

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

**TOWN OF CHESTER
SELECTBOARD MEETING
May 1, 2024, Minutes**

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

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

Visitors Present: Eric Richardson, Debbi Richardson, Amy Anderson, Justin Anderson, Sean Cunningham, Preston Bristow, Richard Lurvey, Kathryn Poston, Richard Poston, Jennifer Gagliardi, Karen Orchitt, Bob Flint, Ben Whalen, Joy Bodycomb, Andy Connolly, Beverly Lawrence, Carol Theodore, and Eustice Theodore at Town Hall; and Karen Ericson, Jim Goodfellow, Derek Suursoo, Hilarie Tolstoi, SAPA TV, Jerene Slovinsky, Caroline Morgan, Susan, Tommy O'Connor, Matt Gorsky, and Larry via Zoom.

Call to Order

Chair Arne Jonynas called the meeting to order at 6:31 p.m. and asked that everyone sign the attendance sheet.

Agenda Item 1, Additions or Deletions to the Agenda

There were no changes to the agenda.

Agenda Item 2, Approve Minutes from the April 17, 2024, Selectboard Meeting

Lee moved and Arianna seconded a motion to approve the April 17, 2024, Selectboard meeting minutes. Lee noted that Ben Whalen's name was omitted from visitors present. Page 5, line 23, indicated three properties would be removed from the Grand List through FEMA buyouts and Tim said it was 5. Page 6, line 2, Tim noted that Preston said he had never been thought to think that way should read taught to think that way. The minutes were approved, as amended.

Agenda Item 3, Citizens Comments/Answers from Previous Meeting

There were none.

Agenda Item 4, Old Business

Report given by the Town Manager, Julie Hance:

Selectboard Retreat

It will be held on June 5th at the Stone Hearth Inn from 8 am to noon. Julie will work on an agenda to cover the strategic plan going into budgeting season for the next year.

1 Solar Field

2 Lee and Julie have a meeting on Monday morning at 9:30 to speak with Greenbacker and their
3 attorney to start drafting what a P&S may look like for the potential purchase of that property.
4 They will come back to the board with that information.

5
6 Summer Meetings

7 In the past, there has only been one meeting during the months of June, July, and August. Julie
8 wondered if they wanted to do that again this year. Arianna will be on vacation in August and not
9 available the first week. Arne suggested waiting until they got closer to the dates and if it was a
10 light agenda, they could cancel until the next meeting instead of cancelling ahead of time as things
11 may pop up. Tim said it made sense to him. They decided to address it one meeting at a time.

12
13 **Agenda Item 5, Economic Development Loan Approval; Meditrina Wine Bar**

14
15 Amy and Justin Anderson were present, and Bob Flint from Springfield Regional Development,
16 to speak about the project. Julie noted when an economic development loan comes to the board,
17 SRDC is their vetting tool for financials and business plans and the recommendation comes to
18 them from SRDC for the use of funds.

19
20 Justin and Amy, owners of Meditrina, are seeking economic development funding for Meditrina
21 Wine Bar and Restaurant. They're located at 295 Main Street on the Village Green in Chester.
22 Their wine shop has existed in Chester for 14 years and Amy's yoga studio has been in Chester
23 for 12 years. Their family owned the Stone Hearth Inn and Tavern for 10 years. Justin's
24 professional career for the past 29 years has been wholesale wine management for the full state of
25 Vermont managing sales teams north of 50 people along with oversight of all channels in the state,
26 including restaurants, retail, supermarkets, etc. Their youngest child is graduating college in May,
27 and this has been a lifelong dream for them to open their own wine bar. A wine bar will be their
28 primary focus of beverage but will also serve Vermont's fantastic craft beer along with spirits and
29 cocktails, along with a full restaurant. They are excited about the opportunity to continue to bring
30 vibrancy to the Village Green of Chester and having lived there as well as owning the building,
31 they recognize the need for more foot traffic on the Green. They are excited to do that and gracious
32 for the opportunity to be considered. Arne said that was fantastic news and the building and
33 location were perfectly suited, and the town could use another place.

34
35 Bob Flint from the Springfield Regional Development Corporation said they serve as Chester's
36 vetting agent for the Economic Development Fund. Concurrently, they have their own revolving
37 loan fund and have already approved an additional loan for \$55,000 and will be the capital stack
38 for the project assuming the board approves the request. They have been working with Justin and
39 Amy for 2 or 3 months. They also have a Small Business Development Counselor Debra
40 Boudrieau, in their office, along with Bob, who both provide free and confidential counseling and
41 services and they're tough. By the time it gets to Chester, they've been through half a dozen
42 iterations, which the area banks like. They are confident in the Anderson's financial projects and
43 have seen them going out for three years. They view their tax returns, credit scores, and other
44 personal information and are confident of the request and support consideration of it. Arne said it
45 was rare they have gotten requests for money in the fund, which is just under \$400,000. The last
46 time someone requested from the fund was the gentlemen on the Green with the apartments. Bob

1 indicated they are working with another potential applicant. As interest rates have increased, the
2 request for revolving loan funds in all the towns they serve has picked up.

