

1 **TOWN OF CHESTER**
2 **July 29, 2024 Minutes**

3
4 **Board Members Present:** Lee Gustafson, Arne Jonynas, Arianna Knapp, Tim Roper, and Peter
5 Hudkins at Stone Hearth Inn.

6
7 **Staff Present:** Julie Hance, Town Manager, at Stone Hearth Inn.

8
9 **Visitors Present:** Jeff Holden, Kirby Putnam, Deb Aldrich, Amie O'Brien, Steven Vertefeuille,
10 Preston Bristow, Tom Williams, Mike Randzio at Stone Hearth Inn.

11
12 **SELECTBOARD RETREAT**

13
14 **Call to Order**

15
16 Chair Arne Jonynas called the meeting to order at approximately 8:00 a.m.

17
18 **Agenda Item 1, Breakfast and Overview of Agenda**

19
20 At Arne's direction, Julie gave an overview of the agenda. The agenda was broken down by
21 department with multiple department heads to be present to speak about their vision of things to
22 come as well as things they would like to see. It was meant to be an open discussion.

23
24 **Agenda Item 2, Citizens' Comments**

25
26 There were none.

27
28 **Agenda Item 3, 2024 Bond Documents**

29
30 Julie noted they were the bonds approved at Town Meeting this year.

31
32 The first document was the Resolution. Arne entertained a motion to approve the Resolution
33 Certificate regarding the General Obligation Bond for \$945,000. Julie said all the different votes
34 merged into one bond. Arianna moved and Lee seconded the motion. The motion carried
35 unanimously. The members signed.

36
37 Arne entertained a motion to approve the Loan Agreement regarding the General Obligation Bond
38 in the amount of \$945,000 with authorization to be signed by the Chair. Arianna moved and Lee
39 seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously. Arne signed the agreement.

40
41 **Agenda Item 4, Public Works; Highway & Water/Sewer**

42
43 Jeff Holden, head of the Water Department said things were going well and then the last couple of
44 years with COVID and the price of things going crazy, he was unable to stay under budget as he
45 usually had done for the past 14 years. Jeff said chemicals were \$4 a bag two years ago and were
46 now \$35 a bag and they're using more because COVID brought more people into town and they're

1 pumping more water. What they use for wastewater was around \$230 - \$250 a barrel and they're
2 using a barrel a week. They require a minimum PH of 6.5 in the river. The past winter the PH in
3 the snowmelt was 4.2 and they are required to make up the difference. Arne asked if what they put
4 into the system was acidic or base and Jeff said they had to raise it. Jeff said neutral was 7.0 and
5 they are required to go from 6.5 to 7.5. Tim asked which state agency created those regulations
6 and Jeff said ANR did most of what was in the river, and they had been 6.5 for quite a while. This
7 year, Jeff had to turn his pump up higher than he ever has as it was up 8 gallons a day and before
8 that, they used to run 3 or 4 gallons a day. Drew's is pretreatment and now they have an automatic
9 monitoring system, and they discharge 7.5 so their PHs are normal unless there's an accident. Jeff
10 said they've been good to work with the last 4 or 5 years. Arne asked if Drew's was the biggest
11 user and Jeff said yes. Jeff said the PH in their products vary from 4 to almost 14. And they've
12 learned over the years that the products with a high PH, they can't pretreat so they ship it out,
13 which lessens the issues for Drew's and Chester.

14
15 Julie suggested Jeff talk about what was going on currently, and what they envision in the next 3
16 to 5 years. Jeff said they must deal with the state, who drags their feet, so some of the things he
17 feels are becoming emergencies. His main concern is the force main. They just got the state's okay,
18 so they're moving ahead. He's concerned they'll have issues. The force main is cast iron, so they
19 probably have a less than 2-inch line coming up the hill. Arianna said it sounded like the First
20 Avenue pump station went into the force main. Julie said it was being designed as one project. The
21 board had signed paperwork that got them into the state's revolving loan fund that got them the
22 preliminary design and a couple meetings ago, the board signed paperwork to authorize the final
23 design. Once the final design is finished, the state will pay for construction through the revolving
24 loan fund. They are currently working on the hazard mitigation grant funding. Every time there's
25 a major national declared event, there are huge dollars of hazard mitigation funds that come into a
26 state so because of the size of what happened in July and December, the state is receiving an
27 unprecedented amount, around \$80 million. They must have their applications submitted in August
28 for projects with a minimum of \$1 million or more that have a resiliency nexus to it and they will
29 fund 100%. With Naomi's help, they have found a nexus and are submitting the \$2.2 million
30 project as an application. Regional Planning has received money to write the applications for
31 towns. The pump station is in the floodplain, and they are hoping to make a connection so they
32 can include the force main. Jeff said the pump station is in dire need of upgrading and the upgrade
33 in pumps will be submersible. The generator has worked well at the pump station but needs to be
34 upgraded and raised. They have been pushing for a generator at the well and the portable generator
35 will no longer be sufficient. The well has never flooded or even come close, so a generator there
36 would be self-sufficient. The first week in August, they will uncover the water main and encase it
37 in concrete so it will be secured, and they won't have a catastrophic loss. Peter said Naomi's report
38 identified a lot of areas in sewer that had seepage, and he wondered how Jeff was planning to
39 address it and replace the liner. Jeff said it was in the plans and on First Avenue, they were going
40 to replace the 8" gravity sewer feed that comes from the top but wasn't sure if it could be cured
41 with a liner. Jeff explained how it was done by putting the liner that looked like a bag inside and
42 inflating it and then inducing a hardening chemical, which could be more fitting but also was
43 expensive, but that type of system has held up well. Lee asked how it worked when pipes were
44 coming in, and Jeff said they would send a remote unit through to cut it out, but some must be dug
45 up. The most serious situation is infiltration at the end of the turnpike, and they need to replace
46 those pipes and could put them into place without taking out service. Arne asked where it was, and

1 Jeff said the First Avenue pump station. Peter wondered if they bought a generator for Jeffrey
2 Well, would they be able to house the unit for the secondary well. Jeff said that was one reason he
3 advocated for putting a second one there. They don't use chlorine, but when they do, they must be
4 able to treat it for 20 minutes before it goes to the first user. With both wells, they could use the
5 injection system for both. Lee wondered what the output was, and Jeff wasn't sure if it was 40 or
6 50 kw. Julie said they have a generator for Jeffrey Well and expected to hear from FEMA soon
7 and the grant paid 95% of the cost. Julie wished she knew it was going to be approved so they
8 could go out to bid. Jeff said the main issue was the force main, then the pump station, and then
9 the gravity feed line. If they could line the gravity feed, it would help. Tim wondered what would
10 happen if they went out to bid for a generator and then cancelled the order if they didn't receive
11 funding. Julie said usually you must put a deposit down, so they could potentially lose money.
12 Julie hoped they would hear soon and felt strongly they would get it because of the stages
13 completed in the process. Arianna asked Jeff what issues he was concerned about in the next 6
14 months. Towards the end of winter and into spring, the flow is gone and that station pumps about
15 half the capacity because of the size of the pipe. Jeff had done some things this spring and was
16 getting the same flow and stressing the old pump. Jeff was concerned about keeping up with the
17 spring flow in 2025. He just had one pump rebuilt and it cost \$800 to get it inspected to see if it
18 could be done but was worth doing. The rebuild cost \$15,000 and was done in 3 weeks but was
19 what needed to be done. Arne said if they lost the ability to pump, they would have to have tanker
20 trucks come in and others agreed. Tim wondered if there was any way to expedite it and they had
21 been trying. Julie said the only way to expedite was to borrow the money and not to get any state
22 assistance. Peter said that was what started the whole evaluation. To find funding, you had to go
23 through all these steps. Julie agreed. Jeff said they had to plug every one of the emergency outfalls
24 about 12 years ago. Peter wondered if there was any reason they could reconnect to the reservoir
25 and there wasn't. There was no reason it was a water facility to use for the town unless they were
26 in dire straits. Tim said worst case scenario was the catastrophic failure of the force main. Julie
27 said the state has emergency funds and they would go to them. Peter said they had been rated
28 poorly since Irene with the dam and removing the dam wasn't as expensive, but Jeff didn't agree.
29 Julie is waiting for FEMA to see if they will cover the engineering costs to evaluate the dam and
30 what improvements are needed and if the dam ever failed, it would take out Route 11. The real
31 issue is where it crosses under Route 11. Julie wants an engineer to look at the dam and its outflow.
32 Arne noted it had a preliminary look last year but was only cursory. Jeff said the concrete core
33 didn't wash out. Arne asked how old it was, and Julie said there was a sketch back to 1856 or 1858.

