

1
2
3
4
5
6
7
8
9
10
11
12
13
14
15
16
17
18
19
20
21
22
23
24
25
26
27
28
29
30
31
32
33
34
35
36
37
38
39
40
41
42
43
44
45
46

**TOWN OF CHESTER
SELECT BOARD MEETING
January 2, 2025 Minutes**

Board Members Present: Lee Gustafson, Arne Jonynas, Arianna Knapp, Tim Roper, and Peter Hudkins at Town Hall.

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

Visitors Present: Jeff Holden, Wayne Wickens, Shawn Cunningham, Derek Suursoo, Hugh Quinn, Preston Bristow, Cathy Hasbrouck, Cherryl Leclair, Leslie Thorsen, Scott Kilgus, and Barry Goodrich at Town Hall; and John Velit, Robert Nied, Linda Diak, and Lori Quinn and (MK Harrelson) SAPA TV via Zoom.

Call to Order

Chair Arne Jonynas called the meeting to order at 6:30 p.m. and led the audience in the Pledge of Allegiance.

WATER/SEWER COMMISSIONERS MEETING AGENDA

Agenda Item 1, Citizens' Comments

There were none.

Agenda Item 2, Water Meter Purchase

The two options were the old setup, AMR, and the new one, AMI, which is cellular. The Water Department, Jeff, and Julie asked them to strongly consider the AMI solution. Arne said everyone had a chance to review the numbers which added up and made sense. When they first did the upgrades 20 plus years ago, they knew it was a 20-year program. They continued to work with Badger and the meters lived up to their promise. Jeff wanted to continue with Badger, whose meters can be rebuilt and are accurate. Jeff suggested keeping the meter bases and going with new registers and a new cellular antenna. Jeff anticipated only being around another year before he retired, although he would be available to help, if needed. His position would not easily be replaced with someone with his experience or certifications, so Jeff anticipated less manpower. The meters would help with the lack of manpower and alert them to leaks. They could pay for themselves by providing early detection of one leak and conserve water and lessen the homeowner's damage. Had they been installed recently, they would have proven useful where vacant homes had leaks with damage, which were only noticed by someone showing up. Arne said the register, head, and antenna were new and everything else stayed the same and Jeff agreed. The price was \$140,310 for AMR or \$148,200 for AMI with some annual fees because of the cellular reading but would help with less manpower and they could bill monthly for commercial properties. They would provide final readings for real estate closings without a trip needing to be made. Arianna confirmed the cost was only \$8,000 more for the initial investment for the AMI

1 meters and then \$5,000 more annually. Arne confirmed the \$1 monthly fee would be borne by
2 the customer and thought it was reasonable, especially considering the protection offered. Jeff
3 said they have more second homeowners than ever and he gets calls because people have cameras
4 at their homes and see him reading their meter and wonder why he's on their property. Jeff had a
5 property with a leaky toilet that went through two billing cycles before the problem was identified.
6 The alert would provide the town and customers with information to help identify an issue much
7 sooner.

8
9 Tim made a motion to approve the purchase of the Beacon Cellular AMI Solution for a cost of
10 \$148,200. Arianna asked if it was in the budget, and it was not, and Julie said they would be paid
11 for by the fund balance. Jeff said that was the point of the fund balance and that's why they had
12 the money because he anticipated this purchase coming. Lee seconded the motion. The motion
13 carried unanimously.

14 15 **Agenda Item 3, Water / Sewer Budgets**

16
17 Debbie is retiring as town clerk this year after 42 years. She will remain as Town Treasurer, which
18 is great for the town because it fills another role. But because of Debbie retiring, she will be added
19 to Jeff's insurance for 2025, which shifts the cost from the general fund to the water and sewer
20 department which is the only change in expense. If the board wanted to continue with adopting
21 an administrative fee, Julie had it listed at 2% for both the water and sewer departments. Peter
22 asked for the timeline for the second well and Jeff hoped it would be online by September. Julie
23 wasn't sure because it would require a special vote for a bond, and they weren't ready yet. Jeff
24 said after they drill, they will need to put in a 16-inch diamond pipe that would need to be
25 monitored for 6 months before it was completed. Julie thought there would be a special bond at
26 the end of the year or suggested it go until March. Arne said the whole town would vote on an
27 expense that was bonded.

28 29 **Agenda Item 4, Adjourn**

30
31 Lee moved to adjourn, and Arianna seconded the motion. The motion carried, and the meeting was
32 adjourned at 7:31 p.m.