3
4 Arne asked if there were any questions or concerns from the board members.

5
6 Lee thought it was a great idea and an opportunity to put traffic on the Green and have a delicious
7 meal and it was wonderful. Peter is glad to see the building being used more. Arne said given all
8 the vetting, it was difficult for him to come up with a question and it was great to hear they had
9 backing. Arne was happy to see the money used where it was intended and to possibly create jobs
10 and help the downtown. Arne wished them luck and success and indicated the board seemed to
11 also be on board with it.

12
13 Lee moved and Arianna seconded a motion to approve loan of \$55,000 for Meditrina Wine Bar at
14 5% for 10 years. The motion carried unanimously. Arne congratulated the Andersons. Julie will
15 draft the documents for their signature and will provide the funds, once signed.

16 17 **Agenda Item 6, 2024 Nuisance Ordinance**

18
19 Arne said there had been issues in certain parts of town and their packet included a Barre City
20 Nuisance Ordinance that was very involved and extensive, and they could take all of it, parts of it,
21 or none of it. Julie said they had received an increased number of complaints about some
22 properties, specifically one in West Chester, that primarily has to do with farm animals living on
23 lots that are not designed for farm animals without the ability to keep them contained. A lot of
24 goats are running in the road with several incidents of close calls with traffic. It's only a matter of
25 time before there's an issue. Today the goats walked down Andover Road and Potash Road. Over
26 the years, Julie has heard of other incidents of chickens running loose in the village and being on
27 other people's property. The issue in West Chester has raised it to a different level and there are no
28 tools in the toolbox to deal with it. There is a dog ordinance, but that's about it. Preston found the
29 Barre City ordinance and they weren't suggesting they go that far but wanted to let neighbors and
30 property owners speak about the issues they were having. If they wanted to impose an ordinance,
31 Julie and Preston would start working on one.

32
33 Bob Lurvey who lives at 66 Eddy Road, right off Potash, said the goats are always in the road and
34 this past weekend there were 13 goats in the road, and he doesn't want to hit one with his
35 motorcycle. The goats are on his neighbor's deck running around their property eating things. Bob
36 couldn't believe the Humane Society hadn't removed the animals as there isn't one blade of grass
37 on the owner's property, and it was just a mud pit. People are chasing goats up and down the road.
38 He has an orchard at his home, and he doesn't want the goats up there eating it. He said the goats
39 are terrorizing people and someone is going to get hurt.

40
41 Arne read a letter from Gladys Collins who could not attend. It said she wanted to support a town
42 ordinance to control the range of nuisance farm animals. The goats that are the topic of the night's
43 discussion have wandered freely for months on Andover and Potash Roads and have been all over
44 and range from adults, to does and billy goats totaling 14 when last counted. Some looked pregnant
45 and she expected more soon. Goats can present a hazard to property and harm humans. Their
46 neighborhood should not share the problems that free-range goats bring, and they should be cared

1 for by their owner. The property in question belonged to the Plumb Steele Family and has many
2 issues making it out of compliance with the town's salvage yard ordinance. It borders the Andover
3 Branch of the Williams River and she guessed much of the property's waste flows into that branch.
4 Many of the residents have been in touch with the town officials voicing their concerns but are
5 told nothing can be done. So here they are again asking for the protection their neighborhood
6 needs and they hope they get. If anyone on the board or in the community feels they don't need to
7 worry about salvage yards or errant goats, she thought the same thing 20 years ago. Several years
8 ago, a group worked with the Selectboard to enact a salvage ordinance to help protect their
9 neighbors. It was approved by a lawyer and passed into law, but they've been unable to enforce it.
10 Approaching Chester from any direction will show the salvage ordinance did not work for many
11 residents on the outskirts of town. While they are sparsely populated, their properties have an
12 intrinsic value that deserves recognition. They often hear the ordinances don't have any teeth but
13 all salvage yards in Vermont need to comply. She wanted an ordinance to protect them from free-
14 ranging goats and other livestock that are a hazard and nuisance and hoped the topic would be on
15 upcoming agendas.

16
17 Hilarie Tolstoi is affected by both the goats and chickens in town. She picks up her grandson at
18 The Little School and almost hits a goat daily and they're multiplying. It's dangerous and sad
19 because they're clearly not being cared for. Chickens are also an issue and there is chicken poop
20 everywhere which isn't healthy. Her son lives across the street from chickens who are left to run
21 free all day long, are all over his yard and driveway and they eat his gardens. He has hired someone
22 to put stone in his garden instead of plants because of the chickens eating it and that isn't fair to
23 him. The issue of her grandchildren running around on chicken poop all day isn't healthy.

