

1 **TOWN OF CHESTER**  
2 **PLANNING COMMISSION**  
3 **June 6, 2022, Draft Minutes**

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

6 **Staff Present:** Preston Bristow, Zoning Administrator at Town Hall; and Susan Bailey, Recording  
7 Secretary, via Zoom.

8 **Citizens Present:** Steve Mancuso and Scott MacDonald via Zoom; and Bill Lindsay at Town Hall.

9 **Call to Order**

10 Chair Hugh Quinn called the meeting to order at 6:30 p.m.

11  
12 **Decisions Made:**

- 13 • Tentatively agreed to Tuesday 7/5 for the PC meeting given Monday 7/4 is a  
14 holiday. This may need to change based on the CCC meeting schedule.
- 15 • Agreed via motion to review the Draft Legacy Use and Adaptive Re-Use with the DRB.
- 16 • Tim agreed to present initial community survey work at the 7/5 PC meeting.
- 17 • Barre & Hugh agreed to identify a future PC meeting to have a representative from the  
18 Vermont Arts Council speak about expanding the arts in Chester.
- 19 • Hugh agreed to lead the work on item #2 from our topics list on “PC Mission, Scope &  
20 Goals”
- 21 • Agreed to the following with respect to the PC topics priority:
- 22 ○ # 6 to update the UDB’s was a top priority. Understanding this is an extensive  
23 body of work with a longer timeline other items can and will be worked in  
24 parallel
- 25 ○ #8 to update UDB Administration Section will be worked in parallel led by  
26 Preston with help from Peter and Cathy
- 27 ○ # 4 Accessory Dwelling Unit Enablement and #5 Short Term Rentals are related  
28 and considered a high priority and will be worked in tandem

29 **Action Items:** None

30  
31 **Agenda Item 1, Add or Delete Items on the Agenda, if necessary.**

32  
33 Hugh asked if there were any changes and there were none.

34  
35 **Agenda Item 2, Review and Approve Minutes from the May 2 and May 16, 2022, meetings**

36  
37 Hugh moved to review and approve the May 2<sup>nd</sup> and May 16<sup>th</sup> meeting minutes and Cathy  
38 seconded the motion. Hugh noted on the May 2<sup>nd</sup> minutes in the section where the decisions made  
39 are itemized that they had made the decision to forward the request for the home occupation permit  
40 amnesty to the Selectboard. It was in the detail of the minutes, but he wanted it added to the  
41 decisions made. There were no other changes for the 2<sup>nd</sup>.

1 Tim noted a typo on page 3, line 8 which started with “Got the third workshop, they hope to get  
2 the Windham and Windsor Housing Trust to meet with them.” Tim wondered if “got” should be  
3 “for” and Hugh agreed. Tim thanked Sue for her hard work and the phenomenal job on the minutes.  
4

5 There were no other changes. A vote was taken, and the motion carried unanimously, and the  
6 minutes were approved as amended.  
7

### 8 **Agenda Item 3, Citizens Comments**

9

10 Hugh asked for comments on items not on the agenda. Steve Mancuso asked for a list of workshop  
11 dates so he could spread the word and try to get people from the business community involved. He  
12 thanked them for their hard work and thought their work should be the role model for the planning  
13 commission community.  
14

15 Hugh responded that the first workshop was tentatively scheduled for June 20<sup>th</sup> at Town Hall. He  
16 needed to confirm the date with Jason Rasmussen. Hugh said they planned to hold a workshop  
17 each month. Hugh said the workshop would consume the Planning Commission’s regular  
18 scheduled meeting on that night.  
19

### 20 **Agenda Item 4, Prioritize PC Agenda Items.**

21

22 Hugh said they would prioritize from the list of topics they had compiled and felt would make  
23 sense to pursue. He had asked the members to identify their top 3 out of the 11 items on the list.  
24