33 34 **SPECIAL SELECT BOARD MEETING AGENDA**

35 Following Water / Sewer Commissioner's Meeting

36
37 **(Meeting called to order – 6:45 p.m.)**

38 39 **Agenda Item 1, Additions or Deletions to the Agenda**

40
41 Pizza Stone was added for a Class 3 liquor license toward the end of the meeting. Lee asked if
42 anything was sent out for Pizza Stone and Julie explained she had just received it.

43
44 An executive session was also added to get an update on the Thompson Road easement and
45 purchase process for the bridge project.

1 Arne asked if they were okay with the additions, and they were.

2
3 **Agenda Item 2 Approval of Minutes from the Selectboard Meeting dated December 18,**
4 **2024**

5
6 Lee moved and Arianna seconded a motion to approve the December 18, 2024, minutes. There
7 were no changes and the minutes were approved, as written.

8
9 **Agenda Item 3, Citizen's Comments**

10
11 Scott Kilgus spoke about the town zoning and where it was headed regarding quarrying and
12 extraction. The town has ordinances about noise including a new animal noise ordinance against
13 disturbing the quiet, comfort, and repose of others, which doesn't allow the clucking of chickens,
14 yet quarries are allowed to operate 100 feet from someone else's property. Someone moving to a
15 rural spot in Chester could suddenly have a quarry 100 feet from their property line where there
16 would be drilling, blasting, and hammering which he found insane. Scott lives at least 1,000 feet
17 from the Julian Quarry and said they have constant noise. It didn't seem right to him that the Julian
18 Brothers could unload a tractor trailer on the side of Route 103. People in Chester and downtown
19 Gassetts were driven out of town because of the noise. He felt the town was moving forward with
20 a proposal to allow someone to have a quarry. It was in total contradiction to people being allowed
21 to have peace and quiet on their property. Scott referenced the talk about the proposed quarry near
22 the high school and the noise it could create, and it wasn't allowed while not thinking there was
23 noise at the quarry in Gassetts but it drove people out of their homes. Scott was concerned about
24 allowing a quarry 100 feet from someone's property line was not tenable and should be
25 reconsidered. Scott said Chester wants people to come and grow families and it would be difficult
26 for him to recommend anyone live in Chester because at any time in the future there could be a
27 quarry 100 feet from their property. The board appreciated Scott's comments, and heard him, and
28 considered what was best for the town with the zoning regulations. Scott asked how 100 feet were
29 chosen and Arne said that it would be discussed if a permit was applied for. Scott didn't think
30 anyone fully understood the conditions and was concerned they were going to approve it.

31
32 Leslie Thorsen of Chester wanted to talk about conditional use. She said it was forever and was
33 state law. Once the town grants it, it is for the life of the property. Chester has rezoned and renamed
34 the part in yellow where extraction is a conditional use and 100 feet from a property. She has spent
35 hours reading the minutes from the Planning Commission meetings and she wasn't against
36 extraction, gravel or sand pits but rock quarrying on its face is a different animal. She read in the
37 Planning Commission minutes that if it was a conditional use, it had to be approved. She wanted
38 the vote delayed and didn't understand why everyone was in such a big hurry to pass it. She said
39 quarrying shouldn't be allowed in residential areas and noted that conditional use was forever.

40
41 Arne asked if there were any other citizen comments and there were none.

42
43 **Agenda Item 4, Old Business**

44
45 There was none.

Agenda Item 5, Adopt Unified Development Bylaw

1
2
3
4
5
6
7
8
9
10
11
12
13
14
15
16
17
18
19
20
21
22
23
24
25
26
27
28
29
30
31
32
33
34
35
36
37
38
39
40
41
42
43
44
45
46