24
25 Jennifer Gagliardi lives at 1020 Andover Road, which was her grandmother's home, and is the
26 property just past the Steele Plumb residence. The goats run rampant through the neighborhood.
27 They're in the road and yards, eating her perennials, and stripping the bark off her grandmother's
28 lilac bush that has been there for years. She has called the police several times but there is no action
29 they can take because there's no nuisance ordinance. There is poop in their yard and the goats
30 come up on her deck and try to get through the screen door. She constantly hears car horns because
31 the goats or dogs are in the road and the traffic goes over the speed limit. She is 50 and has lived
32 on the corner most of her life. Mrs. Plumb kept the property neat as a pin. When the Steeles moved
33 in things changed and she thought there may be mental health issues going on with hoarding.
34 Hoarding has turned into squalor because trash is strewn about and creeps onto her property. She
35 can choose not to look at it but when comes into her yard, she can't ignore it and it's an issue.
36 None of them want anything bad to happen to the animals or themselves. The police officer
37 suggested they ask the town for help. She asked the board to help the police help them. Her parents
38 were also in attendance and had lived on Potash for 50 years and the goats ate their flowerbeds. It
39 was upsetting to hear her mother moaning in pain because her plants had been eaten.

40
41 Richard Postin, Jennifer's father, has lived on Potash Brook Road for 50 years and has seen a lot
42 and now this issue. Last year it was pigs. Another issue was dogs who are quite vicious. He has
43 attempted to speak to the owners, but they don't answer the phone. He doesn't dare go on the
44 property as neighbors have been bitten when walking past the property because the dogs come out
45 and charge and bite them. He wants to shoot the goats for eating his plants, but the police told them
46 he can't. He has no right to protect his property because the law and town won't support him. He

1 has lived with deer for 50 years with no problems. These animals are out of control. He raised
2 sheep for 20 years but fenced his property so they wouldn't do what the goats are. Richard
3 suspected they wouldn't put up a fence because the goats need to eat and can't blame the goats
4 because they want to eat, and their owners won't feed them. He has spoken to them about the trash,
5 and they were apologetic and moved some of it but it's coming back. The goats also run through
6 the stream. Richard asked the town for their help and thanked them for listening.

7
8 Joy Bodycomb just purchased 83 Potash Brook Road 6 weeks ago and didn't realize there was a
9 goat issue or a couple of others. She was on a work call with her boss and a goat jumped into her
10 camper van and scared her old dog and then a second one jumped in, and she had to get off the
11 call. Fortunately, she has a great boss. A lot of the bark is being eaten off the young trees which
12 can kill them. They are trying to work and get things settled and make it a great place to be and
13 the goats are making it challenging for them. She understands the goats need to eat too and feels
14 for them. They are excited to be in Chester and if there is anything they can do to help the town
15 with anything that can be done to help with this issue. She has heard about dogs but hasn't
16 experienced that. She had also heard the beeping and originally thought people were welcoming
17 them because they were new to town but realized it was the goats causing the beeping.

18
19 Andy Connelly, who was with Joy, said there was at least one goat pregnant named Wi-Fi so there
20 will be more goats soon.

21
22 Debbi Richardson lives at 827 Andover Road, which is diagonal from the property that has all the
23 animals. She used to walk to Andover but doesn't anymore. She has been stuck in the car for 20
24 minutes because of barking and growling dogs outside without cell service to call anyone. The
25 goats are destroying everything. The bank across from them is washing out and all the trees are
26 stripped so the trees will die, and the bank will fall. People are honking their horns and pulling into
27 her driveway to ask who owns the goats. They called the police who told them that they must build
28 a fence. Her husband has brought the pigs, horses, and goats back to the property. They are
29 destroying their land, and she can't leave her home.

30
31 Julie said Chester has a dog ordinance so the dog issue can be dealt with aside from the ordinance
32 and suggested they call the Police Department who can deal with the dog issue. The Selectboard
33 has dealt with vicious dogs in the past.

34
35 Beverly Lawrence at 60 Andover Road said everything she had heard tonight was true and the
36 goats needed to go. Beverly echoed what Debbi said. She said they will cause a flood problem
37 with the bank going, and it was historic. It went back to when Mark Phelps was alive and didn't
38 want to see the horses go through what they did. She believes the horses are buried not far from
39 their well. Mark was an advocate for the people in the neighborhood. In 2018, Larry Sylvan
40 slammed on his breaks and went in the yard and told them to get the horses to their field where
41 they flourished but then they came back, and the Humane Society and Claremont Vet got involved.
42 Just before COVID, the State was involved. They visited in March of 2020 and left a note on the
43 door and then we were in lockdown. She said they dug a hole and put the horse in there and she
44 thought there were 2 horses in the ground next to their well. She wondered where the owners were.
45 She was concerned of a potential flood issue and the ruining of her neighbors' stuff.

1 Carol Theodore lives next to Bev and on the corner of Andover and Potash Brook roads and has
2 had the dogs in her yard. She has gardens and plants vegetables to feed her family. She has video
3 of the goats running through her yard. They barrel through between the house and barn which is a
4 10-foot space and if she and her husband were out there, they would be flattened. She suggested
5 they create an impounding ordinance. If the goats are on private property, or in the road
6 endangering traffic, they should be impounded. It's the town's problem and shouldn't be private
7 property owners' problem. If the people who own the goats don't have the money to retrieve them,
8 the goats get killed or sold or whatever happens to impounded animals. They do it in other places
9 and should do it here.