34
35 Jeff said the wastewater plant was inspected last Thursday, and they did well but there would be
36 some changes with permits, and he thought he had talked them out of some expensive ones. They
37 have PFA testing. The levels have been low, so they haven't had to test annually but they are
38 talking about making them do it. Jeff said their permit is for 175 a day and for the first 6 months
39 of the year, they were doing an average of 210 and 225. It was all treated, but the level was high.
40 Earlier in the spring they were between 400,000 and 500,000 gallons a day. They may have a
41 weekly test that costs \$25 a test. They are talking about having them do the monthly testing weekly
42 which costs \$350 per test. They haven't been blatantly violating their tests so he wasn't sure why
43 they needed to increase it and explained to her that they were just a small town and couldn't afford
44 it and they took their manpower away to test all the samples. Arne asked if they were testing the
45 discharge, and they were. They tested for E. Coli, phosphate nitrates, and other things. The SBR
46 system takes the phosphorous out of the mix. They don't have secondary tanks like they used to,

1 and each cycle is done in roughly a 4-hour period. Tim said there is so much more to it than the
2 average person thinks. Jeff said they've been on the cusp a few times of having a major issue and
3 didn't know what would happen at the pool and thought it would make it through the summer. He
4 has an old sump pump he thought he could use for next year, but the pump station needs a new
5 pump because it keeps getting plugged. Jeff thought it would make it to next summer but there
6 was talk of upgrades and Julie agreed. Some of the hydrants are out of service with replacing
7 valves and water leaks and Jeff didn't know if they would get to them this summer. It is \$10,000
8 to replace a single fire hydrant with the cost of the hydrant and digging and is trying to get to at
9 least one this year.

10
11 Arne asked if all the projects were documented somewhere other than Jeff's head. Jeff said he had
12 preliminary drawings, but [REDACTED] also had them.

13
14 With respect to the new meter system which would be on the August agenda, every meter has been
15 tested and is eligible for self-service. Arianna wanted to know if the meter didn't work for 6 weeks,
16 if it would just be a matter of figuring out the billing. Julie agreed. If the meter broke, there's no
17 interruption of service and they could read the numbers like they used to. Julie said if there was an
18 issue, they would look at historic usage and estimate. Jeff said consumers would have more power
19 by an app on their phone which would display usage and other information. Jeff said most people
20 are lucky and haven't had interruptions in 25 years. Arianna asked how many people worked in
21 the department and Jeff said it was 4, including him. He has 2 new guys and to become water or
22 wastewater certified, you must take the training and test and have experience in the system, and
23 he must sign off to the state that they have that. Anything less than 2 years, the state won't certify.
24 Peter said replacement was difficult and Jeff could see the wastewater system grade level
25 increasing in the next couple of years. Tim asked if they hired someone a year or two ago in
26 preparation and Wayne Wickens was hired, who has been in wastewater for about 12 years: 8 years
27 at Rutland and 2 years at Springfield and 2 at Chester but is still learning. Jeff said there is
28 paperwork that the state requires. Jeff went to 6 different leadership schools and some people think
29 they can oversee 50 people and be efficient and they can't, but they need to be able to oversee 5
30 people. Jeff felt he was fair and would do what he expected of those he supervised.

31
32 Arne thanked Jeff for the presentation and found it helpful, especially for new members. He asked
33 Jeff if there was anything he wanted to see from the Selectboard. Jeff appreciated the confidence
34 and support and said it takes three times as long to do a job if they don't have the proper tools, so
35 it makes a difference in morale having the tools to get the job done. Jeff said they've been working
36 on Main Street in front of the hardware store where there was a leak across the street. They were
37 able to get around the curbing without tearing it out and having the proper equipment saved them
38 a lot of time. Tim appreciated all the work Jeff had done for the town that very few people know
39 about. Jeff appreciated that but wasn't about accolades. Peter mentioned being in the police
40 department, the fire department, and the ambulance. Arne said Jeff's roots ran deep in the town
41 and he was appreciated. Jeff was more than happy to help where he could when he retired.

42
43 Kirby said they had been turning the material from the sewer treatment plant into sand. Arne asked
44 how the town was as far as roads, bridges and projects. Kirby said walls were being poured on
45 Thursday for the bridge project. All the beams are fabricated, and it would be a timber deck. Kirby
46 said for the future, he wanted to lean more towards making more concrete decks, even on existing

1 bridges. Not all the bridges are timber decks, which have a lot of maintenance. Kirby said they
2 were their big projects for the year. They started with Andover Road and did 13 culvert
3 replacements there, several of which were 5 feet down which made it challenging because there
4 was a lot of water. They had been catching up from the flooding of last year. For future expenses,
5 the grader is 2013 and will need to be replaced. Kirby said there were certain areas that receive
6 more traffic and require more maintenance. There are about 11,000 hours of use on the grader.
7 Kirby considered it still in good shape, but it was showing its age with worn out joints, and they
8 don't have the capability to replace them themselves. Kirby hasn't been asked for trade-in values.
9 They kept the old grader because of the lesser trade-in value. In the winter, they use it. Arne asked
10 if having the second grader had been cost effective when maintenance was considered, and Kirby
11 thought it had. The head gasket blew this year and cost about \$10,000 to replace but was worth
12 having it around. Kirby said it was a 2002, but he can take it out in 10-degree weather, and it starts
13 right up. Arianna asked about the crazy mud season they had this year and if there were any acute
14 issues. They used more gravel this year. Kirby said it varies from year to year and didn't expect
15 the next year to be as bad. It's easy to spend \$60,000 on two roads and it took all 10 of them to
16 cover the road in one day and there are 30 roads. There are 10 employees in the road department,
17 including Kirby. Julie said out of the 10, two are cemetery. They've had conversations and
18 discussed replacing a current open position with a full-time position in the highway department
19 and then in the spring, hiring someone part-time for the cemetery. One struggle is the guys are
20 unable to use vacation in the winter so because there are guys that have been with the town several
21 years, they all have 5 weeks of vacation and want to take it in the summer. They have had
22 conversations about how to cover the time when guys are out. Peter asked Kirby about the list that
23 came from Regional Planning and wondered what came of the spreadsheet on ditching and culverts
24 and things they wanted replaced. Arne said they were new requirements. Julie said it was all
25 connected to the hydrological event segments. Kirby hadn't heard much and would look into it.
26 Julie said there wasn't a list they maintain but had a culvert inventory, a bridge inventory, and
27 hydrologically connected segments. Kirby said they put new rules into place that give exceptions
28 which they've been able to use for some of the roads where they were needed. Kirby was meeting
29 with Cindy from Regional Planning to further look into the mitigation money. There is a break on
30 Grafton Street and Route 35 that has some pretty good seepage. Kirby said it was more problem
31 areas and they are continually replacing culverts and several that had hydraulic studies and came
32 back requiring a box culvert and arch pipe and funding would be tough. Peter said with the zoning
33 change and the ability to have 2 acre lots along all these roads, he considers there are a lot of people
34 who live on roads like Trebo that can't handle the traffic all season. Peter said Kirby would have
35 to think because there would be more people on Class 3 roads and trying to patch them every time
36 there's a bad mud season was not a long-term plan and Kirby agreed. Julie said that was something
37 the Planning Commission needs to consider when making these decisions and was something she
38 wasn't aware of until she received phone calls after their meeting asking what they were doing.
39 Arianna asked what they were talking about, and Arne said it was a whole different discussion
40 regarding the Planning Commission. Julie said when Preston came in, they could discuss it greater
41 detail. Julie said if it did get developed, it would take years and wouldn't happen overnight. Julie
42 and Kirby agreed it would create a lot of traffic. Arne said the bottom line was Class 3 roads must
43 be maintained no matter how many houses are on them. Julie said if you add 50 houses to a road,
44 it changes things. Arne said that was true of the whole town and a board level discussion. Peter
45 said what he was hearing is they would continue to patch. Arne didn't think they had much choice,
46 because if the road got damaged, they had to repair it. Kirby asked Peter if he was suggesting doing

