

1 **TOWN OF CHESTER**
2 **SELECTBOARD MEETING**
3 **September 6, 2023, Minutes**

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

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

8 **Visitors Present:** Cathy Hasbrouck, Sean Cunningham, Nick Boke, Kathy Giurtino, Lori Quinn,
9 Hugh Quinn, Bill Lindsay, Mike LeClair, Frank Kelley, Robert Brown, Daun Brown, Richard
10 Pease Grant, Joe Karl, Ian Montgomery, and Polly Montgomery at Town Hall; and Russell Fearing,
11 Joy Slaughter, Ed Grossman, Joan Grossman, Jerene Slivinsky, Joel Feinberg, and Evan Parks via
12 Zoom.

13
14 **Call to Order**

15
16 Chair Arne Jonynas called the meeting to order at 5:45 p.m.

17
18 **Agenda Item 1, Executive Session Grievance Hearing**

19
20 Lee moved and Arianna seconded a motion to enter executive session at 5:45 p.m., a vote was
21 taken, and the motion carried.

22
23 (Executive Session)

24
25 Lee moved and Arianna seconded a motion to exit executive session at 7:00 p.m., a vote was taken,
26 and the motion carried.

27
28 (Arne reconvened the meeting at 7:05 p.m.)

29
30 **Agenda Item 2, Additions or Deletions to the Agenda**

31 None.

32
33 **Agenda Item 3, Approve Minutes from the August 2, 2023 Selectboard Meeting**

34
35 Lee moved and Arianna seconded a motion to approve the August 2, 2023, minutes. Lee said it
36 was a long set of meeting minutes and appreciated the attention to detail in drafting them. The
37 minutes were approved as written.

38
39 **Agenda Item 4, Citizens Comments/Answers from the Previous Meeting**

40
41 There were no comments.

42 **Agenda Item 5, Old Business**

43
44 Report given by the Town Manager:

1 Citizens Advisory Committee

2 There were some members present and it is gathering momentum. They will present the new false
3 alarm policy at the next Selectboard meeting. They are establishing a Neighborhood Watch
4 program, creating a community survey, and working with the Police Department on the creation
5 of a search team/emergency response team for future town natural disaster events. They will also
6 be part of the interview process for the new lieutenant being hired. Be on t look out for their new
7 Facebook page and a community input form. In October, at the second meeting, the flood in review
8 will be on the agenda, and they will participate in the discussion and things department heads are
9 considering.

10
11 Grants

12 They received a grant for the scoping study for extending the sidewalk to the high school. They
13 were also awarded the highway safety grant for line striping through the village.

14
15 Flood Recovery

16 Recovery is going well. The town is at about 80%. They will consider some long-term projects for
17 the future. Julie's recovery scoping meeting with FEMA will take place tomorrow. From that point,
18 they have 60 days to identify any damages they will seek recovery from. They are confident they
19 have identified everything but will work with the departments to make sure. The biggest issue is
20 debris in the river. There are 6 locations throughout town where debris is extensive. There are a
21 couple locations where the gravel berm is equal to the height of the road. They have permits to
22 remove the debris but are lacking funding. There are conversations throughout the state and have
23 been in contact with the governor's office. The biggest piece is getting the rivers opened back up.
24 Lee asked what the debris included. Julie said there were some locations in West Chester, Andover
25 Road, and Kingsbury Road where there is gravel but also tree debris and some spots that the tree
26 debris is massive and has blocked the river which has jumped and created a new course headed for
27 Fenton Road and Route 11. Lee asked if they could reclaim the gravel and Julie said they could.
28 After Irene, they took back as much gravel as they could, and she wanted that to happen this time.
29 They will have resiliency projects that they will apply for grant funding. The resiliency work
30 completed after Irene held up for this flooding and most of that was paid for by grants. Julie will
31 provide updates at each meeting about where things stand.

32
33 Joe Karl of Flamstead Road asked if they could reclaim some of the wood to heat houses and he
34 would volunteer time to cut wood. Julie would check and said it was a good suggestion. Arne
35 mentioned the town also burned wood, but Julie pointed out there was plenty of debris. Joe
36 suggested even if they didn't volunteer to cut it up, and the wood was cut in 8-foot lengths to fit in
37 a pickup and put aside, people could come get it. Julie would check with Kirby on the condition
38 of the wood.

39
40 Julian Quarry

41 The hearing is scheduled for Monday night, September 11th, at 6:00 p.m. and the site visit is
42 September 25th at 4:30 p.m., which will be confirmed at the September 11th hearing. Julie is trying
43 to secure the bus for the site visit.

44
45 Thompson Road Project

46 An environmental assessment was necessary, and Julie said the required public hearing is

1 September 28th at a time to be decided, and as many Selectboard members as can attend would be
2 good. Julie will provide history to the new board members about the project. The engineer will be
3 running the hearing somewhat and it will be for the community to express any concerns, especially
4 environmental, about the project.

5 6 Fall Festival

7 Fall Festival is next weekend on both Saturday and Sunday. The Police Department will be sitting
8 with the ambulance and will sell special patches for breast cancer awareness and have joined the
9 National Police Campaign. They will donate money to a local breast cancer research facility or
10 hospital. They will be sold for \$10 apiece.

11 12 Solar Field

13 Lee and Julie finally heard from Greenbacker, and their appraisal came in at \$1.2 million which
14 was half the original \$2.4 million they were asking. Chester made round one on Senator Sanders'
15 Congressional Appropriation Program for the funds to purchase the solar panels. Julie will reach
16 out to Senator Sanders' office to inquire about the timing. Julie assumed the board wanted her and
17 Lee to move forward and the board agreed. Arne said it was a return on investment and Julie would
18 reach out to the financial contact Arne had given as this was above anything she had done. Arne
19 thought the contact would be a wealth of information.

