

1 **TOWN OF CHESTER**
2 **SELECTBOARD MEETING**
3 **September 20, 2023, Minutes**

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

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

8 **Visitors Present:** Shawn Cunningham of The Chester Telegraph, Carrie King, Matt Gorsky, Evan
9 Chadwick, William Lindsay, Aleda Bliss, Judy Verespy, Claudio Veliz, Hugh Quinn, Joan
10 Grossman, Ed Grossman, Donna Hudkins, Bill Dakin, Janice Bradley, and Cathy Hasbrouck at
11 Town Hall; and SAPA TV, Scott Blair, Joy Slaughter, Laurel King, Laurel Cocokat, Madline
12 Bodin, Maralyna, Nick Boke, Preston Bristow, Deena's iPhone, Donald Stone, and Susan
13 Goodfellow via Zoom.

14
15 **Call to Order**

16
17 Chair Arne Jonynas called the meeting to order at 6:30 p.m. with the pledge of allegiance. He
18 welcomed everyone to the meeting and asked those in attendance to sign the sign-in sheet.
19

20 **Agenda Item 1, Additions or Deletions to the Agenda**

21
22 Arne said the executive session for the Economic Development Fund would be held in an open
23 session rather than executive. Arne also wanted to add a short executive session at the end of the
24 meeting regarding an update on the union grievance. Arne entertained a motion and Lee moved to
25 make the changes to the agenda, as stated. Heather seconded the motion. A vote was taken, and
26 the motion carried unanimously.
27

28 **Agenda Item 2, Approve minutes from the September 6, 2023 Selectboard Meeting**

29 Lee moved and Arianna seconded a motion to approve the September 6th minutes. There were no
30 changes and Arne thanked Sue for the great job. A vote was taken, and the minutes were approved,
31 as written.

32 **Agenda Item 3, Citizens Comments/Answers from Previous Meeting**

33 There were none.

34 **Agenda Item 4, Old Business**

35
36 Report given by the Town Manager, Julie Hance:

37
38 Julian Quarry

39 A site visit has been scheduled for September 25th at 4:30 p.m. For anyone wanting to attend, the
40 bus will leave the high school at 4:30 p.m. and will travel to the sites. The follow-up hearings have
41 been scheduled for October 11th and October 23rd both at 6:00 p.m.

1 Thompson Road

2 The engineering firm will hold their required public hearing for the environmental assessment on
3 September 28th with an open house from 5 pm to 6 pm and the formal hearing will be held from
4 6:30 p.m. to 8 p.m. SAPA will record the meeting and Susan will be running Zoom. Julie will not
5 be present. The meeting will be run by the engineering firm and any Selectboard member that
6 wishes to attend may. It will be held at Town Hall.

7
8 Solar Field

9 Julie hasn't had a chance to reach out to the contact but was hoping to this week.

10
11 Electric on the Green

12 The project is something that may be eligible for the Downtown Transportation Grant because it
13 is in the Village Center and Julie has been thinking of bigger projects for the Green that have been
14 discussed in the past. As a result, the electric will not be done this fall, as the grants open late fall
15 and are awarded in January. This may be a funding source rather than Economic Development
16 funds.

17
18 Municipal Planning Grant

19 It has opened and is due November 1st. Julie has spoken with the State and ACCD, who manage
20 the grant, about the potential of using the funds to develop or do a feasibility study on 2 or 3 parcels
21 owned by the town that could eventually be used for housing development. They are very
22 supportive and think the grant may be competitive. Julie has reached out to SE Group, who they
23 have used before, to discuss what a project may look like. Julie will report back to the board, and
24 it would be a good topic for the Housing Commission's first meeting.

25
26 Lead Service Line Inventory

27 It has been completed, Jeff has reviewed it, and it will come to the board in final format.

28
29 Wayfinding

30 Lee asked where it stood. Julie said the bid had been awarded to W.S. Signs and the kickoff
31 meeting is on October 5th with the architect and designer. The signs will be constructed over the
32 winter and installed in early spring.

33
34 Sidewalk Project

35 Julie mentioned the Railroad is still holding the town up with the sidewalk project after 5 years.
36 Arne said they were having issues with the railroad crossing by Smitty's that extends to Town Hall
37 and the bottleneck has been the Railroad. Julie said that the Railroad had agreed to it at the time
38 of application but when it came time to sign the easement, wouldn't sign.

