

Regular Meeting

The Town of Chester Council held the Regular Scheduled Council meeting on September 9, 2026, at 6:00 pm at the Liberty County Senior Center.

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

Members Absent: Tina Neer

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

Guests: Bill Hunt, John Kleinsasser and see list for additional community members.

1. Mayor James Dahlen called the regular meeting to order at 6:00 pm
2. Reminder that the Meeting is Audio Recorded
3. Pledge of Allegiance
4. Mayor Dahlen moved Old Business Agenda item number two to the beginning of the meeting.
5. Old Business:
 - Discussion/Action: Liberty Colony request for new waterline connection: Mayor Dahlen asked the Colony to begin.
 - Liberty Colony would like to connect to the Town of Chesters water system. They would be requesting 20,000 gallons of water per day for the first couple of years and then would increase to 30,000-40,000 gallons of water per day.
 - John Kleinsasser asked where/how the Colony would have their fire protection set up? It would be at the Colony and would not affect the Towns water.
 - John Kleinsasser stated he doesn't think the town would have any problem supplying water to the Colony.
 - The Colony asked if they would have to pay for only the water they use or would they pay for the water they requested. Mayor Dahlen explained the current billing system.
 - Jim Sivils asked if the Colony has gotten easements. Colony stated they can't go through Susan Yurman's property and wanted to ask the Town about using the right of way on the road coming to town. Mayor Dahlen stated that that was not up to the Council. Larry Hendrickson, Liberty County Commissioner, was able to answer this question. "No, the County does not give easement to private individuals".
 - Susan Yurman wanted to know why the Colony doesn't connect directly to the water line that will be going to Rocky Boy? Bill Hunt explained the Core and Non-Core lines and that anyone who isn't the Tribe would have to be a customer of a district or municipality to receive water.
 - The Colony stated that they could possibly get water from Hill County Water District, however, Chester is their first choice.
 - Mayor Dahlen stated that he believes this would be financially good for the town. Bill Hunt agreed that it would help the town and would not affect water pressure.

- Mayor Dahlen went over the process to connect to the town water, including the current connection fee, and that the line leaving town would be up to the Colony to engineer, work with DEQ on and pay for.
- There would also need to be agreements put into place regarding sampling and such.
- The Colony inquired about the connection fee, and Bill Hunt explained this again.
- Mayor Dahlen stated that any booster pumps would be the Colony's responsibility and that if someone wanted to connect to the Colony's line, the Colony would have to figure this out.
- The Colony asked about base rate and monthly fees, Mayor Dahlen explained the current billing process.
- The colony asked about being able to give water to a property owner in return for being granted easement. Discussion about the current customers of the Town who have easements.
- Jim Sivils expressed his belief that he is against connecting the colony to our current system. He believes the current system can't support it. The increase in income would be nice.
- Patrick Wicks wanted to know how the Town was going to supply a 6-inch line leaving town when a 2-inch line just outside of town limits on the north side was not approved. This was explained that the line on the north side of Town is not looped, and the engineers determined it would not be in the Town's best interest to connect anything larger than a 1-inch line in this area. The areas where the 6-inch line would be connected are both looped lines and the engineers do not see it being a problem.
- Patrick Wicks asked about max capacity. Dave Ghekiere and John Kleinsasser explained the yearly average, which is about 220,000 gallons per day, however the Town did hit 400,000 gallons one day this summer.
- Susan Yurman asked about the process if the Town is put on water restrictions. Mayor Dahlen stated that the restrictions would apply to everyone. Liberty County Commissioner, Justin Wickum, asked if water restrictions apply to the Colony with livestock production. Bill Hunt stated that it would apply to everyone connected to municipal water.
- Mayor Dahlen reviewed the information from the engineers. John Kleinsasser stated that it will not drain the towers. Jim Sivils does not want to see it overworking our current plant, as this is our priority, and we need to maintain it as we are not hooked up to North Central yet. He doesn't believe that ramping the system up to provide that amount of water is a good idea. Garrett Graff agrees with Jim Sivils on this. Option number one, provided by the engineer, showed the billing at the current billing process, and this would not be enough to cover additional costs.
- John Kleinsasser stated that the Colony isn't asking for 50,000 gallons per day right now, they only want 20,000 gallons per day which would not ramp up the plant.
- Garrett Graff addressed that the Town does not know when the connection will be made to North Central.
- Bill Hunt stated that having more people connected to the Towns system will help the Town get connected to North Central faster. Chad Hedges with Hill County Water District disagrees with Bill Hunt.
- Mayor Dahlen asked Bill Hunt how soon the Town needs to give North Central an answer for the requested capacity. Bill Hunt will double check on this.
- Sonja Dahlen wanted to know what was done in the past when there was more water being used because of more people living in Town. The plant was newer then.
- John Kleinsasser believes the plant is big enough and that it would be a mistake not to connect.

