

Regular Meeting

The Town of Chester Council held the Regular Scheduled Council meeting on May 13, 2026, at 6:39 pm at the Liberty County Senior Center.

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

Members Absent:

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

Guests: Rudy Cicon
Megan Hedges
Bill Hunt

1. Mayor James Dahlen called the regular meeting to order at 6:39 pm
2. Reminder that the Meeting is Audio Recorded
3. Mayor Dahlen moved the following New Business items to the beginning of the agenda.
 - **Approval: 409 East Adams Ave: Request for out-of-city limits, new sewer connection.** Mr. Cicon presented the council with information on the request for a new out-of-city limits sewer connection for the property at 409 East Adams Ave. This property currently receives water from the town but has a septic tank. This property is not within city limits and is in the floodplain and the floodway. The current owners are looking to have the parcel where the house is located surveyed and separated from the surrounding property. To move forward with the sale and the separation of the desired parcel, there must be an approved replacement plan for the current septic tank. The proposal is for a grinder pump at the property and to connect to the city sewer by placing a service line from the property, under the creek and connecting to the city sewer main at the manhole in the alley east of third street. They would be following all floodplain permitting regulations, DEQ regulations and obtain all permits required for digging in the creek. The sewer line would be the owner's responsibility, including all maintenance. Mr. Cicon would like to have the council approve this preliminary request so that a complete design and all permitting can be completed. After a final design is complete it will be brought back to the council for final approval. Jim Sivils inquired how many lots would be on this parcel with how many homes connected to this service line. Mr. Cicon responded that it would be one lot with one residence, and only one connection to the sewer system. Discussion of when this connection would be made. The connection would be made if/when the property owners current system fails, however, it could be sooner. The Council would like to know what our engineer thinks. Dave Ghekiere is concerned about dumping into a line that doesn't have a lot of flow, and would it be a forced main? Jim Sivils made motion to approve the preliminary request pending engineer approval. Garrett Graff seconded the motion. Motion passed with all voting ayes.
 - **Building Permit for T. Hartz- 509 East Washington Ave: New Construction Floodplain Permit** was discussed next. Mr. Cicon presented information on the floodplain permit for Tyler Hartz. This is a floodplain permit for a new manufactured

home to be placed on a permanent foundation; the foundation will be at least 2 feet above the base flood elevation. There would also be additional manufactured homes for sale on the lot, these would be anchored according to floodplain regulations. DNRC has been part of the permit process and has given the go ahead. The legal posting has been submitted and a notice to adjacent property owners has been sent. There is a 15-day requirement for comments to be submitted. Discussion, the office will be attached to city water and sewer. Mr. Cicon would like the council to give conditional approval of the permit if no comments are received during the comment period. Sonja Dahlen made the motion to conditionally approve the building permit if no objections or comments were received prior to May 27, 2026. Garrett Graff second to the motion. Motion passed with all voting ayes.

- **Approval: 110 Main Street: Request to move light** was presented next. Mrs. Hedges with Northern Plains Insurance would like to move the light from the post in the sidewalk on the north side of the building to the post in the alley west of the property. Northwestern Energy would move the light to the pole in the alley for no cost and then Chad Hedges will remove the pole. This will still light the street as much as it did prior. She also plans to have lights on the north side of her building that could help light the street even more. Jim Vinson messaged Ashley Wickum as he was unable to make it to the meeting due to weather. He reiterated what Mrs. Hedges presented to the council and sees no problem with the move. Scott Decker made the motion to allow the light on the north side of 110 Main Street to be moved to the post in the alley with the current pole being removed. Rachel Ghekiere second the motion. Motion passed with all voting ayes.
- Megan Hedges and Rudy Cicon left the meeting at 7:27.

