



**COMMONWEALTH OF MASSACHUSETTS**

**TOWN OF CHESTER**

**2024 ANNUAL TOWN MEETING WARRANT**

**HAMPDEN, SS.**

To any of the Constables in the Town of Chester in the County of Hampden:

**GREETINGS:**

In the name of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts you are hereby directed to notify and warn the inhabitants of the Town of Chester qualified to vote in Town affairs to meet in the **Chester Town Hall, 15 Middlefield Road, Chester, MA on Monday, the 10<sup>th</sup> day of June, 2024, A.D. at 7:00PM**, then and there to act on the following articles:

**ARTICLE 1:**

**APPOINTMENTS**

*To authorize the Board of Selectmen to appoint such other Town Officials as are not required to be chosen by ballot, or to take any other action relative thereto.*

**Majority vote required**

**John Baldasaro accepted the article as read, Barbara Huntoon seconded, no discussion.**

**0- No votes    All in favor    80- Registered voters present    Article approved.**

**A True Copy, Attest**

**Town Clerk**

**6/11/24**

**ARTICLE 2:**

**COMPENSATION**

To see if the Town will vote to fix the annual salaries of all elected officials for the period of July 1, 2024 to June 30, 2025 as indicated below, or to take any other action relative thereto.

Elected Official's Salary	FY2024	Proposed FY25
Selectboard Member	\$2,480	\$2,580
Selectboard Member	\$2,480	\$2,580
Selectboard Member	\$2,480	\$2,580
Water Commissioner	\$700	\$700
Water Commissioner	\$700	\$700
Water Commissioner	\$700	\$700
Town Moderator	\$200	\$200
Health Board Member	\$1,545	\$1,607
Health Board Member	\$1,545	\$1,607
Health Board Member	\$1,545	\$1,607

**A True Copy, Attest**

*Tina M. Davis*

**Town Clerk**

*6/11/24*

**Majority vote required**

**John Baldasaro accepted the article as read, Andy Sutton seconded. Discussion followed , someone wanted clarification as to what this article meant, John explained these were the amounts these positions get paid, showing last year and this year rates.**

**0- No Votes All in favor 80- Registered Voters present Article Approved**

**ARTICLE 3:**

**FY2025 OPERATING BUDGET**

*To see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate, or transfer from available funds, the sum \$3,658,936 to defray charges and expenses of the Town, including debt service (principal and interest) and to provide a Reserve Fund, for the period July 1, 2024 to June 30, 2025 and further, to hear the report of the Finance Committee and act thereon, or to take any other action relative thereto. (Please see separate budget sheet)*

**Majority vote required**

**John Baldasaro accepted the article as read, Andy Sutton seconded. Andy Myers provided an explanation on the budget. Jason Forgue asked why Town Council increased? John Baldasaro said anticipating increase in legal use due to possible changes in town. Jason also asked why not prop 2 ½? Andy Myers said 4.6% was within the tax levy limit without prop2 ½.**

**0-No Votes                      All in Favor                      80 Registered voters present      Article Approved**

**ARTICLE 4:**

**REVOLVING FUNDS**

*To see if the Town will vote to set FY2025 spending limits for each of the Town's previously established revolving funds that have been authorized under Chapter 44, Section 53E1/2 of the Massachusetts General Laws as indicated below, or to take any other action relative thereto:*

<i>Board of Health</i>	<i>\$8,000.00</i>
<i>Building Inspector</i>	<i>\$30,000.00</i>
<i>Plumbing Inspector</i>	<i>\$3,000.00</i>
<i>Wiring Inspector</i>	<i>\$2,000.00</i>
<i>Tax Collector</i>	<i>\$2,000.00</i>
<i>Deputy Collector</i>	<i>\$1,000.00</i>
<i>Police Detail Fees</i>	<i>\$15,000.00</i>

**A True Copy, Attest**



**Town Clerk**

*6/11/24*

**Majority vote required**

**John Baldasaro accepted the article as read, Andy Sutton seconded. Rosanne McClafin asked if these were the same amounts as last year, John answered yes.**

**0-No Votes      All in Favor                      80- Registered voters present      Article approved**

**ARTICLE 5:**

**FY2023 INVOICES**

*To see if the Town will vote to authorize payment from Free Cash of the following invoice from FY2023, or to take any other action relative thereto.*

Pioneer Valley Planning Commission for Pioneer Valley Municipal IT Collaborative FY23 membership \$250.00

Four fifths vote required

John Baldasaro accepted the article as read, Andy Sutton seconded.

0- No Votes All in Favor 80- Registered Voters present Article Approved

**ARTICLE 6: GATEWAY REGIONAL SCHOOL BUDGET**

To see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate, or transfer from available funds, the sum of \$1,644,903 for the Gateway Regional School District for the period July 1, 2024 through June 30, 2025, or to take any other action relative thereto. (Last year's number \$1,606,927).

Majority vote required

John Baldasaro accepted the article as read , Andy Sutton seconded. Discussion about a decrease in students but cost per student went up that causes the increase.