25 Cathy said item #8 was her first priority, which was almost a third finished.  
26

27 Her second priority was #6, to review the town plan, which she thought would involve picking up  
28 on the document from Brandy that discussed the town plan and adopted bylaws. Hugh said it was  
29 broader than that. He said #6 encompassed all the work that Jason and Preston would ultimately  
30 be doing under the Bylaw Modernization Grant, which would also include the work they will do  
31 in the housing study. He asked her to keep in mind that the scope was broad. She thought it could  
32 start with that because she has never been able to look through Brandy’s report and get all the  
33 insight out of it that she thought was there. Hugh thought that was one of the first things in the  
34 foundational workshop they would want to address.  
35

36 Cathy’s third priority was #2, the PC mission, scope, and goals from a very high level. She didn’t  
37 want to get into the weeds. She was thinking they could review what the state had for documents  
38 and maybe look at it to see if it suited what they’re after and possibly add or drop things, if  
39 necessary.  
40

41 Peter’s priorities were #8, #6, and he had been researching both #5 and #4 and felt they overlapped  
42 a lot. Hugh said they did but they weren’t the same. Peter thought they would find when they were  
43 doing them, they would overlap. Peter said once they started looking at short-term rentals, they  
44 would also affect the auxiliary dwelling enablement. Hugh said when one of them was worked on  
45 if there was one related to it, it would probably drag along. Peter decided he would go with #4.  
46

1 Tim said when he looked at #10 which wasn't discussed much, and he thought it had been  
2 introduced by Cheryl Joy Lipton as something they needed to take under consideration. He asked  
3 if Jason would be taking it into account as he looked at the bigger picture of working on the  
4 rewriting of the UDBs. Hugh said that was a great question and one would think yes because if the  
5 idea is under this work, they're supposed to make sure the bylaws are aligning with the town plan  
6 and any other legislation that is relevant. He hadn't confirmed it with Jason yet, so it was an open  
7 question. Tim thought maybe when Jason returned from vacation they could find out.

8  
9 Tim said his #1 would be #4, accessory dwelling unit. He thought it was critical to Chester.

10  
11 Tim's #2 would be getting the community survey draft out to the Planning Commission as he  
12 thought it would entail a lot of discussion to get agreement on what it should look like and get it  
13 finalized and saw it as taking multiple meetings to get through it.

14  
15 Tim said his #3 would be #6, getting to work on updating the UDBs.

16  
17 Barre's first interest was #2. He wanted them to see what they're able to do as a Planning Board  
18 and the economic aspects, which were important. It would be nice to get the UDBs done. With the  
19 mission, scope and goals, if it included an economic element, he thought it would be good for  
20 Chester.

21  
22 Barre said if he is the champion of the Arts and Culture thing, he would want #11 to be his second  
23 priority.

24  
25 Barre said out and about in town, people had been talking about community. He had spoken with  
26 people about the Stone Village, and they were concerned with the number of Airbnbs there and  
27 how they were losing their neighborhood. If people become elderly and there's nobody to help  
28 them or kids in the neighborhood. He was not against Airbnbs but thought they needed to tighten  
29 it up to make sure they aren't losing their community, possibly limiting the number of days they  
30 were in use. He thought that was important. Barre's third priority was #5, short-term rentals.

31  
32 Preston's first was #8, and his second was #6, and his third was #9.

33  
34 Hugh's first was #6, his second was #5, short-term rentals, and his third was #7. His rationale for  
35 #7 was there was a timeframe on it. If there was anything they could do as a planning commission  
36 as it related to the adoption of cannabis retail, they need to make sure they have it under control  
37 before October. Hugh felt the same way as Barre that there was a ton of activity in Vermont and  
38 cities and towns all over the country about what to do as it related to short-term rentals, so he chose  
39 it as his second priority. He put #6 first because at the end of the day for him, they've been on this  
40 path trying to update the bylaw and align them with the town plan, the Village Center Master Plan  
41 and whatever legislation is upon them. He chose it first because he probably just wants to figure  
42 out how to get it done.

