

1 **TOWN OF Chester**
2 **PLANNING COMMISSION**
3 **July 19, 2021 Minutes**

4 **Commission Members Present:** Peter Hudkins, Hugh Quinn, Barre Pinske, Tim Roper, and
5 Cathy Hasbrouck at Town Hall.

6 **Staff Present:** Preston Bristow, Zoning Administrator; and Susan Bailey, Secretary

7 **Citizens Present:** Scott MacDonald, Alexander Taft, Steve Mancuso, Arne Jonynas, Jason
8 Rasmussen, Cheryl Joy Lipton, Gwen Kerr via Zoom, Bill Lindsay at Town Hall

9 **Call to Order**

10 Chair Cathy Hasbrouck, called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m. followed by approximately 10
11 minutes of technical difficulty.

12 **Agenda Item 1, Discuss the ACCD document Enabling Better Places: A Zoning Guide for**
13 **Vermont Neighborhoods**

14 Jason Rasmussen said he was invited to the meeting to talk about the zoning for Great
15 Neighborhood's Project and Enabling Better Places document and believed it was a really good
16 document and the Congress for the New Urbanism did a nice job with it and hoped the board felt
17 the same. Jason said he would walk through the document but told the board to feel free to stop
18 him and ask questions. He said the primary focus of the document was to address housing. He
19 said housing has been a major factor as to why businesses have been having a hard time
20 recruiting people. Jason said everything that can be done to aid with housing situation would be a
21 good thing from a development point of view and other things. He said the document addressed
22 the need for affordable housing and how the market force and zoning can be hurdles. He said the
23 document was created to be understandable and included concrete steps that Chester may want to
24 consider doing, but that not everything suggested is worth doing.

25 Jason said if the permitting process could be streamlined, it would help, if only by not
26 establishing unnecessary barriers for new types of affordable housing. He pointed to the first
27 couple of pages where they talk about in their assessment that municipalities need to make it
28 easier. He said there is a large housing stock in Vermont and it wasn't what many people were
29 looking for, and the demographics are shrinking in size with one or two person households,
30 which creates a mishmash with the big old farmhouses. Jason acknowledged that they recognize
31 regulations need to be adjusted to accommodate retrofitting the larger homes into two or three
32 unit rentals, as well as making changes to zoning to encourage or allow for smaller types of
33 homes. He said they are laying out code reform or bylaw updates and trying to do it
34 incrementally. Jason said their philosophy was it could be overwhelming to do an overhaul and
35 comprehensive re-write and it can be politically easier to accomplish things with an incremental
36 approach. He said comprehensive rewrites can be done. He asked for any questions before he
37 continued.

38 Preston Bristow told Jason he was very impressed with the document when it came out. He said
39 he it put another spin on it and there was a whole national conversation about zoning. Preston
40 said the American dream was always that you could own your own home and your own piece of
41 land and that was what zoning had promoted. He said they are starting to say it is exclusionary
42 because not everyone can afford it anymore. He said the document said zoning needed to be

1 reformed and that was a strong word but that was what they were talking about. Preston said they
2 are trying to make housing more accessible to everyone. Preston mentioned that in Vermont the
3 goal has been to preserving rural character and protecting wildlife and the environment but have
4 never focused on downtowns and the paper is saying don't have to give up protecting the
5 environment and preserving rural character but you can allow the downtowns to accommodate
6 more people.

7 Barre said when one is old enough they see a number of things that seem trendy. He said people
8 built mansions and huge houses and there was a big influx of cash at that time. He didn't know if
9 setbacks had been changed in order to build bigger houses. Barre said if you look way back in
10 history, it is good to have kids get out and spread their wings. He wondered if the idea of
11 roommates and more people living together to make things affordable was what natural life is
12 and not the responsibility of the community to make sure everyone has their own apartment. He
13 was concerned that breaking up nicer homes and renting them out downtown to lower income
14 tenants would result in seeing less people in local restaurants because they couldn't afford to eat
15 out. Barre said he didn't want to discriminate against low income people, but if big houses get
16 broken up in order to make more money on rent and those tenants don't patronize local
17 businesses or working, it would have a negative impact on the quality of life. Barre said he was
18 concerned the people who would be moving in wouldn't really be looking for jobs. He said he
19 wasn't saying if he was for or against it, but wanted to make sure the big picture was looked at.