Arne asked if there were any comments or concerns. Lee said some concerns had been raised at this meeting and he wasn't familiar enough with the zoning bylaws to answer them. Lee thought they discussed a lot of the issues, and a lot of work had been done and didn't think it was anything that would necessarily delay the adoption. While going through the bylaws, Arne noted he kept falling back to the work the Planning Commission had done. They had been tasked with a job and asked to prepare all the regulations, go through them, and present them to the board. The Commission had been working on them for about 2 years which included a lot of workshops, citizens' comments, and hearings, and their consensus was to go forward with it. Arne and the Select Board met back in November and agreed to accept everything except the density-based zoning and tasked the Planning Commission with modifying the bylaws to reflect that and leave it at 3 and the 5 acres with the other changes remaining. Arne pointed out that when they make zoning changes, there will always be people who are unhappy. Arne really sympathized with the people who were affected by Julian Quarry. Arne thought they should do what they said they were going to. Because other things came up about setbacks, it changed a few minds on the board. Arne wanted comments from the board about how they wanted to proceed and noted he was one voice out of 5 and tried to facilitate things. Hearing no motion, Arne moved to adopt the Unified Development Bylaws as presented for the rural districts presented with the density zoning taken out and reverting to the 3 and 5 acres leaving all the other changes in place, and Tim seconded the motion. Lee asked Hugh to approach the board and explain the process for a conditional use permit for extraction. Hugh was happy to go through it but wanted to set the tone for the discussion. With respect to extraction, quarrying, whether together or separate and the 100-foot distance, Hugh said it was already in the bylaws before the recommendation that was before the board, and that was not being changed. Hugh said there was absolutely no change to the process, definitions, or uses for R-120, Rural 3 and Rural 5. Lee asked Hugh when it was added, and Hugh thought about 2014 and possibly before. Lee noted it had been at least 10 years. Hugh said if a landowner wants to start a quarry or do extraction they have to apply, go through the DRB process, and the DRB has criteria they use to determine if the applicant meets all the requirements in the bylaws. Preston joined the discussion. Preston said Leslie was correct that conditional use approval was permanent and forever and if the applicant can meet the criteria, they are approved. The South Quarry permit was granted loosely without any bells and whistles for enforcement and was done long before Preston. It would be difficult for someone to have a quarry today given the performance standards they now have regarding noise, and they also have a good DRB now. The applicant would need to prove they could do it quietly. Lee asked how the state would be involved and Preston said if it is over 10 acres, Act 250 is involved. Quite often, towns buy a piece of property that is 9 ½ acres to do gravel extractions. Preston said the size of the lot determines Act 250. Currently, for quarrying and extraction, there is 100-foot setback. 10 acres or more would be Act 250 and if under 10 acres, the town would issue the permit and have a restriction of 100 feet from the lot line. Preston said it was rare that all stones are small, and the bigger stones require crushing which can be noisy. Arne noted that the hours when the stone was crushed could be stipulated in the conditions for the permit, the time of day, year, and how long, and Preston agreed, and it was one of the tools the DRB could use. Hours and days of operation, frequencies per year, and times of the day were the tools the DRB had. Preston thought at least 60% of the zones allowed it and probably more. Arne knew over the years that the town had a difficult time finding gravel and had even considered going to New Hampshire to get some. The town has 95 miles of gravel roads that need to be maintained.

1 The town is trying to remedy the problems with Julian Quarry but are bound by the legal process.
2 Lee asked if there were any areas in town where gravel extraction could be accomplished with
3 minimum issues. Hugh said the conditions the DRB considers are the same regardless of the
4 property. Lee wondered if the abutters would be notified when someone applied giving them an
5 opportunity to voice their concerns and Hugh confirmed they were. Regarding the bylaw pattern,
6 Hugh said not to assume that what is adopted today will be the same in 10 years. And they were
7 probably in the position to update the bylaws more frequently. They will look at the town plan to
8 see what needs to be done. If they decide, as a town, that quarrying isn't a good idea in general,
9 they can act on that. Arne said there were times that adoptions only affected a specific area and
10 noted it was a living document and is revised over time and when issues arise. Lee wanted to make
11 sure he was thinking through things, and said it depended on how comfortable, as a board, they
12 were with having more restrictions. When the quarry was first permitted, it was very loose, and
13 they couldn't do much to change that. Arne said it affects people's lives, and the town, but if they
14 didn't allow it, he wondered how they would get gravel. Lee also said there would be an added
15 cost to the taxpayers if they had to travel to get gravel. Hugh said if there was additional work
16 around quarrying and extraction, they could address it as a future work item, but they hadn't
17 changed anything in the current package with extraction or quarrying except removing it from the
18 Residential 2 district, or the old R-40. Arianna confirmed with Preston that if someone was
19 contemplating a conditional use, they had to go through the DRB. Arianna spoke with more people
20 and once she removed politics, time spent, and personality, the changes proposed provided current
21 property owners with more flexibility for how they choose to use their property, and she was
22 inclined to support the changes. Listening to Hugh and trying to educate herself over the last two
23 weeks about the nature of the DRB, and how property use is managed, she felt strongly that they
24 needed to continue to pursue the question of quarrying and extraction in the town and didn't think
25 they should be let off the hook or questions stopped. She acknowledged there was a problem that
26 they were trying to address, and it was a slow process but didn't think this was the moment or the
27 tool to address that concern.

