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*Tom M. Dean*

Town Clerk

**COMMONWEALTH OF MASSACHUSETTS**

**TOWN OF CHESTER**

**2026 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, Massachusetts on Monday, the 8<sup>th</sup> day of June, 2026, A.D. at 7:00PM**, then and there to act on the following articles:

**ARTICLE 1. MONETARY INCREASES.**

*To see if the Town will vote to authorize that any motion or amendment to increase any monetary articles or line items as recommended by the Finance Committee & Select Board, presented at this Town Meeting, shall be Out of Order unless such motion or amendment states the source of funding as being from available Free Cash, or a line item, article, or other funding source that will be reduced by the same amount; or to take any other action relation thereto.*

**Submitted by: Town Administrator**

**Majority vote required**

**Explanation:**

This article means that at Town Meeting, people cannot propose spending more money than what the Finance Committee and Select Board recommended unless they also explain where the extra money will come from. If someone wants to increase a budget item or spending amount, they must either use available "Free Cash" or reduce funding somewhere else by the same amount. If they do not identify a funding source, the proposal cannot be considered or voted on.

**Select Board Vice Chair Jill Strong made a motion to move the article as read. Barbara Huntoon of 35 Bromley Rd seconded. Jason Forgue of 23 Bromley Rd asked about reducing funding from a budget line item and if that's allowed. Town Administrator Andrew Alward said that is allowed at Town Meeting for the Town Operating Budget.**

Bob Broga of 305 Bromley Rd asked if this would only pertain to this town meeting. Brian Forgue said that was correct.

49 registered voters present

0- no's

Article Passed

**ARTICLE 2: EDUCATION STABILIZATION FUND TRANSFER**

*To see if the Town will vote to appropriate by transfer from Free Cash to the Educational Stabilization Account the sum of \$37,000, or to take any other action relative thereto.*

**Submitted by: Finance Committee**

**Majority vote required**

**Explanation:**

This article asks the Town to vote on moving \$37,000 from the Town's available "Free Cash" into the Educational Stabilization Account, which is a reserve fund set aside for future education-related expenses.

Jill made a motion to move the article as read. Second from Jim Zimmerman of 129 Prospect Street.

Bob Daley of 7 Andrews Ave said that the Finance Committee was excited about this article.

49 registered voters present

0- no's

Article Passed

**ARTICLE 3: TOWN VEHICLE STABILIZATION FUND**

*To see if the Town will vote to appropriate by transfer from Free Cash to the Town Vehicle Stabilization Fund the sum of \$25,000, or to take any other action relative thereto.*

**Submitted by: Finance Committee**

**Majority vote required**

**Explanation:**

This article asks the Town to approve transferring \$25,000 from available "Free Cash" into the Vehicle Stabilization Account, which is a savings fund used for future vehicle purchases or major vehicle repairs.

Jill Strong made a motion to move the article as read. Rich Holzman of 14 Ingell Rd seconded.

Jason Forgue, 23 Bromley Rd, asked if this is for all departments. Brian said that it would be for all departments that currently have vehicles.

49 registered voters present

0- no's

Article Passed

**ARTICLE 4: TOWN BUILDING MAINTENANCE STABILIZATION FUND**

*To see if the Town will vote to appropriate by transfer from Free Cash to the Town Building Maintenance Stabilization Fund the sum of \$22,000, or to take any other action relative thereto.*

**Submitted by: Finance Committee**

**Majority vote required**

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**Town Clerk**

**Explanation:**

This article asks the Town to approve transferring \$22,000 from available "Free Cash" into the Town Building Maintenance Stabilization Fund, which is a reserve fund for future building repairs, maintenance, or improvements.

**Jill made a motion to move the article as read, Barbara Huntoon seconded. There was no discussion.**

48 registered voters present

0- no's

Article Passed

**ARTICLE 5: TOWN INSURANCE STABILIZATION FUND**

*To see if the Town will vote to appropriate by transfer from Free Cash to the Insurance Stabilization Account the sum of \$10,000, or to take any other action relative thereto.*

**Submitted by: Finance Committee**

**Majority vote required**

**Explanation:**

This article asks the Town to transfer \$10,000 from available "Free Cash" into the Insurance Stabilization Account, which is a savings fund for future insurance costs.