20 Jason responded by saying they were talking about homes of varying types that everyone can
21 afford. He said that included teachers, firefighters and older folks looking to downsize who want
22 a one level, easier to maintain house and to stay in their community. Jason pointed out they were
23 talking about all sorts of housing and not just affordable. He said he would skip ahead, because
24 there was a lot to talk about in the document.

25 Cathy said there were buildings currently vacant and not being used, that she would be happy to
26 work with the bylaws so something else could go in there. Cathy sees them as an asset the
27 planning commission and town need to take care of.

28 Jason said there are other communities where large homeowners have a hard time with the cost
29 of heating them. He said by creating rental units, it has helped them to stay in their homes while
30 earning rental income.

31 Preston added that zoning can't make anybody do anything, but it can put up obstacles or make
32 things more possible. He said the goal was to not have zoning get in the way of making things
33 useful.

34 Hugh in reply to what Barre had said about affordable housing, said on one hand, people worry
35 about affordable housing folks on the lower income scale moving in, but on the flip side there's
36 always that potential but at the same time if you can make housing more available and affordable
37 and in walkable areas in a village or town, there are more people available for the workforce.
38 Hugh said not everyone can afford to go to restaurants but by the same token, most people can
39 only eat so much food in restaurants. He said larger homes are mostly empty or only have a
40 couple of people in them.

41 Jason said in the interest of time, he would skip ahead. He said there were a lot of ideas and they
42 would have to figure out how they would fit in Chester. Jason said it was worth touching briefly
43 on some of the topics of reform discussed in the document. He said dimensional projects referred

1 to minimum lot sizes and setbacks and that typically most communities starting from scratch
2 could not build them as they look today based on the zoning. He said there is recognition that
3 these dimensional standards aren't necessarily in-line of what is on the ground today and that
4 maybe they should be. He said the document includes ideas of short-term fixes and matching
5 dimensional standards to existing conditions and that way there are less non-conforming
6 structures. Jason said the document included other ideas such as making sure density standards
7 were appropriate. He then recalled a comment he had heard regarding Chester building heights
8 and other density standards some projects were not feasible because of the restrictions on number
9 of units. Jason said these were common barriers.

10 Barre asked Jason what he envisioned. He wondered if there would be more density in the zones
11 that comprised The Green and Chester Depot and how the rural area would be affected.

12 Jason said it was the community's choice, but smaller was generally more affordable, so it may
13 make sense to consider where infrastructure currently is. He said in the village districts where
14 water and sewer existed should be considered. He said it should be based on community needs
15 and what the housing market is like and what people are looking for. He referred to Preston's
16 comment about national conversations and said they should allow for duplexes and triplexes in
17 any residential district.

18 Tim said when he read the document he was struck by the impression that the proposed bylaws
19 document already accomplished increasing density in the village district and it aligned with what
20 they had already done.

21 Jason said he was a little rusty on the details but thought they were steps in the right direction in
22 terms of the setbacks. He said it was important the math works when considering how
23 dimensional standards relate to one another. Jason thought it was moving in the right direction
24 with respect to setbacks in the village and they were an improvement.

25 Tim said the setbacks were decreased in the proposed bylaws.

26 Barre mentioned an article about Chester's architecture and unique Stone Village. He said a lot
27 of houses in town have barn-like structures on the back. He suggested turning them into in-law
28 structures would help the homeowners by giving them rental income. Barre pointed out they
29 already have water and sewer available and doing so wouldn't change the character of the town
30 because the homes wouldn't look the same.

31 Tim responded that Barre's suggestion would fall under ADU. Cathy said it was in both sets of
32 bylaws. She said the difference between the two sets was the adopted bylaws didn't have the
33 square footage requirement, but the proposed bylaws did. So, under the adopted bylaws, she said
34 you could have as many homes as you could physically fit on the lot but under the proposed
35 bylaws, they would be limited.