39
40 **Agenda Item 5, Whiting Library, Employee Benefit Discussion**

41
42 Peter disclosed that his wife, Donna Hudkins, is secretary on the library board. Arne thanked him.
43 Matt Gorsky, Chair of the Library Board of Trustees, spoke. Matt said they weren't asking for
44 money at this point. What they've run across is an issue with personnel retainment due to lack of
45 benefits. One of the driving factors for the most recent director to leave was she was offered a
46 position with commensurate pay and benefits. During the summer, she contracted COVID, and it

1 was during that time she realized she had no short-term or long-term insurance availability for
2 getting Long COVID. Those factors have put them in a place where the library, as an entity, doesn't
3 want revolving door personnel to come get the experience of leading a library and then when a
4 better offer comes along, walk out the door. Matt wasn't saying that was what happened in this
5 case, but they could see it happening. They wanted to start a conversation with the Board of
6 Trustees and form a committee of Selectboard members and Trustees who come to a reasonable
7 accommodation that works for both the library and town to give the two full-time employees
8 benefits that most take for granted at the full-time jobs they work.

9 Arne said they have had similar discussions before, and he knew the board had supported the
10 library as much as they could in the past. Arne thought it was an important discussion and said
11 there were 26 full-time town employees with an excellent benefit package and the library, being a
12 big part of the town with 2 full-time employees, would warrant the same type of benefit package
13 others have. Arne said it was figuring out the details. The town employees are under the jurisdiction
14 of the Town Manager, and Selectboard indirectly. And the library employees are under the
15 direction of the Board of Trustees and there would need to be a memorandum of understanding on
16 how it would work. Arne thought the idea about the Selectboard and Trustees coming to a solution
17 was good, but it was up to the Board to decide which direction to go. Arne said back when he
18 started on the board, the contribution was \$40,000 or \$50,000 and he knew it had gone up but
19 probably was not keeping up with the cost of living or inflation. Last year they were up to \$97,000.
20 Arne said it was an important discussion to have, especially when trying to retain employees. The
21 library was the first thing people have contact with, especially those with small children, when
22 they move to a small town. Arne said it was good to hear the positive effects the library has on
23 new people in town. Arne saw it as an important asset that also tied into economic development
24 and the fact, they had a functional library with people who were good at what they do.

25 Arianna said it was clear the relationship the Town of Chester had with the library was not
26 textbook, so the relationship of the board of the library and the Selectboard was part of what they
27 were discussing. As to the compensation question, she thought what they were putting on the table
28 was who worked for whom and how and who had oversight over whom and why and the extent.
29 She thought the question was did they want to dive into an exploratory process of The Whiting
30 Library in relationship to the town where someone could do some serious research to find out how
31 other towns handled it. But if it was only a compensation issue, it was a very different conversation.
32 Arianna wanted to know if they were only discussing how the library operates or a compensation
33 package for two employees that may or may not be town employees. Arne said they were excellent
34 questions, and the employee relationship was a big question. Arne said every town has its own
35 relationship. He thought it was relatively clear that the library board was responsible for its
36 employees but as a town, they were asking them to take on the benefit side.

37 Lee asked how many library trustees there were and how they were appointed. There are 7 and
38 they are elected. The authority given to the trustees comes from the town voters the same as the
39 Selectboard. Lee agreed with Arianna and wondered how the two groups work together and who
40 is responsible for whom and agreed a discussion was necessary to figure it out. Arianna added that
41 the issue was whether the salaries go in the town budget or the library budget, which she believed
42 was allocated and became part of the whole budget approved by the Selectboard. She wondered if
43 the library employees became employees of the town, would the funds that pay for those
44 employees become part of the town infrastructure. There were a lot of dominos. Arianna said the
45 answer was yes to whether they should pay appropriately to keep a librarian in town, but it wasn't

1 as easy a question as that. Matt said that's why they brought it before the board because the trustees
2 recognized it was a complicated issue and needed to be solved between the two boards.