43  
44 Hugh thought there was at least some consensus around #8, as three members had it as their first  
45 priority. #6 had four people who had it as their top three priorities. There didn't appear to be a  
46 clear winner for a third priority so they may need to think about it a little more. Hugh said they all

1 agree they don't need to do things serially. He used Tim's example as his second priority is to  
2 make some progress on the survey. There is nothing to prevent someone who is assigned something  
3 to start making some headway on it and reporting the status back to the Planning Commission.  
4 Some of the other work items like #6 and #8 have a longer tail and may be actively worked by  
5 other folks on the Planning Commission. There's nothing that says more than one thing can't  
6 happen at a time.

7  
8 Tim noted that Peter had mentioned #4 and #5 were related and by Tim's tally, between the two  
9 of them, there are four votes for making one or the other of those a top priority. Hugh liked Tim's  
10 logic. He said #6 was obvious and as Hugh had said, it was a body of work that had been going on  
11 for a long time. Tim thought they would probably visit it in some aspect at every meeting. Hugh  
12 agreed.

13  
14 Hugh said it was unfair to think about #6 as it related to other items on the list because some of  
15 the other items have a fairly finite work scope and people can envision the beginning and end of  
16 those in a matter of weeks or months and not a year and a half. He suggested they understand that  
17 #6 is a top priority with a long tail and is going to run its course. What it means to him is if there's  
18 work that comes to the Planning Commission that's associated with advancing #6, they should  
19 make it a priority. He gave the example if Jason is creating some work product or Jason and Preston  
20 are working on something together and they have cycles to do some other things and can just pick  
21 something else up, what they've agreed for #6 is the heavy lifting and will be done by Jason and  
22 Preston. Preston will continue to bring feedback and updates back to the Planning Commission if  
23 at any point in time there is something the Planning Commission needs to consider and possibly  
24 act on, he would be the person with the most insight and could report back. Hugh said when that  
25 happens, they will be sure to move it to the top of the priority list so #6 can keep moving. If that's  
26 a model that will work, they can move on.

27  
28 With that, he was seeing #8 and then #4 and #5, which were accessory dwelling unit enablement  
29 and short-term rentals as a thing, so he put them together. They handled how #6 would work and  
30 # 8 was already under way. The question he had was the UDB administration section was a broad  
31 area and all they were currently listing was home occupation permit, which was done. They were  
32 about to talk about legacy use and adaptive reuse in the meeting so he wondered what else they  
33 should be considering in that scope that Preston and Peter may chug away at.

34  
35 Preston said one of the things that Brandy handled well was the list of exempt structures. There  
36 was a lot of clarity. He thought it would be good to include it. The current bylaw is broad regarding  
37 fences and Brandy brought in detail about it so there were other things in the administrative section  
38 they could work on. Hugh thought they could do a couple of things to track how it was running.  
39 They could continue to add new things to the list. At some point, they could say it looked like  
40 everything on the list had been handled and then there will be something else. Preston said a lot of  
41 bylaws put a lot of ink in to address ponds and swimming pools, while their bylaws said nothing.  
42 Hugh assumed those sorts of things they may address were independent in overarching of any  
43 zone. He asked if that was typically true. Preston agreed and said it was another piece they could  
44 address sooner than later. Peter said it was easily chunked out. Nonconformities would get  
45 rewritten and then the section would be done.

1 Hugh said when work came into the Planning Commission that was related to #6, they would  
2 prioritize it. #8 was already assigned to Peter but he would add Preston to that, and they could  
3 continue to advance it if it wasn't taking priority over something under the banner of #6, which  
4 was more important, and they needed them to weigh in on it.