36 Barre said when people come up with housing concepts they have idea the downtown has things
37 to do like a store, senior center, place to gather. He said Chester was definitely a town but lacked
38 a lot of conveniences most towns have. Barre said if someone is older and didn't have a car, they
39 would not do well in Chester. He said if more housing were created, what would the town
40 accomplish, unless there was an art school or something that would attract young people. He
41 thought Chester was unique but they should be realistic.

42 Hugh agreed with Barre and said changing zoning bylaws wasn't a silver bullet to solve all the
43 affordable housing problems in the community but thought if everything were to come together

1 in a positive way, he would not want the bylaws to get in the way. He said the process gets in the
2 way so much that it discourages ideas in the first place. Hugh felt changing the bylaws wasn't
3 going to make Chester the perfect place but said if they could eliminate a roadblock or barrier,
4 they should do it.

5 Barre said another issue was there wasn't a lot of flat ground that wasn't near water. He thought
6 one of the best spots is behind the Stone Village but suspected the people who lived there would
7 be upset if they put it there because it's a historic district.

8 Cathy said that was an argument for trying to make what already exists into apartments. She
9 thought if they could make it easier for more affordable housing they should do it.

10 Jason said the cost per square foot for building new structures is ridiculous right now. He
11 referred to Montpelier's ADU pilot program and said they're trying to avoid new structures and
12 instead renovating existing structures. He suggested that, like Barre had said, maybe that was
13 where Chester's efforts should be right now but that it was a local choice. Jason said another
14 topic was parking.

15 Jason said maybe parking standards were suburban focused and suggested reducing the parking
16 standards or allowing on-street parking. He felt it was less of an issue in Chester than most other
17 places.

18 Jason pointed out allowable uses. He said zoning talks about single, two, and multi-family
19 dwellings. He suggested having four categories to include three and four family dwellings. He
20 said it was typical that multifamily structures had to undergo a conditional use review. He said
21 some of this would be existing structures and what harm was there in an existing large home
22 being three rental units. He said they needed to look at the impact on the neighborhood and the
23 conditional use review standards. He said in effort to make it easier for the review process they
24 should consider whether it was permitted use or administrative review. He asked for any
25 comments.

26 Barre asked if he thought they had to regulate potential Airbnbs. He said Chester is in a way a
27 resort community and changed the rules so everyone could have an apt. in back barn would make
28 more money renting out for weekend than having a hillbilly like him moving in. Do they define
29 if do that can't Airbnb it.

30 Jason said he didn't believe the document dealt with it but it was an issue in Ludlow. He said
31 they may decided they want to regulate it – building code state codes comply with. Chester may
32 want to consider a registry. A lot of towns thinking short-term rentals are beginning to be a
33 problem. He said Barre was right that they take away from long-term rentals.

34 Barre said Chester was a sort of resort town with all the skiers that visit and many people had
35 Airbnbs that he didn't want to get in their way because they benefit from them. He asked if the
36 potential affordable housing would be prohibited from being used as Airbnbs and how would
37 they be classified.

38 Jason didn't recall the document specifically dealing with that but agreed that it was an issue. He
39 said he knew it was an issue in Ludlow and suspected it was an issue in Chester and other places.
40 Jason said the town may choose to regulate them. He said they need to comply with state
41 taxation and building codes. He said some are requiring short-term rentals to be on an owner-
42 occupied lot only which would address party issues. He said the Airbnbs take away from long-
43 term rentals that could be available.

1 Barre said his concern was if the purpose was to create more housing in Chester and they ended
2 up becoming Airbnbs, it would totally defeat the purpose.

3 Hugh said he could see Barre's point. He said a homeowner could chop a big house into
4 apartments and Airbnb them. He said people loving to come to Vermont year-round and they
5 would need to face the Airbnb issue.

