



**A True Copy, Attest**

*Tom M. Deen*

**Town Clerk**

**Special Town Meeting Warrant**

**Monday, November 24<sup>th</sup>, 2025**

**6:30PM**

Town of Chester

Commonwealth of Massachusetts

**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 Elections and town affairs to meet in the Chester Town Hall Auditorium, 15 Middlefield Road, in said Town on Monday, November 24, 2025, at 6:30 in the evening, then and there to act on the following articles:

**Article 1: COUNCIL ON AGING BY-LAW ACCEPTANCE**

*To see if the Town will vote, pursuant to Massachusetts General Laws Chapter 40, Section 8B, to adopt a Council on Aging Bylaw in substantially the form on file with the Town Clerk, in order to authorize the establishment of a Council on Aging for the purpose of coordinating or carrying out programs designed to meet the problems of the aging in coordination with programs of the Department of Aging and Independence, and to authorize the Select Board to take any action necessary or appropriate to carry out the purposes of this vote; or to take any other action relative thereto.*

**Submitted by Town Clerk**

**Majority vote required.**

**Explanation**

*Acceptance of this statute will formally establish a Council on Aging in the Town, empowering it to plan, coordinate, and oversee services and programs for older residents, and to apply for state and federal grants through the Department of Aging and Independence.*

- **John accepted the article as read and Barbara Huntoon of 35 Bromley Rd seconded. There was no discussion.**

**0 – No votes All in favor 30 registered voters present**

**Article Approved**



**Town Clerk**

**Article 2: BILLS OF PRIOR FISCAL YEAR**

*To see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate, transfer from available funds, or otherwise provide a sum of money to pay bills of a prior fiscal year, as authorized by Massachusetts General Laws Chapter 44, Section 64, or take any other action relative thereto.*

**Submitted By Board of Selectman  
required.**

**9/10ths vote**

<u>Department</u>	<u>Vendor</u>	<u>Fiscal Year</u>	<u>Amount</u>
Police Department	Verizon	FY24	\$275.43
Water Department	Dutko Electric LLC	FY25	\$315.00
Conservation	Turley	FY25	\$65.12
Conservation	Turley	FY25	\$52.91
Fire Department	Fire Tech & Safety	FY25	\$1,545.00
CMELD	MA Fire Technologies	FY25	\$135.00
Police	MA Fire Technologies	FY24	\$764.25
Highway	Berkshire Springs	FY25	\$88.05
Town Admin	Kinsherf CPA	FY25	\$2,900.00

**Total: \$6,140.76**

**Explanation:**

*Under Massachusetts General Laws Chapter 44, Section 64, Town Meeting must authorize the payment of bills from a prior fiscal year. These bills were received after the close of the fiscal year, were inadvertently omitted from year-end processing, or represent adjustments from prior period invoices. A nine-tenths vote of Town Meeting is required for approval if, as here, the vote occurs at a Special Town Meeting.*

**John Baldasaro made an amendment on the floor to remove the CMELD MA Fire Technologies bill of \$135.00 and updating the total to \$6,105.76. Jason Forgue of 23 Bromley Road said the total would actually be \$6005.76 with that bill removed.**

**Jason Forgue seconded the amendment. Andy Meyers clarified these bills would be paid with free cash.**

**0 – No votes   All in favor   32 registered voters present                      Amendment Approved**

**Barbara Huntoon made a motion for the amended article. John Baladasaro seconded.**

Jason Forgue asked about the \$2,900 FY25 Kinsherb bill and why that was outstanding. Andrew said this bill was received late, after the start of the new fiscal year. He said the bill was not anything additional from what had been budgeted in FY25. John also confirmed that the FY24 bills included in the list were received after that fiscal year ended.

0 – No votes All in favor 32 registered voters present Article Approved

### Article 3: RIGHT TO FARM BY-LAW ACCEPTANCE

*To see if the Town will vote to adopt a "Right-to-Farm By-law" as authorized by Massachusetts General Laws Chapter 40, Section 21, for the purpose of protecting and encouraging the pursuit of agriculture, promoting agricultural-based economic opportunities, and preserving the rural character of the Town, by recognizing that farming is a valued activity which contributes to the Town's economy, environment, and culture; said by-law to read substantially as set forth in the draft on file with the Town Clerk; or take any other action relative thereto.*

Submitted by Town Clerk

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Majority vote required

#### Explanation

*Acceptance of this By-law formally recognizes farming as a protected and encouraged activity within the Town. It provides notice to residents of the Town's support for farming and offers a framework for resolving complaints related to normal agricultural operations.*

John Baldasaro accepted the article as read. Lee Meyers at 104 Maynard Hill seconded.