1 segments. Peter thought they needed a plan that would incrementally increase density. It wasn't a
2 cheap thing and Kirby said there wasn't much in bases for the roads and Peter was aware. Arianna
3 asked if there was a desire to pave and Julie had none. Arne didn't think so. Kirby said it depended
4 on development. Peter said it depended on where people lived and if they talked to their next-door
5 neighbor whose road fell apart 9 times during the spring season, what were they saying, and
6 Arianna said that's why she was asking the question and wondered if it was appealing to pave
7 Class 3 roads. Arne said it might be appealing but financially, it wasn't. Arianna wondered if they
8 had another million in ARPA funds if that's what they would want to spend it on, and Julie said
9 that million might get them a quarter of a mile. Julie said whether it was a desire or not, it wasn't
10 financially feasible. Kirby said he was going to keep trying to keep the drainage as good as possible
11 with what they have. Arianna said, as someone who lives on one of these roads, she knows where
12 she lives and doesn't have expectations and suggested communication and education for those who
13 live on Class 3 roads and the town's responsibility for maintaining them. Julie said they do but
14 sometimes residents forget and said people assume paving makes it better. Kirby understood what
15 Peter was saying about patching and said without doing under draining and fabric, wouldn't
16 necessarily be better and said they put in stone every year. Kirby said it would probably have to
17 be contracted out. Peter said for what Kirby has, he does a great job, but they must have a bigger
18 plan. Regarding Kirby dealing with Regional Planning, Lee said that's where 66% of the budget
19 goes and wondered why they couldn't make those decisions on their own. Regional Planning is
20 getting their money from the state who are trying to tell Chester what they can do with their roads,
21 and they can't do what they think is best for their roads with their money without the state telling
22 them what to do. Arne thought instead of more mandating, they should have recommendations and
23 suggestions and let them decide what the final decision is. Peter said back in the day, they dealt
24 more locally but they subcontracted it all to Regional Planning. So instead of engineers coming to
25 help, they have Regional Planners. Julie said Chester is lucky because they have a good Regional
26 Planning Commission who works well with Chester to get the most funding they can. There are
27 other regional planning commissions throughout the state who don't, so Chester is fortunate. Tim
28 agreed but didn't know how to impact that. Lee said they vote in November and tell the
29 bureaucracy at the state level they want local control back. Tim said the government has the
30 propensity to grow itself and the others agreed. Kirby doesn't reach out to them all the time and
31 Lee said he wasn't faulting Kirby. Julie said they tend to do their own thing. Kirby said there are
32 segments he must get signed off on but doesn't get their approval first. They did High Street
33 without their approval but followed the guidelines. Lee asked if Kirby would have done the entire
34 hill if it wasn't required and Kirby said he would. Arne said it was a good thing and Kirby agreed.
35 Arne said they have a unique town for the number of roads and rivers they have. Arne said Kirby
36 had a good relationship with the state. Lee thought it got to the point that commonsense had gone
37 out the window and it was stupid that the state dictated so much to them and Chester should be
38 able to use their commonsense to do what was best for them. Kirby said they have extraordinarily
39 hydrologically connected segments throughout the town. Adrianna asked what a hydrologically
40 connected segment was since she had heard it referenced multiple times and Julie said it had to do
41 with whether road runoff could reach the river. Kirby said there was a certain distance. Arne said
42 any road that is close to a river would qualify. Kirby said Regional Planning came in and did an
43 inventory which was going to be updated. Peter said that's what he was referencing before. Since
44 1989, when Tim moved to Chester, he felt the roads have been getting worse, a little at a time. Tim
45 said Trebo road was bad during mud season. Kirby wouldn't say they were worse but said it went
46 back to what Peter was saying that the improvement is only going to go so far. Kirby said gravel

1 is getting harder to find and they got 8,000 yards that was pulled out of the river and probably isn't
2 the best gravel and what Kirby would call a dirty mixture, but they got a reasonable price and they
3 usually budget for 6,000 yards and 1,000 of it would be stone. Peter said they were going to have
4 to use more sand because it didn't pack. Kirby agreed and said he's been using it more as a binding
5 agent than a dust agent. Kirby said if they can keep the moisture in the material, it holds up better.
6 If the conditions are correct, it helps astronomically. Tim wondered about Flamstead Road if they
7 could educate any of the residents about it. Arne said it was tough to adjust people's driving habits
8 anywhere. Kirby said it gives you a fighting chance until it dries out. Along the lines of traffic and
9 issues, some of it isn't residents but delivery vehicles. Kirby said Stage and Popple Dungeon were
10 requesting a grader almost every year last week and there were residents who live there that have
11 a company and receive a lot of deliveries – several trucks a day. Lee drives up that road all the
12 time and uses four-wheel drive and wondered if it was worth putting a sign up that says to use
13 four-wheel drive and Tim added to slow down. Peter said if there was a half-ton in the UPS truck,
14 it would create issues. Arne loves where they live but didn't think people realized the cost of
15 paving all the roads. Lee wondered who the knucklehead was leaving tire marks all over the roads.
16 Kirby had a pretty good idea. Tim said unless they were caught in the act, it didn't matter. Lee said
17 it costs them money every time they must pave the road. Kirby said he was upset about Andover
18 Road and thought it was an educational side or they just didn't care. Tim wondered if they could
19 circulate something to educate people to save money.

20
21 Arne asked Kirby if there was anything he wanted to see from the Selectboard and he said he still
22 had a lot to learn and felt supported. Kirby said they would be losing some staff within the next 5
23 years and would be difficult to replace them. Kirby said applicants want to come in and learn
24 something new but it's a big gamble finding someone with a CDL. Julie said all departments have
25 been discussing different ways for recruitment of the next generation and succession planning, but
26 it costs money, and they would want them to work full-time with the guys for a year to gain the
27 knowledge and experience needed. Arne thought that was a good idea. Julie said the issue is if
28 someone retires and there's overlap. Kirby said there are jobs that don't need a CDL immediately.
29 When he was hired, obtaining your CDL in the first 6 months was required but he was able to work
30 for the town for a year before obtaining it, so it was possible. Julie said in water wastewater, they
31 are doing on-the-job training, which is sometimes better, but you must plan and budget for it. Arne
32 said it was a decent job and a great town. Arne said when there's a 100-year flood every few years
33 it causes issues. Julie said it also comes back to the guys taking vacation in the summer so it's a
34 question of whether to bring in seasonal help, but it all comes down to budget. Kirby said projects
35 take up time and they have several coming up, many that are grant funded.

36
37 Arianna asked Kirby what concerned him that may come up in the next year that they should be
38 prepared for. Bridge failures were a concern and Arianna asked if they were already on the list or
39 if there were ones that didn't meet grant requirements. Kirby said looking through his inspections,
40 other than one bridge which is a big concern because it's been on radar for too long because of
41 funding and it's one-way. Arianna asked if it was on the list. Kirby and Julie said they need to
42 figure out which program it fits into for funding. Peter said going from wood decks to concrete
43 was an issue. Kirby has been trying to do homework and the girders and timber decks are cost
44 effective and he thought it would cost \$20,000. The concrete side would be \$40,000. Life
45 expectancy is what Kirby was leaning more towards. Depending on the location of the bridge, if it
46 could stay completely dry, there were some that were 30 years old that weren't terrible but there

1 were some that would need replacement. Some may have 15 years left and some will need to have
2 something done in 5 years. Kirby was looking at lifespan and concrete had a 75-year lifespan. The
3 cost was more but may be worth it in the long run by getting an extra 30 or 40 years out of it and
4 not needing to constantly address them. Julie said Kirby could attend a Selectboard meeting and
5 provide more information about them.

6
7 The board thanked Kirby for his input.

8
9 (The board moved into the back room of the Stone Hearth.)