6 Barre said they need to consider all the angles. He said there was no way he would live in
7 Chester if didn't do the business he does. He would like to see more arts in Chester to make it
8 more interesting. Barre said vacationers and second homeowners effect the local economy. He
9 said they can't just come down from Montpelier and rubber stamp work for Chester because it
10 wasn't a normal town.

11 Jason said each community looks at short-term rentals differently. He said they bring people into
12 town who support local restaurants and the economy. He's heard people talk about for seasonal
13 homes to allow for an ADU in a tourist home situation and that person acts like more of a
14 caretaker. He said it was something to consider.

15 Jason also touched on the topic of reforming street standards. He said the document is pushing
16 for on-street parking where it makes sense. Jason suggested for long-term, they should consider
17 what standards could be modified or added to. He said they are suggesting changes to make
18 communities more walkable and safer if there are more homes in the village.

19 Preston said on-street parking requires a lot of effort into removing snow in the winter and if that
20 isn't done, on-street parking disappears for four months or more.

21 Barre said Chester has some of the best public works people. Preston said if true, they could use
22 on-street parking year-round. Barre compared Chester to a country club and said they take good
23 care of their residents.

24 Jason said they suggested allowing owner occupied lot, not an owner-occupied primary house to
25 allow for flexibility, larger sizes, and eliminate parking, if applicable. He suggested considering
26 an adaptive reuse provision to accommodate the creation of an apartment with a barn out back.

27 Jason concluded that it was important for the board to streamline the process the best they can.
28 He said if the find as a result of hearings, that criteria isn't applicable to the project at hand, they
29 may want to make a permanent change in the land use. Jason then asked for questions.

30 Barre asked Jason if he had written the recommendations down and could forward them to the
31 board in an email. Jason said they would be happy to follow up and help the board. Barre asked
32 if the board felt they knew what Jason was talking about.

33 Preston told Barre in the booklet on pages 14 and 15 contained the list of what Jason had gone
34 over.

35 Tim Roper told Jason he had been involved in working on the proposed bylaws and road
36 standards and found in almost every case the fire department determines the required road width
37 and where turnarounds need to be. He asked Jason how to balance things.

38 Jason replied that Philadelphia doesn't get near the amount of snow that Vermont does and their
39 streets are only seven feet wide and they maintain them. He said the state standards have more
40 flexibility than people may realize and it was worth talking about. He said there is a push to have
41 Complete Streets' policies so streets are designed for more than just cars, i.e. walking, biking,

1 etc. He said he personally thinks there is opportunity for streets to be narrower and it would be a
2 conversation for the town to have.

3 Cathy said they would probably start with highway superintendent.

4 Peter said the Select Board has the ultimate authority regarding roads.

5 Cathy asked if Main Street was a state street or belonged to the town.

6 Peter said portions belong to town but need to meet state standard.

7 Cathy said, at the moment, they were not thinking much about new development and she
8 wouldn't have Kirby Putnam in to talk about it as he doesn't have control over it.

9 Preston said Complete Streets legislation applies to VTrans, as well. They have roads that have
10 tractor trailer trucks and are supposed to consider Complete Streets in all of their work.

11 Barre said there was a whole design for the downtown area and opposite The Green regarding
12 walkability and parking with the downtown master plan.

13 Tim said he was thinking both in terms of new development and to allow on-street parking
14 probably need to reduce the travel lane width to allow for parking spaces.

15 Barre said there wasn't a lot of ground in town and the roads were already set. He said he loved
16 Monopoly houses and other cool architectural things in other places. He said if somebody were
17 to do something that would involve different structures without tearing something down it would
18 have to be on the edge of town or the cornfields on the Vermont Turnpike as that's where the
19 land is.

20 Jason mentioned that VTrans was revisiting some of their standards and thought Chester's
21 Village Center Master Plan had a lot of good ideas in it and suggested that it might be a good
22 starting place. Before Jason left the meeting, he said he would be happy to follow-up with
23 everyone and thanked them for coming. He asked to let him know how he could follow-up.