Lee asked who will be the enforcement officer if people are not following this bylaw? John said that would be the building inspector Jason Forgue. John said this has already been adopted in town but was never officially filed with the Attorney General's office.

Stewart Budreau of 646 Skyline Trail said that Middlefield had issues with adopting this bylaw and ended up having a pig farm. Terry Donovan of 280 Bromley Road mentioned that is against the zoning bylaw, which is not changing.

0 – No votes All in favor 33 registered voters present Article Approved

### Article 4: REQUEST FOR PROPOSAL (RFP) FOR OLD ELEMENTARY SCHOOL AT 10 MIDDLEFIELD ROAD

*To see if the Town will vote to authorize the Select Board, or such other board or committee as the Town may direct, to prepare and issue a Request for Proposals (RFP) in accordance with Massachusetts General Laws Chapter 30B, Section 16, for the purpose of seeking proposals for the sale, reuse, lease, or other disposition of the property known as the former Chester Elementary School, located at 10 Middlefield Road, Chester Mass 01011, including all buildings*



and appurtenant land thereon, and to take any and all actions necessary to carry out the purposes of this article; or to take any other action relative thereto.

**Town Clerk**

**Submitted by Board of Selectman**

**Majority vote required.**

**Explanation**

*This article authorizes the Town to issue a Request for Proposals (RFP) to solicit potential reuses, redevelopment ideas, or disposition options for the former Chester Elementary School property. The RFP process will allow the Town to evaluate proposals that are financially, environmentally, and socially beneficial to the community before any future disposition or redevelopment decision is made.*

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

**Jason Forgue asked how it will work when the town receives proposals from developers. John said there is a committee formed that created the RFP with the potential use of the building in mind. John said this vote would allow the town to move forward with publishing the RFP. The committee would then review the proposals before the town authorizes a sale. Lee Myers asked what happened with the grant that was discussed for this a year ago. John said this is the next stage of that process.**

**0 – No votes      All in favor      33 registered voters present      Article Approved**

**Article 5: PURCHASE ASSESSOR SOFTWARE**

*To see if the Town will vote to appropriate by transfer from Free Cash the sum of \$18,500 to purchase new Assessor software, or to take any action relative thereto.*

**Submitted by Board of Assessors**

**Majority vote required.**

**Explanation:**

*The current assessing software used by the Board of Assessors is outdated and cumbersome to use. Upgrading to new software will improve the accuracy and efficiency of property assessments, streamline data management, and enhance compliance with Department of Revenue requirements. The proposed funding covers software licensing, data migration, staff training, and related implementation expenses.*

**John Baldasaro accepted the article as read. Ann Daley seconded.**

**Jason asked about the current software cost and Andy Meyers said it's about \$5,000. Andy said that \$10,000 of this cost is a one-time charge for the software changeover. \$8,500 is for the license and it is software most other towns use.**

**0 – No votes      All in favor      3 registered voters present      Article Approved**

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*Tom M. Deen*

**ARTICLE 6: INCREASE RESERVE FUND**

*To see if the Town will vote to appropriate by transfer from the Stabilization Fund the sum of \$8,500 to the Reserve Fund, or to take any action relative thereto.*

**Town Clerk**

**Submitted by Board of Assessors & Town Administrator**      **Two-Thirds vote required.**

**Explanation:**

*The Reserve Fund provides the Finance Committee with limited flexibility to address unanticipated expenses that arise after the annual budget is adopted. Transferring funds from the General Stabilization Fund will ensure sufficient capacity to manage such needs during the current fiscal year without requiring a Special Town Meeting. A two-thirds vote of Town Meeting is required for this transfer under Massachusetts General Laws Chapter 40, Section 5B.*

**John Baldasaro accepted the article as read. Jim Zimmerman of 129 Prospect Street seconded.**

**Barbara Huntoon asked how much is in stabilization currently. Brian said about \$700,000.**

**Jason Forgue said a few years ago the reserve fund was increased from \$5,000 to \$10,000 and asked why have an additional increase. Andrew said this is to be more in line with current fiscal practices. Brian Forgue said the goal is to plan for large capital expenditures and be able to have another account to use other than stabilization.**