5  
6 Hugh said the same as Cathy was giving updates on the status of the Village Green, it may make  
7 sense for Tim to figure out how he wanted to move forward on the survey. He asked if Tim had  
8 bandwidth to work on it with the other stuff they were discussing or if they should establish another  
9 timeframe. Tim said he wanted to make time to work on it because he thought getting a good  
10 sample back from the community on a well-crafted survey would help inform a lot of the work  
11 they were doing. He knew the next meeting was the workshop so they wouldn't have time then  
12 but wanted to present a draft of the survey for the full committee to review and consider at the first  
13 meeting in July. He was sure they would discuss and edit it but wanted to get a draft out for  
14 consideration. Hugh thought that made sense.

15  
16 Hugh thought #2 was a behind-the-scenes Planning Commission operating type model activity  
17 which would be good for the group but didn't necessarily advance any of the agenda items that  
18 would move the needle on things the community cares about. He thought of #2 as the back-office  
19 stuff and would prioritize it a little lower. He was going to offer to take #2 and own it and was  
20 happy to do that unless there was someone else who had a lot of passion for it. Tim thought it  
21 would be fantastic if Hugh took it. Hugh agreed to take it and didn't want Cathy and Barre to feel  
22 like it was being dropped.

23  
24 Hugh told Barre he thought #11 was just a matter of scheduling Zon Eastes to come to a meeting.  
25 Barre said when he first moved to Chester, he spoke to the Select Board and suggested they spend  
26 a few bucks on Paradise City Magazine, who produces two nice arts and crafts fairs in  
27 Massachusetts, one in Marlboro and one in North Hampton. He thought Route 103 was valuable  
28 and underutilized. He's championed that cause since moving to Chester and has encouraged others  
29 to move onto Route 103, some of whom bought the antique store and are doing well. He didn't  
30 think Chester was utilizing arts and culture in town like they could. He thought it was like planting  
31 a seed. If someone came in and gave a presentation, hopefully it would have a positive effect. He  
32 really wanted to get the arts and culture seed planted and watered because he thought it could really  
33 bear fruit for the community. He thought it was overlooked in Chester compared to other  
34 communities and wasn't sure why. Hugh said the next meeting would likely be the bylaw  
35 modernization workshop. They would be doing some survey work at the first meeting in July with  
36 Tim, so Hugh wanted to coordinate with Barre to identify some available Planning Commission  
37 meeting dates so Barre could reach out to Zon. Barre said it could be October. He thought the  
38 sooner the better because there could be more important things. He would be happy if he knew  
39 there was an opportunity at some point.

40  
41 Hugh said July's meeting will fall on July 4<sup>th</sup>. He wondered if anyone would object to pushing the  
42 meeting to July 5<sup>th</sup>. Barre noted he was on the Cannabis Control Board which would meet on  
43 Tuesdays so he didn't know if they would be having one on that date. Hugh said they wouldn't  
44 meet on the 4<sup>th</sup> so to let him know if they had another date. Tim was open to meeting on the 5<sup>th</sup>  
45 and wondered if it would be a conflict with Cannabis Control meeting. Peter said it was about  
46 space. Cathy, Peter, Hugh, and Preston could do the 5<sup>th</sup>. Hugh said they would figure out if the

1 CCB was meeting and if they were, they would regroup.

2  
3 Hugh said they discussed #11, he was taking #2, Preston and Peter were working #8, Tim was  
4 working #1. #6 is a top priority whenever the work comes in and #8 was Peter and Preston. He  
5 asked if there were any other thoughts on the topic before they closed it out.

6  
7 Steve Mancuso said several the items were within the Planning Commission's scope to write  
8 bylaws for but not necessarily market. He suggested allowing the CBC to put whatever they are  
9 seeking, such as arts and crafts, on their next agenda and dig up the right people to follow in their  
10 footsteps. Hugh appreciated that.