24 **Agenda Item 2, Status Report on the Bylaw Subcommittee Progress**

25 Cathy asked Preston if he wanted to give the report. Preston said they had two meetings at
26 Jason's office. Hugh asked who attended and Preston said it was Peter, Cathy, and himself.
27 Preston said at first they didn't think they needed an agenda and minutes but the town manager
28 and attorney said they should. Cathy said the town manager didn't want them to have minutes
29 but the editor of the Telegraph said they did, so she confirmed with the solicitor it was required.
30 Cathy said there was an agenda for the next day's meeting at 10 a.m. and there would be minutes
31 provided. Preston said going forward there would be more transparency. He said the two
32 discussions were general and focused around whether they take small steps with the existing
33 bylaws or do they look at changes for the proposed bylaws. He said their group was more
34 inclined to take small steps with the existing bylaws. Preston said they considered taking the best
35 out of the proposed bylaws and incorporating them into the current bylaws. He said there were
36 two meetings but they didn't discuss specifics. He said if they hold a public hearing with the
37 proposed bylaws, with the Planning Commission divided, he thought they would lose a lot of
38 credibility. He would like them to go forward with something they can be proud of.

39 Tim said he wasn't an expert on Roberts Rules of Order but thought subcommittees report back
40 to the full committee. He was taken aback that that was the full report from two meetings. He
41 found it interesting they could meet twice without a report and then learn the direction had been

1 decided on by a committee of two. Cathy said the committee was four. Tim said the committee
2 appointed was two from the Planning Commission and thought the Commission would vote on a
3 direction to be taken.

4 Barre agreed with Tim. He said he thought it was great they had met but he was expecting
5 minutes and was a little surprised Julie said she would prefer not to have minutes and would like
6 to know why that was the case. Barre said being he was the person who suggested the
7 subcommittee, the goal wasn't to have a theory on how to move forward but to identify what
8 they thought should be replaced because the community didn't want it. Barre wanted the actual
9 problems with the new bylaws written down and proposed wordage and then brought back to the
10 Commission for a vote.

11 Peter said all they talked about in the last meeting were the bylaws and the book and that's why
12 Cathy brought it to this meeting. He said Jason took on role to transplant ideas. Peter said the
13 book was used because they were taking a completely different outlook. He said he and Cathy
14 had spent most of a morning walking the Village Green looking at the proposed bylaws.

15 Tim agreed they should look at and he thought it was terrific document from what he had seen so
16 far. He took issue with Peter and Cathy and Preston, the subcommittee, and Jason melting the
17 document into their existing bylaws as he didn't think it was a function of the subcommittee.

18 Peter said they couldn't approve anything on their own but could propose it to the Commission.
19 He said they needed time to look at them. He said Jason had been involved with the modification
20 history of the bylaws. He said Jason was more comfortable working with the document worked
21 on for 20 years than with Brandi's document.

22 Preston said they already met twice and the impression was to work with the bylaws they have.
23 Tim said the Planning Commission was charged with a full rewrite of the bylaws.

24 Cathy said Jason had immediately questioned what they were supposed to be doing. Julie said
25 they wanted a full review of bylaws and not necessarily a full rewrite. Tim wondered why they
26 spent the 1.5 years rewriting them. Barre thought it was three years. Cathy said nobody expected
27 Brandi to come up with a complete new set of bylaws. Barre said she didn't – that the board did
28 and Cathy was there. Barre said it was influenced by Brandi as the consultant but Cathy said she
29 wrote them. Barre said he wants to know what will be approved and what won't and would like
30 it written down. Peter said he didn't think it was necessary to write things down that had already
31 been disagreed upon and pointed out that he was removed as Chair because they didn't like what
32 was being done. Barre felt it was the same argument. Tim said the Planning Commission had
33 already made a decision and maybe Julie had been involved. Barre wondered if Julie was
34 involved and said he didn't like throwing her under the bus. Barre said they were an independent
35 committee and whatever they say goes and wondered who was pulling the strings. Peter said it
36 was Barre's suggestion to form subcommittee and he was now telling the board it wasn't the
37 idea. Barre said that was the idea and Peter told him to be patient. Barre said he felt it was a
38 festering thing. He said he didn't have a clear understanding of what people want or why. He felt
39 something was getting changed along the way.