**0 – No votes   All in favor   34 registered voters present      Article Approved**

**ARTICLE 7: ESTABLISH OPEB FUND**

*To see if the Town will vote to accept G.L. c. 32B, § 20 and establish an Other Post-Employment Benefits Liability Trust Fund (OPEB Fund), effective immediately,*

*or to take any other action relative thereto.*

**Submitted by Select Board**      **Majority vote required.**

**Explanation:**

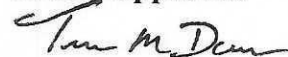
*The Department of Revenue requires even communities that already have an OPEB Fund to accept the newer version of the statute that governs Other Post-Employment Benefits Liability Trust Fund (OPEB Fund), in which the Town sets aside money to assist with payment of retiree health insurance benefits.*

**John Baldasaro accepted the article as read. Andy Meyers seconded.**

Jason asked if the town has an OPEB account now? Andrew said yes, but there was a state revision that the town would need to adopt. Jason asked if we knew how much it is in the account now. Andrew said the account balance is unknown at the moment.

0 – No votes      All in favor      35 registered voters present

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Article Approved



**ARTICLE 8: APPROPRIATE TO OPEB TRUST FUND**

**Town Clerk**

*To see if the Town will vote to transfer a sum of money in the amount of \$50,000 from the General Stabilization Fund to the Town's Other Post-Employment Benefits (OPEB) Trust Fund, as established under Massachusetts General Laws Chapter 32B, Section 20, or take any other action relative thereto.*

**Submitted by Board of Assessors & Town Administrator**

**Two-Thirds vote required.**

**Explanation:**

*The OPEB Trust Fund allows the Town to set aside and invest funds to meet its long-term liability for retiree health benefits. This transfer represents a proactive effort to reduce the Town's unfunded OPEB liability and improve long-term financial stability. Transferring funds from the General Stabilization Fund requires a two-thirds vote of Town Meeting in accordance with Massachusetts General Laws Chapter 40, Section 5B.*

**John Baldasaro accepted the article as read. Terry Donovan seconded.**

**John said the OPEB account was created ten years ago and it has become a problem in other towns when this account wasn't funded. Audits have always brought up the issue of not having a funded OPEB account. He said they are trying to avoid any issues in the future. Ray LaBreque of 626 Route 20 asked what the liabilities are. Andrew said that if employees retire and they are paid retirement benefits, this account will pay those out. Ray asked if there are retirees now? Andrew said yes, and they are being funded by the general fund. Jonathan Williams of 280 Goss Hill Road asked who managing the town funds. Andrew said the accountant and treasurer. What is invested in by the town is the treasurer's responsibility.**

**Jessica Sakaske of 124 Prospect Street asked if the audit was available to the public? John said yes, it should be on the town website.**

**John Foley of 40 Sylvester Hamilton asked if the account gains interest. Brian said yes.**

0 – No votes      All in favor      35 registered voters present

**Article Approved**

**ARTICLE 9: ADDITION TO TOWN BUILDING STABILIZATION FUND**

To see if the Town will vote to appropriate by transfer from the Stabilization Fund the sum of \$10,000 to the Town Building Maintenance Fund, or to take any action relative thereto.

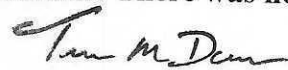
Submitted by Board of Assessors & Town Administrator Two-Thirds vote required.

**Explanation:**

The Town Building Stabilization Fund provides a dedicated reserve to address future capital needs and major maintenance of municipal buildings. Transferring funds from the General Stabilization Fund will strengthen the Town's ability to plan for building repairs and improvements without requiring large single-year appropriations. In accordance with Massachusetts General Laws Chapter 40, Section 5B, this transfer requires a two-thirds vote of Town Meeting.

John Baldasaro accepted the article as read. Barbara Huntoon seconded. There was no discussion.

A True Copy, Attest



0 - No votes All in favor 34 registered voters present

Town Clerk Article Approved

**ARTICLE 10: ADDITION TO TOWN VEHICLE STABILIZATION FUND**

To see if the Town will vote to appropriate by transfer from the Stabilization Fund the sum of \$10,000 to the Town Vehicle Stabilization Fund, or to take any action relative thereto.

Submitted by Board of Assessors & Town Administrator Two-Thirds vote required.