20 21 **Agenda Item 6, Citizen Advisory Committee Interview & Appointment**

22
23 Sam Bailey, who was a big help starting the committee and working on it, is moving out of town,
24 which creates an opening. They put out a request and received one reply from Mike LeClair who
25 was present. Mike wanted to pay the town back by serving. He liked the way the police department
26 was currently operating and had heard good things. He had 27 years with the State Police and 21
27 years with the local school system. He coached high school softball locally. He also played Santa
28 Claus and did the Cub Scout auction. Mike was happy to serve on the board and do whatever he
29 could. Arne pointed out that Mike was also a past Selectboard member and Mike agreed he had
30 been one for 15 years. Julie remembered that when she started 19 years ago, Mike had pleaded for
31 community policing. Mike added that it was his favorite subject. The members thanked him.

32
33 Arianna moved and Lee seconded a motion to appoint Mike LeClair to the Committee. The term
34 he was appointed to complete expires in March of 2024. Arne thought Mike would be a great
35 addition and appreciated him coming forward. A vote was taken, and the motion passed
36 unanimously.

37 38 **Agenda Item 7, Housing Commission Interviews – Executive Session if Necessary**

39
40 Arne said they had formed the housing commission in July and had decided to have between 5 and
41 9 members. There were 5 people who had come forward. The mission of the commission is to
42 create a strong, sustainable, inclusive community and quality affordable housing for all. They had
43 the option to conduct interviews in executive session but Arne noted they have found it's better to
44 have them in open session.

45
46 The first candidate, Nancy Fennell, was not present.

1 Joel Feinberg is not a citizen of Chester and lives outside of Boston but has had a house in Chester
2 since 1986. They have always felt it's more than a second home and have been connected to it for
3 3 decades and have a real interest in seeing the town thrive. Anyone who talks about Vermont
4 always has a favorable impression of Chester. The influx of COVID people seeking property has
5 contributed to the cost of real estate skyrocketing. If there is anything he could do to help, he would
6 be interested. Joel was a practicing real estate attorney for several years and the majority was in
7 affordable housing and community development. In that capacity, he represented the
8 Massachusetts state agency that developed affordable housing, developers, community
9 organizations that were developing housing, banks, and other quasi-public funding sources. After
10 he got out of the law business, he worked for community development organizations and was their
11 director of real estate development and developed three projects. He thought he had a lot of
12 background and skills and if the town could use them, he would be glad to offer them. Arne thought
13 his qualifications were excellent. Arianna pointed out that when they first started discussing the
14 commission, they said they should have young people, people in rural areas and town, but they
15 never said they should include a second homeowner and listening to Joel, it was important to
16 recognize how much of their grand list and what they do includes people like him who don't live
17 in Chester full-time. Peter asked him how often he was in town. Joel said they are up every
18 weekend and if there was a reason to be there mid-week, they could. They are 2 ½ hours away and
19 sometimes avoid mud season. Other than that, they are here a lot. Lee noted the difference for
20 affordable as a second homeowner versus someone who lives in the area and wondered what
21 philosophy he would bring to solve the issues to make affordable housing affordable for people
22 who live and work in Chester. Joel said people who can afford second homes can take care of
23 themselves. They have a house on the Williams River and have had a couple of discouraging
24 months and started looking around for another house in town. When they bought their house, it
25 cost around \$100,000 and most of what is in Chester now is more than \$600,000, so they will
26 probably stay on the Williams River. You want housing that doesn't take up more than 30% of
27 people's income. Joel said the starting point was to find out what the average income of people
28 looking for housing was and what was available in that starting range in both rental and mortgage
29 payments. He suspected there weren't many people who could afford a \$600,000 house who live
30 in town. The mission of the commission would be to figure out what to do to make it affordable.

31
32 Joe Karl grew up in Connecticut. He lived in Proctorsville from 1997 to 2003 and built a house on
33 Flamstead and raised 3 kids in town. He sells real estate and has done it for 25 years. He sees
34 firsthand the locals complain, until they sell their house to someone who is going to give them the
35 most money, which is the US. economy. There are two gals in his office who have been trying to
36 buy a house for at least 3 years. He asked the board to imagine working in an office where you see
37 a dream house and then the phone rings and someone buys the house right out from under you. Joe
38 questioned a second homeowner being on the commission and pointed out that they need someone
39 to mow their lawn, plow their driveway, wait on them when they're up for the weekend eating in
40 a restaurant, and if they don't have local people to do those jobs, they won't want to come to
41 Chester. They have a big task to figure out a way to keep young families, as many Vermonters are
42 aging out, and they need to find a way to accomplish that. Joe wanted to add his knowledge of
43 selling for 25 years to the commission and think outside the box and said he's well versed in
44 zoning. The members thanked him. There were no questions.

45
46 The third candidate, Nathaniel Vilandre, was not present.

1 William Lindsay served on the Planning Board, and thought it interesting that in many cases,
2 regulations included investment in housing for certain restrictions in the regulations. The new
3 planning board, in addition to a realization by the state, has concluded that they can't continue
4 under old regulations that prohibit young people from coming to smaller rural areas. Bill said
5 medium income housing is missing in Chester. As a follow-up to Joe's previous comments, Bill
6 would find it hard to go to work when homes they wanted to buy were being sold out from under
7 them. When Bill was on the Planning Board, he was concerned about the small growth in the
8 Grand List and went to the Listers Office to find the value of senior housing. He said they also
9 have housing with multiple rental units and both that housing and senior housing added to the
10 Grant List. Bill pointed out that many citizens who have lived in Chester for several years wanted
11 to remain but needed senior housing and some would like a garage. Bill said there are communities
12 that have built senior housing. He thought they should consider a diverse housing supply. Several
13 years ago, he stopped at a real estate office to inquire about what properties were for sale and he
14 was amazed at the price of a rental. Bill thought due to the salaries offered and the economy, it
15 made it difficult for younger people to buy a starter house. Bill said there had been discussion
16 about available land and it would be good for the commission to conduct an inventory of places
17 that may be suitable for housing. Bill thought there may be developing land close to water and
18 sewer and may qualify for possible grants. He thought the water and sewer lines could be extended
19 if there was adjacent land suitable for housing. He did not want to rule out senior housing as there
20 was a lot of gray hair in Vermont. Arne and Lee thanked him. There were no questions. Arne
21 appreciated Bill throwing his hat in and thought he would be a good addition.