0-No Votes All in Favor 82- Registered Voters present Article Approved

**ARTICLE 7: VOCATIONAL TUITION AND TRANSPORTATION**

To see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate, or transfer from available funds, the sum of \$209,307 to pay for vocational tuition (\$168,000) and transportation (\$41,307) for Chester students for the period July 1, 2024 through June 30,2025, or to take any other action relative thereto. (Last year's figure – \$209,307).

Majority vote required

John Baldasaro accepted the article as read, Barbara Huntoon seconded.

0-NoVotes All in Favor 82- Registered Voters present Article Approved

**ARTICLE 8: ACCEPTANCE OF CHAPTER 90 FUNDS**

To see if the Town will vote to accept and expend without further appropriation funds being provided by the Commonwealth of Massachusetts under the provisions of Mass. General Laws Chapter 90, to pay for such costs as allowed by appropriate legislation in connection with the maintenance, repair, and construction of Town ways and bridges, with such funds to carry over from year to year until expended by the Town, or to take any other action relative thereto.

A True Copy, Attest:

*Tamm Daw*  
Town Clerk 6/11/24

Majority vote required

John Baldasaro accepted the article as read, Barbara Huntoon seconded.

0- No Votes All approved 82- Registered Voters present Article Approved

**ARTICLE 9: CMELD OPERATIONS**

*To see if the Town will vote to appropriate the income from the sale of electricity to private consumers, municipal building and jobbing for the Municipal Electric Light Department, for the fiscal year beginning July 1, 2024 to June 30, 2025, and to authorize that the whole be expended under the direction and control of the Board of Electric Light Commissioners and Manager, or to take any other action relative thereto.*

Majority vote required

John Baldasaro accepted the article as read, Andy Sutton seconded.

0- No Votes All in favor 82-Registered Voters Present Article Approved

**ARTICLE 10: CHESTER WATER DEPARTMENT ENTERPRISE FUNDS**

*To see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate or transfer from available funds a sum of money to operate the Chester Water Department Enterprise, as set forth below, or to take any other action thereon.*

*That the following funds be appropriated for the Chester Water Department Enterprise:*

<i>Water Dept, Salaries</i>	<i>\$75,822</i>
<i>Commissioners Stipends</i>	<i>2,100</i>
<i>Operation Expenses</i>	<i>75,000</i>
<i>Debt</i>	<i>29,479</i>
<i>Budgeted Surplus</i>	<i>15,000</i>
<i>Total</i>	<i>\$197,401</i>

*Last Year's Total \$180,777*

*and that the \$197,401 be raised as follows:*

<i>Enterprise Receipts</i>	<i>\$167,922</i>
<i>Tax Levy</i>	<i>29,479</i>
<i>Total</i>	<i>\$197,401</i>

**A True Copy, Attest**

*Tina M. Davis*  
**Town Clerk**

Majority vote required

John Baldasaro accepted the article as read, Andy Sutton seconded. Bob Daley, Water Commissioner gave an update on the water dept.

0-No Votes 82-Registered Voters Present Article Approved

**ARTICLE 11:**

**HILLTOWN AMBULANCE REPLACEMENT FUND**

*To see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate, or transfer from available funds, \$4,002 to cover the Hilltown Ambulance Replacement Fund assessment, or to take any other action relative thereto.*

**Majority vote required**

**Brian Forgue accepted the article as read, Ann Daley seconded. No Discussion**

**0- No Votes All in Favor 83- Registered voters present Article Approved**

**ARTICLE 12:**

**FIRE DEPARTMENT UPDATE FUND**

*To see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate, or transfer from available funds, \$31,600 to cover necessary updates for Fire Department equipment and supplies, as set forth below, or take any other action relative thereto.*

Equipment and Supplies:

Electrical Station 1	\$2,000
Tires Tanker 1	\$4,000
Turn Out Gear (3)	\$12,600
Medical Supplies	\$3,000
Truck Maintenance	<u>\$10,000</u>
Total	\$31,600

**Majority vote required**

**John Baldasaro accepted the article as read, Rich Holzman seconded.**

**Discussion followed, Ro McClafin asked if this was in addition to the budget, John answered yes. Mary Ann Pease asked if the bills this would cover have been turned in yet, answer is no the FD has them.**

**0- No Votes All in favor 83- Registered Voters present Article is Approved**

**ARTICLE 13:**

**UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE/SUTA**

*To see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate, or transfer from available funds, \$16,500 to cover the shortfall in the FY2024 Unemployment/SUTA account, or take any other action relative thereto.*

**A True Copy, Attest**

**Majority vote required**

*Tom M Dan*  
**Town Clerk**  
*6/11/24*

**John Baldasaro accepted the article as read, Andy Sutton seconded.**

**Jason Forgue stated that is should read from free cash, legal said to write it up this way. Shauna Holland asked if this was included in the budget, Andy Myers said no this is to finish out this years bills. Coming from free cash.**