11  
12 **Agenda Item 5, Review Draft Legacy Use and Adaptive Reuse content**

13  
14 Preston noted on the first sheet there were only two things in red which were to rename the  
15 headings to legacy use and adaptive reuse. The legacy uses on the second sheet were already  
16 approved but could be reopened. Although there were several models out there, for adaptive reuse,  
17 they decided to pick Windsor due to their proximity and tweaked it some. Some provisions say it  
18 should be on the National Register and some only apply it to barns but item C under adaptive  
19 reuse, the list is a church, school, armory, barn, or industrial facility. Windsor had listed a prison  
20 because they have one, but Chester doesn't so it was removed. Preston said he's a churchgoer but  
21 also knows they go out of business and then there's a question of what to do with the building.  
22 There's one school in town that's been converted into affordable housing. They have an armory.  
23 They have a few classic barns and a few industrial facilities. There had been some discussion about  
24 it, and they put a lot of weight on the DRB to use their judgment about legacy use and adaptive  
25 reuse. Preston is of the belief that if you try to write a bylaw too tight, you say no to a lot of things.  
26 He felt it was always possible they could become a board that lacks integrity or rigor but the board  
27 they have now wouldn't give away anything without being thoughtful about it.

28  
29 Peter thought when this would come to the DRB it was different because it wasn't checking boxes  
30 but required thinking about it. He referenced the old auction house on Route 10 which wasn't one  
31 of the examples but could apply here. When you get the oddball building out, it can be used for  
32 something, and you don't have to specifically call out it was used for something else first. It would  
33 then be up to the DRB to decide how they're going to do it. One of the things not in there but in  
34 several other ones was with an eligible building whether there was outdoor storage. He thought  
35 they had it covered in their performance standards. He would take them to the DRB and get their  
36 edits and bring them back to the Planning Commission. Hugh said if the thought this was okay,  
37 the next step would be to meet with the DRB and have them provide some feedback. Peter said  
38 the DRB would be the ones to enforce it so they would want to know if they had a problem with  
39 it. Hugh thought it made sense but asked in C (1) about the uses of the building such as church,  
40 school, armory, barn, or industrial facility, if they were examples and not the only thing considered  
41 in the adaptive reuse consideration. Preston suggested they could put the lengthier phrase of  
42 "including but not limited to." Hugh just wanted to know the intent and Preston said that would be  
43 his thought that "such as" was such as.

44  
45 Tim said he was in the same spot looking at it and wondered and maybe it was a question for the  
46 DRB, but would it be better to add some clarity there so people don't focus on the uses listed. Tim

1 noted Peter had mentioned the auction house and Tim was thinking about Buck's Auto on Route  
2 11 which were two examples that would not be covered by C (1) or (2) specifically as it's written.  
3 Hugh suggested they use Preston's suggested phrase of "including but not limited to."  
4

5 Hugh said the only other thing he was calling out was under legacy use they made one change. He  
6 thought they softened the language on what the applicant should demonstrate. Preston said he had  
7 said the burden of proof and people thought it was heavy handed. He didn't think the new one said  
8 that. Preston said they had word smithed it out of legacy uses as it was part of the last meeting  
9 approval.  
10

11 Hugh asked for any other feedback. He thought it was great and would get good community  
12 feedback because nobody wants a building that isn't useful. He couldn't see a downside to either  
13 one of them. Preston was envisioning that because they were both conditional uses that would go  
14 the DRB that neighbors would have opportunities if they didn't like them to say something. The  
15 DRB can give the thumb up or down. They can say no if they think it's not worth doing. He thought  
16 it added a lot of flexibility to the bylaw. Tim thought it was an important decision. The armory  
17 was an example. It was sort of being used right now but the adaptive reuse clause could apply to  
18 it. Cathy noted there were towns in Massachusetts that promoted recycling of buildings. Preston  
19 said they were looking at the cultural aspect, but Cathy was pointing out the cost of tearing a  
20 building down and throwing it into a landfill. Hugh added the cost of raw materials going into  
21 something new.  
22

