

Chester Finance Committee Meeting

5/7/2026 at the Fire Department

In Attendance: Sr. Judith Dalesandro, Florence Bolduc, Mary Ann Pease, Joe Ryan, Nick Chiusano and Jon Williams

Absent: Bob Daley

Guests: Brian Fogue, Andrew Alward, Graig Gauthier and Jill Strong

Rec Committee Members: Jessica Sakaske and Barbara Huntoon

Meeting called to order by Flo at 5:30.

4/30/26 meeting minutes were reviewed. Sr. Judith made a motion to accept as written, Flo 2nd. Unanimous. Flo signed and gave signed copy to Andrew to give to Town Clerk.

Park and Rec FY27 budget request was reviewed by Jessica and Barbara. After much discussion on the activities of the rec committee, it was decided to level fund them and see how the upcoming year goes. A porta potty was mentioned, but if needed can come out of expense account. Attendance at events is iffy with so many other surrounding towns hosting the same activities. Jessica and Barb were informed that they could do fundraising for the committee. They were also told they have a donation account. They were given the account # and balance. Approximately \$202. Barbara mentioned that she would like to see a line item for Town Hall speakers on this year's ATM warrant. This could be considered a capital expenditure for a future purchase. She stated they had secured a speaker system for the Memorial Day activities from a band playing at Chester on Track. The Park and Rec budget includes funding for mowing the ball field.

Flo mentioned that she reached out to the Police for call numbers based on Bob's request at last meeting. Has not heard back.

She also stated she has not received a budget for CMELD, nor did she think she would be getting one.

BOS member, Craig Gauthier, was asked to come to the meeting to discuss our concerns with increasing the BOS member stipends and the work he does independently on behalf of the town. Craig explained what he has been doing for the town to save money for the town. It was decided that there are two different

issues. BOS stipends and the need perhaps for a handy man. Suggestions were made for Craig to bill the appropriate departments when he works for them. Maybe taking funds from the Town Hall expense account. A clear answer was not made on how to proceed, and this topic may come up at the ATM. Jon thought perhaps the same way the Fire Chief salary was handled, doing annual gradual increases for a # of years to get the Chief up to the industry standard might be a nice approach to handle the BOS stipends. ~~5 years to get the BOS to \$25,000.~~ **FAB**

5 YRS TO GET THE BOS TO \$5000 PER SELECTMAN .

The BOS stipend will appear in the 27 budget as \$2,789 per member. A 5% increase same as all other town employees with 3 exceptions.

Andrew suggested going year by year as opposed to promising something extended out and not being able to honor our commitment the next year. Sr. Judith made a motion on this and Nick 2nd. Unanimous, except Jon was a no vote.

Sr Judith, once again asked for job descriptions for everyone. Everyone should be paid hourly, signing in an out on payroll system. Nick mentioned how low Chester stipends were and thought they should be increased as well.

This year's budget is 2.98% of an increase over last year.

Insurance for employees was discussed and all the past trouble the town has had with its current carrier. The split for employees is 80% paid by the town and 20% employees pay. We should investigate surrounding towns' splits. Bryan discussed that there are not many options out there as far as insurers for Municipalities. Jon suggested that since this is such a large portion of our budget the FIN COM should be paying more attention to this item and perhaps form a subcommittee.

Andrew stated that the numbers he as seen from the state for FY 27 are pretty accurate and have not been fluctuating. Some may go up further but not down.

Jon inquired about departments that don't use all their funds each year and perhaps starting at a base line of what they actually spent the prior year. It was mentioned that COA had their budget cut last year due to not having any activities. This year they came back with larger increases. Not the best practice.

The entire budget was reviewed, and Flo made a motion to accept the budget as is. Nick 2nd. Unanimous.

Next meeting will be 5/14/26 at Fire Station.

Items for discussion are the amount of Free Cash distribution to the stabilization Funds.

Jon would like further discussion on the 3rd largest line item in our budget, insurance. The costs are out of hand and will continue to rise in the coming years. Nick also voiced his insurance concerns.

Meeting was adjourned at 7:05 PM

Respectfully submitted,
Mary Ann Pease

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5-14-2026