**Jill made a motion to move the article as read. Ann Daley of 7 Andrews Ave, seconded. There was no discussion.**

48 registered voters present

0- no's

Article Passed

**ARTICLE 6: APPROPRIATE TO OPEB TRUST FUND**

*To see if the Town will vote to appropriate by transfer from Free Cash the sum of \$5,000 to the Town's Other Post-Employment Benefits (OPEB) Trust Fund, as established under Massachusetts General Laws Chapter 32B, Section 20, or to take any other action relative thereto.*

**Submitted by: Finance Committee**

**Majority vote required**

**Explanation:**

This article asks the Town to transfer \$5,000 from available "Free Cash" into the OPEB Trust Fund, which helps pay for future retiree benefits such as health insurance for Town employees.

**Jill Strong made a motion to move the article as read, Select Board member Craig Gauthier seconded. Jason Forgue, 23 Bromley Rd, asked if there has been any progress in finding the amount that the town has spent on OPEB. Andrew said that will be calculated when the new accountant is fully up to speed**

48 registered voters present

0- no's

Article Passed

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**Town Clerk**

**ARTICLE 7: COMPENSATION**

*To see if the Town will vote to fix the annual salaries of all elected officials for the period of July 1, 2026 to June 30, 2027 as indicated below, or to take any other action relative thereto.*

Elected Official's Salary	FY2022	Proposed FY27
Selectboard Member	\$2,657	\$2,790
Selectboard Member	\$2,657	\$2,790
Selectboard Member	\$2,657	\$2,790
Water Commissioner	\$700	\$1,500
Water Commissioner	\$700	\$1,500
Water Commissioner	\$700	\$1,500
Town Moderator	\$200	\$200
Health Board Member	\$1,655	\$2,000
Health Board Member	\$1,655	\$2,000
Health Board Member	\$1,655	\$2,000

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**Town Clerk**

**Submitted by: Select Board**

**Majority vote required**

**Explanation:**

This article asks the Town to approve the salaries for all elected officials for the fiscal year running from July 1, 2026 through June 30, 2027.

**Jill Strong made a motion to move the article as read. Craig Gauthier seconded. John Baldasaro of 83 Lyon Hill Rd asked why the Select Board stipends were not increased as much as other boards that were increased. He said when it was discussed at a prior Select Board meeting, the proposed amount was more than what is being presented today.**



Jill Strong made a motion to move the article as read, Barbara Huntoon, 35 Bromley Rd, seconded the motion.

Ann Daley of 7 Andrews Ave asked why the Debt and Interest line item was increased. Andrew said there is an increase because it will be built into the operating budget. This will alleviate the need to have debt payment articles for Town Meeting.

Barbara Huntoon asked about the increase in Assessor Salary because the justification just says 15 hours of work at \$27.00 and not really a justification. Andy Meyers, Assessors' Chair said that Chester has the lowest salary rate for Assessors in the area. He said that they are still looking for an Assessors' clerk after months of the job being posted.

Jason Forgue asked about some of the increases in the Select Board and Town Hall expenses. Andrew explained that this past year some of the bills and regular expenses were lumped in as one line item. He explained that most of the budget has been broken out with further line items this year. He said there were also a lot of line items that went over budget and the town is trying to prevent that going forward.

Jason asked why the COA didn't have a 5% salary increase like most of the other departments? Florence said that was because of performance reviews provided. Jason asked if that's why Building Inspector also didn't get a 5%? Florence said that the Finance and Capital Planning Committee voted on a 5% increase for the building inspector and isn't sure why that amount didn't make it to the Town Meeting version of the budget.

Jason asked why the Finance and Capital Planning Committee reserve fund is having a \$7,000 increase. Florence and Brian explained that decision was made because of the number of increases in services through the fiscal year. There were a lot of unexpected expenses this fiscal year that caused some accounts to go deficit and the reserve fund would allow a cushion if there were more unexpected costs.

Jason asked why there were so many line items for the Fire Department. Fire Chief Nate Bolduc explained that the Fire Department previously only had an expense account and they wanted to have their expenses broken out for better projections and accounting.