10
11 Eric Richardson lives at 827 Andover Road, which is across the street from the property they were
12 discussing. Everything said was accurate except that it hadn't been going on for months but for 8
13 years. All different types of farm animals and dogs are on the loose. The goats had destroyed
14 significant vegetation. If people go onto someone else's property to cut down a tree for wood is
15 like what is happening now but at a smaller level. Eric said it was very emotional for them because
16 they had been going through it for so long. The animals aren't just the noise but the homeowners
17 themselves. They can't sit out at night now for a nice dinner on their porch because of the dogs or
18 the noise of the neighbors yelling. The dogs aren't on leashes. They have goat parades on Andover
19 Road twice a day. The other day, he counted 13, from babies to old billy goats. Eric didn't feel
20 they should have to spend a lot of money to create fences to keep someone else's property off
21 theirs. He said in speaking with them, they sound very apologetic. Eric suggested electric fences
22 and he told them they don't work. Eric witnessed them using non-electrified metal fences years
23 ago which were totally ineffective as they would jump right over. A few weeks ago, after they had
24 the big snow, they were in their yard, and he dragged them back to their yard and approached the
25 owner and showed him the damage they did to their property. The owner said he would replace
26 them, but his concern was keeping the animals off their property. The horses left big divots right
27 across their yard and although he doesn't own a championship golf course, that wasn't the issue.
28 The owner said he would fix them but didn't. Eric wasn't concerned about the reimbursement but
29 that they wouldn't follow through with what they said. The owner said he was going to put the
30 goats in his garage and four hours later they were back again. For the sake of everyone in the
31 neighborhood, Eric hoped they could find a solution.

32
33 Arne echoed what Julie said earlier about the dogs and there was an ordinance and to make the
34 call so action could be taken. Arne suggested they continue to make the calls and the town would
35 check into it at their end.

36
37 Karen Orchitt had a problem with dogs, horses, and pigs for years. Last year, she chased the pig
38 home four times on a Sunday. The pig isn't mean but is huge and difficult to herd. The owner
39 never came to help her, so she called the police. The following week the pig was in the garage.
40 There are no more pigs that she can see. She walks from 7:30 to 8:30 so the dogs will be fixed.
41 The white dog has bitten her twice on the arm. The dog comes up behind her and grabs her arm.
42 The last time he bit her, he didn't break the skin, but her arm swelled up and was bruised and he
43 left his teeth impressions through her coat and heavy sweater. The police spoke with Tom and the
44 first time it bit her, it broke the skin, and she called the police. She herds the goats when she goes
45 for a walk so cars can get by. All she wants to do is go for a walk on a dirt road in the morning and
46 it seems like a problem. It's not the owner of the property who is an old woman who has been a

1 patient at the hospital for 10 weeks with an infection in her leg, but her daughter who lives there.
2 She doesn't want to be a neighbor who causes trouble for other neighbors because it's a small
3 community and usually when you speak with people, they address the issue and that was probably
4 why there wasn't an ordinance. She thought it would continue until someone really got hurt. She
5 thanked them for listening. Julie asked when the bites happened, and Karen said in the winter.
6

7 Tim commented as a citizen who lives at 729 Andover Road, and he thanked them for coming in.
8 He sees the goats daily and they've been in his yard once, likely because he has dogs that keep
9 him out. He had seen the damage of the trees along the river and had no idea that they were getting
10 into people's gardens. Tim found it eye opening. Tim could attest that the dogs used to come in
11 his yard but no longer did and didn't know what had changed. The pig cornered him in his yard
12 once, and he talked to Tom about it and the pig never came back. Tim had no idea the was as
13 severe as people were saying.
14

15 Arne said there were some compelling stories about what was happening, and it was amazing
16 nobody had been hurt yet and there wasn't more trouble than mentioned. Arne understood the
17 police were looking for an ordinance but found it hard to believe there was nothing they could do
18 given the traffic issues and other things. The board has the power to implement an ordinance. Arne
19 said it would be good to enact it all over town as there were also issues with chickens on High
20 Street.
21

22 Matt Gorsky had trouble believing there wasn't a state law in place about public endangerment of
23 loose livestock with the agricultural background Vermont has. It had been a dairy state since the
24 1700s and he thought there must be a law on the books about public endangerment with loose
25 livestock like goats, cows, pigs, and sheep. Arne said they would investigate that to see if there
26 was anything missing but even if there was, it may not be a bad idea to pursue an ordinance like
27 the one from Barre City to help with the issues on a local level because it seemed the ordinance
28 had more teeth than anything he was aware of.
29

