

1 **TOWN OF CHESTER**  
2 **SELECTBOARD MEETING**  
3 **May 17, 2023, Minutes**

4 **Board Members Present:** Arne Jonynas, Lee Gustafson, Peter Hudkins, Heather Chase, and  
5 Arianna Knapp at Town Hall.

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

8 **Visitors Present:** Cathy Giurtino, Frank Kelley, Cathy Hasbrouck, Bill Lindsay, George Legace,  
9 Pamela Spaulding, Steve Slivinsky, and Jerene Slivinsky at Town Hall; and Scott Blair, Joy  
10 Slaughter, Hugh Quinn, Chester Telegraph, and SAPA TV via Zoom.

11  
12 **Hearing for Union Grievance**

13  
14 Lee Gustafson moved, and Arianna Knapp seconded a motion to enter executive session for the  
15 purpose of a hearing for a union grievance. They invited Julie Hance, Tom Williams, and  
16 Constance Pell. A vote was taken, and the motion carried.

17  
18 (Entered Executive Session at 4:37 p.m.)

19  
20 Lee moved, and Arianna seconded a motion to exit the executive session. The motion carried.

21  
22 (Exited Executive Session at 5:06 p.m.)

23  
24 In open session, Chris Hoar stated that he learned at 4:30 p.m. that the grievant is in the hospital.  
25 Therefore, he requested that the hearing be postponed. The Board stated that they will agree to a  
26 future date.

27  
28 Lee moved, and Heather seconded a motion to adjourn the hearing. The motion carried and the  
29 hearing was adjourned at 5:15 p.m.

30  
31 **Call to Order**

32  
33 Chair Arne Jonynas called the meeting to order at 6:30 p.m. with the pledge of allegiance. He  
34 welcomed everyone.

35  
36 **Agenda Item 1, Approve minutes from the May 3, 2023, Selectboard Meeting**

37 Lee made a motion and Arianna seconded it to approve the May 3, 2023, minutes. Heather noted  
38 the name, Hugh, should have an initial cap under Visitors Present. The minutes were approved as  
39 amended. Heather abstained from voting as she was absent from that meeting.

40 **Agenda Item 2, Citizens' Comments/Answers from Previous Meeting**

41 Frank Kelley, Conservation Committee member and Green Up Day Coordinator, gave a Green Up  
42 Day report. He thanked the Chester Conservation Committee for the work they did during Green  
43 Up Day. Frank said they filled the dumpster. He gave shoutouts to the Popple Dungeon Crew who

1 has been there since the start, the Smokeshire Crew, the Flamstead/Mattson folks, the Chester  
2 Conservation Committee, and his neighbors who cover for him. They covered the whole town.  
3 Chester Town Office, Whiting Library, and Chester Hardware were instrumental in getting 250  
4 bags out to people and the bags all came back. He said the community comes together to make  
5 things look better. He suggested people clear their culverts. He asked in 2024 if they could appoint  
6 a co-coordinator in Carrie King. Frank does the logistics of the routes and Carrie makes it fun and  
7 had a neat program at the library that makes it fun for people to come together. He couldn't say  
8 thank you enough to all the people of Chester who were part of the Green Up Day. Arne thanked  
9 him for coordinating it for all the years he had and said Vermont looks the way it looks because of  
10 the volunteers. The members thanked him. Frank asked them if there was anything he could do  
11 better, to let him know. He would follow up with Green Up Vermont about the wonderful work  
12 the folks of Chester had done.

13 Cathy Giurtino thanked the board for putting the short-term rental ordinance together. Cathy had  
14 spoken with Julie about the Housing Commission addressing short-term rentals. Cathy suggested  
15 they put a cap on the short-term rentals. She said the hosted short-term rentals were wonderful  
16 because there was someone living in the community, but she thought the unhosted were just empty  
17 houses taking away from the community. Cathy spoke with Todd Thomas of Morristown where  
18 they put a moratorium on stopping anyone coming into town and having an unhosted short-term  
19 rental. He told her they put a freeze on short-term rentals. If they were already established, they  
20 could keep them. There was a freeze and after a certain date, you couldn't move into town and set  
21 one up. Cathy said they were running into the same problems as she thought Chester would have,  
22 which were normal families who want to live here and can't compete with the money from outside.  
23 Someone from Connecticut, New York, or Philadelphia can come in with cash and buy them. Local  
24 people can't buy anything because people with cash are buying them, and they don't have to go  
25 through the same steps. Young people are leaving because their friends have left, or they can't live  
26 here. She was concerned about the fire department if all the young people moved away and  
27 wondered who would work there. She was concerned about a school bond because the school  
28 needs work. Currently they only have 55 kids graduating and may have less in the future but still  
29 have a bond to pay for. She wanted something done before it eroded the community. It is happening  
30 so quietly that they aren't aware of how many there are. Julie and Arne said they will have the  
31 figures soon and they would distinguish between hosted and unhosted. Cathy said her  
32 neighborhood is turning over and she's afraid they will all become short-term rentals and she won't  
33 have any neighbors. Her neighborhood already has three and two are hosted. Cathy said the hosted  
34 ones were wonderful but the unhosted sit empty until strangers come and go. Arne thanked her  
35 and said once they have the data and have a clearer picture, they can address it and decide what  
36 action to take, if any. Cathy suggested they speak with Mr. Thomas in Morristown.