3 Peter asked if they could join the Vermont League of Cities and Towns as a separate entity and get
4 the benefit package. Julie said the town benefits weren't through VLCT but were private. Julie
5 said the only thing that ran through VLCT was their unemployment insurance and property and
6 liability. Arne noted health insurance changes yearly depending on the quotes received. Arne
7 thought the library employees would fall under the town's employee package to keep it simpler.
8 Arne didn't want to see the Selectboard involved in micromanaging the library and noted it wasn't
9 allowed and was clear in statements from their attorneys. The board of trustees had direct control
10 and if the voters weren't happy, the control was ultimately theirs. Arne viewed it as strictly
11 bringing their benefits under the umbrella of the town. Arne didn't want to be involved in the
12 governance of the library. Lee agreed but questioned where the line was, as they were holding the
13 purse strings, and wondered what the anticipated cost was. Matt said he couldn't answer that, and
14 Heather said they could answer it easily.

15 Heather thought it was lovely the library was separate from the Selectboard and had its own
16 identity and functioned as such. She suggested they form a committee to draft a document outlining
17 whose responsibility was whose. Heather wanted to protect the library and wanted to make it clear
18 who was hiring, who was managing, and who was paying for benefits, if that's what they chose to
19 do, or if they approved a higher budget and passed it to the library to manage. Heather thought
20 there was a lot to do to study the problem. There was a long history of the library being governed
21 separately from the town and Julie said the library was separated from the town in the 1800s.
22 Heather said there were times the Selectboard wasn't supportive of the library, so it was nice there
23 was a board elected by the voters to manage the library. Heather thought a committee to help
24 resolve the issue wasn't a bad idea. Arne suggested the committee could be two Selectboard
25 members to meet with the Board of Trustees to start the discussion and noted the past opinion from
26 the attorney explained a lot but didn't address employee benefits. Arne thought the library had
27 been governed separately since 1888 when it was established. Heather said they would need an
28 attorney to help map out the Memorandum of Understanding. Heather and Arianna volunteered to
29 be involved. Arne said there were a lot of topics and issues in the Memorandum of Understanding
30 but the big one it would come down to would be finances and money. Heather asked if Julie could
31 itemize the current price of healthcare. Lee also wanted to see everything provided to the
32 committee. Arne suggested both boards receive the information and Heather said one of them
33 could report back to the board. Arne told Matt the idea was good to form a committee. Matt said
34 since he became trustee, the work between the Selectboard and Trustees had made leaps and
35 bounds toward the positive and he wasn't looking to damage it any way. Arne agreed.

36 Aleda Bliss was born and raised in Andover and the library was her childhood library. Having
37 returned to the community, she thought the library was a hub and backbone of the community and
38 it was vital they support the employees of the library to the same degree they support the
39 community. She entrusted the board with that responsibility. The Board thanked her.

40 Janice Bradley has lived in Chester since 2016, and the first thing they did after leaving the
41 attorney's office for the closing on their house was get their library cards. She has lived in many
42 places, and it's always been one of the first things she's done. She has been in Chester through a
43 whole cycle of library directors and is yearning for the stability that comes with good solid work
44 benefits. As a retired state employee, she doesn't have to worry about benefits. She brings her
45 grandchildren to the library and has met a lot of parents while there who have all expressed their

1 love for the library. She hoped the work the Board was discussing would bear some good fruit.

2 Carrie Roy King, resident of Chester and the Youth Librarian at The Whiting Library, loved her
3 job and thanked them for it. She recognized they were a municipal library from 1888 when it
4 opened, and the town agreed to make it a municipal library and keep it open. She looks at her
5 position as a public service, as she doesn't receive health insurance from her job. If she didn't have
6 health insurance through her husband, she wouldn't be able to continue working there and that
7 thought breaks her heart. To be that precarious in a work situation feels uncomfortable to her when
8 she looks at parenting and equity across the board in the community and the other municipal
9 employees who work for Chester. She is paid by the Town of Chester and her tax dollars are paid
10 to the Town of Chester and she feels she is a town employee and is proud to be that and wants to
11 continue and honor the legacy of the librarians who have worked there before her. Carrie didn't
12 understand how she was different from other town employees except who her boss was. She
13 thanked the Board for putting it on their table and moving forward in a positive way.