28
29 Arne asked if there was any more discussion. A vote was taken and everyone voted to approve the
30 motion, except Peter, who voted against it. The motion passed. Julie asked if the board was giving
31 the Planning Commission directions to start looking at quarrying and gravel extraction. Arne
32 suggested that they discuss it at the next meeting to give them the time to digest it. Arianna wanted
33 to assure the public that they would direct the Planning Commission to prepare to move forward.
34 They didn't know the directions and that's why they weren't addressing it tonight. Arne agreed
35 and wanted it as an agenda item so they could discuss it further. Preston noted that two Planning
36 Commission members, Hugh and Cathy, were present and open to discussing it and Preston agreed
37 they made the right decision and if it was appropriate for the Commission to focus on it, they
38 would. Arne thanked them and said it was difficult to make those decisions. The board thanked
39 Preston and the Commission.

40
41 (There was a brief recess.)
42

43 **Agenda Item 6, 2025 Draft General Fund Budget and Capital Budget**

44
45 Arianna clarified they were not adopting the budget at this meeting. Julie said they were meeting
46 on the 15th and the 17th. The warning cannot be adopted until the 17th. Arne said the meeting is in

1 public but not with the public, but they've always been flexible and accommodating to the public.
2 Other boards have public comments and they're done. Arne thought it was a better process to allow
3 public comment. Derek agreed and noted he had experienced boards with a draconian chair.
4

5 Arne wanted to go through the budget by sections and began with revenue. Lee noted Peter had
6 raised the land use taxes last year and whether they were getting their fair share and wondered if
7 there was an update. Peter said the state comes and magically provides the numbers. Arne wanted
8 the state to explain how it works, because it was a huge number, and they were giving a big break
9 to landowners. Arne wanted the justification of why it works. Peter could see the state not
10 reimbursing them for what they should. Julie said they could figure it out and would speak with
11 the listers about what a project like that would look like. Julie could tell them how much Chester
12 is losing with respect to what they received from the state. Lee thought they should ask the state
13 for details about how they value and reimburse. Peter said there were years that the state has not
14 paid 100% and Arne found that interesting and was a good discussion for the future.
15

16 Under general government, the only thing that was different was the administrative fee. The short-
17 term rental fee was income. Arne got confused about PD services and other. Julie said it was for
18 special details.
19

20 Fire Department income – Lee asked about the Andover contribution and Julie said it was all
21 combined now and appeared later in the budget. Derek asked about what assessment covered, and
22 it was fire and ambulance. Recreation was under a separate line. Lee asked what revenue for
23 ambulance included. Transfer income was separate. Julie said they had done over 30 transfers in
24 3 ½ weeks with a revenue of \$20,000. Arne said there would be expenses with that, but it was a
25 net positive. Julie said it was taking off, which was great. Arianna asked if that \$20,000 would
26 appear, and Julie expected it to in January.
27

28 The Andover assessment was a combination of fire, ambulance, and communications, and they
29 used a formula from the contract to determine that.
30

31 Highway – Lee wondered why there was an optimism on the income and Julie said it was based
32 on what was received last year.
33

34 Recreation was pretty straight forward. Derek asked if revenue was collected from anyone other
35 than Andover, such as customers from other towns. Julie said people who don't own property in
36 Chester or Andover can buy out-of-town membership for the pool. Derek understood pickleball,
37 the skate park, and others were popular. Julie said someone had asked about a pass and said it
38 would be hard to monitor without someone staffed there. Arne suggested a donation box and Julie
39 said there was one. Arianna noted there was a fundraising line and asked if it was something the
40 town embraced. It was a typo. Lee wondered about the camps and Julie said Matt had one of the
41 Red Sox trainers last year do a camp, and it wasn't a guarantee it would happen in 2025, so they
42 couldn't budget for it.
43