30 Peter said there were some state laws for loose animals, and it's \$10 every time. With a male Billy
31 goat, the price goes up. Julie thought this helped with the impoundment piece. Places you can take
32 them typically require an ordinance in effect first. It would help decide who picks the animals up
33 and where they take them. Julie said some research was necessary before they could put an
34 ordinance into effect. Arne thought some of the issues for the people at the property may not be
35 addressed with an ordinance. Julie said someone must be designated to get the goats and where
36 they take them and what they are picked up in. Julie added that the place who accepts the goats
37 would charge the town to take care of them, as is the same that happened with the vicious dog.
38 The mechanisms need to be in place so they can enforce an ordinance.
39

40 Arianna thanked them for attending. She said there was a lot of conversation that would be valuable
41 around fences, property, and zoning, and what kind of fences and when. In the short term, she
42 asked them to call about the dogs. Arianna said developing an ordinance was a good place to start
43 but there was a lot they had to do to have enforceable language to cover situations beyond a basic
44 ordinance. It was imperative the Selectboard address it for the future of the town, future residents
45 of the town, and other situations.
46

1 Eustice Theodore of Andover Road said his fellow citizens have described the situation well. He
2 hoped they could put a simple structure in place required for success. There must be a decision
3 made that focuses on what is wrong, possible changes, what direction they need to change, and
4 how to make it happen. The only way he has ever seen success for communities is to identify the
5 things going wrong, have a plan, and be ready to execute it and not wait to address it later. He
6 thought by the second draft, they could move forward. He congratulated them for taking it on and
7 thanked everyone who spoke. Lee said he was drafting a plan of attack which included
8 identification by the neighbors of the problem, talking to the owner, and then the police. The first
9 contact by the police would be a warning, the second a ticket and/or fines, and action would be
10 removal which would require manpower and a truck or trailer to move the animals, and
11 impoundment which would require a fenced area, feed, care and then disposal. Lee thought it was
12 straightforward but would require more time than the 6 members had sitting there to make
13 something viable and enforceable. Julie said if the board had the appetite for an ordinance, she and
14 Preston would work together to produce a draft. Arne thought they had to do something, even if
15 there was a state law. Barre City's ordinance was comprehensive and addressed the issues raised
16 and would give them a place to start as it had obviously been a problem in other towns in the state
17 over the years. Arne asked if the consensus of the board was to address it with an ordinance. Tim
18 looked up the state ordinance, 20 V.S.A. § 3341 deals with loose animals and, although antiquated,
19 could help deal with it in the interim. Fines can be levied, and the animals can be impounded. The
20 animals include cattle, horses, sheep, goats, and swine. Julie said impounding was the issue. Tim
21 said a private landowner could impound the animals in their own place. Julie said they would
22 investigate the language when drafting the ordinance.

23
24 Ben Whalen, former Selectboard member who had dealt with enacting ordinances, said it was time
25 consuming, and the conversation after was whether it had teeth, how to enforce it, and the cost,
26 and they would say they weren't paying. Ben said Title 13 Chapter 8 talks about humane treatment
27 and the pound keeper and Ben thought an ordinance was a good place, so they had the teeth there.
28 Ben said \$10 each time and whether warrants could be created from it, was a good place to start
29 while working on that ordinance. The board thanked Ben.

30
31 Arne said they could task Preston with the ordinance, since he had experience writing them. Arne
32 said the Barre ordinance covered the issues they were facing. But as Julie said, it all had to be part
33 of the project to make sure it was doable and enforceable. Arne asked that Preston be tasked with
34 coming up with a Chester Town ordinance to address the issues happening. The board agreed.

35
36 Arne thanked everyone for coming in and telling their stories because the motivation the board
37 takes is more powerful when people are there in person and tell them what's going on. Arne noted
38 it was a serious issue from what they had heard, and it wasn't the first thing that happened in that
39 area of town and seemed like they were getting a double whammy. Arne encouraged them to call
40 about the dogs. He said they would look to see what could be done currently and would address
41 the implementation of an ordinance. Arne said even if the police come and they can't do anything,
42 a report will be documented and there may be something else they can do.

43
44 Karen Orchitt said when the police came, they did offer a \$10 fine but when they couldn't feed
45 their animals, a \$10 fine seemed counterproductive.

46

1 **Agenda Item 7, Q1 Financial Update**

2
3 Arne noted it was in a new format that was broken down and clearer. The first page was a summary,
4 and more detail by department on the following pages. Julie said there wasn't a lot that happened
5 in the first quarter and at the end of the day, they were at 77% unexpended, which was where they
6 wanted to be. Because of timing issues, some things may be off such as something from the first
7 quarter being paid in April. Tax revenue has not been received yet, so revenue is down which was
8 standard. Peter said under facilities' expense, the same number was not reflected in the breakdown.
9 Julie wondered if the difference was facilities' payroll because they lump payroll together as it's
10 their biggest line item in the budget and she likes to see it separate. Peter was looking at the 18%
11 expended for facilities and asked if it wasn't getting expended because he was working with the
12 fire department. Page 1, facilities expense was 18.6 and the other part of facilities, the numbers
13 matched up. Julie said if they go into detail and see general facilities expense, it was the 18 points.
14 Julie would have Laurie number the pages and lines on the spreadsheet to make it easier to read.
15