14 Susan Goodfellow thanked them for the opportunity to speak and their management of the issue.
15 She was surprised, as a library volunteer, that the employees who work there don't have health
16 benefits or sick leave. She said it is especially underscored during the time of COVID and looks
17 like the viruses aren't going to be fading away. She said there is a stream of folks coming in and
18 out and a lot of little kids exploring the library with Carrie. She hoped they would come to a quick
19 and fair resolution of the issue and said Chester was very fortunate to have such a wonderful library
20 available to them.

21 Julie noted while the library employees don't have the benefit package, there was a lot of work
22 done by previous Selectboards and Trustee Boards that give the librarians a stipend that pays
23 towards a health insurance benefit that they can go on the open exchange and get. While it isn't
24 the town health insurance, it was a bridge that they had worked on with previous boards to get
25 them to that point. Julie said unless she can check the box that they work for her and are a town
26 employee, they can't be on the town's health insurance.

27 Lee asked who paid the stipend and Julie said it was part of the annual contribution to the library
28 and included in the budget the town pays. Julie said they had done it for a few years, and it wasn't
29 equal but there had been a lot of work over the last 5 years to get there.

30 Heather said for the 9 years she had been on the board, they had tried to support the library, but
31 this was a difficult legal situation and a unique relationship between a library and town, and she
32 was all for clarity on how to handle it, but this board hadn't ignored it for 9 years. Arne said the
33 discussion wouldn't be necessary if the country had healthcare for all and someone wasn't
34 dependent on where they were employed. Lee understood the point Arne was trying to make, but
35 said he is self-employed and doesn't have health insurance. Not that Lee wanted to deprive people,
36 but he wondered where the money was going to come from. Lee thought they should do it, but
37 they had to figure out how to fund it responsibly while meeting the needs of the town. Lee said
38 they had similar issues with housing and maybe he was out on his own but thought they should be
39 realistic about what to expect and what they could afford it. Lee said it wasn't that he didn't want
40 to provide health benefits to the library employees but thought they should be reasonable and figure
41 out a way that it would make sense to the community. Peter said a good benefit package was 48%
42 of a salary including FICA benefits, so they needed to be realistic that it would be a big number.
43 Peter said the biggest complaint was about the tax hike last year and it would be an uncomfortable
44 place said there was currently \$90,000 budgeted for the library and another \$30,000 was a hefty

1 jump. Arne agreed that finances would be a big topic and part of it was how they value their
2 employees, like the ones who mow the grass, plow the snow, and those who work in the library.
3 Arne thought they were philosophical but important discussions. Arne's point was he wished it
4 wasn't town money but a standardized federal system that worked and somehow other countries
5 can do it, but not the U.S. Lee said the money must come from somewhere.

6 Heather said they would have a committee and sit-down with the library and brainstorm. She said
7 saying it costs too much, takes all the wind out of the sails and stifles creativity. She was positive
8 about the committee and hoped the team could come up with a solution for the next 30 years. Julie
9 will coordinate two Selectboard members and the Board of Trustees from the library meeting.
10 Arne thanked everyone in attendance for coming to support the library and voice their concerns.