37

38

### **Agenda Item 3, Old Business**

39

40 Report given by the Town Manager:

41

#### Canal Street Boundary Line

43 Jim is preparing the quit claim deeds and they will be completed soon.

44

#### Signage Project/Wayfinding Plan

46 The signage project is out to bid, and bids are due June 9<sup>th</sup>. Construction will take place this

1 summer.

2

3 Community Garden

4 The Community Garden will have their kickoff meeting on May 27<sup>th</sup>. The community is invited.

5

6 Academy Committee

7 Julie is beginning to form the committee which will work on restoration and renovation of the  
8 interior of the building and devising a plan for its use. They will work closely with the Historical  
9 Society. It won't be an official committee of the Selectboard, but she is forming a group. Arne  
10 asked if it would include the grounds. Julie said it would but now, it was only repurposing the  
11 interior. Arianna was interested in being on the committee. Arne said it had a brand-new roof and  
12 the windows were done recently so the exterior was basically in good shape so now it was the  
13 inside and the use of it. Julie asked if anyone else was interested, to let her know.

14

15 Bookkeeper

16 Cil is retiring this summer but has not given an exact date. They will do the same as when anyone  
17 else retires from a position and take a step back and decide what they need. They spoke with the  
18 auditor and the position is no longer a bookkeeper position as there is a lot more to it. They are  
19 looking to increase it to a staff accountant position. They don't need a CPA but more than a  
20 bookkeeper. Increasing that skillset will allow her to take the grant management piece and hand it  
21 off to this person. Julie could write the grants and this person could handle the financial portion  
22 which would save Julie many hours. They could handle all the HR so she wouldn't need to do that  
23 part. Julie expected the job description to be out next week. Arne said it was a big change. Julie  
24 said a lot of their staff have been there 30 or more years so as they leave, they will try to see how  
25 they can do things better and more efficiently.

26

**Agenda Item 4, Coin Drop Application: Ruck Up**

27 Ruck Up had submitted a coin drop application. They have held coin drops in Chester before. They  
28 are based out of New Hampshire. George Legace was there, and said they are a non-profit  
29 organization with veterans from Vermont, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, Maine, Connecticut,  
30 and they have one from Oregon. They hold coin drops in Keene, Bellows Falls, Chester, Newfane,  
31 Londonderry, and Guilford. He was hoping to have another vet, Ian, who will fill in for him this  
32 summer while he is out for a stem cell transplant. The coin drop is for August 19<sup>th</sup> with a rain date  
33 of August 20<sup>th</sup>. They have been rained out a couple of times. It's been great and they've had a good  
34 response from the people coming through Chester. The antique store where they park their vehicles  
35 has been cooperative. The Selectboard has been phenomenal and stood behind them and they  
36 appreciate it. Arne asked if there were questions from board members and there were none. Arne  
37 thought the connection meant a lot to people when they supported them. George said he did not  
38 have his report on money raised last year but he would email copies to them. His wife, Pam, spoke.  
39 They help veterans apply for their benefits. Last year it was almost \$2.5 million they were able to  
40 win for the vets in their claims, which can take years to get. They have one on one counseling and  
41 group counseling. The outreach program helps veterans keep and maintain their homes. They work  
42 with other organizations. They have a food bank and clothing bank which is all donated. Through  
43 their grants, fundraisers, and coin drops have been instrumental in allowing them to do what they  
44 do. It is made up entirely of volunteers.

45 Arne entertained a motion to approve the coin drop for Ruck Up on August 19<sup>th</sup> with a rain date

1 of August 20<sup>th</sup>. Heather moved, and Lee seconded. Arne noted there is a policy that only two coin  
2 drops per year. The motion carried unanimously.

