



**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 bylaw 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.*

**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
<b>Total:</b>			<b>\$6,140.76</b>

**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.*

**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**

**Majority vote required**

**Explanation**

*Acceptance of this By-law formally recognizes agriculture 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.*

**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.*

**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.*

**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.*

**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.*

**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. e an OPEB Fund to*

**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.*

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

*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.*

**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.*

#### **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.*

#### **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.*

**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**

*In order to maintain an effective and responsive fire service, the Town has recognized the need to retain and incentivize qualified on-call firefighters who are available to respond to emergencies outside of regular staffing hours. The stipend will be paid to those on-call firefighters who meet specified criteria—such as maintaining certifications, responding to a minimum number of calls, completing required training, and remaining available for deployment as needed by the Fire Chief.*

*The appropriation of \$3,300 will provide the necessary funding to cover the stipend program for fiscal year FY26. The program supports public safety by enhancing readiness, bolstering the pool of available personnel, and recognizing the commitment made by on-call volunteers/part-time staff. This approach is more cost-effective than converting to full-time staffing, while providing a meaningful incentive for availability and performance. Funding for this appropriation is to come from Free Cash*

**ARTICLE 13: HAMPSHIRE COUNTY GROUP INSURANCE TRUST RATE INCREASE**

*To see if the Town will vote to appropriate by transfer from Free Cash the sum of \$23,749 to cover an expected deficit in the Group Health Insurance line item, or to take any other action relative thereto.*

**Submitted By Finance Committee**

**Majority Vote Required**

**Explanation**

*The Hampshire County Group Insurance Trust, of which the Town is a member, has announced an increase in health insurance premium rates. The current budget did not anticipate this additional increase, which affects the cost of employees and retiree health insurance.*

*This article appropriates additional funds from Free Cash to cover the unbudgeted cost of these increases, ensuring that the Town meets its contractual obligations for employee health insurance coverage without disrupting other operating budget commitments.*

*This is a one-time adjustment based on the Trust's increase rate, and future years will reflect the updated rates during the regular budget process.*

**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.



John Baldasaro, Chair



Craig Gauthier, 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