23 Hugh thought it sounded like everyone was in support of it. Tim moved they forward the edits to  
24 the legacy and adaptive reuse clause to the DRB for discussion at one of their future meetings.  
25 Hugh seconded the motion. A vote was taken, and the motion passed unanimously. Tim added it  
26 was with the one change Preston captured and everyone agreed. Hugh said Preston and Peter would  
27 take it and see when it made sense to get with the DRB. Preston said they were motivated to move  
28 it along.  
29

### 30 **Agenda Item 6, PC Roundtable**

31  
32 Tim said he already voiced his opinion during the priority discussion.  
33

34 Barre felt the same as Tim. He thought the arts and culture was valuable and would be nice to get  
35 something moving forward with that. He said someone from the Stone Village came to their  
36 meeting last time, so the Airbnb issue was important. He was glad Hugh was taking on #2, mission  
37 and scope. It was their job to get the bylaws done. From going back home and seeing what goes  
38 on in other places, he wondered what their scope could be and how they could help their  
39 community more than just by doing the bylaws.  
40

41 Preston was happy with the June 1<sup>st</sup> Selectboard meeting. It was a positive crowd, which he thought  
42 was likely there because of the library issues and was good to have that many people viewing and  
43 have the Selectboard and others compliment the Planning Commission. And Arnie as chair was  
44 quite positive.  
45

46 Peter said the more he looked at short-term rentals the less it becomes a zoning problem and more

1 a municipal ordinance problem. He said people have talked about fees to slow it down and then it  
2 becomes more of an ordinance than zoning. Tim said that was a great observation. One of the  
3 things he had just become aware of was Key West, Florida has a huge issue with short-term rentals  
4 because service workers can't afford to live there. What the city of Key West did was created an  
5 ordinance that requires a license to operate a short-term rental. They limited the number of licenses  
6 issued based on the percentage of total habitable dwellings. It was right in alignment with what  
7 Peter was saying that maybe it was something the Selectboard needed to address, and the Planning  
8 Commission could advise them on. Peter said there would need to be something that goes hand in  
9 hand when they do something regarding zoning. Hugh agreed and said it wasn't something that  
10 was either/or. There would be changes if they move it forward in the bylaws and perhaps some  
11 complimentary ordinances. Hugh echoed what Tim said about Key West saying that San Diego  
12 did the same thing where you apply for a license and if it's granted, it's only for two years and  
13 then you reapply. This process in San Diego would cut the short-term rental population by fifty  
14 percent. Hugh wasn't suggesting they do those things but said there was a lot of passion  
15 surrounding it and they couldn't pretend it wasn't happening and needed to address it. Barre  
16 remembered hearing something similar in Aspen. Barre remembered when they were working with  
17 Brandy and the topic came up, they set the number of days people had to be in their house. Barre  
18 was surprised that some people didn't know what Airbnb was or how it started. He said some  
19 college students blew up an air mattress and put it in the bedroom to assist with their rent. The  
20 initial concept was to help someone traveling. The idea that people are buying homes and not  
21 living in them and turning them into Airbnbs is not at all relative to the initial concept.  
22 Unfortunately, it's taking people out of our community. He said it was a tough thing. It wasn't  
23 intended to end up the way it currently is and was creating some issues.