16 Arne questioned the summary page that included net income and loss and wondered what the loss
17 was. Julie said because they don't bill taxes until July, they don't see the income until Quarter 3.
18 Arne questioned the interest income on government revenue and Julie said at the end of last year,
19 the bank changed the interest on their accounts. When they switched to M&T, they put them in a
20 different category with a much higher interest rate, and they earn money from that money. Arne
21 asked about the TAN interest which had been budgeted at \$2,500 but they were already paying
22 over \$30,000 in interest. Julie would check with Laurie, as she thought there might be an issue
23 with the number. Arne asked if the number under insurance expenses was unusually high and Julie
24 said the beginning is usually higher because they hit their deductible first, and then it gradually
25 goes down. Arne questioned if the fire department salaries were included or if it was accrued. Julie
26 said they are accruing differently now. Arne thought it seemed low and Julie said there hadn't been
27 as many calls. Arianna said it looked great and made perfect sense and the anomalies were clear.
28

29 **Agenda Item 8, ARPA Funds Discussion**

30
31 The fund started out at over \$900,000 and in the beginning, there was input on how to spend it all.
32 There is a detailed sheet where a lot of the money went, what's expended to date, and the balance
33 that was there. Julie explained they need to allocate the remaining funds by December 31st of this
34 year, and they need to be expended by December 31, 2026. There is roughly \$170,000 remaining
35 in the ARPA funds which is after they took half of the principal payment of the bond from ARPA
36 to give the taxpayers a break, so after that \$88,000 and if they approve the use of the funds for the
37 fire department compressor, it will leave \$167,000. Having not been there when the ARPA funds
38 were received, Arianna wondered if they could allocate them to the Economic Development Fund.
39 Julie said they need to be dedicated to something specific. Arianna asked about housing
40 development and Julie said if they had a housing development and they knew they were going to
41 do one in the next two years, it would work. Lee suggested something like the solar field would
42 work. Arne said it didn't need to be decided today. Arianna asked if they could discuss the
43 compressor.
44

45 Ben Whalen, Acting Fire Chief, spoke about the memo in the packet and the breathing air
46 compressor. For the past three to five years, they've known it was the end of life. The tag on it said

1 1989. It was a Poseidon, a Vermont business which is no longer, so you can't get parts and most
2 people don't want to touch it. Steve tried to make it last but wasn't successful. Ben said a breathing
3 compressor was more expensive than a regular compressor because of regulations it must meet.
4 The grant funds they applied for were at a higher cost based on replacing the fill station and air
5 compressor. The fill station is fine and will continue to be for another 20 years, but the compressor
6 needs to be replaced. Ben said they were hopeful if they placed the emergency order, they would
7 have the compressor delivered within a week which was huge. When the building was built, they
8 planned, and three-phase power was available which is what it requires. With installation, it should
9 cost no more than \$50,000. Peter asked where they were filling their cylinders currently. They
10 reached out to Springfield who told them they could fill cylinders if needed. If they had any type
11 of incident, they would use mutual aid and several departments have a cascade system to fill
12 cylinders on scene. Any time they have a building fire, that's part of the compliment that arrives
13 and the nice partnership they have with them. They looked into leasing stored air, and nobody has
14 that volume cylinder to drop off. Arianna asked if they had the cylinders and just needed the
15 compressor and Ben replied they have cylinders. Arne asked if they were filling them in
16 Springfield now and they were and then asked if they ever had to fill them during a fire. Ben said
17 they use Walpole, and their backup is Ludlow. Each of those departments has storage cylinders on
18 their engines. Ben said back in the 90s, they had that, but with technology and higher PSIs, it was
19 something they upgraded. Arne wondered if there was an advantage to having a dedicated one in
20 Chester rather than sharing the Springfield one. Ben said most departments have their own
21 compressor and if they have a building fire at 10 pm and get back to the department at 2 am, if
22 they don't fill the cylinders and there's a car fire or some other fire event and they don't have full
23 air cylinders, they can't go into that fire to do anything. Going to another town to fill them is
24 working temporarily but may hinder their ability to fight fires if they continue to fill them that
25 way. Arne confirmed that they would not even be able to fill their storage tanks. They had looked
26 for grants and asked the AFG, who considered it a medium priority and only fund high priority
27 items.

28
29 Peter moved and Lee seconded a motion to purchase an air compressor for the fire department, not
30 to exceed \$50,000. Tim clarified it was with the use of ARPA funds and the motion was amended
31 to include that. The motion was passed unanimously. In jest, Lee asked if they had considered
32 using helium in the tanks which would make them lighter and talk funny and Ben replied that it
33 would make for fun nights with the voices on the radios.