40 Cathy pointed out the first time the subcommittee met was June 22nd and this was the first time
41 the Planning Committee had met since June 21st. Barre felt the reality was that Preston and Jason
42 had been charged to rewrite the bylaws and Tim added without any committee input. Barre felt
43 strings were being pulled. Peter said it seemed like they went through that at every meeting with

1 Barre that there was a dark horse and something else was going on and the old boy network in
2 Chester. He said nobody is pulling his strings.

3 Barre asked why they didn't write down the problems they have. He said he had heard no
4 specific reasons and if he had a problem, he would write down. Barre said the only thing he hears
5 is that people won't approve it because they don't like it. He asked who those people were.

6 Peter said the biggest thing they don't like is the amount of regulation is doubled.

7 Tim asked who everyone was. Peter said when he first came to the meetings there was a group of
8 people in attendance regularly who drove things, but they were no longer there.

9 Cathy said they would meet tomorrow at 10 am and asked what the Commission wanted to see
10 out of that meeting. Barre replied minutes. Cathy said she could tell them what transpired but
11 that would not solve the issue.

12 Hugh said as a subcommittee they had latitude but they needed to look at the proposed bylaws by
13 section and identify areas that were problematic and areas that looked good and then write those
14 up, because until they had something to look at, they couldn't do anything other than read work
15 in progress.

16 Tim said to be clear, they wanted to know which sections were issues and which were good, but
17 not to assign limited resources as a subcommittee and rewrite a whole other set of bylaws and
18 present them to the Commission.

19 Barre said he had no problem with that and that they could do that. He said what was important
20 to him is to see what was decided and why in writing.

21 Tim said there was limited resources and time, but to do that without the Planning Commission
22 voting and approving it was procedurally way off track.

23 There was discussion between Tim and Peter concerning the amount of time that had already
24 been spent working on the proposed bylaws and what, if any, time limit there was. Tim felt they
25 needed to be making some progress.

26 Peter said the others didn't know what was in there because they hadn't taken the time to read
27 through it, but instead elected to have a public meeting. He said they weren't interested to read
28 through what was in the bylaws was correct.

29 Cathy said on pg. 89 it talked about the requirements of density which would require a certain
30 number of square feet on a lot which would not be helpful in Chester and would put many
31 parcels into non-conformity.

32 Barre said the reality was bylaws could be changed and they had spent years and had meetings
33 and felt they would keep taking the same steps and still not have accomplished anything. He said
34 in March there would be a new member not as bright as Cathy and they would have to take time
35 to bring them up to speed and said they may as well adjourn until March.

36 Cathy asked if they were so attached to the proposed bylaws what was their objection to the
37 changes and Peter had asked the Commission to go over the changes to make sure they got in
38 properly.

39 Tim said the process under the previous two chairs was to review what was written, discuss
40 together as a commission and alter, if necessary, and if there was a consensus, to vote on it move

1 on. He said it had not been done over the last year.

2 Cathy said once Brandi was not part of process there was a period where they worked on the
3 zoning map but also made changes to bylaws and held them waiting for an agreement from
4 Brandi but it never materialized because they couldn't come to an agreement. Cathy said she
5 figured out how to edit the bylaws and put the agreed upon changes into the bylaws. Barre asked
6 if they had voted on each line. Cathy said she changed document. Peter explained she worked on
7 it all last January and when the document was brought back to the Commission they did not want
8 to review it.

9 Barre felt Peter was making up stuff. He said his problem was they were throwing their work out
10 rather than to say what was wrong with the document and felt it was insulting to the board.

11 Preston told Barre he heard him and agreed that if they have problems they need to tell them.

12 Barre said he's not married to the deal and is just showing up for work and doing his job. He said
13 no matter what is done it requires a vote so if it came down to lobbying the select board for new
14 players, they could do that. In the end, it is all politics.