**0- No Votes All in Favor 83- Registered Voters present Article Approved**

**ARTICLE 14: MEDICARE/FICA**

*To see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate, or transfer from available funds, \$4,700 to cover the shortfall in the FY2024 Medicare/FICA account, or take any other action relative thereto.*

**Majority vote required**

**John Baldasaro accepted the article as read, Andy Sutton seconded. No discussion**

**0- No Votes All in Favor 83- Registered Voters present Article Approved**

**ARTICLE 15: TRANSFER OF FREE CASH TO STABILIZATION FUND**

*To see if the Town will vote to approve the transfer of \$100,000 from Free Cash to the Stabilization Fund, or to take any other action relative thereto.*

**Majority vote required**

**John Baldasaro accepted the article as read, Ann Daley seconded. Discussion , was asked how much will be in the stabilization account? \$700,000.00 is the answer.**

**0- No Votes All in Favor 83 Registered Voters present Article approved**

**ARTICLE 16: HIGHWAY DEPARTMENT TRAINING FUND**

*To see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate, or transfer from available funds, \$10,000 to establish the Highway Department Training Fund, or take any other action relative thereto.*

**Majority vote required**

**John Baldasaro accepted the article as read, Andy Sutton seconded. Jason Forgue asked why not make this a line item? John responded this is new this year and hopefully we won't have to use it every year and the employees will stay on longer.**

**0-No Votes All in Favor 83- Registered Voters present Article Approved**

**A True Copy, Attest**



**ARTICLE 17: CORNERSTONE CHURCH**

**Town Clerk**

*To see if the Town will vote to authorize the Board of Selectmen to accept as a gift for general municipal purposes the so-called Cornerstone Church property located at 1 Middlefield Road,*

*Chester; and further to see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate, or transfer from available funds, \$50,000 to renovate the property for public use, and \$20,000 to cover annual expenses of utilities, heating fuel, insurance and routine maintenance; and further to authorize the Board of Selectmen to take any other action deemed appropriate in relation to such acquisition; or take any other action relative thereto.*

**Two Thirds vote required**

**John Baldasaro accepted the article as read, Rich Holzman seconded. Discussion followed. John Baldasaro stated he would vote no on this article. Stating we are not in the real estate business. Veronica Marr asked about the septic, Andy Myers said he would consider allowing the building to still be connected to his septic. Joe Hepworth asked if we could sell the building after getting it? Answer is Yes we can. Keirsen Broman made a presentation on how the building could be used, COA in basement, Police could expand into COA room at town hall. Upstairs could be used for meetings, Theater practice, library function, etc. Michell Kinney spoke to how well maintained the building was, Rich Holzman spoke to the possibilities for the building before deciding. Barbara Huntoon asked to table the question to get more information. Rich Holzman made a motion to table the article, Annette LaMountain seconded.**

**36-No Votes 42- Yes Votes 83 Registered Voters present Article is Tabled**

**ARTICLE 18:**

**FIRE DEPARTMENT TRANSFER OF FUNDS**

*To see if the Town will vote to transfer \$9,000.00 from the New Fire Truck account to the Fire Department Expenses account, or take any other action relative thereto.*

**Majority vote required**

**John Baldasaro accepted the article as read, Andy Sutton seconded.**

**0-No Votes, All in Favor 83-Registered Voters present Article Approved**

**John Baldasaro made a motion to Adjourn, Ann Daley seconded.**

**Meeting Adjourned 8:10pm**

**A True Copy, Attest**



**Town Clerk**

**6/11/24**



You are hereby directed to serve this Warrant by posting true and attested copies thereof, in three public places within the Town of Chester, seven (7) days at least, before the day and hour of holding said meeting.

Therefore, fail not and make due return of said Warrant with your doing thereon to the Town Clerk of the Town of Chester, at or before the day and hour of holding said meeting.

Given under our hands at Chester, this 1<sup>st</sup> day of June, 2024

\_\_\_\_\_  
John Baldasaro, Chairman

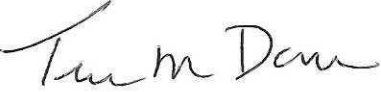
  
\_\_\_\_\_

Richard "Andy" Sutton, Vice-Chairman

  
\_\_\_\_\_

Craig Gauthier, Clerk

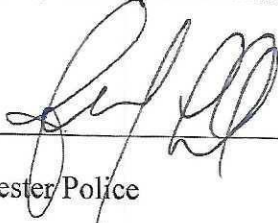
**A True Copy, Attest**



**Town Clerk**

6/11/24

As per instruction in this Warrant, I have posted same, this 1<sup>st</sup> day of June 2024 in three public places, Chester Town Hall, Chester Post office, Chester Center.

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Chester Police


**Annual Town Meeting    June 10, 2024**

**Amendments:**

**Article 17:    Cornerstone Church**

Barbara Huntoon moved to call the article.

It was originally recorded that Barbara Huntoon asked to table the question. She in fact did not, she moved to Call the article.

7/25/2024  Teresa Donovan- Town Clerk