22
23 Peter wanted to speak for Nancy Pennell and thought she should be on the commission. Peter said
24 they had a lawyer, a real estate agent, and Bill, who was a good money person. Peter didn't think
25 they could find anyone more compassionate than Nancy. Julie agreed and said she speaks with
26 Nancy weekly about housing. Peter had known Nancy for 60 years and could vouch for her. Peter
27 said he didn't know why she wasn't there. Julie said if Nancy wasn't there, there was a good
28 reason. Arianna also thought because Nancy was an Airbnb host, she would be a good choice, as
29 that was a critical component of the housing issue.

30
31 Julie said Nathaniel had just emailed her and withdrawn his application.

32
33 Arne said it would be a good diverse group and the Commission would also include the Planning
34 Commission Chair, Hugh Quinn, and the Regional Planning Director, Jason Rasmussen, as well
35 as Julie and Preston, who would be ad hoc non-voting members. Julie is trying to find someone
36 who works in the non-profit housing department. Peter wanted to be an ad hoc member. Julie said
37 they were public meetings and would have to follow open meeting laws. The Selectboard members
38 would need to decide if they wanted Peter on as an ad hoc member.

39
40 Lori Quinn thought the candidates were wonderful and knew a lot of people who were impacted
41 by housing and a lot of them were younger. She was disappointed they had not come forward and
42 hoped the committee would encourage input from people directly impacted. She liked Bill's idea
43 that there could be seniors that, if they were in a good senior housing environment, would open
44 housing for younger families.

45
46 Daun Brown asked if there was someone with economic and business development on the

1 commission, as they go hand in hand. Arne pointed out that she had heard the candidates and they
2 had someone for Regional Planning. Daun wondered if they had a separate business development
3 committee. Arne said they didn't but someone with that expertise would be more than welcome
4 for the commission. Julie said they had the Regional Development, the Planning Commission, and
5 Preston, who was the town planner, who had economic development experience. She said the
6 young people all left and it was a big issue finding development to support the housing. She didn't
7 want to see all low-income housing and they needed the jobs to support them. Arne agreed and
8 said they are suffering, as the rest of the state is, with youth leaving but that some filter back. Arne
9 thought this year's kindergarten had one more than the prior year, so it was encouraging. He agreed
10 that the cost of housing makes it difficult for young people to stick around. Daun said no matter
11 how inexpensive the housing is, they won't get people to come if there are no jobs. Lee said it is a
12 totally different conversation as to why young people are leaving and how to get them to stay.

13 14 **Agenda Item 8, Housing Commission Appointments**

15
16 Arne said they could appoint four members tonight, if they desired, from the interviews. Julie said
17 they needed to formally appoint the Planning Commission Chair, so there would be 6. Lee noted
18 Peter wanted to be on the committee either as voting or ad hoc and wondered if a discussion was
19 necessary. Peter said he didn't need to be a voting member. Arianna said if Peter was an ad hoc
20 member and the Selectboard member was represented, that wouldn't be a bad thing. Lee agreed
21 Peter would be a good addition and it would just be whether he was voting or non-voting. Non-
22 voting was Lee's preference, if Peter was fine with it, because it eliminated conflict-of-interest.
23 Peter said there was a conflict-of-interest policy in place that he would follow, and he had years of
24 experience as a consultant and could partake in the information that would make good decisions.
25 Arne also would be looking as a Selectboard member and not as a voting member and thought
26 attending the meetings and bringing back information would be more than sufficient. He asked if
27 there was an advantage of being ad hoc to just attending. Arianna said she has all intentions of
28 attending Planning Commission meetings but if she was an ad hoc member, she would do better
29 attending so it was incentive. Lee agreed having a Selectboard member as an ad hoc member would
30 be preferential. Arianna wasn't sure they had a consensus because Heather was absent, and Peter
31 would abstain. Peter suggested they table it and appoint the people they had. Arianna agreed. Julie
32 said Peter could still attend the meetings.

33
34 Arianna moved and Lee seconded to appoint the four citizens who applied, as well as Hugh Quinn,
35 and Jason Rasmussen to the Committee. Julie would have 2 three-year terms, 2 two-year terms,
36 and 2 one-year terms. Lee asked if the terms would always be that length. Julie said it was up to
37 the board, but she would recommend they become three-year terms as they reappoint, but they
38 must be staggered to begin with. Arne said they could start out with 2 threes, 2 twos, and two one-
39 year terms and then reappointments would be three years. Peter questioned if it should be Hugh
40 Quinn or the Planning Commission Chair. Julie suggested a Planning Commission Representative
41 and a representative from the Regional Planning Commission. Arne asked if it would be the same
42 for Preston and Julie and it would be Zoning Administrator and Town Manager. Preston suggested
43 ex officio. Lee pointed out that ex officio could still vote and Julie said they would be non-voting.
44 Hugh Quinn suggested a Planning Commission member instead of the Chair.

45
46 Lee suggested Nancy Fennell and Joel Fienberg, as 3-year terms; Joe Karl and Bill Lindsay as 2-

1 year terms; and the Regional Commission and Planning Commission members at 1-year terms.
2 Peter seconded the motion. Arne noted they still would have one open. Sue reminded the members
3 there was still an earlier motion on the floor. Arianna retracted her earlier motion and Lee retracted
4 his second. Russell Fearing wanted to make sure they didn't lose the point in having a younger
5 member on the commission. Arne agreed and said if a person came forward who met the criteria,
6 they would welcome them. Julie said the document allows up to 9 appointments and they have 6,
7 currently, so there was room. A vote was taken on Lee's motion and the motion carried. Arne
8 thanked everyone who came forward to be on the commission. Julie would contact them to set up
9 a first meeting.