15 Peter suggested letting the subcommittee play out as it was Barre's idea.

16 Cathy said there was public comment.

17 Scott MacDonald from the DRB had a few concerns. He said he was new and had only been in
18 Chester 5 years and could appreciate all the hard work the Planning Commission had done. He
19 mentioned Barre's comment about wanting to hear from people and understood how frustrating
20 that could be. He said there was a man sitting in the audience for 45 minutes and left because
21 nobody gave him the time of day. Barre said he asked him ahead of time and he had no
22 comment. Mr. MacDonald said it would have been nice to know what he wanted to say. Mr.
23 MacDonald said he also heard someone say what the planning commission says goes and he
24 thought there was a disconnect and an arrogance to such a comment when there is a culture in a
25 community that may be hurt by that.

26 Barre clarified the comment by referencing what he believed was Section 181 that defined the
27 role of the Commission with respect to zoning laws, the Planning Commission was responsible
28 and whatever it did couldn't be decided by the Select Board or someone else.

29 Peter said it could and had been decided by citizen vote. Barre disagreed. Peter said it was put on
30 by petition and voted by public.

31 Barre said he could be wrong, but his point was he sees his role as a job and has not been happy
32 with the leadership for 1.5 years. He felt like he had done the job a million times and wanted to
33 know who has decided they need to redo it and what is wrong with it.

34 Peter said if minutes were presented, then Barre would be okay with it.

35 Hugh said the subcommittee should consider which areas of the proposed bylaws they want to
36 address first, set a timeframe, and provide the Commission with recommendations, with respect
37 to good and bad. He said they should pick work they can manage and estimate a completion
38 date. Hugh said at the next meeting if the only thing they did was layout where to focus and
39 when they would report back, it would allow them a path forward for productive discussion. He
40 said if they could do that, they would not feel like they were standing around in a circle.

41 Tim felt that was an excellent suggestion and asked Hugh to put it in the form of motion.

1 Hugh moved the subcommittee in the next meeting formulate which areas of the proposed
2 bylaws to review and provide a target date for conclusion and report back to the full Planning
3 Commission. Tim asked to modify it to provide a specific section of the proposed bylaws.

4 Peter said he had a problem with the motion because there would be an overlap of different
5 sections. Tim said he understood but once the proposals were brought back, they could discuss
6 and if approved, apply them. Peter said he thought they could pick up different sections rather
7 than one specific section.

8 Tim asked Hugh if he wanted to modify his motion. Hugh modified his motion to give latitude if
9 they pick a topic like the Village Center and it pulls in multiple sections of the document. he
10 didn't have any objection to that. He just wanted something tangible that, as a commission, they
11 could review.

12 Cathy read the motion as the subcommittee would choose an area of the proposed bylaws and
13 any subsidiary to be reviewed and a date on which to deliver the review to the Commission.
14 Hugh agreed and moved, and Tim seconded. The motion approved unanimously.

15 There was discussion by the members that they felt they could move forward now.

16 Peter thought they should look at how they need to do affordable housing. He mentioned
17 anticipated funding for low-income housing money from the largest federal budget in history.

18 Cathy suggested they discuss agenda for the next meeting.

19 Barre said he expects people who bought during COVID to sell based on social media posts. He
20 said it wasn't that long ago the government was paying people \$10,000 to move to Vermont and
21 anticipated thing to change.

22 **Agenda Item 4, Citizen Comments**

23 Cathy asked for public comment from those who were waiting on Zoom.

24 Steve Mancuso said in a nutshell, the Commission was a mess and needed to clean it up. He said
25 the taxpayer is demanding clarity and transparency from them. He said some of the Commission
26 realized it and has taken the correct form of action but he didn't see it as universal. He said they
27 are public servants and it wasn't an option but an obligation.

28 Barre asked if they had specific ideas they wanted them to look at.

29 Gwen Kerr said she didn't appreciate the Commission saying the public can't ask questions
30 because the Commission knows better because they don't. She said if they do, they should be
31 able to clarify answers to their questions. She said when the taxpayers ask a question, she doesn't
32 expect to hear that she doesn't have the right to ask and she should just trust them. She doesn't
33 think that's how it works.