34
35 Arianna asked how to allocate the remaining funds of \$138,000 and Julie clarified there was
36 \$167,945 available in ARPA funds after the \$50,000. Peter asked what they were going to spend
37 on Community Health and Julie said that was a tough one and they would have an offsetting
38 revenue in theory. Community Health wouldn't be in full swing until next year because Mike had
39 to attend schooling. Arianna said the ARPA funds must be allocated this year but could be used
40 next year. Julie suggested using them toward the ambulance purchase, so they borrow less or
41 borrow the same and allocate it to the ambulance to free up money to be used in other ways. The
42 ambulance is \$350,000, so \$168,000 would knock it down. Peter noted the capital expense for the
43 ambulance would come from that department but if the ambulance was paid down, the capital
44 expense would be less, and Julie agreed. Peter said Community Health would be offset by paying
45 down the ambulance. Tim said because the old ambulance needs work, it may be a good way to
46 have reserve funds. Arne said putting it in capital as a placeholder could be used for the ambulance

1 to lower the cost and if they had to put something in capital, they could do it because they had the
2 extra money in there for the ambulance that they don't have to use. Peter said it would depend on
3 what they bonded it for, and Julie said it was bonded for \$350,000. Bond applications were due
4 May 20th and if she knew that the ambulance would only cost \$250,000, she would only go to the
5 bond bank for \$250,000 because she can't spend the \$100,000 on anything but ambulance because
6 that was what she was authorized to do and she questioned why she would borrow an extra
7 \$100,000 that the taxpayers would need to pay. Arianna said capital expenses in the coming year
8 that they've danced around like the new ambulance, updating the old ambulance, and the solar
9 field if it's something they can move forward to, and wondered if there were other things they had
10 considered. Arne explained originally, there was a whole list. Julie said most of them were large
11 projects that far exceeded \$900,000. Some smaller things had been accomplished. Julie said the
12 Wayfinding signage would go in soon and the money was slated to come from capital from the
13 grant fund. They could use ARPA funds for that which would free up \$40,000 from the grant fund.
14 They could buy the dump truck which would free up money in the capital plan. Julie wasn't
15 expecting an answer tonight. Arne said the funds expended to date were discussions they had, and
16 the biggest expense was the cost overruns on the EMS building that was built during COVID.
17 Arianna wondered if they addressed each individually or as a group. Arne said they discussed them
18 both ways, in the beginning as a group, but most were individual as they came up.

19
20 Shawn asked about the first item on the list for \$34,491 and what the special appropriations were.
21 Julie said in 2021, at Town Meeting, when they voted for the slate of special interest groups, it
22 was agreed to use those monies from the ARPA fund and at that time, it was a specific use ARPA
23 allowed before they loosened it up.

24
25 They will look at it as they go along. The biggest Lee saw was the \$390,000 for the EMS building
26 and that expense has saved the taxpayer a lot of money because they aren't paying interest on
27 borrowed money. Lee said buying their own compressor will save the taxpayer because they're
28 not getting themselves into a situation or paying people to drive to Springfield. Lee thought all the
29 things were good to have spent the money on and was providing a tax break. Arianna was willing
30 to explore ways they offset capital expense to negate interest for several years. Arne said they
31 would review it as they go along.

32
33 **Agenda Item 9, Class IV Roads Discussion**

34
35 Arne didn't have much on it because the Chester Conservation Committee hasn't met yet this
36 month. Derek Suurusoo couldn't hear well and asked the members to lean towards the
37 microphones or speak louder. Arne said the meeting wouldn't be until the 7th for the CCC. When
38 he looked at the Class IV discussions they had been having, he also thought about the Class III
39 roads, and they were a treasure of the town. He sees more people walking on the roads, walking
40 their dogs, bicycling, and people parking by the Pinnacle and walking on the roads and wondered
41 what they could do to protect the Class III roads for the use of pedestrians and cyclists and others
42 and have a similar discussion like for the Class IV roads. Arne wondered why some of the speed
43 limits on them were as high as they were. Arne just wanted the conversation incorporated when
44 they talk about trails and usage and related items and wondered what the board thought. Peter said
45 30 mph on a lot of those roads wasn't there for sight distance and 30 mph was way too high. Arne
46 agreed. Arne thought dirt roads should have a speed limit of 25 mph and there should be signage

1 because there were horses and people on the road who should have the right-of-way. Arne wanted
2 the Class III roads included in the Class IV discussion. Arne also thought the paved road for
3 Andover-Weston should be included as people walk on it. Lee said the thought about limiting the
4 speed limit to 25 mph on a dirt road wasn't reasonable as a lot of people live on them. Lee thought
5 most who are traveling paved or dirt are traveling at a reasonable speed so he would be hesitant to
6 set it at 25 mph as most people will act in a responsible and reasonable manner. Lee could relate
7 as he has horses they walk, and most people will slow down and act responsibly. Lee wasn't ready
8 to include the Class III roads in the Class IV discussion. Arne understood. Tim didn't disagree
9 with Arne because a lot of the dirt roads are windy and people come around and when he's walking
10 with his grandson, it can be scary. It's hard to steer with loose gravel but also didn't disagree with
11 Lee that most people are respectful. Tim had spoken with someone who lived on the road and
12 drove fast. Tim wasn't sure a lower speed limit would change it but maybe signs would and thought
13 it was worth discussing. Peter added that they should consider sight distance for 25 and 30 mph.
14 Tim thought Vermont statute said if the speed limit wasn't posted it was 50 and Julie said it was
15 now 35. Arne thought most of the dirt roads were not posted. Arne cautioned about discussing
16 something not on the agenda and wanted to know the board's appetite. Lee was happy to have a
17 Class IV roads discussion on the agenda. Arne said he had already discussed what was going on
18 and hoped he would have more information at the next meeting.

