it would be nice if he had more support from the bylaws. Hugh found what he was  
36 looking for on page 24 and it said to consider limited deviations from certain zoning stages. The  
37 way it read; bylaws can define certain standards that can be modified by the zoning administrator  
38 so that locally desirable development cannot be forbidden due to a minor inconsistency with  
39 adopted regulations, a deviation of up to ten percent from a setback requirement. Something that  
40 would allow the zoning administrator some wiggle room. It seemed like a thing they were making  
41 a recommendation about it. The Development Review Board Different might be granted the  
42 authority to approve certain larger deviations based on criteria established in the bylaws. Both  
43 types of deviations would be different than a variance which are limited to strict hardship  
44 situations. It must be a hardship to get a variance, and this was suggesting considering a deviation



1 if it made sense to allow wiggle room. It was common sense to him. Peter recalled a situation with  
2 a woman with a septic and a mobile home and 10 feet of the home was in the setback, and he  
3 thought they should give her the 10 feet. Hugh agreed and said he thought that was the spirit of  
4 what they were saying there. Peter thought deviation was a good word. Hugh thought the goal was  
5 to go through the list as a commission and agree to the right items in the right priority. Peter thought  
6 a lot of it was hearing Preston build out his list because he is trying to deal with the bylaws and  
7 here is what he would like to see better. Hugh agreed and said his input should go into it. Cathy  
8 said she and Preston had discussed it and were trying to come up with a document and say these  
9 are the things we could do and pick their priority and order but after a while it became clear you  
10 couldn't vary it. Hugh said the value of doing that is if things are listed in a certain order and  
11 someone wants to change the order, it's an order of precedence. Once everyone understands it  
12 wasn't a random list of activities and was ordered in a certain sequence, everyone can be onboard  
13 with it. He thought they should revisit the list when the rest of the commission was back.

14 Cathy added that she has listened to a few seminars discussing housing and what could be done.  
15 Chester is a small town, and they may find places to put water and sewer lines but were mostly  
16 looking at existing housing to make sure they could be converted from large houses that 1 or 2  
17 people live in to houses that a few people can live in without a lot of regulation getting in the way.  
18 The state is clear they want people to live in town, so they aren't plowing three miles of road to  
19 get to their house. They are also protecting the larger patches of woodland and forest. Cathy said  
20 they were hoping the housing study would provide some clarity about what is needed in Chester.  
21 She said the housing chapter in the town plan from 2008 said there was no new need for housing.  
22 Currently, a lot of people don't feel that way. The data in the town plan is 20 years old and needs  
23 updating. They have fresher data than that. Hugh said what he had been hearing and reading about  
24 was a couple of things, including not to have a requirement that you could only have a single-  
25 family house. Real estate is becoming more and more an investment vehicle and properties and  
26 homes are being purchased by corporations and LLCs. He didn't know whether it was good or  
27 bad, but it was a trend happening because people aren't able to make the same amount of money  
28 in other businesses, so they are latching onto real estate. There were similar examples throughout  
29 the country. He thought they may be turning them into short-term rentals. Cathy said worse yet,  
30 they were renting them full-time to a family and were charging them all the expense of owning a  
31 property plus their little profit. It raises housing costs even further. Hugh said those were the things  
32 they would be digging into if they were to make any progress.

33 Cathy asked for any other comments.

34 Steve Mancuso said it was a productive meeting and to carry on.

35 Noel Corbett had left a message for the board in chat before she left Zoom thanking them for  
36 letting them join and said they were excited to be part of the Chester community.

37 Lillian Willis asked the commission to remember that people move to Chester because they want  
38 to be here and they like their properties the way they are. She doesn't care if the state wants her to  
39 divide her house up, she thought you should have the option. She said one thing that would be  
40 popular in town was a senior retirement community that was upscale. There weren't a lot of  
41 choices. Not that she couldn't afford it, but she considers it as she shovels her driveway. She  
42 thought it would be very successful.

43 Cathy asked how many units she was thinking of. Lillian said you must go quite far away to find  
44 something very special, but this area is a wonderful place to be. With Okemo nearby there are a

1 lot of options. It was something to think about. Everything doesn't have to be packaged teeny  
2 weeny. Cathy asked her if she could think of examples of places that may work in Chester, to let  
3 her know. They could look at the services they provide and the space they need. Lillian knew a lot  
4 of people who moved to Burlington and Hanover because they were looking for special places,  
5 but Chester has a lot to offer.

6 **Agenda Item 7, Adjournment**

7 Hugh moved to adjourn, and Peter seconded the motion. A vote was taken, and it passed  
8 unanimously. The meeting was adjourned at 7:51 p.m.