**Explanation:**

The Vehicle Stabilization Fund was established to plan for and manage the long-term replacement of Town vehicles in a fiscally responsible manner. This transfer from the General Stabilization Fund will strengthen the Vehicle Stabilization Fund balance, providing future flexibility to replace essential vehicles without requiring large, single-year appropriations. A two-thirds vote of Town Meeting is required to transfer funds from the General Stabilization Fund, pursuant to Massachusetts General Laws Chapter 40, Section 5B.

John Baldasaro accepted the article as read. Jim Zimmerman seconded.

Ann Daley asked what the account balance is right now and what departments would be able to use this fund. Andrew said any town department with a vehicle, such as police, highway, etc. Brian said the account balance is at \$28,000 currently. Brian said this article falls in line with the capital asset plan being put in place by the finance and capital planning committee. It will be presented at town meeting. It is to plan better for bigger expenditures so the town will not have to rely on free cash or stabilization. Tiffany Alos of 102 Old State Highway asked if this would include funds for maintenance of the vehicles. Brian said if there was a significantly large bill, that could be covered with the stabilization but would be deemed necessary on a case-by-case basis. John confirmed that most maintenance would be

budgeted in the departments' budgets but any unbudgeted and large bills ~~could be used~~ from this account.

**Town Clerk**

**0 – No votes All in favor 35 registered voters present**

**Article Approved**

**ARTICLE 11: TRANSFER TO SALE OF REAL ESTATE**

*To see if the Town will vote to appropriate by transfer from Free Cash the sum of \$35,500 to the Sale of Real Estate, or to take any action relative thereto.*

**Submitted by Finance Committee**

**Majority vote required.**

**Explanation:**

*At the 2025 Annual Town Meeting, funds intended for the second payment of the new fire truck from the Sale of Real Estate account were miscalculated. This article seeks to correct that error by transferring the necessary amount from Free Cash to ensure that the Sale of Real Estate account accurately reflects the Town's financial intentions.*

*This transfer will not increase overall expenditures but will properly allocate existing resources in accordance with the original intent of the Town Meeting. Approval of this article allows the Town to maintain accurate financial records and ensure proper representation of funds related to the Sale of Real Estate.*

**John Baldasaro made a motion. Barbara Huntoon seconded.**

**Brian said that at the Annual Town Meeting, the Finance Committee had requested that the fire truck payment come from the Sale of Real Estate account because the balance was showing as \$100,000. That balance was an accounting error and there was actually only \$50,000 in that account. Jason asked if we would have used free cash if the real estate account showed the proper balance at the ATM? Brian said yes**

**0 – No votes All in favor 35 registered voters present**

**Article Approved**

**ARTICLE 12: STIPEND FOR ON-CALL FIREFIGHTERS**

*To see if the Town will vote to appropriate by transfer from Free Cash the sum of \$3,300 to pay stipends of \$400 per year to eligible call firefighters and \$750 per year for eligible officers, or to take any other action relative thereto.*

**Submitted by Finance Committee**

**Majority Vote Required**

**Explanation**



John said that insurance was budgeted and after the vote at the ATM, Hampden County Insurance Trust raised their rates another 20%. John said that the town is looking for other insurance providers, but HCGIT is still the cheapest around. Gateway also uses them and has decided to stay with them. Brian confirmed insurance told the town there would be an 18% increase, which the town voted for but was then increased after that.

Jonathan Williams asked how going forward if this would happen again. John said there's no way to know. Jason said that the HCGIT director has retired and believes that the mistrust and misrepresentation left with him. They are currently looking for a new director and there was not a good plan in place for the future. The town benefitted for years with no rate increase and then it all came at once. Jonathan asked if there should be a stabilization fund for health insurance in that regard. Brian said that's something the finance and capital planning committee can review. He said a mid-year rate increase is very unusual and he doesn't anticipate this happening in the future. John said he agreed that a stabilization account for health insurance could be a good idea.

Maryann Pease of 16 Hampden Rd asked how much free cash the town has before all these articles? Brian said \$188,000 and after the articles, there would be about \$100,000 remaining. Jessica Sakaske asked if that is a good number for stabilization. John said yes. Ray Labreque asked if free cash can't be carried over. John said any unspent free cash would go into stabilization.