10
11 **Agenda Item 5, Administration; Town Clerk, Zoning & Assessing**

12
13 Steven Vertefeulle, Facilities Director for the Town of Chester, has been with the town for 2 ½
14 years in this new position. There's a lot of stuff in town that gets overlooked. He walks through
15 the town buildings every morning as part of his routine and finds things that need attention, such
16 as leaks or little things that are left on. Even unusual odors alert him to things that may not be
17 right. The number of things he discovers will save the town money over time. He also helps the
18 office staff, the Highway and Water Departments, the Rec Department and the Fire Department.
19 He works with the ambulance service and police department and goes wherever he is needed at a
20 moment's notice. The hardest thing for him is scheduling time to do something because he can be
21 called at the drop of a hat to help where he is needed. For the first year, his biggest concern is
22 replacing the entire sprinkler system at the library and upgrading the fire alarm system. The system
23 is 30 years old and since he's been working there, they've had 4 leaks. The current system is a dry
24 system and water stays in it and rots the tank and a leak starts that's backed up by air pressure.
25 When there's a hole in the pipe, the air compressor can't keep up with it and it hurts the system.
26 They had one leak when he first started and replaced that pipe. They've been replacing sprinkler
27 pipes here and there. The reason the entire system hasn't been replaced is not only is there a leak
28 in the basement but one on the second floor in the kids' area. There are holes that come out of the
29 system anywhere in the system and the clapper valve is old and they can't get parts. The company
30 doesn't make that valve anymore. They have talked about replacing the system in sections. Julie
31 said the sprinkler system had been included in a large grant they wrote for the library through The
32 Department of Libraries who received a big chunk of money from ARPA funding. They will be
33 for projects over \$300,000. They haven't heard back yet, and they haven't made any decisions, but
34 the sprinkler system is a big part of it. The grant is based on accessibility to the library and the
35 argument was, if it didn't have a sprinkler system, it couldn't be opened. The grant was \$800,000
36 but it was included in the grant application, and they hope it gets awarded. Peter said they set aside
37 money for the clapper and Julie said they hadn't purchased it yet because they were waiting to see
38 if they received the grant. Julie expected they would be awarded soon because it was ARPA
39 funding, which must be awarded by the end of the year. Peter wondered if there was a way they
40 could have central control with heating. They had a control downstairs that took over one heating
41 system while the other system was in the other room on a separate thermostat they would turn on
42 to cool if it got too hot. The new section was built in 1992 and their electric and propane bill for
43 heating was outrageous. They ended up having the unit serviced and found out that nobody had
44 ever put a filter in it and the unit had been plugged for 17 years and was why the A/C had to run
45 when the furnace was. Wayne Wickens and Steve were able to have it taken care of and Julie said
46 it was one of the benefits of hiring a facilities director having someone who was watching

1 everything. Steve had spent quite a bit of time at the library trying to figure it out and called Wayne
2 in, who was worth his weight in gold, and figured out what the problem was, which was partly the
3 lack of a thermostat in one of the areas. Steve said someone had shut off half the radiators which
4 weren't working in the building, so now they were running and doing well. Steve wants to install
5 2 A/C units in the basement to control the humidity because currently, there are 4 humidifiers in
6 the basement which were expensive to run. A lot of parents and children use the basement. There
7 is an air exchange unit on the back wall in the basement that runs continuously. It's an air exchange
8 with a heater in it. Steve said they had some energy audits done on the buildings which came with
9 a lot of recommendations. Julie said there were three phases to some grant money received and
10 the last phase was they could apply for up to \$500,000 with no match to be used in the municipal
11 buildings to mitigate issues found in the energy audits. Arne said that's where's Steve's knowledge
12 and experience would be valuable because he would know where to spend the money. Julie agreed.
13 They contract with BART Energy, and he asks them to be honest and give him the life expectancy
14 of units. Steve said he would rather pay a little more for service if they have a good relationship
15 and are familiar with the buildings. Arne said the trust and rapport they developed was invaluable.
16 If they had to bring a different contractor up to speed every time, it would be difficult. They got
17 an estimate to add two A/C units. Tim asked if an electrical upgrade would be required and Steve
18 said it was part of the grant application, as there were also lighting issues downstairs. They replaced
19 all the lighting upstairs with the discount they got, and the lighting upstairs was 99% LED now.
20 They will have to tear the drop ceiling down when they replace the sprinkler system so they're
21 waiting on the grant before replacing the electrical. Steve said he would like a tractor to be used
22 by all the departments. Jeff Holden uses a personal tractor for pushing snow. Steve is looking for
23 a 30HP tractor and it would be used by the Fire Department for pushing snow and the Water
24 Department and Rec Department for miscellaneous landscaping and field work and cleanup.
25 Currently, Matt uses a wheelbarrow. It would also be used for the cemetery sextons because right
26 now they pay for someone to come dig for the cemetery and they could use the tractor for digging
27 backfilling and setting the headstones. They wouldn't have to bother Kirby. At the Pinnacle, they
28 want to pull up the guardrails to give it a more open look. Steve works with Matt on a lot of projects
29 there and a tractor would be beneficial to move the picnic tables and bleachers. Julie said it gets
30 the guys away from using their own personal equipment on town property. A tractor with a
31 backhoe would cost \$46,000 and have forks on the bucket. It wouldn't be used to mow as Matt
32 gets the mower from the Highway which they share.

33
34 Peter asked them to go back to the discussion about units at Town Hall. Steve said the two units
35 upstairs in the attic were part of the 5-year plan. Julie said they would probably move up because
36 the energy audits had identified them as one of the big things. The Town Hall part of that project
37 would include fully insulating the attic and walls of the building and getting the units out and
38 installing new units, so it was more energy efficient. That would be included in the \$500,000 grant,
39 which opens this year so the work will probably be done next year. Steve said when he was upstairs
40 and they had to mount a big fan, it was blowing all the cool air into the attic instead of the building.
41 Over the years of people going upstairs, they've pushed the insulation out of the way to see where
42 they were walking, so the ceiling is probably only a couple of inches of insulation.

43
44 For three years, Steve has wanted a facilities vehicle. The one he is using was from the water
45 department. It would be nice to have a 4-wheel drive vehicle. When Highway replaces theirs, Steve
46 will probably get their current one. The library ADA upgrades will fall under the grants they are

1 hoping to get. Steve said his three-year plan included back up boilers for the Highway Department
2 as there aren't any currently. They use the wood fire boiler for heat and with the building
3 renovations, their wood consumption has gone down considerably because it's so well insulated.
4 The wood boiler is 19 years old, and life expectancy is 25 years, so it's getting close. Steve said if
5 the boiler goes down, there's no heat. Steve has gotten a price for back up boilers from a few
6 different contractors and it will cost about \$50,000 for two wall mounted ones. One would run and
7 if it called for too much demand, the second would kick on. They need to do a heat loss on the
8 building since it's been reinsulated. They open the doors in the winter because it gets too hot in
9 there, because it's insulated so well.

10
11 All town buildings could use some paint and touch up. For five years, the price he got a year or
12 two went for a wood boiler and now it was \$27,000 to \$30,000 to replace the existing ones of the
13 same size. Arne suggested it could be smaller in size if they opened the doors to cool the building.
14 Steve agreed. Steve said to replace the thermostats, it would cost close to \$2,000 but they don't
15 need any currently because of the amount of heat that stays in the building. In 7 years, he hoped to
16 finish the upgrades to Yosemite Firehouse. Julie said the windows, which are absolutely gorgeous,
17 were almost done and the only work left to do was painting and much more would be the
18 responsibility of the Yosemite group. The conversion of the interior of the building to a museum
19 is not a taxpayer expense and that group needs to raise the funds to do that. The last expense of the
20 taxpayers is the painting. Steve said the clapboard is thin and some of it needs to be replaced,
21 which would be at taxpayer cost. When the roof was done on the Town Hall, they did Yosemite.
22 Julie said when they got bids to paint 4 or 5 years ago it was \$40,000 and it was without replacing
23 any boards. Julie wouldn't propose it as an expense this year. Arne said the Selectboard agreed to
24 preserve the building and there was no obligation to finish it by a date certain.

25
26 The Academy Building is another project that falls under the energy audit. They want to insulate
27 the building and walls but there are restrictions that Julie needs to look into because it falls under
28 a conservation covenant. Julie said one of the primary things for the Academy building would be
29 insulation and the grant would pay for it. The town maintains and preserves the building. Steve
30 said when he first started, there was no humidifier in the basement which keeps it at 60 to 69%
31 and the alarm system has been fixed. Steve has installed sensors that tell him what the humidity is
32 without going into the basement. They are leaving the doors closed to dehumidify the basement.
33 The humidity in the vault, even when closed, is 41%. Steve said the sensors provide a lot of
34 information and only cost about \$39. Peter noticed the difference in the mold.