10
11 (8:01 p.m. - 8:02 p.m. short recess)
12

13 **Agenda Item 9, Short Term Rental**

14
15 Arne said it was a topic that had been discussed for several meetings. Granicus, who helped gather
16 information, was a little behind. Chester had only just begun receiving information that was
17 supposed to be received by April. Preston Bristow, Zoning Administrator, was present with a
18 recommendation from him and Julie regarding short-term rentals and a possible solution to give
19 them breathing room and time by putting a moratorium on short-term rentals in town. They would
20 have liked to have been a little more ahead by September but due to the delays, housing is still
21 changing hands and there are more Airbnbs. They mostly wanted to address unhosted ones.

22
23 Preston said since their last report to the Selectboard at the start of August, they had a meeting on
24 August 4th that was attended by Arne, Peter, and Julie, with the project manager from Granicus
25 who did her best to be bright and upbeat but couldn't provide a date when they would have an
26 online registration program ready. She hoped it would be in November. They wanted to avoid
27 town staff having to do it, but it was unavoidable. Granicus provided URL sites for all the known
28 short-term rentals in Chester. The town mailed out 54 letters on August 25th and Preston thought
29 there was probably a half dozen that hadn't been mailed because they weren't sure they were
30 active. Preston informed the billing department at Granicus they would make no further payments
31 and Granicus replied that they would forward it to their customer relations. Julie added that Preston
32 and Cathy are keeping track of their time because it will be deducted from any final bill paid to
33 Granicus. Preston said he was involved in the rollout of the short-term rental program in Killington
34 and as soon as people received a letter, they called him and questioned it. Preston had not seen that
35 happen here. So far, they received calls asking how to complete the application; two registration
36 applications; two who said they aren't listing anymore which he asked them to remove the ad; one
37 that said it was the wrong house and was the neighbor; one said they were the new owner, and it
38 was the previous owner's ad; and one who said they rent it out less than 14 days a year which he
39 told them they didn't need to register but would remain in the system. Preston said it would take
40 more time to roll out.

41
42 Cathy presented a map of the Stone Village with pushpins showing the known short-term rentals.
43 Cathy said there were a couple of buildings in Stone Village that were anticipated to be listed for
44 sale soon. Cathy and Preston saw that the registration process could take a while because they
45 would be appointing a project leader in November, and she didn't know how long that would take.
46 Russell Fearing asked Cathy to show the map to those on Zoom, which she did. From the August

1 4th meeting with Granicus, Arne had the impression that things would begin happening in
2 September, but they weren't even close. Cathy's understanding was a project leader would be
3 appointed in November. Preston thought there was a while without a project manager and now
4 they had one, a woman named Alex, who had been doing something, but the problem is part of the
5 product package was an online registration which won't happen until at least November, so now
6 the town is sending out paper applications. Preston said the Stone Village could easily become a
7 hotel center so he had suggested a 6-month moratorium for any registrations in the Stone Village
8 so they could get their facts and some breathing room. Some people had suggested it for the entire
9 town. Preston said the legal sense was the moratorium for 6 months wasn't that much of a hardship
10 and if it was longer, they would need to go through a formal process. Arne was worried it would
11 keep happening and his main concern was if they did nothing, the problem wouldn't go away.
12 Arne suggested a 6-month moratorium on the entire town to give them some breathing room.
13 Arianna said she would support a 6-month moratorium if she knew when the start of it was. She
14 thought the 6 months would allow them to gather information, including from around the country,
15 and figure out what to do. She knew there were lawsuits in Burlington and around the country and
16 they needed to pay attention and learn from them. Peter said they didn't know where the line in
17 the sand was, but they could easily make the line by saying any property transactions for the next
18 6 months couldn't be short-term rentals because they haven't established who the short-term
19 rentals are. Peter said the memo included properties that could be sold and that would allow them
20 to draw a line. In 6 months, they would know who was registered in town. Preston said as of the
21 date of the resolution, if it wasn't a short-term rental, they couldn't put it online. Arne said it was
22 just a short-term stop gap to slow things down to see what was happening. Lee asked Preston if
23 Granicus provided 70 short-term rentals and they sent letters to 54, why didn't he send them to the
24 others. Cathy said 5 or so were already permitted hotels and bed and breakfasts. For about 6 or 7
25 of them mentioned, when she looked at the URL to see their ad, the ad was gone. 3 or 4 of them
26 were campsites. 2 had buildings associated with them and by the state's definition, could be a
27 short-term rental but had no power or running water. Lee asked if there were a couple more that
28 they decided not to send because he thought all 54 weren't sent but Cathy clarified they were. Lee
29 asked if after 6 months and they did nothing if it was business as usual. Cathy pointed out that the
30 6-month period they were looking to eliminate was the busiest time for the area and was ski season
31 and may make more noise. Lee asked if the short-term rentals in Stone Village that already existed
32 would be able to operate if the moratorium was enacted and Cathy said they would. If someone
33 bought one of the buildings, they wouldn't be able to advertise.