44 Parks and Cemeteries had special projects paid for by the Trustees.
45

46 They moved to expenses. Derek thought putting the number of people employed under each

1 department, as they used to do, was helpful. Arianna agreed.
2
3 Julie said they paid out a balance of vacation time that she hasn't been able to take, so her salary
4 looked higher. Derek questioned STD and LTD. They eliminated sick pay, so it was much cheaper
5 to purchase the short-term disability insurance. Julie said if someone was out for 3 weeks, they
6 would have far exceeded the cost of the STD insurance. Lee suggested adding the word insurance
7 after the initials.
8
9 Debbie will remain as part-time treasurer, and they need a part-time finance person and with
10 Debbie retiring from her full-time position, she will be able to step in. Tim thought it was brilliant.
11
12 Derek asked if an annual audit cost \$21,000 and it did.
13
14 Listers' payroll increased and it was because Hugh was hired in 2024 and 2025 reflected a full
15 year of his salary.
16
17 Derek questioned \$2,000 in enforcement under Planning and Zoning expense and \$5,000 for legal.
18 Given this meeting, Derek gathered they needed both and wondered if it was adequate. Julie
19 suggested possibly increasing legal. Lee wondered if the town got sued where the expense would
20 be. Julie said often insurance covers it, but a basic lawsuit would fall under the legal line in
21 administrative. Julie said if it was specific to zoning, it would fall under Planning and Zoning. The
22 deductible for the insurance is \$1,000.
23
24 Property liability insurance was up. Workers' compensation was up because payroll rates were up.
25 Tim wondered if there would be a change with medical insurance and was pleasantly surprised at
26 the cost. Julie said they try to remind employees when the employer pays the entire deductible and
27 co-pay, that they should opt for generic prescriptions.
28
29 Under police expense, Derek asked about PD services at Okemo for \$1,000 and \$30,000 programs
30 as revenue. Julie said they could increase it, but it's always balanced between revenue and
31 expenses. They bill Okemo. Derek was questioning the \$29,000 difference in income. It was
32 administrative fees. Arianna said she had several questions and would come to see Julie the
33 following day for explanations. Lee wondered if the union cost them money and Julie said although
34 they haven't had any issues, it always costs them money. The union dues are a payroll deduction
35 but at no cost to the taxpayer, only the benefits are. Derek asked about payroll for services and
36 Julie thought it was part of PD Other Services, and she would talk to Laurie about removing some
37 of the unnecessary lines. Arianna asked if it was the cost to run additional payroll and Julie would
38 ask. Derek asked about the payroll, that was \$2,000, and Julie thought it would come in under the
39 CORE program. CORE was a program they re-instituted where officers come in on their regularly
40 scheduled days off and at an overtime rate, do nothing but speed enforcement. Tim wondered why
41 computer services were budgeted higher in 2024. Julie said computer services were all lumped
42 together under communications because they were under contract. In 2024, they anticipated
43 several upgrades, and it won't happen in 2025. Derek asked if police services were provided to
44 Andover, and Julie said they were not. Shawn Cunningham asked if there was no cost for MDC or
45 mobile data center. Julie said there was no annual fee.
46

1 Fire Department - Arianna questioned the salaries and if it reflected an interim full-time fire chief.
2 It did not, as they have their part-time fire chief for all of 2025. All the employees of the fire
3 department are paid but are on-call and part-time. Arianna thought that was where having the
4 number of employees in each department would be useful. Julie said the fire, police, and
5 ambulance departments are all testing a program to conduct asset inventories and if it works well,
6 they will do it for all the departments. One benefit of the program is it tracks their training. To
7 maintain certification, they must take certain levels of training. Derek asked what asset
8 management meant. Julie said before she can do a capital plan, she needs to know what their assets
9 are, and it starts with large capital assets all the way down. Arianna wondered who was tasked
10 with overseeing the inventory of assets. Currently, different employees in their respective
11 departments are working on it. Lee questioned the association dues amounts and Julie thought
12 there was an expense coming.

13
14 Ambulance looked different because they added in the numbers having to do with the transfers
15 and their salaries are all offset by the revenues. When Mike Randzio becomes certified as a
16 paramedic in September, by 2026, they will see the intercept go down and probably see a revenue
17 because Mike can act as an intercept to other departments and Chester can bill. An intercept is
18 when a paramedic has to come from another facility to meet the ambulance.

19
20 For Capital, the capital plan transfer has not been included in the general fund budget and Julie is
21 proposing the use of some of the extra ARPA funds.

22
23 Public Works and Highway Department – Julie moved the \$30,000 for the back-up boiler for the
24 garage out of the budget and it will be paid for by a grant they received and will come out of the
25 general fund. They were able to get permits to extract the river gravel and were able to drop those
26 lines. Even though they could have dropped them to zero, but didn't so there was a cushion. Julie
27 will know the highway surplus at the next meeting.