48 registered voters present

0- no's

Article Passed

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Town Clerk

**ARTICLE 9: REVOLVING FUND CAPS**

*To see if the Town will vote to set FY2027 caps 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>
<i>Transfer Station</i>	<i>\$57,000.00</i>
<i>Cemetery</i>	<i>\$30,000.00</i>
<i>Fire Department</i>	<i>\$5,000.00</i>

**Submitted by:**

**Majority vote required**

**Explanation:**

This article asks the Town to set spending limits (caps) for several "revolving funds" for fiscal year 2027. These funds are accounts that collect fees from certain Town services and can only be spent on related expenses. The limits listed show the maximum amount each department is allowed to spend from its funds during the year, such as for the Board of Health, Building Inspector, Police details, Transfer Station, Cemetery, and Fire Department. In simple terms, the Town is deciding how much money each of these departments can use from their own fee-based accounts next year.

**Jill made a motion to move the article as read. Craig seconded. There was no discussion.**

**47 registered voters present**

**0- no's**

**Article Passed**

**ARTICLE 10: GATEWAY REGIONAL SCHOOL BUDGET**

*To see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate, or transfer from available funds, the sum of \$1,637,010 for the Gateway Regional School District for the period July 1, 2026 through June 30, 2027, or to take any other action relative thereto.*

**Submitted by: School Committee**

**Majority vote required**

**Explanation:**

This article asks the Town to approve \$1,637,010 to pay its required share of funding for the Gateway Regional School District for the 2026–2027 school year.

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*Tom M. Deen*  
**Town Clerk**



<i>Transportation/Fuel</i>	25,743	26,000	26,260
<i>Depreciation</i>	81,678	82,495	85,000
<i>Office/Insur/ All Other</i>	17,804	17,982	18,161
<i>Total Expenses</i>	1,559,525	1,551,075	1,568,224

**Submitted by: CMELD Commissioners**

**Majority vote required**

**Explanation:**

This article asks the Town to allow the Municipal Electric Light Department to use all the money it earns from selling electricity during the 2026–2027 fiscal year. That money would be spent under the control of the Board of Electric Light Commissioners and the department manager. In simple terms, it lets the electric utility keep and spend its own income to run and maintain the electric system.

**Barbara Huntoon made a motion to move the article as read. Jill Strong seconded. There was no discussion.**

**47 registered voters present**

**0- no's**

**Article Passed**

**ARTICLE 13: 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 relative thereto.*

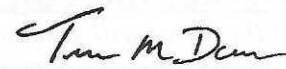
<i>Salaries</i>	\$100,000
<i>Commissioners Stipends</i>	\$4,500
<i>Operating Expenses</i>	\$80,000
<i>Budget Surplus</i>	\$15,000
<i>Total</i>	\$199,500

*Last Years Total's \$179,757*

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*And that the \$199,500 will be raised as follows*

<i>Enterprise Receipts</i>	\$199,500
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**Town Clerk**

*\$29,479 will be raised from the tax levy to pay the debt service on the loan for the upgrades done to the Water Treatment plant previously.*

**Submitted by: Chester Water Department**

**Majority vote required**

**Explanation:**

This article allows the Water Department to pay for its expenses using the money it collects from water bills and other fees, rather than general Town taxes. The funds would stay within the Water Enterprise Fund and be used to operate and maintain the water system, including repairs, staffing, equipment, and improvements, making the department financially self-supported. Tax revenue will be applied to pay the debt service on prior borrowing that paid for system upgrades.

*Tom M. Dem*

Town Clerk

Town Clerk

Barbara Huntoon, 35 Bromley Rd, made a motion to move the article as read. Rich Holzman, 14 Ingell Rd, seconded.

Bob Daley discussed the history of the Water Department and how critical their operations and operators are. Today is the 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Austin Brook Reservoir. Jim said this is the 6<sup>th</sup> quarter that the water has tested with very good numbers.

47 registered voters present

0- no's

Article Passed

**ARTICLE 14: TRANSFER FROM CWD RETAINED EARNINGS TO CWD STABILIZATION FUND**

*To see if the Town will vote to appropriate by transfer the sum of \$13,213 from the Chester Water Department Retained Earnings account to the Chester Water Department Stabilization Fund, or to take any other action relative thereto.*

**Submitted by: Chester Water Department**

**Majority vote required**

**Explanation:**

This article asks the Town to move \$13,213 from the Water Department's savings (retained earnings) into the Water Department's Stabilization Fund. In simple terms, it is setting aside saved water system money into a reserve fund for future repairs, emergencies, or major water system needs.

Jill made a motion to move the article as read. Jim Zimmerman, 129 Prospect Street, seconded. There was no discussion.