19
20 Matt Gorsky was going to comment on the Class III roads but would do so at another meeting
21 when it was on the agenda.

22

23 **Agenda Item 10, Liquor License/Entertainment Permit Second Class: Meditrina**
24 **Entertainment: P&J's Country Kitchen**

25

26 Arianna moved and Tim seconded a motion to approve a second-class liquor license for Meditrina
27 Wine and Cheese, and the motion carried unanimously.

28

29 The second item was P&J's Country Kitchen Country Girl Diner for an entertainment license for
30 Fridays or Saturday nights for June through September from 4 to 9 and only 8 to 10 on July 20th.
31 It only required a signature and no vote.

32

33 **Agenda Item 11, New Business/Next Agenda**

34

35 Tim was looking forward to seeing a purchase and sales agreement, but Julie doubted there would
36 be one on the next agenda.

37

38 Tomorrow evening there would be several social service groups hosted by the Ambulance at Town
39 Hall.

40

41 Ben Whalen said some may be aware, but he had resigned from his position at the Fire Marshal's
42 Office effective June 15th and has accepted a position as full-time Fire Chief in Ludlow. He would
43 remain as the Acting Chief for Chester as long as needed and was happy to continue working with
44 Julie, the board, the firefighters, and chiefs. Ben has been with the Chester Fire Department since
45 he was 15 years old. It will be a challenge and change that he is excited for. He hoped to remain a
46 member of the Chester Department when he was not in Ludlow and couldn't say enough about the

1 members of the department because they are who make it as great as it is and the communication
2 between the departments and the Town Hall is what it is because of them. The board congratulated
3 him. Tim and Arne were disappointed in losing an asset like Ben to the community but was glad
4 he would be sticking around to assist with fires in Chester. Peter mentioned the fact that Ludlow
5 was going to have a full-time chief and Julie added many towns were. Ben said Ludlow advertised
6 the position two months ago.

7
8 **Agenda Item 12, Adjourn**

9
10 Lee moved to adjourn, and Arianna seconded the motion. A vote was taken, and the motion passed
11 unanimously, and the meeting was adjourned at 8:41 p.m.

12
13 **WATER/SEWER COMMISSIONER'S MEETING**

14
15 **Call to Order**

16
17 Arne called the meeting to order at 8:41 p.m.

18
19 **Agenda Item 1, Citizens Comments**

20
21 There were none.

22
23 **Agenda Item 2, Set Water Rate**

24
25 Julie said in 2023 they began to gradually increase the water rates until they get to a rate where
26 revenue is covering the expense. Julie said as costs and inflation have increased for 5 years, they
27 have not raised water or sewer rates. They have been making gradual incremental changes rather
28 than hitting the users all at once. They plan to do that for all of 2024 and will see where they are
29 at the beginning of 2025 and stabilize. Julie was asking that the water base rate be set at \$70 and
30 the water usage rate at \$2.50.

31
32 Lee moved and Tim seconded a motion to set the water base rate at \$70 and the usage rate at \$2.50.
33 Having never lived in town and been on water and sewer, Tim questioned the rates and usage, and
34 Julie explained the base rate was paid every quarter and the use rate was per 1,000 gallons. Arne
35 thought the average water user was \$140 per quarter including base and usage. And with second
36 homeowners not there much, it was fairer to increase the base rate and the usage rate drop. Julie
37 said something like the car wash has multiple base rates. The water department is looking at the
38 water reading system which is 20 years old and are looking at a different type of reader that would
39 allow them to read the meters from Amy's desktop which would be enormous in many ways, as it
40 would save 2 days of labor every quarter to read meters and would allow them to look at billing
41 commercial units differently than residential. They would love to bill commercial monthly, which
42 would help cash flow, as well as commercial consumers. Arianna wondered if they could use
43 ARPA funds for the system and Arne explained they couldn't because the whole community is not
44 on the water system. The motion carried unanimously.

1 **Agenda Item 3, Set Sewer Rate**

2
3 Julie said the sewer base rate would go to \$108 and usage at \$5.25 with flat rate consumption for
4 those who are on sewer only with a well and their rate would increase to \$42. Arianna moved with
5 Tim seconding the motion to set the sewer base rate at \$108, sewer usage at \$5.25 and a flat rate
6 consumption at \$42. The motion carried unanimously.

7
8 **Agenda Item 4, Adjourn**

9
10 Lee moved and Tim seconded a motion to adjourn, and the motion carried unanimously. Meeting
11 adjourned at 8:48 p.m.

DRAFT