34
35 Joe Karl urged them not to do that because they would make national news and not be healthy. He
36 is a proponent for fire regulations and safety and why he applied to be on the Housing Commission.
37 He asked if Granicus cross-referenced who had fire and safety certificates. Joe said he could
38 guarantee that only a third of the pins had one, which was a big issue. He would rather see them
39 go after that than limit it for those who buy a house in Chester, from renting it for 6 months because
40 the board doesn't know what it's doing. Joe thought they should allow all the work to get done and
41 lay the groundwork to establish regulations for short-term rentals, but it would be dangerous and
42 make way too much noise to tell them they couldn't rent it out. Part of it was educating the public
43 because there should be a rental registry for fire safety reasons. He said families are staying in
44 homes with no fire or carbon monoxide detectors which is a crime. Joe said there are people staying
45 in homes with septic permits that are only for 6 people yet they're advertising to sleep 15 and are
46 jeopardizing their neighbor's well by overburdening the septic system. Joe said there are fire and

1 safety and septic issues, and zoning violations. Joe saw a lot of things they could initiate but was
2 concerned about having a moratorium. Arne said those were the exact reasons they should have a
3 moratorium. Arne thought if they were really concerned about these people, they should stop it,
4 slow it down, and take a breather. If 6 months would stop someone from buying a house, it was a
5 condition of zoning sometimes.

6
7 Hugh Quinn said his comments didn't represent the views of the Planning Commission. The word
8 moratorium sets people off and the reality is, as Peter stated, when a house is sold, there's a waiting
9 period that must be gone through. This regulation was found on the Vermont Short Term Rental
10 Alliance webpage and they're looking out for the interests of people who have short-term rentals.
11 The regulation about creating a waiting period when a house is sold came from that organization
12 and is intended to prevent real estate investors and businessmen from purchasing homes for the
13 sole purpose of short-term rentals that they will never live in nor participate in the community.
14 Hugh said they've largely agreed that having the housing stock depleted by real estate investors
15 and people who just want to do business is not something they want in the community. Having a
16 waiting period will discourage investors from buying property and they will move to another town.
17 Hugh said waiting 6 months wasn't a big deal but waiting 2 to 3 years would cause you to move
18 on to another property where you didn't have to wait, if you had no intention of living there.

19
20 Lee's concern was related to current Chester residents trying to sell their houses and how it will
21 affect the existing community today if they tell someone they can't do anything with a house for
22 2 or 3 years. Hugh said they wouldn't buy it. Lee said that was his point. He wondered how it was
23 fair to someone who wants to retire and move to Florida and can't sell their house. Lee wasn't sure
24 what the answer was but thought they also needed to look out for the current property owners and
25 their investments. Hugh agreed there were two sides to it and didn't know the answer but wanted
26 to provide some context for the notion of a waiting period. It wasn't new and didn't think it would
27 make any news headlines across the country, as other municipalities were also doing it. Arne felt
28 the moratorium would provide time for them to have the conversation to solve the problems. Arne
29 said some people may be hurt financially but some people may be helped by it. Arne said they just
30 needed some time to figure it out. Arne offered the Stone Village may end up being a hotel area
31 and a neighborhood that would change but thought they needed to protect people on both sides
32 which was hard to do by doing nothing. Lee agreed but was trying to consider all sides.

33
34 Ian Montgomery of Stone Village has a hosted short-term rental. He was worried about the tone
35 of it and thought there was a boogie man that they were all afraid of – big investors buying up
36 Chester. Most of the second homeowners he knows occasionally rent out their property like his
37 great neighbor, Russell Fearing, who has rented 37 days so far this year. Ian said the Airbnb
38 business is not booming and they've hardly had one rental this summer. He has one rental in
39 October for a wedding and it's rented out for the ski season. Ian said they're not making a fortune
40 out of it. The people aren't there who are longing to come to Chester to find an Airbnb or a VRBO
41 residence. He thought they had been pushed into an attitude of fear which was unreasonable. There
42 are two houses in Stone Village: one that just sold and will close in 10 days' time; and one going
43 on the market and will probably close before Christmas. Both houses need a fortune spent on them
44 to bring them up to livable standards. Ian said if a Stone Village house sells at a bargain basement
45 price and the money isn't put into it, it will fall. Ian said the people who bought the one house want
46 to move to Chester and retire here and will use it as a getaway until that happens. Ian and Polly

1 had done the same. Ian didn't see investors lining up. The Stone Village isn't going to turn into a
2 major Marriott, and they were frightened. He previously spoke up about Granicus and thought they
3 should get their money back and find someone else. He thought it was a bad decision. At the time,
4 Ian tried to find alternatives and apparently Granicus was the only affordable option and Ian said
5 cheap is what they got and cheap is what they're getting. A 6-month moratorium will only allow
6 people to spin their wheels, and nothing will happen. Arianna said if it wasn't a big deal, then a 6-
7 month moratorium would give them time to learn for themselves. Ian said he didn't like big
8 brother, town government, state government, or federal government.

9
10 Joe Karl was passionate for finding a solution and wondered why they didn't have a 6-month
11 period where people wanting to operate a short-term rental had to complete the proper fire and
12 safety and septic forms and because the sale had to go through the town, they could verify. Joe
13 suggested a moratorium like Woodstock's where new rentals are only for a certain period.

14
15 Arne said until you live next door to a short-term rental and are affected by it, you're not afraid.
16 He isn't afraid but worried about things in town. Because it isn't regulated and there is nobody to
17 get ahold of, there have been issues with unhosted rentals. He doesn't know what the answers are.
18 All the ideas heard are great ideas – a decision they must make and didn't think they would be
19 doing anything concrete. Basically, they were just saying for 6 months, nothing happens. Arne
20 agreed Granicus wasn't a great choice but sometimes that's how life is.

21
22 Kathy Giurtino lives in Stone Village and is good friends with Polly and Ian and loves hosting
23 short-term rentals because they win on both sides. Her concern is losing neighbors. For most
24 people who buy a house, it's the biggest asset they have. She didn't see the need for unhosted
25 short-term rentals. Kathy thought it cost more to the town to lose a neighbor and someone who is
26 part of the community. She said the house may not be sold on the third day over the phone but will
27 be sold perhaps to the employee in the real estate office who can't act fast enough to acquire a
28 mortgage and get the downpayment. She thought neighbors had the right to have a voice to object
29 to an unhosted short-term rental since they are the ones who live there. Kathy thought the 6-month
30 moratorium was a very good idea and the short-term rentals that already existed and could prove
31 they had should continue but the ones that are new should have to wait. Kathy didn't see the people
32 who didn't already have a short-term rental suing and thought it would be the people who already
33 had one if they couldn't continue. Kathy didn't see any issues for hosted short-term rentals.