24  
25 Scott MacDonald's concern was they have a housing shortage and there are second homeowners  
26 in various stages wondering how often they're going to be here. They are all getting letters  
27 nowadays from real estate corporations telling them how much they can make with second homes.  
28 It could really change the landscape of our community. He thought Chester needed to be careful  
29 and he wouldn't go as far to say turn into the next Ludlow but something like that could happen.  
30 They need to look 20 miles down the road instead of just 20 feet. We have innkeepers who are  
31 paying the 9% tax. He had just visited Vermont's tax page to lookup the rules and said even second  
32 homeowners who are renting are supposed to be paying that tax and many are not. The people who  
33 are listing with Airbnb are paying quite a fee and running it as a business and suggested the  
34 question is whether it's a change of use which then falls into the DRB. They were things he wanted  
35 to mention. It's healthy to have them since there are only a limited number of rooms available at  
36 the inns. The inns are paying a lot in taxes, and it must hurt and anger them to see all the Airbnbs  
37 getting away with nothing. He was asking them to consider a registry and fees. Hugh responded  
38 that many of the platforms that homeowners use to advertise their short-term rentals handle the  
39 collection of the Vermont State Meals Tax. In many cases, it's no longer up to the homeowner.  
40 The platform is handling it and getting the money to the state. Scott said that was wonderful. Scott  
41 added with the Airbnbs and second homeowners and housing shortage, it wasn't an easy thing and  
42 it sounded like the Planning Commission was considering everything. He commended them for  
43 doing such a great job. He thought the Commission had a diverse array of people which had  
44 suddenly pulled together and were getting a lot of work done and he was very impressed. He said  
45 Barre was 100% right about arts and crafts and Chester was ready for something like that. He  
46 thanked them for their time.



1 Steve Mancuso didn't think they had to reinvent the wheel concerning ordinance versus creating  
2 a zoning bylaw. He said Springfield had gone down the same road about a decade ago and realized  
3 the short-term rentals were slipping through the cracks. What they did in Springfield was institute  
4 a registry that requires all rentals to register with the town of Springfield. He wasn't going to tell  
5 them it wasn't without its pros and cons. The fertilizer hit the ventilator at first. He suggested they  
6 talk it over with them.

7  
8 Cathy had been thinking a lot about short-term rentals and was thinking they could make a lot  
9 more money doing a short-term rental for a property than long-term rentals. If they tried to stop it,  
10 they wouldn't win. She thought they needed to look at shaping it and finding ways to help it fit  
11 into the town. She wondered if they could offer a break to properties that have a live-in caretaker  
12 that create a caretaker apartment, so that it wasn't a house that a bunch of wild people move into  
13 for a few days and tear apart and disturb all the neighbors. As it happened, Preston was dealing  
14 with a person on The Green who is unhappy with the activity on the weekend. It was a single  
15 person in an apartment she found and now there was more activity there than she enjoys. Cathy  
16 was thinking it would be useful to have more small apartments scattered around town in places  
17 that weren't on The Green. If they could shape it so there was more caretaking going on, the  
18 property would accomplish two goals: it would create more housing and supply some work for  
19 people and would hopefully tone down some of the excesses. She wasn't saying it would provide  
20 2- and 3-bedroom apartments which was another thing they needed badly. She was thinking if they  
21 fought the economics of it, they would lose, and she didn't want that. Hugh thought at the end of  
22 the day, there was a spectrum for everything and if you tried to eliminate the ability for people to  
23 do short-term rentals, it was a losing proposition for everyone. The other end of the spectrum  
24 would be a free-for-all, which wasn't good either. There is middle ground. When he first started  
25 to study it, it seemed like hardly anyone was doing anything. Then you started to see registries and  
26 a little bit of an attempt to understand what was happening. In communities that are heavily tourist  
27 related like San Diego and Jackson Hole, they are going to an extreme to figure out how to reduce  
28 the number of them because it is changing the community. There was a huge spectrum of  
29 possibilities but trying to eliminate them was unrealistic. Cathy thought now that the grand list was  
30 lodged with the town clerk, she would have time to figure out how many second homes there were  
31 and get some clear numbers. She thought it was important to understand how Chester was  
32 experiencing it. Hugh agreed and said the last time he looked; he may have found 75 to 100  
33 properties that were being short-term rented. Cathy thought they needed to be clear about what  
34 goes on in Chester because it's not Ludlow or San Diego and they had the ability to do that.