### 3 **Agenda Item 5, Grand List Extension Request**

4 Cathy Hasbrouck said the new software was released Friday and then Saturday morning the State  
5 changed their minds and said they were going to do it the old way. Cathy said they may still be  
6 able to get the list out as planned but she wanted to be prepared. She said it was an unusual year  
7 and isn't usually done this way. The State has a project called VTPIE, Vermont Property  
8 Information Exchange. They are trying to move all the information needed to produce tax bills  
9 into one database. It's a web-based application and she could theoretically do the work from her  
10 house. She has worked in IT for over 35 years, and she's never seen a project like this before. She  
11 has been told this isn't unusual of a project undertaken by the state. Cathy said this year tax bills  
12 will be produced as they always have, and Homestead Declarations were also being done the same.  
13 She thought maybe next year there would be a change. Arne confirmed it was a 30-day extension  
14 if needed.

15 Arne entertained a motion to file a Grand List extension request and authorize as Chairman to sign  
16 it. Lee moved and Heather seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously. The board  
17 wished Cathy good luck.

### 18 **Agenda Item 6, Housing Commission**

19 Julie said Chester was in a place where a Housing Commission would be the next step to address  
20 housing in the area. She preferred a commission instead of a committee. She saw it as a group that  
21 acts. They would have a close relationship with the Planning Commission. The Selectboard will  
22 be updated as it is with all other committees and commissions. She gave the Board a draft of a  
23 Housing Commission charter and had modeled it mostly after Essex Junction, who is a success  
24 story in the state. Julie was hoping to get the authority from the board to advertise for  
25 commissioners to sit on the Commission. She's looking for people with different skillsets relating  
26 to housing or transferable skills that can be part of the discussion. Having people from both the  
27 non-profit and profit sectors for development, real estate agents, finance people, and legal. She has  
28 several people who meet the requirements and have reached out. She knew it would take a good  
29 30 days to advertise and was hoping to get the go ahead from the board. She noted it would take a  
30 couple of months before they could make appointments. Arne said they would give it a read and  
31 discuss it at the next meeting. Arne said if they wanted to talk about it tonight, they could. Arianna  
32 asked if it needed to be in place before they advertised. Julie said it needed to be in place before  
33 they made appointments. Arianna, having served on the Cannabis Board, which was empaneled at  
34 9 members, wanted to know why they couldn't say between 5 and 9 and Julie noted it said up to 9  
35 and asked if they wanted it to be more specific and say between 5 and 9. Arianna said it would  
36 give them the ability to frame it. Arne agreed. Arianna also said giving a range rather than lowering  
37 the number would feel better. Arianna thought they should start advertising for members. Lee said  
38 Julie had mentioned the Commission would have more autonomy and wondered how that would  
39 be beneficial relative to the purpose as outlined in the document. Julie said if it was simply a  
40 committee, most of what they do would need to be approved by the Selectboard where a  
41 Commission had more freedom. Arne said a Commission was more formal. Julie compared it to  
42 the Planning Commission but said they would not adopt bylaws but said they could possibly write  
43 a grant and get funding to help with a housing study. Julie said maybe they would bring in  
44 developers to discuss different strategies. She offered to provide the statutes defining the two. They