34
35 Peter addressed one of Joe Karl's concerns and said if someone purchased a house during the
36 moratorium, they could still rent the house as a short-term rental for 14 days or less, so it doesn't
37 completely lock everything out if they take a 6-month break. Peter suggested as of September 8th,
38 any property transaction after that date cannot be a short-term rental for 6 months. Arne thought
39 before they decided on a formal motion, they should have more discussion. Arne was still
40 concerned about existing houses. Peter said they hadn't received all the registrations yet. Arianna
41 said anytime they are discussing a 6-month moratorium, it was only new listings and asked if it
42 was accurate. She wanted them to understand it did not apply to active Airbnbs. Arne was fine
43 with a moratorium on someone who had owned the house for a couple years. Arianna said a lot of
44 what they were struggling with was not having a baseline to figure out what they were regulating.
45 She wondered if it could be as simple as advertised on the internet and documented with one of
46 the STR providers on or before September 8th. Then they would be established. Arne agreed.

1 Arianna said it was a research phase and they weren't regulating short-term rentals going forward
2 but figuring out how they could create a process to regulate short-term rentals. Lee clarified that
3 was if they wanted to regulate and Arianna responded that none of them knew yet and Lee agreed.
4 Arianna said to regulate, they need information, and to get it, they need to stop the process briefly.

5
6 Daun Brown has served on housing finance authority boards, economic boards, business boards,
7 and is a member of the Vermont VRBO committee. Her report to them was full disclosure. She
8 has the Chester form filled out, doesn't know when it's due, and didn't know who to make the
9 check out to, and couldn't find the fire form anywhere online. She has no problem registering.
10 That was her general input. She wanted the committee to line up what they were trying to do. Daun
11 wondered if it was complaints, more affordable housing, pricing, and she wondered what the
12 statistics were. Daun questioned how many people had reported an issue. She added that ski rentals
13 from years ago packed 40 people in a little apartment building and had parties and it was an issue
14 that went away. She said the economy has changed rentals and they aren't there anymore. Prices
15 had gotten too high and economically in America, things worked themselves out. She didn't want
16 to be in a communist country where people tell her what she is allowed to do with her property.
17 She has a rental for 4 people and has septic and fire approval and is trying to go by the rules and
18 understands what happens when you miss a meeting. Daun wondered about the real estate people
19 and thought a lot of the issues stemmed from them. She thought her rental was easy to find online,
20 although she currently has a smell issue. She said rentals are way down because people were
21 charging too much. She said there are no viable jobs to help with affordable housing. Daun said
22 they are bringing in business as she has lawn maintenance people, housekeepers, painters, and they
23 all spend money in Chester. Daun said even if you're not hosted, it can be done. She thought not
24 having a moratorium but rather a waiting period before receiving their registration was a good
25 idea. The community should not have to pay the price for the town not having their ducks in a row
26 and not knowing what to do. She thought something less drastic was in order. Arianna wasn't sure
27 how the 6-month moratorium affects Daun's situation. Daun said it didn't but pointed out what
28 they were doing to someone's right to sell or buy and thought they would have a lawsuit. Arianna
29 said she was an ideal host. Daun said it wasn't the problem they all thought it was and agreed with
30 Ian that they were afraid that something was growing they couldn't control, which she thought was
31 no jobs. Lee took exception to that because while he agreed with Daun that they didn't know what
32 they were doing, it was because they hadn't had time to figure it out. Lee said they needed time
33 and information and the ability to sort through everything they had been discussing. Daun
34 questioned why not a waiting period and Lee asked her what the difference was between that and
35 waiting 6 months. Lee used the example of Daun not knowing where the forms were and he said
36 if they dinged her for not completing them, she would have said she didn't have the information
37 and Lee said that's where they were now, they didn't have the information. Lee asked for some
38 patience while they sorted through everything. Lee said he's conflicted because he heard what both
39 Joe and Kathy said and agreed with both.

40
41 Cathy said it was good to hear them speak about a moratorium starting on a date and newly
42 purchased buildings not becoming short-term rentals but agreed with Joe that they don't want to
43 say there's a moratorium and thought they should make it clear that people needed to come in and
44 sign up if they were advertising on any internet websites. Cathy said Granicus notified her 2 days
45 ago that they had more information and suggested using it as a benchmark. Lee thought they should
46 make their goal clear and what they are asking people to do while they figure it out. Cathy noted

1 the letter they sent was polite and gave them 30 days. Preston said several people had contacted
2 him this week stating they had just received the letter. Cathy suggested sending a follow-up letter.
3 Lee agreed and said they needed to outline the criteria people needed to meet. Peter said he was
4 personally fire inspected on June 11th and has yet to receive a report from the fire marshal's office.
5 Peter wondered if it was 30 days and the fire marshal hadn't responded yet, what they should do.
6 Preston said they would be understanding and to send in the registration anyway and let the fire
7 marshal's report come later. Preston said after 30 days, they would send a second letter.