11 **Agenda Item 6, 2023 Short Term Rental; continued discussion re next steps**

12 At the last meeting, they passed a 6-month moratorium on any new unhosted short-term rentals
13 that haven't been advertised and aren't already in existence. Peter disclosed that he is a part owner
14 of a short-term rental and didn't feel he should recuse himself as he could relate to both the pain
15 and good of it. Arne thanked Peter. Lee clarified they were not voting on anything. Arne received
16 an email update from Preston an hour before the meeting stating 21 registrations were received, 3
17 are renting but less than 14 days per year, 3 are no longer renting, 27 total responses or 50% of the
18 54 who were sent letters. Of the 21 registrations received, 9 are hosted and 12 are unhosted or 43%
19 hosted and 57% unhosted. The first letter was mailed August 25th and the second letter on
20 September 4th. The short-term rental ordinance was emailed to the members and additional
21 information from Preston including a synopsis of what was going on with Granicus which had put
22 everything behind and part of the reason for the moratorium. Arne said they wanted to make good
23 use of the 6 months to decide what direction they should go. Going through the list of possibilities,
24 many entailed the Planning Commission, so Arne thought it would be helpful to have a joint
25 meeting with the Commission to discuss items that may be related to their end of it with respect to
26 zoning. The Selectboard can enact ordinances, but zoning regulations would go through the
27 Commission and their Chair, Hugh Quinn, was present. Arne raised it because he thought if more
28 people were involved and had input, it would help. Arianna, who joined the Selectboard in March
29 2023, said that upon reflection over the past few weeks and re-reading the ordinance put in place
30 in October of last year, felt it covered many of the components of things discussed over the past
31 few weeks. She felt the ordinance was comprehensive and good and the work that needed to be
32 done was to put it in place, enact it, figure out how they would follow through on the things in the
33 ordinance, and set themselves up to robustly work in the ordinance. She didn't know her opinion
34 about having more regulation or less regulation than what currently existed in the ordinance. She
35 did not have a preconceived notion of where the ordinance should go. She hoped all of them would
36 consider different things and offer ideas. She said they had an ordinance and were hindered by an
37 outside source that did not come through as promised. Arianna wondered if the ordinance had been
38 signed a month ago, how they would be doing and how they could stand behind the ordinance
39 strongly and firmly and move forward. She thought the document was good and worth living with.
40 What was missing was the reporting requested from Granicus and their appetite for enforcement.

41 Lee asked Preston if there were more than 54 identified short-term rentals. Preston said they sent
42 out 54 letters, although he thought it was closer to 60. Preston said they would receive another
43 report from Granicus by the end of the month and would pursue it more vigorously. Lee said it
44 was less than what they had thought, and Preston agreed. Preston added that the original 80
45 included places such as The Fullerton and Inn Victoria who were also advertising on the host

1 platforms, so it wasn't as many as first thought. Lee said of the 54 letters sent, they received 27
2 and of the 27, there were 3 renting but less than 14 days per year, so they fell out of the ordinance.
3 And there were 3 no longer renting who had been so they were down to 21. There were 57%
4 unhosted and 43% hosted so it was close to an even split and Lee asked if that was a surprise and
5 Preston said it was. Preston was expecting the hosted to be more like 20% and not 43%. Preston
6 said it was good news and it seemed like there were a fair number of Chester residents that were
7 supplementing their livelihoods which they supported. Lee said as part of the ordinance, there were
8 fees and penalties for those who didn't comply with the registration. The deadline allowed 30 days
9 for registration. Preston said the second letter would be firmer and their feeling was they would
10 give them another 30 days before enforcing.

11 Arne realized there was still information they didn't have, and things were changing and there
12 weren't as many as they thought but his question wasn't on how many there were but more to the
13 point of regulation. Arne wondered if the reason no regulation was considered was because there
14 weren't as many. Arne thinks about it as a business and when inns and hotels are held to a higher
15 standard for safety, he wondered why they didn't do the same for short-term rentals which were
16 basically the same thing. Arianna said the ordinance respects the fact that it is a business and
17 requirements must be met for fire and safety and they were required to do more than she does as a
18 homeowner. Arne saw that but part of it for him was they could do it wherever they wanted to.
19 Arianna asked for clarification. Arne thought the location could make a big difference in what type
20 of business would be allowed in a neighborhood and didn't understand why this business could be
21 allowed all over town. Arianna heard Arne say the zoning board wouldn't approve a Holiday Inn
22 in a certain part of town so why allow a short-term rental and asked Arne if that was correct. Arne
23 agreed. Peter didn't think they would have clean data by November 1st. Peter suggested they wait
24 until the first of the year and have a committee and good information because they would know
25 what was going on in the town. They were hypothetically throwing darts out. Peter doesn't make
26 money from it and has a house he was saddled with but understood people don't want things next
27 to them. Peter had proposed for zoning that short-term rentals couldn't be abutted and thought
28 there was more to it than setting the number of days and only allowing in certain districts because
29 they should have spacing. Peter said Granicus had said they could do enforcement and if so, it
30 would start paying. Arianna said the Vermont STR Alliance website lists by town the current
31 ordinance or regulation and there were probably 25 towns and 18 may say ordinance was under
32 consideration at Planning or Selectboard or they were developing regulation. So other towns are
33 exploring it. Arianna thought the next 6 months may generate lots of good information as other
34 towns were trying to figure it out and where to go from there. She thought if they used the time
35 that they had to gather the data, they should be ready for enforcement when the pause was lifted.
36 Lee said they were tasked as a board to make sure their citizens were happy, and they wouldn't
37 make everyone happy, but he didn't think it was their job to make some people happy while they
38 make others furious. Lee said their job was to get out of the way and let people do what they want
39 while respecting their neighbors. Lee was all for hosted short-term rentals and a great way for
40 people to stay in their homes and afford them in an economy that's terrible. Lee had a problem
41 with people who have unhosted short-term rentals because they were reaping the benefits of a
42 small town like Chester and not having a presence or relationship with people which made it
43 difficult. Lee thought another 30 or 60 days to collect data would be useful and then they could
44 revisit it and understand where they are. Arne saw a hosted as a different scenario from an unhosted
45 which was a business and didn't see how more data would change his opinion. Arne wasn't for
46 banning them forever but thought they should be held to a higher standard. Lee wondered if they