28
29 Solid waste is \$35,000 and Derek thought that was the deal of the century. Arne had discussed it
30 with Springfield's Town Manager who explained to him that a lot of it was from when they
31 conducted surveys and Chester usage was around 20-25% and it ranged from \$50-60,000 to
32 \$110,000 for Springfield. Last year, their number was down. Chester's \$35,000 had been at that
33 for a long time. Arianna wondered if they should quietly be grateful. Julie said any user pays the
34 sticker fee plus the cost for every bag. Tim noted that not every town that uses it pays any fee. Tim
35 asked if anyone had ever been surveyed and nobody could say they had been. The stickers can be
36 purchased anywhere. Derek said it was established when Sue was town manager and was driven
37 by legislation that they had to do something, and this was the answer. The rate has been
38 exceptionally low and serves Chester well. The board had nothing but good things to say about the
39 transfer station and the people who work there.

40
41 The animal care listed in the budget was for the dog that had to be impounded.

42
43 Parks and Cemetery - Lee asked about the schedule for the installation of power on the Green.
44 Julie said it was under the grant that was expected to get under way in the next couple of months.

45
46 Library – Julie understood their ask was \$126,000 and she had increased it to \$105,000 and had

1 used the cost-of-living formula that is used for the other town employees for the library increase.
2 Julie cautioned against giving money based on salaries, which was their basis for wanting a 25%
3 increase. Arne said they aren't supposed to have that type of discussion. Tim understood why Julie
4 had done it and said there were two advertisements in the Vermont Journal, and the salary was in
5 line with Chester's. It reminded Tim of the way the increase was handled for water and sewer by
6 incrementally increasing it. Lee felt the board wasn't being treated with respect by the library. Julie
7 would reach out to the library board for more information. Derek noted it was a 24-year-old
8 conversation going on forever. Lee wanted to clarify that the library was valuable for the town and
9 didn't lightly say they should cut their budget, but he also had a responsibility for the taxpayers.

10
11 For Revitalization, they had budgeted \$30,000 but only spent \$129. Julie was going to doublecheck
12 the amount and report back to the board.

13
14 Recreation facilities – work needs to be done to the baby pool, fencing at the pickleball court, and
15 work for the skate park, and treating the baseball fields. Arne asked about the \$17,000 budgeted
16 for ice rink maintenance and Julie would doublecheck that amount.

17
18 Emergency Services Building – there were a couple of years off because it was a new building and
19 difficult to predict the expenses.

20
21 Facilities Director – the only big add was the snowblower but it would be used for all the buildings
22 and not just emergency services.

23
24 Julie said the budget, as reflected, was up \$262,000 or 6%. Arne did the math on salaries, social
25 security, and health, and they were up about \$243,000. Julie said the biggest part of the increase
26 was another \$80,000 for the Public Safety Building. Arne noted the departments had done a good
27 job keeping their budgets down. Julie noted Springfield was up 22%, Montpelier was up 26%, so
28 6% was very low, as most were 10% or higher.

29
30 Capital – Arianna clarified it was a report on the loans they must pay back and wasn't a plan. Julie
31 said they are trying software to see how well it works for the capital plan, as some are very
32 expensive. Julie hoped they will have a pretty good idea in 2025 and wanted to break down into
33 the following categories: technology, communications, building, equipment, and maintenance,
34 which are the five key categories that the auditor suggested they focus on and allow them to
35 depreciate their assets. \$157,780 is remaining in ARPA funds to transfer into the capital plan to
36 offset making the ambulance's first capital payment. This year ARPA could pay for the first
37 ambulance payment and the monitor purchased. Communications equipment for highway and
38 public safety is needed because the radio systems are old and are starting to fail. They have less
39 areas they can communicate with fire radio. There is no longer a Homeland Security grant to cover
40 it. It would use \$52,000 of remaining ARPA funds and \$20,000 from capital fund balance to pay
41 for them. Julie has not been able to find a grant source to fund the sprinklers for the library so that
42 would also come out of the fund balance. The two items total around \$200,000. The police cruiser
43 would be a loan. In 2025, bonds for paving would be \$250,000 for Green Mountain Turnpike and
44 some sections of Flamstead. Currently, the grader with trade-in is \$380,000 but they are waiting
45 for a quote from Caterpillar. Steve has identified a vehicle for \$35,000. They could finance it for
46 two years or pay for it from the fund balance. Julie said there is another pool of funds: the 2024