8
9 Russell Fearing said while the letters were sent out on August 25th, he has yet to receive his and
10 wondered how the scraping done on the platforms was accurate and complete. He assumed Preston
11 sent him a letter because he was cited in the paper as being a VRBO host with a live link to his
12 house, and asked if it was sent to the same address where the taxes were sent. Arne thought issues
13 about registration could be handled through the Zoning Administrator or Cathy rather than the
14 meeting but would allow it. Cathy told Russell his name did not come up in the scraping, so she
15 didn't send Russell a letter until someone sent her the URL to his short-term rental listing. Cathy
16 thought it went out on the 4th or 5th of September. Russell found it interesting that someone had
17 sent Cathy the URL to his house. Arianna said a lot of what had been raised regarding the flaws
18 or foibles that had happened were exactly why they were looking to implement a pause. Arianna
19 said the moratorium was a pause and as a group, they hear from both those for and against and
20 they have been listening but there hasn't been time to act. Arianna feared if they didn't take a
21 pause, they would try to implement ordinances and she wasn't confident they would choose the
22 right ones. Arianna said it was possible they would deregulate at the end of the pause but if they
23 wanted something done now, they would regulate.

24
25 Ed Grossman appreciated that they were looking into it and taking the time to gather data. He
26 suggested they get the data, look at clustering in parts of the community, and set a percentage as
27 suggested a while ago. He appreciated they were taking it seriously. He didn't want to impede
28 someone's ability to get the true value of their house if they were looking to sell it but also wanted
29 to preserve the nature of a community with neighbors and a neighborhood.

30
31 Sue Bailey, as a homeowner, asked if the pause would apply to current homeowners if the short-
32 term rental was hosted; and if they had considered giving more warning than one day if they were
33 going to implement a pause. Arianna believed they weren't saying anyone currently operating
34 would be affected by the pause if they were in the process of registering as they had requested.
35 Sue asked how that would apply if you were not currently operating. Arianna said what they were
36 considering would be a pause in unhosted short-term rentals that weren't currently operating.

37
38 Hugh said the software has the capability to determine whether the rental is hosted or unhosted.
39 When it's advertised, it's advertised as a whole house. If it's partial house, then it's hosted, so they
40 had the data to discriminate between the two.

41
42 Lee called attention to the other question Sue had asked about giving some warning before the
43 pause went into effect. Arne said that was a board decision and how the motion was stated. Arne
44 would entertain a motion if someone wanted to state one. Lee asked if they didn't adopted a pause
45 what the repercussions would be.

1 Joe Karl said if someone bought a house and they put in an Airbnb, what the board would do. Peter
2 said they could rent it for 14 days and Joe asked what the board would do if they rented it for 30.
3 Arianna said if Joe asked them to solve it tonight, they would. Peter and Arne said there was an
4 ordinance and there were repercussions with it. Arne thought if people wanted to ignore the laws,
5 it wouldn't be a good way to begin life in a new neighborhood. Arne said there would be fines
6 associated with it and would probably get away with it until legal action was taken and was an
7 interesting way to start their relationship with the town. Joe thought by imposing a moratorium,
8 they would force people underground and would rent without a website so they may be unaware.
9 Joe thought the board would create more work for themselves. Peter said they had a good
10 ordinance, and the problem was the contractor failed to meet the timeline and work. Peter said it
11 was a matter of completing the forms and filling in the database. Peter said safety is back to the
12 fire marshal and self-certifying for 8 people wasn't what the fire marshal wants, and the ordinance
13 only holds people accountable for what the state already wants them to do. Peter said the contractor
14 had made them all look like fools and there was nothing they could do about it except what Cathy
15 and Preston were already doing by manually working the system. Peter said their goal was to get
16 the system working and if someone were to purchase a home, they could still rent it for 14 days
17 and 7 good weekends during a ski season would be good. Joe thought, as a community, they were
18 all on the same page and all trying to achieve the same thing. Joe was worried about them
19 broadcasting that if you purchased a house in Chester, you could only rent it for 14 days and
20 thought they should think it through for enforcement and the word getting out. Lee said that's why
21 they were thinking it through.

22
23 Polly Montgomery said a lobbying group, the Vermont Short-Term Rental Alliance, of which she
24 is a member, was a good resource with tons of information and shows what all the towns are doing.
25 As the board conducts research, she recommended going online to see what towns say. Polly said
26 other towns are struggling with the same thing. Polly said to look VSTRA up online. Arne thanked
27 her for the information. Julie suggested they could shorten it from 6 months and Arne thought that
28 was having a lot of confidence in getting something accomplished in 3 months when they were
29 dealing with an organization who was behind.

30
31 Arne moved that no unhosted short-term rental registrations be granted for 6 months after the date
32 of the resolution for any property in the Town of Chester that hasn't already been identified as a
33 short-term rental. Arianna seconded the motion. Arianna asked if the current registration process
34 included the question of is it hosted or unhosted. Preston said it is a question in the application
35 form. Peter said Arne needed to name a date and Arianna said it was as of tonight, but she didn't
36 think that was reasonable and that they needed to give some notice as the letter only went out
37 August 25th and they needed to give people the best effort. Arne said it went to people who already
38 advertised so they were already in. Arianna questioned the date by which the pause takes effect,
39 because they were sending the letters to unhosted Airbnbs and addresses where nobody lives.
40 Cathy said they were sending them to the taxpayer's address. Arianna suggested they amend the
41 motion to say as of October 1st. Peter suggested 30 days and August 25th was the first letter, so
42 Arianna proposed September 25th, although her gut would suggest October 1st. Arne didn't think
43 changing the date would change anything unless someone ran out and registered. Arianna said
44 there may be current residents who want to take advantage of the business opportunity, so it was
45 in their best interest to do the right thing and get on board and give them the time. Lee asked to
46 have the motion read again and Arne stated that no unhosted short-term rental registration be