1 could reach out to the police to learn how many complaints they had received about short-term
2 rentals over the last year. Lee thought it would help them to understand if it was a big problem and
3 if it was concentrated in one area. Arne stated the ordinance dealt with some of it already, including
4 contact information for the short-term rental so someone could be called if there was an issue so
5 the neighbor didn't have to take the step. Lee agreed.

6 Heather asked if Julie was current on the lawsuits. Julie thought Burlington was in the middle of
7 one or two and Morristown, but she wasn't sure. Preston had heard both Burlington and New York
8 City were in lawsuits because they would only allow hosted rentals. Heather thought they should
9 keep an eye on it and others agreed.

10 Heather liked going back to the list because there were a lot of things they could do with unhosted,
11 such as not permitting it unless you owned the property for a certain period. She thought there
12 were things that could be done to discourage unhosted rentals. The registration listing contact
13 information was important to her. Heather suggested the Health Officer inspect it, if that was legal.
14 Arne noted there were 8 suggestions which included: basic registration, owner limit, day limit,
15 residence requirement, unit limit, zoning limit, STR waiting period, fees and taxes, and financial
16 incentives. Heather thought if they worked with some of the items, it may have the same effect as
17 having fewer. She had heard both 4% and 8% and didn't know what a healthy number was and
18 wondered if it was zero. Heather wasn't saying they should sell homes to industry to rent them out
19 but wondered if a large portion of the housing stock was second homeowners, were there
20 advantages if controlled well, to the town to renting them out. Heather thought the trend may be
21 dying down. Her kids have had bad experiences and aren't staying in short-term rentals anymore.
22 Heather was concerned about the liability for saying no more short-term rentals. Arne didn't see
23 that as the direction of the board to totally ban them. Arne just wanted people involved in what
24 goes on with their neighborhood. Heather thought zoning regulations only allowing a certain
25 number in certain parts of town rather than abutting property ones. Heather thought a neighborhood
26 where there were 60% or 80% short-term rentals would not be the same as one that had 10% or
27 15%. Arne wasn't sure a joint meeting with the Planning Commission was necessary at this time
28 and thought the consensus of the board was to continue to gather data. Arianna thought they should
29 pay attention to what other towns were doing, and at the state level, and continue to have
30 conversations. Heather wasn't opposed to a joint meeting with the Planning Commission. Peter
31 said the Commission was on a roll and were going to complete the zoning of the town and he didn't
32 think their cycle should be interrupted. Peter thought the end of the year would be a better time
33 and soon the Selectboard would be getting into the budget. Arne said they could handle more than
34 one topic and thought the Planning Commission should make the decision about whether they
35 could handle the additional work. Peter asked Hugh if he wanted to speak to that. Hugh said the
36 Commission was busy with the bylaws, but they also had down time when they were going to a
37 hearing, so he thought if it was important to have a joint meeting, they could fit it in. Hugh
38 suggested a working session to go through the list that had been compiled and discuss what other
39 towns in Vermont were doing. Aside from the fact they had that information in their packets and
40 were able to read it, there had never been discussion about the merit of each and the level of effort
41 to implement and enforce. Hugh thought for the purpose of educating everyone about the options
42 would help the Selectboard decide which they wanted to consider. Hugh offered to work with the
43 Selectboard if they wanted to schedule something. Arne asked the board if they were interested in
44 having a working meeting as Hugh had suggested. Peter said if Preston thought in 60 days they
45 would have better data, to have it then. Lee didn't want to push it out for 60 days and thought they
46 should meet with the Planning Commission in at least 30 days and go over their options. Lee