0 – No votes      All in favor      35 registered voters present

A True Copy, Attest  
Article Approved  
*Tom M. De...*

#### ARTICLE 14: TOWN ADMINISTRATOR SALARY DEFICIT

Town Clerk

*To see if the Town will vote to appropriate by transfer from Free Cash the sum of \$17,102 to cover an expected deficit in the Town Administrator salary line item, or to take any action relative thereto.*

Submitted by Finance Committee

Majority Vote Required Explanation

*This article provides funding for the salary of the Town Administrator for Fiscal Year 2026. The appropriation reflects mid-year adjustment due to employment agreements with prior the Town Administrator to train the current Administrator and severance.*

John Baldasaro accepted the article as read. Chris Strong of 57 Middlefield Road seconded.

John said this is a source of protentional litigation. He said the prior Town Administrator was offered a contract, but it was not signed and was not moving forward as such. The contract offered was for three years and the time was served. When a new town administrator was hired, there was a training period overlap and the previous Town Administrator asked for a severance. There was back-and-forth about the situation after

*Tom M. Dean*

Town Clerk

reviewing with Town Council, a severance agreement was reached and alleviated a litigation. John said if this is not voted on it means the Town Administrator salary account would run out and would result in the new Town Administrator being not paid for two months.

Sister Judith of 117 Prospect Street said that there should be an executive secretary to handle the situation. She said when the job was posted for a new administrator in May, the Town Administrator knew his last day was approaching and she thinks this is being done on purpose. John said outside of executive session, there is no discussion able to be had publicly about job performance.

Melissa McAuliffe of 91 Prospect Street wanted to confirm that this agreement was already made by the board, and this vote is to make sure Andrew Alward gets paid appropriately. John said yes.

Diane Demoss Maple Street asked why the town wasn't included in the amount of severance agreed on? John said discussions happened in Executive Session.

Liz Massa of 3 Park Knox Road asked if there was a second opinion sought out from another attorney. John said no.

Jason said there was never a contract presented to the previous Town Administrator for 3 years. John said it was offered and never signed. Jason said that was not presented when he was on the board. Jason said there was a job description provided and there wasn't a contract provided when he was hired. Jason said that since a contract wasn't signed, the town could have posted the job and hired someone else.

Jonathan Williams said he lived in a town in Vermont that was sued multiple time and \$17,000 is a small amount compared to what people could fight and win.

Ann Daley wanted to discuss job performance. Brian asked that she refrain from speaking about his performance. It is not appropriate to do without council.

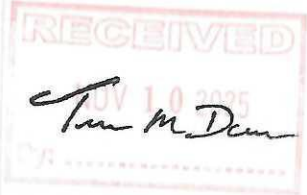
Maryann wanted to know what the amount of training was versus the severance amount. John said about \$11,000 was for severance and \$6,000 for training.

Nick Chiusano of 3 Park Knox Rd asked if it was the prior Town Administrator or the town's choice for him to not sign the contract. Jason said that the board had decided that they did not want him to sign a contract.

Charles Schoonmaker of 248 Route 20 asked why there was a severance given if he was being let go. John said in the contract that was not signed, there was a severance clause, which the previous Town Administrator brought up.

2 – No votes      All in favor    35 registered voters present      Article Approved

John Baldasaro made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Terry Donovan seconded.



**ARTICLE 14: TOWN ADMINISTRATOR SALARY DEFICIT**

To see if the Town will vote to appropriate by transfer from Free Cash the sum of \$17,102 to cover an expected deficit in the Town Administrator salary line item, or to take any action relative thereto.

Submitted by Finance Committee

Majority Vote Required Explanation

This article provides funding for the salary of the Town Administrator for Fiscal Year 2026. The appropriation reflects mid-year adjustment due to employment agreements with the prior Town Administrator to train the current Administrator and severance.

**ARTICLE 14: TOWN**

**Town of Chester Special Town Meeting**

November 24<sup>th</sup>, 2025

6:30PM

You are hereby directed to serve this Warrant by posting true and attested copies thereof, in three public places within the Town of Chester, fourteen (14) 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.

**ARTICLE 14: TOWN**

John Baldasaro, Chair

public places within the  
holding said meeting

Craig Gauthier, Clerk

A True Copy, Attest

Town Clerk

As per instructions in this Warrant, I have this 10th day of November, 2025, posted same in three public places, Chester Town Hall, Chester Village Marketplace, Chester Post Office, prior to 6:30PM.

Chester Police Officer/Constable