35
36 Steve's 10-year plan was for a new recreation center. Julie asked Steve to come back at 2 pm so
37 the others could speak and return to work. Arianna asked about Jeffrey Barn. Peter said there were
38 two ideas, and he wanted to get a hold of the board again regarding their input. Julie said Chester
39 has a historic preservation committee not appointed and there were some opinions. It is included
40 in the town's inventory. Arianna confirmed they didn't know what to do and were waiting to learn
41 more.

42
43 Deb Aldrich said they want to go back to indexing things online through the 1800s. They are back
44 to 1979 on some of the deeds and mortgages and it's all online, but they'd like to get everything
45 online under land records. They were given a price of \$115,000 in 2021. There is an option of
46 doing it in sections. It would be scanning the documents, and the books don't come apart. They

1 took some of the books before to scan them and she gets nervous when they take things out of
2 office. Profile no longer is in Vermont but at one time, had a plant in Essex Junction. The maps
3 are a continuing thing and are sent out to scan. This time they had to send them to South Carolina,
4 and it made her nervous. She wasn't sure how the books would be done. They have a restoration
5 fund and to record a document, it's \$15 a page. \$11 goes into the general fund and \$4 into the
6 record restoration fund per statute. Last year they got a new map file cabinet with some of the
7 money, and it should last. They now have shelves in the vault so there's enough space. The books
8 went from 11 x 17 to 8 ½ x 11. They need to figure out what to do with old grand lists from the
9 1800s. Peter was surprised how well they held up compared to other things. As far as the books
10 are concerned, there aren't any that need to be restored. They've restored the births and deaths and
11 any of the old record books. The town reports are all bound up to 2023. They go to as many
12 trainings as they can regarding the election laws. Lee assumed because the documents were
13 scanned, the text wasn't changed, and it was just a picture. They also get indexed. Lee wondered
14 if they could hire an intern to do it. Peter has been doing images and he said the pictures are easier
15 to read. Arne asked if the state required them, or if they were just doing it because it made sense.
16 Deb said it wasn't required but suggested. The reason they went back to 1980 was because it was
17 40 years, and most attorneys do a 40-year search. They would like the rest of them on there to have
18 them. When people are looking at them, they write on a piece of paper sometimes near the record.
19 Julie added that the records are preserved. The quote was just the mortgages and deeds and the
20 documents that are recorded in the land records and not the civil books and other documents in the
21 vault. It's the history of the town in the vault. The board agreed it was a good idea and made sense.
22 Handwritten deeds will cost \$52,000 to scan. Anything that is new and recorded gets scanned,
23 including marriages. The new items don't show an image online. Peter asked if they still retain the
24 originals, and they do.

25
26 Deb said they are trying to stay on top of voting laws and get the information out there. Lee
27 suggested using the new notification system that people are signing up for. Amie said the school
28 re-vote nobody knew about and were upset. The members thought the notification system was a
29 good way to let the public know. Arianna noted that people could sign up for what notifications
30 they wanted and suggested a civic notification group. Julie reminded them that there are many
31 avenues to let people know and if they decided to live under a rock, that was their choice. Tim said
32 they do their best but the public needs to do their part.

33
34 Deb asked about security cameras in the office. There were times she wished they could lock the
35 front door and people would need to buzz to get in. Arianna didn't think it was a bad idea. They
36 have panic buttons which go to the alarm company who dispatch the police.

37
38 Arianna asked if there was anything the board could do for them and Deb asked if there was
39 anything they could do differently for the board. Arne didn't think he had ever heard any negative
40 comments, and all were positive. Peter has noticed they drop what they're doing to help.

41
42 The board thanked Deb and Amie for all they did.

43
44 Preston said he was on the Woodstock Selectboard for 12 years so knew how these things went
45 and had worked for the Vermont Land Trust in part of his career. He's seen towns where the lister
46 and town clerk won't talk to each other and towns where you can't get through a Selectboard

1 meeting without someone shouting or someone walking out. Chester has been a great town to work
2 for by comparison. Preston was impressed with Deb and Amie. One of Preston's mottos is to be
3 calm but not complacent. Some people that come in are very cranked and it's hard to tell people
4 what they can or can't do with their land. Preston is retiring next June and has been there 3 years
5 and said it was a great place to land at the end of his career. Preston had three times in his career
6 he left because he didn't get along with the boss and within 3 years, the bosses were gone.

7
8 Five years ago, Mike worked 10 hours a week and Valerie still works part-time. Now, they have
9 three full-time employees. Hugh Quinn has started and is great and Preston's goal is to download
10 what's in his brain to Hugh. Cathy and Valerie are still there. Julie said one of the things in the
11 budget was adding a full-time position and they interviewed Hugh Quinn, Chair of Planning
12 Commission, and he was hired and has proved to be a great addition to the team. They will continue
13 evaluating since he is still the Planning Commission Chair and identify if there are conflicts. Hugh
14 may step down as Chair but stay on the Commission. Tim asked what the position was, and Julie
15 said it was a full-time position to be shared between zoning and assessment and Hugh would be
16 an assessor and the assistant zoning administrator. Hugh's background has proven to be very
17 helpful. The plan would be that when Preston retires, Hugh can slide into the spot and replace the
18 part-time. Tim liked the succession planning. Through legislation, there are so many changes
19 coming to the assessment side. Cathy is supposed to be full-time and works way more than part-
20 time. Val works very limited hours. They need someone who understands data and Hugh brings
21 that to the table. Peter said there was a huge transition. Preston was hired as zoning administrator
22 but then they created the position of town planner to help Julie with grant writing which Preston
23 has never had a chance to get to because of the volume of work in the office. Preston works with
24 short-term rentals, housing commission, and other things. Hugh coming in has been helpful.
25 Preston said he's a systems guy in his 50s and was with Cisco and they wanted him to come back
26 to the corporate office and he wasn't interested. Hugh started with the town 2 weeks ago. Cathy
27 turned 74 and has been a wonderful help but needs to start slowing down. Cathy is a good-hearted
28 person. Julie said that's the tax base and needs not to be ignored. Preston wasn't expecting to need
29 to spend more money in 5 years, as they were well staffed. Both zoning and assessment records
30 haven't been kept well and they were hoping to improve it so someone new could come on board
31 to figure out the job. Preston felt the records have improved greatly since he's been there because
32 he's a filer. Chester has been zoning since 1976 and there are both periods when the records are
33 great and when they aren't. For the town records, every document has a book and page, so
34 digitizing would not be a challenge. Looking at some of the zoning files, they were a mishmash of
35 cover letters, handwritten notes, and stickies and digitizing them didn't seem simple and they
36 would not want to give them to an intern. Peter asked Preston if he was currently digitizing what
37 he did. Preston said when he came to Chester 3 years ago, he was aware state law said all zoning
38 permits were supposed to be recorded and they weren't. From the time Preston has been with the
39 town, they've been recorded. In the CAIC system, which is the tax database, there are dropdowns
40 for the lister card, and Preston and Julie have talked about having a dropdown for permits. Preston
41 confessed he spoke with someone at CAIC who was supposed to provide a proposal and hadn't
42 and he hadn't followed up. It would be fairly easy to go back, and Julie agreed. Julie has considered
43 bringing someone in to do that and once it was set up in CAIC, it could be part of Preston's ritual.
44 Julie said when they made the tax maps digital online, anything they have digital, they can connect.
45 Everything can be attached to by a person. They knew they were starting with the assessment side
46 only, but the plan was that was where they would end up. Peter wondered if they locked them to

1 one contractor, if they would be putting themselves in a corner. Ludlow and Cavendish don't have
2 this contractor. Arianna asked if she got less information from Ludlow or Chester because their
3 systems were different. Julie didn't know if they would ever have a program that municipalities
4 shared. Peter said that was his point and the files shouldn't be put into one tax record. Arianna
5 asked if there was cloud storage for Chester. Julie said the digital records aren't kept on their server
6 but go to a link. There was discussion over where the PDF was being saved that Preston was
7 saving. Julie said this was a discussion for another meeting and it was a good discussion.