1 recommended that in 30 days they have the working meeting to discuss their options. Heather
2 agreed with Lee. And if Preston had additional data, they could also discuss that. Arianna thought
3 if they gathered in 30 days, they could review the recommendations even if they didn't have the
4 data. She saw value in meeting in 30 days. Cathy Hasbrouck said people on North Street are why
5 this issue was raised. Cathy said there were 1,700 kitchens in Chester and was the best way they
6 could count how many dwellings there are. She said if they had 70 short-term rentals, it was 2%
7 of the whole, but on North Street, it was closer to 50% and that's what was driving the worry of
8 the citizens. She thought if they could solve that problem, the rest would fall into place. Arne said
9 there were other neighborhoods having issues with short-term rentals. Arne thought the idea had
10 made sense and they could have more data which would help them narrow things down and give
11 them a better understanding of the options if they choose to use them and that they may stay with
12 their ordinance.

13 Julie offered to coordinate a meeting between the Planning Commission and Selectboard 30 days
14 out. The members agreed.

15 **Agenda Item 7, New Business/Next Agenda**

- 16 • Traffic ordinance changes
- 17 • Oversized loads
- 18 • Parking and fines
- 19 • False alarm policy finalized.
- 20 • October 15th will be quarterly financials and Julie hoped to have the first drafted budget.

21 Julie said they will hold a panel for the hiring of the new lieutenant. The panel would include Julie,
22 Tom, and two members of the Citizen Advisory Committee and a Selectboard member. Peter
23 volunteered. Lee said he would love to be on the committee but didn't have the time.

24 Julie said there had been a generous offer from a resident of Chester who, in memory of his wife
25 and brother, wanted to donate a carport at the emergency services building so cruisers could park
26 under cover and wouldn't need to idle. It would not be a garage. He met with Tom a couple months
27 ago and was serious about the idea. It would be an open wood structure that would blend with the
28 building. He is having drawings done. Julie would provide the board with the drawings when
29 received. Arne noted that it was a very generous offer.

30 Heather asked about a donation policy. Julie suggested that they review policies because some
31 haven't been looked at for a long time, although they were working and being followed. Heather
32 understood and said her policy review is like Arne's passion for healthcare.

33 **Agenda Item 8, Economic Development Funds; Request for Funds REDD**

34 It would be an open session. It was a request for the former Masonic Temple in the amount of
35 \$50,000 from the Economic Development Fund. Julie said Evan Chadwick was the new owner of
36 the Masonic Temple and has plans to renovate the building and have office space and apartment
37 spaces. He has applied for the funds and per policy, it was required to go before the Regional
38 Development Board for review and recommendation. The packet included Bob's recommendation
39 and discussed the parameters.