1 said that would be helpful. Lee wondered if it was just an advisory role. Julie said they couldn't  
2 obligate town funds but could advise the town. Lee was all in favor of it but was trying to  
3 understand the function of the Commission as it interacts with the Selectboard, Planning  
4 Commission, and other boards and committees. Lee wasn't sure what their capacity would be in  
5 bringing in affordable housing to Chester. Julie thought their first task was to gather survey data  
6 about housing that was out there and fill in any gaps by conducting any needed surveys. Julie  
7 wanted to know where housing could go, where there was land, water, and sewer and where there  
8 was potential. She thought it included not only affordable housing but workforce, senior housing,  
9 and other things. Julie saw the Commission as a bridge and an assistant to the Selectboard and her  
10 as far as how to get developers here. She said a lot of towns are using town land and increasing  
11 infrastructure. She said they were big conversations for voters, and they could work to get the  
12 community buy in. At the end of the day, they won't be developing housing. Julie thought they  
13 could play the role of liaison. She said there was a lot happening in the State where municipal  
14 government is interacting with private developers to get housing in their communities. Lee  
15 wondered if there was something they could do in the interim about the short-term rental issues  
16 raised by Ms. Guirtino. Julie said they should wait for Granicus to complete their survey and once  
17 they had looked at the data, they would know what they were working with. Julie thought the  
18 Planning Commission should weigh in on the policy, but it would come back to the Selectboard  
19 for a general discussion about whether to implement a cap. Arne thought it was a more specific  
20 way to address the issue which was only a small part of the housing issue. A lot of times Arne gets  
21 the impression that Commissions are having the same discussion the Board is having, which takes  
22 it off their plate so they can complete other tasks. Arne said it was still connected to town  
23 government and where the purse strings are involved and that would be where the Selectboard gets  
24 involved with the policies. Arne was curious how the Planning Commission felt about the Housing  
25 Commission. Julie had met with the Planning Commission, who were supportive, and they asked  
26 how the Housing Commission would interact with the Planning Commission. Julie said there was  
27 a flow between the Housing Commission and Planning Commission and once the Planning  
28 Commission realized that they were onboard. Arne and Julie noted the Planning Commission has  
29 a lot on their plate and is doing a lot of great work and this would help them. Heather said statewide,  
30 they are saying 40,000 units are needed to get there and it won't be easy. Heather thought they  
31 should keep an eye on S100, which was being passed. Heather thought they should see what they  
32 can do to attract some of the developers interested in what the state is doing. Julie said if they were  
33 adding 500 units at 2 people per unit that would be 1,000 people which would impact emergency  
34 services, and water and wastewater and it all needs to be monitored. Julie said it must be planned  
35 to fit the community. Heather thought they could consider how they would get money to do this.  
36 Peter thought it worked better for housing to plan and disburse housing throughout the town rather  
37 than concentrate it in one area. Julie agreed. Lee said where the infrastructure is located was a  
38 small area of town and there's land in other areas of town so why concentrate on this small area.  
39 Peter said there were options to have housing outside of town water and sewer and wasn't a  
40 subdivision but a shared property. Peter said Jeff could have 100 more homes before there's a  
41 problem with the sewer system. Peter said they will know better how the system can handle it after  
42 he completes the study he's working on. Peter said they have water, but wastewater is the issue.  
43 Julie said that was the reason they are doing the wastewater management plan and they planned  
44 on starting upgrades within the next couple of years. Julie said that's where the Housing  
45 Commission would come in to identify how many potential units can be added so now is the time  
46 to start saying what they want as it's time to upgrade the sewer plant. Heather said they would

1 dovetail. Julie said the sewer plant was 20 years in and now was the time to start planning and not  
2 only with sewer and water but industry and business, such as a brewery. Heather hoped the housing  
3 fit into all of it and Julie said it was critical. Arne thought it was a great step. Lee said they've been  
4 at around 3000 people for 150 years and he'd love to see Chester at 5000 but it would take a lot of  
5 planning and thought, and this was a great place to start. Arne thought the discussion they had just  
6 had would be perfect for the newly formed Housing Commission to have. Lee recommended once  
7 the Commission is formed and established, they meet with them at their second or third meeting.  
8 Heather suggested an all-day seminar after six months with the Selectboard, the Planning  
9 Commission, and the Housing Commission.