1 bonds were underspent by \$90,000 because they got such a good price on paving Andover Road.
2 They must draw the unspent money which can go into the capital plan and be used to make a bond
3 payment which frees up money. Julie preferred to just buy Steve's truck rather than finance a used
4 vehicle for 2 years if the board agreed. Julie wanted them to pay for what they could rather than
5 financing. Derek wondered if there was a bond vote with an article and what it said. Julie said it
6 was for paving, the ambulance purchase, and a dump truck. The savings were made from the
7 paving project. Arianna wanted to know if they had to justify it to the public. Peter asked if it
8 should have been carried forward and Julie said it wasn't reflected and she still had to show it.
9 Julie said it needed to be clear and straightforward, and she needed to map it out on spreadsheets
10 so it could easily be explained and available to the public. Adrianna thought it sounded like a good
11 idea and encouraged her to explore it, and Tim agreed. Arne said it was great and made sense.
12 Arianna appreciated the wisdom of not taking out a loan for a used vehicle. Peter wondered what
13 next year would look like. Julie said there was no fluff at this point, and they would need to cut
14 either services or labor. Julie said the increase started at 9% and they dropped it to 6% by making
15 cuts. Except for a couple of employees whose salaries had big disparities, the increase was only
16 3.4% and health insurance is part of the salary package. Julie didn't know what else they would
17 cut. Peter said it wasn't just what they were going to cut but what would happen next year. Julie
18 said the sidewalk project proposed includes pedestrian lighting, which could be removed, and a
19 \$800,000 grant was paying for the project. Julie would need to speak with the engineers about how
20 they could modify it. Derek thought the project was a result of someone indicating that they
21 couldn't use the sidewalks with their wheelchair because of the cracks. Julie said the project was
22 a result of the Master Plan.

23 24 **Agenda Item 7, Current Expense Note**

26 The current expense note of \$1.9 million borrowed last year that was to get them through the flood,
27 as FEMA reimbursements from the flood have been slow but are starting to roll in. They have
28 requested to extend their current expense and expand it. They had a lot of flood-related projects
29 that came up in the beginning of 2024. At this point, they have spent about \$3 million on flood
30 costs and have asked the bank to expand the \$1.9 to \$2.5 million, which they have approved. Laurie
31 and Julie feel if they do \$2.5 million considering the way FEMA reimbursements are flowing in,
32 cash flow should carry and get them through to tax billing. FEMA has approved and will pay for
33 the interest on the current expense note for funds needed to bridge because of the delay. Arne
34 questioned paying off the original note and Julie said when this is funded, they pay off the other
35 note. Arne asked for a motion to accept the current expense note that the Town of Chester promises
36 to pay M&T Bank for the principal sum of \$2,500,000 dated January 2, 2025. Lee moved and
37 Arianna seconded it. The motion passed unanimously. The members signed the note.

39 Lee moved and Arianna seconded a motion for the Resolution for the Current Expense Borrowing
40 for the Town of Chester for \$2,500,000 with M&T Bank. The motion passed unanimously. The
41 members signed the Resolution

43 Arianna moved and Lee seconded a motion to approve the Tax Certificate for the Current Expense
44 Borrowing of \$2,500,000. The motion carried unanimously. The members signed the Tax
45 Certificate.