40 Lee asked if anything was out of line with their philosophy of lending money. Julie said it was in

1 line, but they would stay interest for two years which, although it was not unusual for economic
2 development funds, the town had never done that. Bob had not raised concerns. Julie said in the
3 current economic times, towns are doing a lot of creative things to get the revolving money out
4 there. It included a proposal for a couple of apartments which Chester needs. Arne noted the term
5 was 10 years as opposed to 5. Julie said Bob was not concerned about financial stability. Mr.
6 Chadwick said they closed on the Temple building two weeks ago and were working on the
7 downstairs currently. Their first goal is to put the law office in, which is a branch of his law office.
8 They currently have three branches in Vermont in Brattleboro, Pittsford, and Randolph, and wanted
9 to add a branch in Chester. That would be their first goal, an attorney, and an assistant and if
10 business was good, to have three full-time employees stationed at the lodge. After that, they will
11 focus on the upstairs apartments which he noted was a gorgeous high ceiling space and they were
12 going to try to preserve historically a lot of the character and have applied for tax credits through
13 the state. They have been working with the State of Vermont through their housing program for
14 some grant money to make the apartments available to lower income individuals. After the office,
15 they will work upstairs, and lastly put a two-bedroom downstairs next to or behind the office.
16 Upstairs will be a three-bedroom apartment, downstairs a two-bedroom, and then the office, which
17 they expect to be two rooms: the beautiful front room with the nice windows and a back with a
18 handicapped accessible bathroom. They have been doing demolition and have engaged an architect
19 to draw up plans working with fire and safety. They have already gotten the permit through zoning
20 to do the work. Their goal is to have the office open by January 2024 and have the project
21 completed and have tenants by the end of 2024. Arne asked if the parking had been resolved. Mr.
22 Chadwick said there was discussion about that at Zoning. They have space for two spots in their
23 lot behind the building but also are working with the other downtown merchants to contribute to
24 the community parking behind the building. It would be one vehicle per residential unit and if
25 there were any guests or additional tenants, they would use town parking down the street and that
26 was accepted by zoning. They would have access to the front like other merchants in the downtown
27 district. Arne asked if they had ever done anything similar anywhere else. Mr. Chadwick said they
28 had done it at all their offices, and this was the fourth time. The reason he was asking for special
29 consideration was as beautiful as the lodge is, it was dated. The electrical was a major concern and
30 they would need to invest a significant amount to get it up to code. There were issues with the
31 windows, siding, and painting which involved lead issues and was costly. The cost would be
32 around \$190,000. The building had been tax-exempt for many years and vacant. He was
33 encouraged by the Fall Festival to see the energy and vigor the town had. He grew up in Rochester
34 in Windsor County. His business is a family run operation. They live in Vermont, he grew up in
35 Brattleboro, and he coaches basketball at Bellows Falls and they are committed to the community.
36 They love Vermont and aren't going anywhere. He saw it as something they could both benefit
37 from. Heather said it was exciting to see the building used and taken care of. Arne agreed and
38 asked if they would keep the building architecturally the way it is as much as possible. Mr.
39 Chadwick said they are focusing on efficiency measures with heat pumps and are going to try to
40 limit their dependence on the boiler system. The infrastructure is very old in the building and are
41 willing to focus on efficiency up front, so their tenants are comfortable and provided for. He has
42 heard a lot of heated debate about the short-term rentals and said you couldn't find an apartment
43 in Brattleboro for less than \$2,000. It is everywhere and they have focused on affordable rentals.
44 They bought and remodeled a place in Bellows Falls and the rent is \$900 for a three-bedroom.
45 They are proud to do that. The tenants they have are ex-military and don't make a lot of money.
46 They aren't there to take advantage but to create a mutually beneficial relationship and bring new

1 people into town. Arne thanked him and said it sounded like a fantastic project and a great addition
2 to the town and Green. Bob Flint had vetted everything. Arne asked where the town would be if
3 the project went south. Mr. Chadwick said they have a loan through 802 Credit Union for 80% of
4 the purchase price, or a \$225,000 mortgage. The property was just assessed as is at \$315,000 so it
5 already had equity. There are no other loans so Chester would be second in line with substantial
6 capital. Arne liked the fact they had done it in other towns, and it meant a lot.

7 Heather moved to approve the redevelopment of the former Masonic Temple and the loan for
8 \$50,000 to REDD Holdings, LLC and Lee seconded the motion. Lee thanked him for doing it. The
9 motion carried unanimously.

10 Heather moved to go into executive session for the discussion of a union grievance and Arianna
11 seconded it. The motion passed unanimously.

12 (Entered executive session at 8:07 p.m.)

13 Heather moved and Lee seconded a motion to exit the executive session. A vote was taken, and
14 the motion carried.

15 (Exited executive session ended at 8:17 p.m.)

16 A motion was made by Lee to ratify the settlement as agreed in executive session and seconded
17 by Heather. A vote was taken, and the motion carried.

18 **Agenda Item 9, Adjourn**

19 Heather moved to adjourn, and Peter seconded the motion. A vote was taken, and the motion
20 passed unanimously, and the meeting was adjourned at 8:18 p.m.