10

### **Agenda Item 7, Rules of Procedure Review**

11 Arne said at the reorganizational meeting, they had adopted the rules from the VLCT. After he  
12 went thought them, he picked the changes in yellow as they were doing in the past but noted he  
13 should have checked to see if those parts highlighted in yellow were the consensus of the board.  
14 The rules had been adopted and were based on the VLCT model, but they had leeway in what was  
15 highlighted in yellow. Arne wanted to know how the other members felt about them. For #6, Lee  
16 could foresee in the future with another board where things could be contentious so asking for  
17 recognition before speaking may be a good idea but thought it could be too formal for them. Lee  
18 thought they could adopt it with the more stringent requirements but wondered what the point of  
19 that would be. Julie said they would be there to enforce. Heather pointed out there was an  
20 opportunity to change it every year. Arne said they had never operated that the Chair had to  
21 recognize you to speak. Heather thought Arne did acknowledge them, and they asked to get their  
22 word in. Arne said they had been operating without but subtly. Heather said they were polite. Lee  
23 said all rules of procedure do is regulate decorum. There was consensus they were happy without  
24 them and would change them in the future if necessary. For motions to close, Lee said it should  
25 remain because people would talk forever. Arne brought up time allowed for each item on the  
26 agenda and Julie said they have never had a time limit. Heather said they discussed it at one point.  
27 Arne said it was difficult to estimate times when a topic comes up where there is a lot of interest  
28 and discussion. Lee said it seemed tone deaf when there was an article of interest to the community,  
29 and they cut off discussion. Heather said Springfield has a time limit and likes it. She thought if  
30 they did times, it shouldn't be rigid but could be beneficial to some people. On #3, the order it  
31 appears on the agenda, Peter said sometimes people come for a specific item and it's back on the  
32 agenda and if there were a lot of people there for something, they could change the order. Julie  
33 pointed out that it could be done but had to be done at the beginning of the meeting. Arne would  
34 add that to the first part of it, so it was obvious it was an option. Back to point 1, Lee didn't see a  
35 need for adding time limitations but didn't think it serves the public. Heather thought people  
36 allotted 10 minutes for old business. Arne thought if they allotted time, it would be close to being  
37 a guess. Lee said something they talked about a couple of months ago he thought would take 15  
38 minutes and it took 90 minutes, so he didn't know how they could do that and in good faith, stick  
39 to those numbers. Lee saw it as something they would put in place and ignore so he questioned the  
40 point. Peter said when meetings run long, they usually table the last items for another time. The  
41 consensus was to leave it out. Under #2, Public Participation, Arne said they have allowed  
42 discussion from the public at all the points offered and they were asking to specify when to allow  
43 people to talk on an agenda item, but Arne liked the flexibility. Arianna suggested saying, "As part  
44 of each agenda item, but before any action is taken by the public body at each meeting, there may  
45 be time afforded for open public comment." Arne said that could be a board decision as they went  
46 along. Lee said they could set time limits if needed. Julie suggested the last part of the sentence

1 come out. Heather suggested including something about the Chair and limiting the number of  
2 minutes for people for public comments. Heather appreciated that Arne usually gives people time  
3 but thought he would limit it, if necessary, though she couldn't remember a time Arne had done  
4 that. Lee said during the quarry meeting, Arne had limited time. Julie said he had done it during  
5 public hearings. Heather suggested it was at the discretion of the chair. Lee said if they modified  
6 the last sentence under #2 by majority vote, action could be taken to limit discussion and that way,  
7 it wasn't just up to the Chair because what if they didn't agree with the Chair. Arne liked that  
8 better too. Arianna suggested they change the intent of the last sentence representing they could  
9 increase the time and say, "By majority vote, the body may decrease or cease the time for open  
10 public comment." The others agreed. Julie will provide a clean copy at the next meeting.

#### 11 **Agenda Item 8, Sign Tax Anticipation Note**

12 Arne said the TAN note comes due this time of year as the account balances drop and bills come  
13 in, they borrow money to hold them over until taxes are collected in September. This year they are  
14 asking for \$900,000 which is normal but the past couple years they had ARPA money and other  
15 funds and didn't need to borrow the entire amount. It provides a buffer in case tax bills don't go  
16 out the first week of July as they usually do. Lee asked if they took the whole chunk. Julie said  
17 M&T doesn't do a LOC and they must do the note. Lee suggested for the future, considering other  
18 lenders. Julie said they could. This note was a fixed rate of 4.58%. Heather thought the rate wasn't  
19 horrible. Julie said historically, they pay it in October but would earlier if they had the money  
20 coming in.

21 Arne entertained a motion to approve the Town of Chester Tax Certificate on the tax anticipation  
22 borrowing of \$900,000. Arianna moved and Heather seconded the motion. The motion carried  
23 unanimously.

24 Arne entertained a motion to approve the Town of Chester's Resolution for the tax anticipation  
25 borrowing to the tune of \$900,000. Lee moved, and Heather seconded the motion. The motion  
26 carried unanimously.

27 Arne entertained a motion to approve the Town of Chester Tax Anticipation Note for \$900,000  
28 with M&T Bank. Lee moved, and Arianna seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

29 The members signed the document.

#### 30 **Agenda Item 9, New Business/Next Agenda**

31 Lee asked when they would get the update from the Trustee of Public Funds. Julie emailed them  
32 and didn't receive a response. She would email them again.

33 Water/Sewer rates need to be increased. Julie wanted to chat with the auditor before coming before  
34 the Board. Heather asked for a refresher of the rates with a history.

35 Julie would talk to the Board at the next meeting about adding a second full-time ambulance  
36 position. Julie said calls are up.

37 Rules of Procedure and the Housing Commission Charter will be on the next agenda.

#### 38 **Agenda Item 10, Adjourn**

39 Lee moved, and Arianna seconded a motion to adjourn the meeting. A vote was taken, passed  
40 unanimously, and the meeting was adjourned at 7:51 p.m.