8
9 Preston said the lister database that included the grand list could be more complete and more
10 accurate but was good to get tax bills out. It has not been maintained to provide more information
11 and it would be great to be better with that. Preston has had 49 years in this and hoped to transfer
12 some information and experience to Hugh. Preston said it was phenomenal what people can obtain
13 online. Enforcement issues come up and Preston tries hard to use his skills to avoid court and
14 always feels if that happens, he's saved his salary for one year. There are things like the quarry
15 where that can't be done. Preston's philosophy of zoning is commonsense, and calm but not
16 complacent. As far as future savings, with AI, it is interesting what it can do and could prove
17 interesting. Preston said DRB is on the record now and Chester is one of only 12 towns in the state
18 that opted for it. The DRB hearings are supposed to be conducted at the level of a court case and
19 when someone appeals a decision and it goes before an environmental court, the judge doesn't re-
20 hear the case but reviews the record to make their decision to uphold or remand the DRB's
21 decision. Preston said when he was hired, he had been working for a month when he was told
22 Chester was an on-the-record town. Arne said they get more local control as it offered more and
23 Preston thought that's why it was implemented because of O'Neil Quarry. Preston brought it up
24 because it takes more time and money. The DRB hearings must be legally warned, and a lengthy
25 decision needs to be written and some towns have what the DRB does done by an administrative
26 review meeting. Preston said Chester's DRB isn't interested in that, and some think they add a lot
27 of value and sometimes they think they won't be around forever, and some won't be able to do it
28 as well. Currently, anything involving a survey such as a boundary line adjustment, subdivision,
29 or whatever goes to the DRB, which is very rare, and most towns don't do that. The Planning
30 Commission has asked the DRB if they would be willing to relinquish that, and they've said no.
31 Preston reminded them that the DRB takes 3 months to get a decision and said they want to be
32 friendly towards people getting things done because state law says a 15-day warning period before
33 the hearing and they only have publications that publish once a week so it's a 3-week warning
34 before, then there's the hearing, then the decision has to be written, and then there's a 30-day
35 appeal period. So, for anyone doing a subdivision, because no lawyer wants to file a subdivision
36 survey until the appeal period is over, it takes three months. Preston said if you were highly
37 motivated, maybe 2 months but unlikely. Julie said if the Selectboard feels strongly that it's a
38 change that needs to be made, the recommendation can come from the Selectboard. Preston said
39 last year it was roughly 5 DRB hearings but the cost adds up and those hearings would have been
40 subdivisions or boundary adjustments that could have been handled administratively. Many
41 bylaws only send major subdivisions to a DRB hearing. Lee asked what jurisdiction the DRB had
42 to decline, and Julie said they don't, that it was just a courtesy. Preston said the Planning
43 Commission wasn't doing well when he came to town and a variety of people can take credit for
44 the turnover and they've been lucky to get most of the bylaws through and to go forward with
45 change the DRB didn't like. They were trying to keep everything happy and as a courtesy, they
46 review their changes with the DRB.

1 Preston said the Chester wall map of Chester's lots show all different shaped lots because there
2 was something called the 10-acre loophole. If you could get 10 or more acres, you didn't need a
3 septic. The loophole no longer exists. Preston gets a lot of questions about old septics and he didn't
4 have a good answer. Sometimes a septic needs to be repaired but many of them didn't have a riser
5 with a cap on it. He gets 2 or 3 calls a week from people wanting him to look up their old septic
6 permits. Chester has good records, and he's had some luck. Anything before 1973 or 1974 doesn't
7 have a permit because they weren't required and anything more than 10 acres doesn't have one
8 because septics weren't required. Preston said when they moved into the realm of short-term
9 rentals, they looked up septic permits and that's why there's a complicated form they use to count
10 bedrooms. There are many houses out there that are legal but don't have a septic.

11
12 As far as other ways of saving money would be remote inspections through drones or aerial
13 imagery, it was expensive to have boots on the ground visiting every house in town and people
14 don't want to let you in or they're not home and you have to prove your identity before they'll let
15 you in their house. They hire NEMRC to do property inspections and issues are the cost and it
16 could be cheaper if it was done in-house. There is a process to become a certified property assessor,
17 but it would need to be an employee who would stick around because it is a multi-year program.
18 Arianna wondered if they ever contemplated having an assessor on staff and Peter said that's how
19 they used to do it. Preston said for years, the model was there were 3 elected listers and when he
20 came to town, the elected listers enjoyed it and they would sit at their desks and debate. The model
21 has changed since they've received more school money, and it needs to be more scientific rather
22 than 3 listers having a good time debating the value of a house. Preston said the property assessor
23 program takes in the range of 4 or 5 years to become an assessor, and they would almost have to
24 promise to stay an employee or forfeit some money if they leave. The average American employee
25 only sticks around 6 or 8 years. Julie saw the question of what the value of an in-house assessor
26 was. There is a waiting list for contracting the services out and it affects the grand list. Peter said
27 you cannot use the sale value as the tax value and the others agreed. Peter thought getting the long-
28 term commitment would be difficult. Julie thought it was for the person looking for a second career
29 and it was the whole reason Hugh was there. Lee wondered if they would cross-train someone
30 already employed. Preston said the thought had crossed his mind, but Hugh was too new. Julie
31 said Cathy would be retiring and that would be something to consider as they hired someone.
32 Preston said every town he left, he was asked to be put on retainer if needed and he was willing to
33 do that and not just walk away. Peter mentioned Preston was also hired as a planner and hadn't
34 had much time to do that. Preston said Chester could hire an economic development person, but it
35 was one more piece of funding they needed to think about. Preston said the Regional Commission
36 said the housing stock is getting older, the number of young people reduced, and the number of
37 single households is increasing but the reality is it's all over Vermont. Julie had Preston speak at
38 a housing conference. While there's money out there for affordable housing, it's more difficult to
39 build. Preston has a situation with someone on Trebo Road who wants a FEMA trailer because
40 their mobile home isn't in good condition, and they have septic and water, but the FEMA trailer
41 isn't there yet. It's been almost a year and it's not the town's fault as Preston issued the permit in
42 2 weeks, but the state wants everything tested and has many requirements, so any affordable
43 housing is really slow. Arne said the cost of a 1,000 square foot house is \$600,000. Tim wondered
44 what it was assessed for, and Arianna said 200,000. Preston saw the reforms making it worse and
45 Julie said the legislators insist it's better and don't understand. Tim asked for an explanation of
46 why it was worse. Preston said the flaw of Act 250 from the very beginning was there was

1 supposed to be a state use plan and there never was, so it was applied to everything. They decided
2 to use the regional plan for state use but the way the law was adopted was Tiers 1, 2, and 3, and
3 Tier 1 was broken into 1a and 1b, which were the downtown village centers that shouldn't be Act
4 250. They told towns they needed to show them their zoning was sufficiently robust and must
5 enforce it the way they wanted them to. Towns saw it as a terrible deal. Preston didn't think it
6 would go well at all. The river corridor was another thing the state did that expanded federal
7 floodplain. Preston said the federal flood plain was based on a Mississippi model where water rises
8 and then recedes. Vermont's river corridor is based on rain events and the water slamming the
9 riverbanks and half of Chester's downtown is river corridor, so Preston advises against signing up
10 for it. Julie agreed. The legislature basically told ANR they would develop and enforce river
11 corridor rules but would give them a period. The Secretary of the Agency of Natural Resources
12 testified that they didn't have the capability and weren't even doing their present job well and
13 didn't have the capability to add something. Preston said the state wasn't doing a good job with
14 the rules they had, and they all knew there was a problem with flooding and understood something
15 needed to be done but what it would mean and how it would be outplayed, he didn't know. The
16 legislature has the ability for towns to make their case to carve out certain areas from the flood
17 rights to say they are downtown areas. Peter said the current ANR map was good and because it
18 hadn't changed, the agency only uses 2006 data before Irene, so they don't see a problem and
19 there's more recent flow data. Preston tells people the federal flood maps date back to 1975 and
20 some were boots on the ground and some were estimates off photography. Preston believed they
21 would never update the maps but now, because there's such good aerial photography, they're going
22 to update them in the next few years. They will look like Swiss cheese because of the terrain.
23 Preston didn't know what would happen with the Vermont maps because they take the premise
24 that rivers meander and it's normal and until they hit some kind of wall, you must assume they
25 may meander. Peter said you can download an accurate map from ANR which identified Class 4
26 roads. Peter said the river corridor definitely affects the flood map and when he looks at the river
27 corridor now, they did pretty well. Preston said even the 1975 maps had boots on the ground in
28 places like Chester and were based on flow data but couldn't do that for all the streams. Preston
29 drives Route 106 every day through Reading and there's a field where the river runs over its banks
30 and if there was a more active economy, the farmer would have been out there and cleared out the
31 channel and redirected the river back to where it was but since it hasn't been redirected, it's
32 wreaked havoc on this field even brushing up to the side of 106. If someone had been around to
33 clear it, the field would still be usable but now it's just trashed. Lee asked if it was because they
34 couldn't or weren't allowed to and Preston thought that was a good question. In this instance, the
35 owner said he didn't care. Preston said the thinking of the state is that it's natural and they should
36 be left alone but there are a lot of consequences as a result. Lee said one of their residents up the
37 road tried to get things back after Irene and was told to get out of the river. Preston shared his
38 frustration because it was all about balance, but the question was where that fell. Arne said because
39 it now happens so often, it changes your thinking. People say the 100-year model doesn't work
40 anymore but the 100-year model is for a one point and place so if it floods in Plainfield, people in
41 Chester think it counts but it doesn't, but Preston couldn't deny that rain is coming down harder
42 and flood events are occurring more and it was undeniable at this point.