46

1 **Agenda Item 8, Review Draft Town Warning**

2
3 Julie said the Town Warning included a bond vote for paving and a grader. A bond vote for the
4 sewer project for the Force Main and station. There is a subsidy of up to \$750,000 but they must
5 approve the full amount for the project because the subsidy value is not assigned until the project
6 physically begins. Although they have been told it's available to Chester, it hasn't been assigned
7 yet and is not like a grant. Arianna asked if it was on the budget, and Julie said it wasn't. Repayment
8 will start in 2027 for 20 years. There is potential for a bond for the solar field. Tim confirmed the
9 decision needed to be made by January 17th. Julie said they were out of the Australian Ballot
10 articles. Next was the establishment of a housing fund. Arianna asked if there was any obligation
11 that they recommend for the housing fund, and it was explained that they are only establishing the
12 fund and not funding it. They could choose to implement a 1% rooms tax and 1% alcohol beverage
13 tax. Julie said they had discussed these would be two funding sources for the housing fund and
14 they were on there because they discussed it. Arne wanted a separate Select Board meeting to
15 discuss it with the public as opposed to being on the floor that night for a vote because it was a big
16 change. Peter asked if they could make the short-term rental fee for the housing fund to get it
17 started. Julie said doing that would take money from their general fund and if they did that, would
18 the general fund cover the expense for the short-term rentals. Arne said they could not do anything,
19 but it would be great to get it in place and have it. The rooms tax made more sense to Julie because
20 it doesn't affect the local person and only tourists and it also comes from short-term rentals. She
21 didn't think they should do both. She thought the rooms were easier for people to understand than
22 doing both alcohol and rooms. Tim agreed with Arne that the other was worth discussing and the
23 housing fund needed money in it. Julie said it could start with the short-term rental money, and it
24 would be a good source of seed money. Arne said it was a great idea, but thought it needed more
25 discussion. Peter said there is a State of Vermont club membership that will hold them in a corner.
26 It is funded by housing credits which is controlled by the Windham & Windsor Housing Trust.
27 There is a checklist, and the developer will have funds available and Windham & Windsor Housing
28 Trust controls that. Tim said their initial expenses would be studies and some engineering. Julie
29 agreed and said there would be things they have to obtain, like an appraisal and other expenses.
30 Establishment of a fund needed to be included in the warning. The concept of having STR as
31 income was something to include in the budget and not a warning. Lee thought they would need
32 an information campaign to sell it to the public. The Housing Commission is fully prepared to
33 present to the public the idea of the housing trust fund and rooms tax, which they also agreed was
34 the first step. They expected the rooms tax would generate \$30,000 to \$40,000 and the STR fees
35 would generate around \$20,000. Arne wanted to see a more in-depth discussion. Julie said when
36 they set the warning on January 17th, it isn't when they stop talking about it. Arne thought people
37 who had hotels and inns should have an opportunity to discuss it. Arianna asked how they felt
38 about alcohol, and they decided to remove meals and alcohol tax from the warning and only leave
39 rooms. Derek thought it would be contentious and would be difficult to find support for that
40 quickly. Arianna wondered if they should remove rooms and Julie said they could have a special
41 meeting any time in the year. Peter thought STR rental in the housing trust would give them
42 something. Tim asked if they needed to discuss moving the \$20,000 and Julie said she would
43 remove it so they could see the difference in the budget. Arianna wanted to know if the rooms
44 should stay on the draft warning. Julie said if they didn't think they were going to be comfortable
45 putting it before the voters in March, they should remove it. Arianna wanted to flipflop from what
46 she previously said regarding the warning. Julie noted they would be receiving funding through

1 Peter's recommendation and would remove them from the draft warning.

2
3 Three exemptions would be included and Arne hoped they would be present to speak to them. A
4 letter of request was required and if Julie didn't receive them, they would not be listed.

5
6 **Agenda Item 9, Approval of Class 3 Liquor License for The Pizza Stone**

7
8 Julie said nothing had changed. It was Class 3, which was alcohol. There were no complaints. Arne
9 asked for a motion to approve a third-class license for the Pizza Stone. Tim moved and Lee
10 seconded a motion to approve. The motion carried unanimously.

11
12 **Agenda Item 10, New Business/Next Agenda**

- 13
14 • Budget
15 • Warning
16 • Recommendation for quarry, but they decided to wait until they finished the budget. Julie said
17 they weren't changing it but just charging the Commission to look at it. Arne said it would be nice
18 to have a discussion regarding it. Tim wondered if they could ask Preston and Hugh to research
19 how other areas have handled it. Peter said getting an Act 250 permit for any type of quarry is
20 zero. Julie thought quarrying and gravel extraction were so different. Arianna asked that they hold
21 off on any quarry agenda until February, as it would be difficult to get the Warning and Budget
22 done with quarrying on the agenda.
23 • Tim asked if Class 4 roads was on the future agenda, and it was listed for February.

24
25 **Agenda Item 11, Executive Session to discuss Tompson Road Easement Process**

26
27 Peter recused himself and left the meeting. Lee moved and Tim seconded a motion to go into the
28 executive session. The motion carried.

29
30 (Executive Session entered at 9:28 p.m.)

31
32 Lee moved and Tim seconded a motion to exit the executive session. The motion carried.

33
34 (Executive Session exited at 9:40 p.m.)

35
36 **Agenda Item 12, Adjourn**

37
38 Lee moved to adjourn, and Tim seconded the motion. The motion carried, and the meeting was
39 adjourned at 9:40 p.m.