

Regular Meeting

The Town of Chester Council held the Regular Scheduled Council meeting on February 12, 2026, at 6:00 pm.

Members Present: Mayor James Dahlen, Council Persons, Sonja Dahlen, Scott Decker, Rachel Ghekiere, Garrett Graff, and Jim Sivils

Members Absent: Tina Neer

Staff Present: Dave Ghekiere (PWD)
Ashley Wickum (Clerk/Treasurer)

Guests: Matthew Fenger
Justin Wickum (6:05 pm)

1. Mayor James Dahlen called the regular meeting to order at 6:00 pm
2. Pledge of Allegiance
3. Reminder that the Meeting is Audio Recorded
4. Sonja Dahlen made the motion to approve the minutes of the Special Council Meeting, January 14, 2026, with the addition of Ms. Morkrid to the first question under line 5 and Regular Council Meeting, January 14, 2026. Garrett Graff seconded the motion. Motion to approve the minutes passed with all voting ayes.
5. Claims were presented to the council for approval. Ashley Wickum informed the council that a claim for Torgerson's was added. Sonja Dahlen made the motion to approve the February claims submitted for payment. Ck # 21384-21412 electronic payment -99924-99925, February payroll advances, Ck # 21382-21383. January payroll Ck# 21370-21381 and electronic payroll liability payments -88925-88929 were processed. Rachel Ghekiere seconded the motion. Question about vet bill, it was for animal control. Motion to approve claims passed with all voting ayes.
6. The council reviewed the adjustments and journal entries made in January. Rachel Ghekiere made the motion to approve the JV & Adjustments. Jim Sivils seconded the motion. Motion passed with all voting ayes.
7. Public Comments: None
8. Sheriff's Office Report: Copy was provided by the Sheriff's office.
9. New Business:
 - Approval: Hi-Line Event Center Request for New Water Connection: Matthew Fenger and Justin Wickum presented a request for a new $\frac{3}{4}$ inch water connection that will go to the new Hi-Line Event Center. This new building will be located west of the County Shop and will have a toilet and hydrant. There is no building yet, but the trap house has been set. They would like to use the existing six-foot meter pit that the cemetery is already connected to. The new building will be about 970 feet from the meter pit. The cost to connect is \$1250.00. Sonja Dahlen made the motion to approve the request for a new $\frac{3}{4}$ inch connection to the water to service the Hi-

Line Event Center. Rachel Ghekiere seconded the motion. Motion passed with all voting ayes.

- Opening and Awarding: Sealed Bids for Obsolete Equipment- Only one bid from the County was received for the jetter. Rachel Ghekiere made a motion to donate the jetter to the County. Jim Sivils seconded the motion. Motion passed with all voting ayes.
- Approval: Contracts with RPA: These are amendments to the previous contracts for another 5 years. Sonja Dahlen made the motion to approve the contracts with RPA. Garrett Graff seconded the motion. Motion passed with all voting ayes.
- Approval: Contract with Bill Hunt: Scott Decker made a motion to approve the contract with Bill Hunt for Attorney Services. Sonja Dahlen seconded the motion. Motion passed with all voting ayes.
- Administration Committee Presentation of New Wage Matrix: The Administrative Committee presented a wage matrix. Discussion.
- Approval of Resolution #09-2026 to adopt New Wage Matrix and revise Employee Handbook to Reflect Matrix: Mayor Dahlen made the recommendation to table Resolution #09-2026 until more research and detail can be added to the experience and licenses.
- Approval: Advertise with New Starting Wage- Discussion. Sonja Dahlen made the motion to advertise for an operator with a starting wage of \$20/hr. without a CDL, to table Resolution #09-2026 until more information can be obtained and to raise Jadon Sullivan to \$20/hr. to match the starting wage of a new hire without a CDL. Additional discussion included Jim Sivils opposed rewarding employees with raises when they are not passing tests. Garrett Graff seconded the motion. Motion passed with all voting ayes.
- Approval: Advertise for Pool Manager: Sonja Dahlen made the motion to advertise for all summer positions including pool manager, lifeguards, and summer help and set wages when applications are received. Rachel Ghekiere seconded the motion. Motion passed with all voting ayes.
- Building Permits: None

10. Old Business:

- North Central Montana Regional Water Authority update was provided by email from Bill Hunt and placed on the website and Facebook. See below.
"Here's an example of an info update on NCMRWA.

The Chester Town Council held a council meeting on January 14, 2026 at the Liberty County Senior Center. The meeting was held at the Senior Center to accommodate the anticipated public. After approximately two hours of public comment and questions related to NCMRWA, the Town Council voted to request membership in the NCMRWA. Mayor Dahlen signed a resolution formally requesting membership which was forward to NCRMWA.

On January 27, 2026, the NCRMWA held its regular quarterly meeting of all board members in Great Falls. The board is comprised of NCMRWA members who are appointed by their own cities, towns, and local water districts to represent them. The required quorum of board members voted to recommend to their respective member entities that Chester be allowed to become a member. Even though the board members voted to allow Chester to become a member, the two-thirds of the governing bodies of each member still have to approve Chester's request. NCMRWA is now preparing a resolution for each member city council, town council, and water district board to consider and vote.

Chester anticipates this process to take between 30 and 60 days.

Assuming Chester is approved and becomes a member of NCMRWA, Chester still will not receive water from NCMRWA for at least 3 years and probably longer. The Water Treatment Plant which will supply NCMRWA with water is still approximately a year from completion. Parts of the pipeline system will need to be redesigned to include Chester, then the pipeline will have to be funded and installed. All of this is a lengthy process.”

11. Mayor Report/ Additional Agenda Items: none
12. PWD update: Dave Ghekier, PWD, updated the council that the loader has been fixed and they are busy servicing and doing maintenance on equipment. They are also working on garbage racks. The water project is on hold. A fiber glass line was discovered, and options are being looked at on how to proceed. Chris Hayes is doing a water model to determine where the Town might connect to North Central to find out if the line should be replaced or if it would benefit the Town to connect somewhere else and not fix this line. Changing the plan will affect the new flow meter. Dave is waiting on Lakeside to do sewer line cleaning. The salt and sand have been hauled, mixed and are ready. 3rd Street West between Van Buren Ave and Jackson Ave is showing severe problems, they put millings in front of Jim Browns driveway so he can get in and out of his driveway. They don't know if it is frost, ground water, or a leak as they have had leak detection done on this line before and have not been able to find anything. They will do a pressure test and then determine what the next steps need to be.
13. Clerk update: Ashley Wickum provided the council with information on the Bear Paw Development Annual meeting and updates from MMIA on changes in Workers Comp coverage. Ashley will look into having MMIA come to a council meeting to help the council know what needs to be done to make this change. Ashley suggested the council start reviewing ordinances to make sure they are current, such as the sidewalk ordinance, and updating the water and sewer policies as well. The Federal audit will begin next week. The school has reached out about scooter law, and she will be working with them and the county to get the information out. The new payment system is up and ready to go. The pool stairs have been ordered using money from the Reiland Memorial Grant, and she is working with Dave and John to address additional needed upgrades. The shut down and change orders with the water project are making it so that the funding is having to be adjusted. They are doing a rate study and then will let the Town know what the rate increase needs to be, but the process will begin in the upcoming months.
14. Council: Garrett Graff asked about the shut down costs and if there is a daily amount. Ashley will find out.
15. Jim Sivils made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Sonja Dahlen seconded the motion. The meeting was adjourned at 7:48 pm.

Submitted by _____ Approved by _____
Clerk Mayor