43
44 Tim said they've talked a couple times in the past about the local option tax would help Chester
45 fund economic development. Tim wondered if anything had changed. Preston has lived in
46 Woodstock his entire adult life and understands Woodstock doesn't do everything right. They have

1 a bigger base for the option tax and their compromise was half collected went to affordable
2 housing. It was a good compromise in terms of public support. Preston didn't think it seemed like
3 the amount of money generated would help. Julie is still looking at it with the Housing Commission
4 and even if they did rooms and meals only, it would hit the short-term rentals, and the money
5 would be funds for the Housing Commission. It will be proposed to the board, as a vote is required,
6 but they're still gathering information and one of those three groups for taxation makes sense and
7 what would they do with the money. Meals and rooms, retail sales, and alcohol are the three
8 groups. Preston thought Woodstock had all three but when sales came up for renewal, they voted
9 against it. Rooms and meals hardly affect local people, and perhaps alcohol. Julie said if they
10 decided to do retail, she would need to identify the purpose. Preston thought it was something that
11 could be sold to the public, especially if they know what it's going for. Woodstock's short-term
12 rental ordinance is up, and Preston was planning to vote against it because they want to charge an
13 annual fee of \$3,000 to register and \$2,000 for hosted. Chester chose a cheap provider that cost
14 \$6,000 annually and Woodstock chose one for \$30,000. They've argued they're going to hire
15 someone for \$60,000 who people have joked is the STR tsar, so they need to bring in \$90,000 to
16 cover these expenses and are anticipating enforcement, so that's why they are proposing these very
17 high fees which Preston felt were too high. Chester's STR bylaw becomes effective August 19th
18 and is very near the cap. Preston said Jim Carroll is always concerned not to treat two parties
19 differently. Woodstock said for a total of 110 rentals, 55 can be hosted and 55 unhosted. You'll hit
20 the cap on the unhosted right away and the hosted may never hit the cap. Preston said it was an
21 option for Chester to consider. The board thanked Preston for speaking with them.

22
23 (The board took a brief recess.)

24 25 **Agenda Item 6, Public Safety; Police, Fire & Ambulance**

26
27 Arne told them it was great to have the department heads at the discussion and for taking time out
28 of their day.

29
30 They briefly discussed the goats which was a big issue in town and an ordinance would go into
31 effect soon to address it.

32
33 Chief Williams said the Police Department was doing well. They don't have a lot of new things
34 happening but consistent things that happen every day. They are going to use the new sign trailers
35 during storms, incidents, and Fall Festival to get information out and traffic slowed. They used
36 them for National Night Out on the 6th. They will move them into the Green area.

37
38 The department is still down a lieutenant position, but has an active sergeant who is doing an
39 outstanding job. He's given him a little guidance and he's doing an excellent job. Julie said the
40 reason they got to it was they had advertised the lieutenant position for a long time that has a pretty
41 steep list of qualifications that they're having a hard time finding someone who meets them. They
42 don't want the wrong person, so they've started looking at the role they want to fill and maybe
43 they want a sergeant. Arne said the sergeant is still in the bargaining unit and the lieutenant is
44 administration and Julie said it was one of the things they would discuss. They slid Noah into a
45 sergeant position and if they decide they want to make the position permanent and eliminate the
46 lieutenant position, they've already discussed it with the union. Arne asked if it was only in the

1 contract and Julie said if they and the union can negotiate an agreement. Arianna noted it had to
2 be about the position and not the person and Julie agreed. The union is willing to discuss it, and
3 they understand what the town is trying to do. The chief said they were still short rotating people
4 through all the shifts. They are using part-time people to fill in some of the hours. Mike is one of
5 the part-time guys. Julie said they were down one full-time position. They don't get to use Tim as
6 much because he's not available because of another job and family commitments. Arne asked if
7 there was an open offer advertised for part-time people to come in and it was on the website. It
8 may have been closed by the dates advertised but was still there and they may not renew it and
9 change it to sergeant instead.

10
11 Future projections for the department are the crisscross training with public safety, some of the
12 police officers as exterior firefighter certification. All the PD guys are first responders and there is
13 a potential to raise their levels of certification. Julie said most of the guys are excited for the
14 opportunity. The chief said it was intriguing because it gave them something else to do during the
15 shift and broke up the day and gave Chester the most bang for their buck. Peter asked if there were
16 any union issues because of it and the chief said not yet. The chief said the hard part was the
17 training part for firefighting, but they have in-house training for medical. Relationships exist here
18 and people will call you by your first name and that's what the department wants. The chief said
19 they are getting the results he wanted when he first came in and building rapport with the public.
20 People are stopping in to just talk rather than complain.

21
22 The issue of the goats came back up and the fact they have a disease that makes them much more
23 difficult to place.

24
25 Public safety comes naturally by doing cross-training, the guys are doing active shooter/incident
26 training at the schools and then the medics come in. Tim was glad they were doing it. They all
27 hoped it was a waste of time and never needed but wanted to be prepared. They have discussed
28 the scenario of a train derailment in the middle of town where the well is. Gerry Gleason had been
29 in with concerns about what it would look like if a derailment happened.

30
31 Arne asked what they were digging up at the department and was told it was for the donated
32 carport.

33
34 Arne asked what the department's needs would be for the future and if there was anything they
35 wanted to see from the Selectboard. Tom wants to replace the weapons in the cars. The last chief
36 removed the shotguns from the cars, and he didn't know why. They qualified and trained for them
37 and Tom put them back into the newer cars. The old cars don't have shotguns in them because
38 they require racks, and the chief wants them in there. Tom thought they had been there since the
39 department got them and they were a necessity these days. Hopefully they never needed to use
40 them, but he wanted to make sure they worked. Guns would be the next big purchase. They got
41 their body armor last year. Arianna wondered if there was a person in charge of inventory of
42 weapons and armor. The chief said there was a mismatch of weapons. Arianna asked if each officer
43 was assigned a specific weapon or if they were assigned to the cars and they were. They may raffle
44 off the old weapons, but he needed to check with Springfield first. Arne said there used to be
45 storage in the basement of the town hall. The chief said there were guns locked in the evidence
46 room. Arianna wondered if it was an inventory of unclaimed weapons. The court designated them

1 as the keeper of all weapons and they hold them on behalf of the court. They must go through a
2 whole process and it's the responsibility of the police. A lot of people never claim them, or they
3 don't want them back. Arne wondered if there was a period. The chief said if the weapon was
4 involved in a homicide, they pass it on to the VSP who is responsible for storing them.

