

Planning, Zoning & Assessing Service Summary

Mission:

The Planning, Zoning, and Assessing Department is committed to promoting responsible growth, ensuring equitable property assessments, and providing professional, transparent, and responsive services that enhance the quality of life for residents, businesses, and visitors. Through comprehensive planning, fair administration of land use regulations, and accurate property valuation, the department supports sustainable, resilient, and vibrant communities.

Goals:

1. Promote Responsible Growth

- a. Guide development that is consistent with the municipality's comprehensive plan.
- b. Encourage housing, economic development, and infrastructure that meet community needs.

2. Administer Fair and Consistent Zoning

- a. Apply zoning regulations impartially and consistently.
- b. Provide timely permit review and clear guidance to property owners, developers and residents.

3. Ensure Accurate and Equitable Property Assessments

- a. Maintain accurate property records.
- b. Assess all properties fairly and uniformly in accordance with Vermont Law.
- c. Support transparency and public confidence in the assessment process.

4. Provide Excellent Public Service

- a. Deliver courteous, professional and responsive customer service
- b. Make planning, zoning and assessment information accessible and understandable to the public.

5. Encourage Public Participation

- a. Foster open communication and meaningful citizen involvement in planning and land use decisions.
- b. Support transparent decision-making through collaboration with elected officials, boards, and the community.

6. Support Long-Term Community Planning

- a. Maintain and update municipal plans and land use regulations.
- b. Coordinate with regional planning commissions and state agencies to address housing, transportation, economic development, and environmental stewardship.

Town Planner:

The primary role of the Town Planner is to shape how the community grows and changes over time.

Responsibilities include:

- Work with Town Manager, municipal departments, Town boards and commissions, state departments, local businesses, chambers of commerce and the public-at-large to develop and implement short- and long-range planning and economic development projects and initiatives.
- Gather and analyze demographic, economic, and environmental data to make informed decisions about future community needs.
- Ongoing maintenance of the Town Plan, Zoning Bylaws and land use regulations such as the Short-Term Rental Ordinance.
- Provide Leadership, vision and strategic planning support to the Housing Commission, and Economic Development Commission.
- Provide backup to the Zoning Administrator

Zoning Administrator:

The primary role of the Zoning Administrator (ZA) is for the administration and enforcement of zoning and other bylaws. Responsibilities include:

- Research and process zoning applications and issue permits (70 – 80/yr)
- Citizen Consulting and Research (15 – 20 calls/week)
- Investigate complaints, process appeals and correct violations including enforcement when necessary
- Staff Support to DRB and PC (10 – 15 DRB hearings/year @ 20hrs/hearing staff time)
- Short Term Rental Administration (Renewal processing and 15 – 20% turnover)
- E911 Address Coordination
- Provide Backup to Town Planner
- Provide Backup to Lister/Assessor

Lister/Assessor:

The primary role of the Lister/Assessor is to maintain accurate and timely property valuation data to ensure fair and equal taxation which is the foundation for Chester's Grant List. Duties and responsibilities include:

- Complete and accurate listing and assessing of all properties (~ 2200 parcels)
- Processing property transfers, doing research, reading deeds, making changes (~ 115 Transfers)
- Calculating, and assigning all Homestead and Housesite values (~ 865 Homesteads)
- Current Use—allocation of all property value enrolled and excluded from the Current Use program (~ 195 parcels in Current Use)
- Timely and accurate Submission of Abstract Grand List, Final Grand List, 411s and other reports and filings
- New construction (recording, researching, collecting and assessing all changes in the property by permits and property transfer returns within the town).
- Explaining assessed values established for properties. (Answering taxpayer questions, recognizing problems, grievances.)
- Updating property tax maps to reflect changes in acreage, ownership and recording of surveys
- Assessment of special properties with legislative requirements such as solar, cable, subsidized housing, covenant-restricted housing, etc.

Staffing:

The work of this department is performed by 1 full time employee and 3 part time employees for an equivalent of just over 2 FTE's

Future Initiatives:

- Update the Town Plan expiring in May of 2028.
- Town wide re-appraisal July 2027 – June 2029.
- Advance at least one housing project to build phase.
- Digitize and integrate permit information with tax map.

Account		2026	Budget Notes
Revenue		Budget	
01-02 Licenses, Permits & Fees			
01-02-15-00.01	Liquor License	1,100.00	
01-02-15-00.02	Fish & Game	100.00	
01-02-15-00.03	Dog Licenses	1,200.00	
01-02-15-00.04	Other Licenses	500.00	
01-02-15-00.06	Motor Vehicle Reg.	200.00	
01-02-18-00.01	Planning/Zoning	6,000.00	
01-02-18-00.02	Short Term Rental Fee	35,000.00	
Total Permits & Fees Revenue		44,100.00	
Lister's Expense			
01-10-16-10.00	Salaries	72,700.00	
01-10-16-11.00	Social Security	5,816.00	
01-10-16-14.00	Health Insurance	5,500.00	
01-10-16-15.00	STD, LTD, Life insurance	300.00	
01-10-16-16.00	Retirement	1,430.00	
01-10-16-21.00	General Expense	8,000.00	
01-10-16-22.00	Training	500.00	
01-10-16-22.01	Travel	500.00	
01-10-16-23.00	Equipment	1,500.00	
01-10-16-37.00	Computer Service	4,000.00	
01-10-16-37.01	NEMRC Contract Services	5,000.00	
01-10-16-56.00	Legal	500.00	
Total Lister's Expense		105,746.00	
Planning & Zoning Expense			
01-10-18-10.00	Salary	83,300.00	
01-10-18-10.11	DRB Salaries	2,500.00	
01-10-18-10.12	Planning Salaries	2,500.00	
01-10-18-11.00	Social Security	6,372.45	
01-10-18-14.00	Medical Insurance	20,000.00	
01-10-18-15.00	STD, LTD, Life insurance	1,000.00	
01-10-18-16.00	Retirement	6,150.00	
01-10-18-21.00	Enforcement	1,000.00	
01-10-18-21.01	Supplies	500.00	
01-10-18-21.02	Printing	-	
01-10-18-22.00	Travel/Training	500.00	
01-10-18-23.00	Computer	-	
01-10-18-27.00	Notices	3,500.00	
01-10-18-27.01	PC Expenses	500.00	
01-10-18-27.02	Housing Commission Expenses	500.00	

01-10-18-29.00	Short Term Rental	5,250.00	
01-10-18-30.00	Transfer to Housing Trust Fund	24,000.00	
01-10-18-40.01	Regional Planning Dues	4,300.00	
01-10-18-56.00	Legal	5,000.00	
Total Planning & Zoning Expense		166,872.45	
Total Assessing/Planning & Zoning Expense:		272,618.45	