35  
36 Scott MacDonald said with what Cathy had mentioned, he thought the issues with taxes and the  
37 cost of building one thing, they may want to consider if people had enough acreage to build a small  
38 cottage for a long-term rental and defer the taxes for a couple of years and encourage construction  
39 and new people moving in where there are enough setbacks. Instead of just being business-  
40 friendly, they could be friendly to people who own properties and homes who might be thinking  
41 about adding a second income.

42  
43 Sue Bailey said she liked Scott's idea. She also added in the U.S. that 1 in 5 properties purchased  
44 are used for rentals and corporations are buying them. She said they weren't just for short-term  
45 rentals, but long-term rentals and they were limiting people's ability to become homeowners. She  
46 wasn't sure if it was happening in Chester. Hugh said that was a great point of input. In other

1 words, investors have figured out there's money to be made in buying properties and doing short-  
2 term rentals without the intention of coming there to live. He didn't know how pervasive it was  
3 here but if it was happening somewhere else, it was bound to. He said it could be happening like  
4 everything else with the pandemic and people chose to find property in Vermont because it's a  
5 great place to be when everything is too tight in the city. Hugh thought it was a great point. Cathy  
6 could only think of one corporation in the past year and a half of land transfers, but she would hunt  
7 for it.

8  
9 Barre thought some of these things fix themselves and it's difficult to solve some problems that  
10 are bigger than people can solve. He remembered when he bought his place in 2007 and places  
11 were for sale longer and then COVID caused a spike in sales. Now people are talking about going  
12 back to work, interest rates are going up, and we have inflation. There are real problems with short-  
13 term rentals and Airbnbs, and we do have a housing crisis and we are here to try and help these  
14 things but some of them may balance out a little bit. It wasn't that long ago that things weren't  
15 selling and if people do go back to work and interest rates go up, there may be some corrections  
16 just by the nature of economics. They couldn't get all wild about everything and think they can  
17 make a lot of things happen because they're just a small-town board. Hugh agreed it was a  
18 spectrum. They need to do something but couldn't solve everything.

19  
20 Cathy said a positive thing about the situation was if the industry collapsed, they won't be left with  
21 a lot of rotting melons or nuclear waste. They will be left with housing stock which wasn't bad.

22  
23 Hugh wanted to share some things from his list. At the last Selectboard meeting they approved the  
24 Village Green District, which was great news. He commended Cathy for doing a great job. They  
25 also approved the waiver of the home occupation permit fee. Folks that have home occupations  
26 can feel free to get their home occupation permits if they don't have them and only pay the \$15  
27 recording fee. The Planning Commission provided an update to the Chester Business Coalition at  
28 their May 23<sup>rd</sup> meeting. They shared what was going on with the bylaw modernization and the  
29 draft legacy use work and gave them the update on the Village Green. He expects to send a list of  
30 reading material to the Planning Commission members in preparation of the workshop that may  
31 happen on June 20<sup>th</sup>. It would be a foundational workshop and would involve understanding what's  
32 in the town plan, what the future land use maps looks like, what the zoning audit that was done in  
33 2018 look like. There was a lot of material that would be considered as part of kicking off the work  
34 that Jason and Preston will do. He would forward an email he received from Jason Rasmussen to  
35 the members. Hugh thought they may tackle it as a divide and conquer because everyone wouldn't  
36 be able to read everything. He would try to at least have a high-level awareness of everything. As  
37 things get rolling, they may decide it makes sense to each pick something and read it in detail.  
38 They could talk about it later. Cathy asked if he would work the reading list out via email. His  
39 guidance was everyone should become familiar with the documents and if they choose to focus on  
40 one more than the other, great. If the workshop happens on the 20<sup>th</sup>, he didn't want them to show  
41 up completely unaware of what Jason would want to talk through.

#### 42 43 **Agenda Item 7, Adjournment**

44  
45 Hugh moved to adjourn the meeting and Cathy seconded the motion. A vote was taken, and it  
46 passed unanimously. The meeting was adjourned at 7:45 p.m.