4. Tina Neer made the motion to approve the minutes of the Regular Council Meeting, April 8, 2026. Sonja Dahlen seconded the motion. Motion to approve the minutes passed with all voting ayes.
5. Claims were presented to the council for approval. The claim & check for Arc Electric (ck# 21516) was voided as this will be paid by the contractor at as they hit the line at the water plant. The payment to Joplin Park is the last of the Amtrak money donated to them. Ashley Wickum presented a list of reissued payroll checks (for lost checks) Sonja Dahlen made the motion to approve the May claims submitted for payment. Ck#21514-21546 electronic payments -99918-99919, May payroll advances, Ck#21547 - 21548. April payroll checks were processed: Ck# 21502-21513 and electronic payroll liability payments -88903-88912 including new bill pay checks to replace lost MMIA Employee Benefit check# 21464, Workers Comp check# 21464 and State Tax check# 21381. The following payroll checks were reissued for lost checks. Ck# 19823 to 21497, 19972 to 21498, 20377 to 21495, 20823 to 21496, 21215 to 21499, 21413 to 21500, 21451 to 21501. Tina Neer seconded the motion. Motion to approve claims passed with all voting ayes.
6. The council reviewed the adjustments and journal entries made in April. There is a \$90 adjustment for the three stop payments for the payroll liability checks, Sonja Dahlen will investigate reversing these at the bank. There was also an NSF check through the new customer portal. This fee has been added to the customer's account. Garrett Graff made the motion to approve the April JV & Adjustments. Rachel Ghekiere 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 of Resolution # 11-2026 Approving the North Central Montana Regional Water Authority Agreement: Mayor Dahlen asked Mr. Hunt when the town will need to decide on the nominated capacity for the resolution? Mr. Hunt said we should be able to take some time on this, but he will talk to Jody Hellegaard with North Central Montana Regional Water Authority. Rachel Ghekiere made the motion to approve Resolution #11-2026 Approving the North Central Montana Regional Water Authority Agreement. Scott Decker seconded the motion. Motion passed with all voting ayes.
- Approval Resolution #12-2026 Motion of Intent to Raise Water Rates: Final rates were presented to the council. Scott Decker inquired about the bulk water rate. Ashley Wickum reviewed the discussion to increase the bulk water amount slightly more than the other rates to plan for upgrades to the bulk water station and possibly a credit card machine. Ashley Wickum will ask the engineers for more information about the credit card machine. Jim Sivils made the motion to approve Resolution #12-2026 Motion of Intent to Raise Water Rates. Rachel Ghekiere second the motion. Motion passed with all voting ayes.
- Approval of the Swimming Pool Agreement: The swimming pool agreement was presented to the council. Sonja Dahlen made the motion to approve the Swimming Pool Agreement as presented. Tina Neer seconded the motion. Motion passed with all voting ayes.
- Hiring: Mayor Dahlen updated the council that Lily Wickum was rehired as Pool manager, and Davinder Maan was hired as summer help. Wages were set at the April meeting. Garrett Graff made the motion to approve the new hires. Rachel Ghekiere seconded the motion. Motion passed with all voting in favor.
- Building Permits:
 - B. Rudick 211 East Madison Ave- replace existing slab
A building permit was received from B. Rudick 211 East Madison Ave to replace his existing slab. He has a LOMA and will not be changing any elevations. Frank Leeds is doing the work. Rachel Ghekiere made the motion to approve the building permit as presented. Sonja Dahlen seconded the motion. Motion passed with all voting ayes.

10. Old Business:

- North Central Montana Regional Water Authority update no further update was given.
- Bill Hunt left the meeting at 8:01 pm

11. Mayor Report/ Additional Agenda Items: None

12. PWD update: Dave Ghekiere, PWD, updated the council that they have finished sweeping the streets and the concrete at the park is completed. COP is at the water treatment plant, and they are waiting on Northwestern Energy to move the power for the generator. The upgrades to the Ford Lift Station are mostly finished, and they were also able to clean all the lift stations. They are extending the building material pit at the landfill and starting a new household pit. The meter has been installed at the park, and they still need to fertilize it. The pool is ready, and the boiler should be finished on Friday.

13. Clerk update: Ashley Wickum informed the council that the water system policy and water/sewer ordinances will need to also be reviewed and updated with the rate increase. She will work with Bill Hunt to do this.
14. Council: Scott Decker stated that there is a sprinkler at the park not working. He also asked about the meter option for the water treatment plant. Dave Ghekiere isn't sure if it will work.
15. Sonja Dahlen made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Garrett Graff seconded the motion. The meeting was adjourned at 8:13 pm.

Submitted by _____ Approved by _____
Clerk Mayor