47 registered voters present

0- no's

Article Passed

**Article 15: REPAIRS FOR CHIMNEY TO THE OLD JAIL HOUSE**

*To see if the Town will vote to appropriate by transfer from the Building Stabilization account, the sum of \$3,500 for the purpose of repairing the Chimney at the Old Jail House, including any incidental and related costs, or to take any other action relative thereto.*

**Submitted by: Chester Historical Commission**

**Two thirds vote required**

**Explanation:**

This article asks the Town to use \$3,500 from the Building Stabilization Fund to repair the chimney at the Old Jail House. In simple terms, it is using saved building repair money to fix a specific part of a historic Town building.

Barbara Huntoon made a motion to move the article as read. Jill Strong seconded.

47 registered voters present

0- no's

Article Passed

**Article 16: PURCHASE OF NEW IT EQUIPMENT**

*To see if the Town will vote to appropriate by transfer from the General Stabilization Fund, the sum of \$10,000 for the purpose of purchasing and equipping new laptops, website updates and other IT upgrades including any incidental and related costs or take any other action relative thereto.*

**Submitted by: Town Administrator**

**Two thirds vote required**

**Explanation:**

This article asks the Town to use \$10,000 from General Stabilization Fund to buy new laptops and make updates to the Town’s website and other technology systems. In simple terms, it is funding upgrades to computers and IT equipment for Town use.

**Jill Strong made a motion to move the article as read. Jim Zimmerman seconded.**

**Jason Forgue asked why this article is needed when are increases to the IT line item in the town budget.**

**Andrew Alward said would be for one-time purchases as opposed to being part of the operating budget.**

**47 registered voters present**

**0- no’s**

**Article Passed**

**ARTICLE 17: DEMAND BILLS ADJUSTMENT TO FEES**

*To see if the Town will vote to amend the fee schedule for demand bills issued by the Town by increasing the demand bill rate from five dollars (\$5.00) to fifteen dollars (\$15.00) per bill, in order to better cover administrative costs associated with the preparation, issuance, and collection of such bills; or to take any other action relative thereto.*

**Submitted by: Tax Collector & Town Administrator**

**Majority vote required**

**Explanation:**

This article asks the Town to raise the fee for demand bills from \$5 to \$15. Demand bills are charges sent when payment is late or additional billing is required. The increase is intended to help the Town recover the costs of processing and collecting these bills.

**Jill made a motion to move the article as read. Craig Gauthier seconded.**

**Bob Daley asked if the increased demand fee would go to the Tax Collector? Tax Collector Terry Donovan said no, the Tax Collector would collect \$5 and the additional \$10 would go back to the town.**

**A True Copy, Attest**



**Town Clerk**

This article asks the Town to raise the fee for demand bills from \$5 to \$15. Demand bills are charges sent when payment is late or additional billing is required. The increase is intended to help the Town recover the costs of processing and collecting these bills.

Town of Chester 2026 Annual Town Meeting June 8, 2026 7:00PM

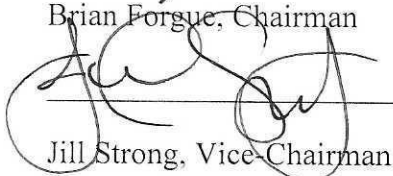
You are hereby directed to serve this Warrant by posting true and attested copies thereof, in three public places within the Town of Chester, seven (7) days at least, before the day and hour of holding said meeting.

Therefore, fail not and make do 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, 2026



Brian Forgue, Chairman



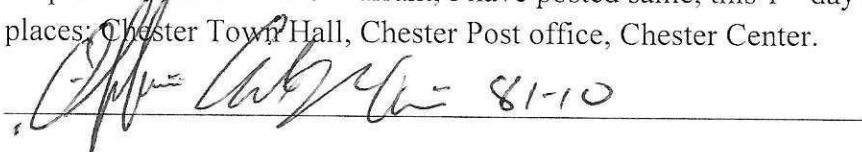
Jill Strong, Vice-Chairman



Craig Gauthier, Clerk



As per instruction in this Warrant, I have posted same, this 1<sup>nd</sup> day of June 2026 in three public places: Chester Town Hall, Chester Post office, Chester Center.

 81-10

Chester Police

**A True Copy, Attest**



**Town Clerk**