5
6 They didn't have any huge expenditures, and it was going well personnel wise. There hasn't been
7 a lot of overtime. For National Night Out, they took the grant money and purchased stuff to re-
8 use. Things like a movie projector were purchased and they can show movies at the fire station for
9 the public. These things can also be used at the Fall Festival. The biggest obstacle has been
10 communications which is across the board with everyone, including highway. They are on
11 different frequencies. They applied for a grant to get everyone outfitted and are waiting to hear
12 back. As they are building the asset management, communications are a line they will need to
13 contribute to annually. For years, grants have covered the cost but that isn't happening any longer.
14 There have been times when they haven't been able to reach anyone, which is a dangerous issue.
15 Arne asked if the goal was to get radios that are the same for everyone because usually you don't
16 share a band unless it's low traffic. Julie said Mike had done a lot of research. Mike said there are
17 multi-band radios that allow them to use all the frequencies and aren't just UHF and VHF radios.
18 Currently, if he's doing a search warrant, he needs two radios. Radios can now operate off cell
19 service or Wi-Fi and are built into the radio. They've created a whole structure with the radios.
20 The reason they found out about it was Kirby was in a dead spot in Smokeshire where Crown Point
21 happened to be and was able to call because they have cell service in all their trucks. The town is
22 looking for portable boosters in all their trucks which would help in the dead areas. Mike said there
23 are a lot of options, and the grant requirement is for it to be NFP compliant so that's why it's so
24 outrageously expensive and they're trying to find the right solution. For fire, PD, and EMS, he
25 wouldn't have to hit a radio tower if it was connected by cell service.

26
27 Mike said they're finishing up their EMT class which had 10 students, and they had filled it
28 completely. Four of them are from outside departments so there is potential for an additional 6
29 EMTs which would be fantastic. It was also \$7,500 in revenue for the town. They charge \$1,500
30 for outside students and for anyone internal they're on a contract where they must commit 2 nights
31 and a weekend a month to repay the debt. Keeping people engaged and having expectations is how
32 they can balance the workload. Mike's goal is to have a rotation between basic classes and
33 advanced EMT classes. For advanced, they would charge \$2,000 per person. Mike White is their
34 other full-time person. He is an advanced EMT and is also interested in becoming an instructor.
35 This fall they should get the new ambulance and go down in two weeks to inspect it. Once they
36 get it, they'll prepare the old one for transfers. The hospital keeps asking when they'll be available.
37 Mike hoped the grant gets approved or they'll have to figure out how to get equipment they don't
38 have currently. A lot of people are excited and motivated to do it. Mike said Springfield Hospital
39 went on diversion for the first time in 25 years recently which forced Chester to go all the way to
40 Mount Ascutney for a patient. Mike could foresee that happening more as hospitals are
41 overwhelmed. They had 25 patients and could not accept any more and the CrowdStrike thing
42 happened, so they also lost their technology, and the patient had to go elsewhere. Mike had not
43 expected it to happen here. Mike will start paramedic school in September and hoped by 2025 they
44 would be at paramedic level. Julie said they had an applicant for the fire chief side and would not
45 release names until he came here and if they get him, he's already a paramedic and could start the
46 program sooner. Arne said it was great news to see the things discussed in the past coming to

1 fruition. It is a positive thing for the town. The board told emergency services they do a good job.
2 Peter attributed the Public Safety Building as the catalyst to this all happening. It was a different
3 image of professionalism and leadership.
4

5 Julie said they were baby stepping and it's allowing them time to think of new ideas and because
6 the guys have experience, they can come to her with them. Julie anticipated people in the
7 community seeing the benefits and hoped it would take off. Lee asked where the transfer unit
8 would be stored. Mike said they spoke with the Fire Department and the hazmat trailer is empty
9 and would be shipped off site and the extra ambulance would be stored where it currently is. Julie
10 said the transfer ambulance would not go out on an emergency basis. Mike said ideas as simple as
11 moving offices around and creating a tiny bumper for people who live further away and have a
12 place to stay because they're trying to think of how to better utilize the space. Lee joked they could
13 use the storage room for a sleeping area. Mike said even something as simple as adding a door so
14 the PD could come into the Fire Department without having to go outside the building was
15 something they did. Another revenue item was the National Association of EMTs was the
16 organization that has emergency casualty care and a whole bunch of different things. He's working
17 on a grant for the equipment through them. If it doesn't come through, he can still get the
18 equipment, but it won't be high-end. If they can get that off the ground, it will be \$450 per person
19 for a 2-day class. Julie said they have all kinds of training in the new facility and outside
20 organizations are coming. In September, the state is coming down for an all-day pediatric training
21 for hospitals. Peter asked where they were on the grant they received to train citizens to help during
22 flooding and other events. Alicia has taken the management course portion, and they need the
23 trainer portion and are on a list for that. Vermont Community Foundation gave the town two grants.
24 One was equipment for National Night Out, the Fall Festival, and other things. The other was for
25 certain stuff. They are starting to purchase the needed equipment. At National Night Out there will
26 be a sign-up table for people who are interested. Arianna asked if it was first responder but flood
27 specific and Tom said it was community emergency response for people who don't want to do
28 EMS or be a firefighter. They will be trained in traffic control and other things.
29

30 Tim asked how the Community Alert was, and Mike said a couple weeks ago there were over 200
31 people signed up for it. They've been using the at-risk forms to identify people with special needs
32 during natural disasters. They received 6 which was 5 more than the state recognized in the area
33 and was only what they had gotten back in the mail. They also will help people who need assistance
34 to fill out the form. In a natural disaster, between public safety people and CERT, they optimize
35 both resources to do a check-in. They may need more advanced level things such as a mechanical
36 ventilator. Both Mike and Julie thought it had been successful and Julie said they sent out
37 information with the tax bills and would also have a table at National Night Out, the primary
38 election in August and the general one in November. They could also do something at the Fall
39 Festival. Tim saw a lot of feedback on social media about the alert system. Tom said it was
40 something to do with their side when they backed out of the browser, they had to start over. Alicia
41 has turned out to be one of the better hires and tops them all and is amazing at what she can get
42 done. She wears multiple hats and loves it and is so good at what she does and very impressive.
43 Julie has been able to hand over the public safety grants to Alicia and the guys.
44

45 Arne noted there was quite a group of employees working for the good of the town. Everyone is
46 focused on the same mission. The town is lucky. Tim thought there was more to it than luck. They

1 didn't think the citizens really understood, for example, if they had a highway department that
2 didn't know how to build bridges in a town with 74 bridges, the budget would be astronomical.
3 Chester is the only one in the state who does. Burlington doesn't even have highway people who
4 build their own bridges. They have an engineer who designs them and a contractor who comes in.
5 Julie wished people understood having a Public Safety Department who is willing to wear different
6 hats and the savings it equates to. Tim thought it was important they find ways to communicate
7 that. Julie said they do a lot of things well but communicating with the public is not one of them.
8 Some towns are hiring marketers which isn't just to encourage people to move to town but to
9 communicate. A few municipal managers have discussed hiring someone to do that. Everyone is
10 in the same boat with a new demographic and some post-COVID who don't understand Vermont
11 and only know what they know from the city and don't understand the value they have in their
12 people. When they have an issue, they learn, but you don't want them to learn it that way. Arne
13 thought it was good when word got out and it was positive. Julie appreciates that people are
14 concerned about money but doesn't know where she can cut it because of how everything operates.
15 Matt and Steve are another dynamic duo, along with Wayne Wickens who don't have to contract
16 things out which is a huge savings. Mike added they have only had one call where someone had
17 to cover for them because they have cross-trained people, and it has saved so much money not
18 requiring mutual aid. Julie wondered how they articulate that, so the public at large understood.
19 She knew how but they didn't do it well and that they needed to fix that. Peter said having town
20 people wave was a big thing. Arne said it was all part of the family community.

21
22 Lee was thinking of putting together a short video to show how all the departments work together
23 because people don't know. Julie said that was a marketing tool. Lee thought they needed someone
24 with a camera to do that and show it at Fall Festival. Mike said his full-time person is a licensed
25 drone operator and has a business on the side for media and an infrared drone for searches and has
26 brought up that he's willing to use it for the town. Mike wanted to give him more time to settle in
27 and then speak with him. Julie suggested it was something to talk about as a leadership group. Lee
28 thought having a drone fly over Fall Festival and National Night Out would be good media for the
29 town. Arianna suggested gathering pictures now for use later. The board thanked Tom and Mike
30 for their input and was helpful for the common goal of the town.

31 32 **Agenda Item 6, Adjourn**

33
34 Lee moved to adjourn, and Peter seconded the motion. A vote was taken, and the motion passed
35 unanimously, and the meeting was adjourned at approximately 3:00 p.m.
36