1 granted for 6 months after the date of the resolution for any property in the Town of Chester” and
2 Arianna completed it by stating, “not currently operating as an STR.” Arianna proposed as of
3 October 1st allowing current residents to become an Airbnb which would not deny them the
4 business opportunity. Peter said the motion was amended and asked Arne what his original motion
5 was, and he said the intent was for those not currently operating as an STR. Arne amended his
6 motion to say as of October 1st and Peter seconded the motion. A unanimous vote was reached in
7 favor of amending the motion. Arne re-read the motion as: That no unhosted short-term rental
8 registration be granted for 6 months after the date of October 1, 2023, for any property in the Town
9 of Chester not currently operating as an STR. There was no further discussion. A vote was taken,
10 and the motion passed unanimously. Arne thought part of the future discussions may involve a
11 joint meeting with the Planning Commission. Arianna thought the ordinance created by the
12 Selectboard was what they should aspire to and meet the ordinance where it is. Julie, again, stated
13 that the ordinance didn’t have to run for 6 months, and Arne agreed that maybe they could figure
14 out things sooner and know the direction they wanted to head. Arne stated he has seen different
15 things in different towns from a complete ban to no regulation whatsoever, to making it a
16 conditional use no matter where it is in town. Arne echoed Joe Karl’s concerns about safety and
17 said they have no control over the state with the fire marshal, but it was part of the process and if
18 they included it, it could make a difference with people’s safety. Arne knew it had been a
19 contentious 6 months and that they don’t always get it right but are trying to do the best for the
20 town. Arne said they weren’t there to squash businesses but rather was a concern on a lot of
21 people’s minds that had affected a lot of people in town.
22

23 Joe Karl wondered in the timeframe of 6 months, how many more people would sign up to be
24 short-term rentals, 6 or 12? Arne didn’t know the answer. Joe understood but said it was almost as
25 if they were fearing 6 new houses were going to be Airbnbs. Joe said there were people who wanted
26 to buy a house in Chester to retire there. Arne said maybe after the ordinance was decided, they
27 wouldn’t be able to rent at all.
28

29 **Agenda Item 10, Sign Capital Equipment Note for Dump Truck**

30
31 Arne read a motion to sign the capital equipment note in the amount of \$155,000, the resolution
32 that accompanies the request, and the Town of Chester tax certificate. Lee moved and Arianna
33 seconded the motion. It was for the dump truck. Arianna asked who got to name it and Julie said
34 the kids at the high school name the plows. Peter said the dump truck would have a plow.
35

36 **Agenda Item 11, Municipal Retirement Plan – Town Manager**

37
38 Julie said VMRS requires that if the Selectboard changes a retirement plan, a decision must be
39 made by December 30th to be in effect by July of the following year and that is why it is being
40 done out of order of Julie’s contract review which is in March. Currently, the town contributes 8%
41 to her retirement. Of that 8%, 6.75% is through VMRS Group B because that is what is required
42 by law. Then Julie is given a check for 1.25% of her salary post-tax to invest somewhere. This is
43 done because her contract states the Selectboard will contribute 8% to her retirement. The auditors
44 don’t like it. Julie said most town managers from the state have Group C, much like police
45 departments. Group C would have the town contribute 8.5% and increase her contribution to 11%.
46 If the Selectboard agreed, she wanted to change her retirement from Group B to C and a check

1 wouldn't need to be cut annually and calculated every year. It would require the town to contribute
2 8.5% so it would be another 0.5% which currently is around \$450. Group C allows a full retirement
3 after 20 years at age 55, and although she would love to, she has no plans to retire at 55. Julie said
4 the reason town managers are at 20 years is because it's a long term in that position, much like
5 police officers. There are cases where town managers have been in their positions for 30 years or
6 longer, but Julie pointed out that Selectboards change, and her future may not be set in stone.
7 Arianna asked if this applied to Julie directly or the position of town manager and Julie responded
8 the position. Peter stated her contract would require modification and Julie said that could be done
9 in March when her contract is up for renewal. Arne said they were making a motion and giving
10 her a small raise by doing this but pointed out the auditors weren't that pleased about the current
11 way her retirement was done.

12
13 Lee moved "The Town of Chester presently participates in VMERS Group B for its qualified
14 employees. We elect to offer to the category of Town Manager the higher Group C, effective July
15 1, 2024. The existing Town Manager will be administered an election by the VMERS office to
16 remain in their present Group B or transfer to the Group C effective July 1, 2024. Any newly hired
17 Town Manager after the approval date, will not be given this election and will automatically be
18 enrolled in Group C effective July 1, 2024." Peter seconded the motion. A vote was taken, and the
19 motion carried unanimously. Julie thanked the board.

20 21 **Agenda Item 12, Cemetery Deed**

22
23 The board members signed the deed.

24 25 **Agenda Item 13, New Business/Next Agenda**

26
27 Arne noted there would be a traffic ordinance, oversized loads, false alarm policy, and discussion
28 regarding library staff benefits. Arne said the current librarian has taken a job in Bellows Falls,
29 partly because of the lack of benefits. Peter noted that was a long ongoing discussion at his house.
30 Julie said there were benefits but they weren't great.

31
32 Lee asked to have the solar field on the next agenda and Julie agreed. Arianna was concerned if
33 they included STR on the agenda, they were listening and wondered at what point they were going
34 to begin working on what they had just said. Peter said the next time it was on the agenda, they
35 needed to read the ordinance because 90% of the discussion was about things already in the
36 ordinance. Arianna said there was work to be done in the short-term, mainly by Preston and Cathy.
37 Lee asked Julie to include the ordinance in the next package and Julie said she would include it as
38 an agenda item. Arne said they need to have the discussion sooner or later. Arianna asked how the
39 board would collaborate and talk about issues. Lee said as they just had done. Peter said the
40 Housing Commission was the place to have the discussion. Julie said Preston and Cathy needed to
41 do the work and present it to the Board, so they had the data to discuss. Arne said they would
42 discuss it at the next meeting regardless of if they had data.

43 **Agenda Item 14, Adjourn**

44 Lee moved, and Peter seconded a motion to adjourn the meeting. A vote was taken, passed
45 unanimously, and the meeting was adjourned at approximately 9:40 p.m.