34 Barre told Ms. Kerr he wanted to know what problems she had with the new bylaws and/or if she
35 had ideas of what she wanted so they could do a better job for her.

36 Gwen Kerr answered that she thought 300 pages of bylaws for a town of 2800 people was
37 excessive. She wanted to know when they come forward with a question such as a business
38 wanting to establish roots in Chester, she wanted to have specific answers to the bylaws. She said
39 every time anyone asks a question they are told "we didn't know that was there and we'll get
40 back to you."

1 Cathy asked if there were anymore comments and there were none.

2 Cathy said she would like to invite Jeff Holden to bring maps of the water and sewer system and
3 discuss its financial health and possible extension and if it could handle more consumers.
4 Everyone was in agreement that would be an acceptable agenda item.

5 Barre inquired about the length of Jeff's presentation and if it would allow time for other items
6 on the agenda. Cathy asked if there was anything else they wanted on the agenda.

7 Hugh asked if the subcommittee would agree to use the Better Places document. And Cathy
8 agreed. Hugh said that was fine but if they were not going to then an agenda item would be for
9 them to look through the document.

10 Peter said his feelings wouldn't be hurt if they went through it to understand it better. He said he
11 had read it cover to cover and like their approach and reasoning. He would like to see them move
12 forward and keep working on affordable housing.

13 Cathy proposed if time allowed at the next meeting, that they discuss a timetable in anticipation
14 of money for housing and infrastructure changes coming soon. She suggested they should make
15 changes to the bylaws to be ready to accept that money.

16 Barre asked where he could find information about the anticipated money. He said affordable
17 housing was complex and someone had to be behind it. Peter said they can get a \$5,000 grant
18 available for a single-family home from the state to work on affordable housing in the state of
19 Vermont. Peter said the state allotted \$30 million last year for affordable housing.

20 Cathy said the process Julie is needing toward the end of the year grants will open for housing
21 and she's going to fund a municipal planning grant to direct to housing and there will be much
22 better and current numbers for housing in Chester out of that grant. Money will be available in
23 the summer of 2022.

24 Barre asked if that was more for like the place across from the Jiffy Mart for affordable housing
25 and if in order to qualify for affordable housing it had to have reduced rent. Peter said it could be
26 done in many different ways.

27 Cathy said there was a lot to it. She said a big house sitting empty in Chester being turned into
28 multiple units could happen and they needed to do what was necessary to allow for that.

29 Tim said they only went to 3 units once and 4 would require a state permit. Tim asked if Julie
30 could directly report to them about what it is and what they should be considering.

31 Peter said from what he had read there was federal money coming down to the state. And
32 Vermont has Leahy who is currently the most senior senator seems to hand out money. So he
33 suggested they figure out where to put things. Tim said it would be nice to have Julie's overview
34 of that.

35 Hugh said his proposal based on that discussion was 6 topics of reform. He would like to take
36 address them individually and take not more than 15 or 20 minutes of discussion. He suggested
37 picking them in context of district. He suggested taking dimensional requirements in the Village
38 District or something that makes sense and then look at their recommendations.

39 Peter, Tim, and Cathy talked about lifting parking requirements for the district. Tim said those
40 are the things they have always wanted to revisit. It was suggested to allocate time in the agenda
41 for conditional requirements. Tim said if Julie couldn't attend, writing was second best but

1 preferred that she attend the meeting.

2 Barre said he wanted to make sure it got in the minutes that the number of pages of a document
3 didn't make it good or bad. Tim agreed. Barre said the DRB asked for things they included and it
4 didn't mean more rules, only more words. Barre said people react emotionally sometimes.

5 Peter suggested they table it and move to adjourn.

6 **Agenda Item 3, Review minutes from June 21, 2021 meeting**

7 Cathy Hasbrouck asked if there was a motion to review the minutes of June 21st and it was
8 suggested they be tabled, as well.

9 **Agenda Item 5, Discuss Agenda and Set Date for Next Meeting**

10 Peter Hudkins made a motion to adjourn the meeting and Tim Roper seconded it. The meeting
11 was adjourned at 8:00 p.m.