- Susan Yurman wants to know what would happen if something went wrong with the plant. Mayor Dahlen stated it wouldn't matter if the Colony is connected or not, if something happens to the plant, it will need to be addressed regardless.
- John Kleinsasser stated the town hasn't been on water restrictions in a very long time.
- The Colony asked if there was a time frame for North Central connecting Chester. Jim Sivils said no, Bill Hunt stated he believes 2-5 years.
- The Colony asked if they should keep getting easements?
- Mayor Dahlen stated that the council can vote on it at the next meeting.
- John Kleinsasser asked the Commissioners why Riverview Colony was able to get an easement down the ditch. Liberty County Commissioner, Larry Hendrickson, explained that the easement isn't with Riverview Colony's, it is with North Central Regional Water Authority, who is a public utility, not a private entity. This is done to control who is digging in the right-of-way, or there would be a problem with everyone doing it. Kurt Kraft stated that it is statewide, not just Liberty County.
- Jim Sivils stated he would prefer to vote tonight instead of waiting. Bill Hunt confirmed that the council could vote tonight as is listed on the agenda.
- Ashley Wickum asked if the council wanted to look at rates before voting? Garrett Graff stated this would make a difference in the way he would vote.
- John Kleinsasser brought up that the Colony offered to do a larger buy in, this is not an option.
- Discussion of user types, in Town verses out of Town, and the EDU rates.
- Patrick Wicks wanted to know how the Town would be able to supply water to the Colony 6 miles out of Town and not have it impact the water pressure? He currently has his meter pit at the same location where the Colony is proposing to connect and he doesn't have pressure. John Kleinsasser stated this could be because of the bulk water. Liberty County Commissioner, Justin Wickum, asked if it would be an issue if both the bulk water and the colony hook to the same line?
- Bill Hunt stated that according to the engineer option three, a different user type can be developed for the Colony. Garrett Graff said that it would be important because option one is not going to make a profit, Bill Hunt stated the Town can't bank money, Garrett Graff stated not looking to bank money, but that the Town has a lot of repairs to make.
- Sonja Dahlen and Mayor Dahlen were in favor of having the engineers investigate the rates and connection more.
- Bill Hunt stated the town would need to justify any rates.
- Mayor Dahlen stated the council can vote tonight, and could revisit it later, and noted that one council member is absent. Members of the council would like to vote.
- Mayor Dahlen called for a vote for all in favor of allowing Liberty Colony to connect to the Towns water system. Rachel Ghekiere and Sonja Dahlen voted in favor. Jim Sivils and Garrett Graff voted against. Mayor Dahlen, as the tie breaking vote, voted in favor. Motion to allow Liberty Colony to connect to the Towns water system passed 3 in favor to 2 opposed.

All community members left. Bill Hunt remained.

6. Sonja Dahlen made the motion to approve the minutes of the Public Hearing Meeting and Regular Council Meeting, August 12, 2026. Rachel Ghekiere seconded the motion. Motion to approve all minutes passed with all voting ayes.

7. Claims were presented to the council for approval. Rachel Ghekiere made the motion to approve the claims submitted for payment. Ck#21755-21788, check 21756 was canceled as it should have been an electronic payment. Electronic payments –99905-99907, September payroll advances, Ck# 21789-21790. August payroll checks were processed: Ck#21729-21753 and electronic payroll liability payments 88881-88876. Jim Sivils seconded the motion. Motion to approve claims passed with all voting ayes.
8. The council reviewed the adjustments and journal entries made in August. Sonja Dahlen made the motion to approve the JV & Adjustments. Tina Neer seconded the motion. Motion passed with all voting ayes.
9. Old Business: Mayor Dahlen moved to Old Business agenda item number one, Global Agro request to be removed from inside Town boundaries, allowing Attorney Bill Hunt to explain the situation prior to leaving the meeting.
 - Global Agro's request to be removed from inside Town boundaries: Mayor Dahlen and Bill Hunt reviewed the situation and Global Agro's request to be unannexed from the Town boundaries. Jim Sivils confirmed that the building is right in the middle of town north of Highway 2/Washington Ave. Rachel Ghekiere wanted to know why they were wanting to be removed. Email correspondence was shared, although the reasoning is unclear. Bill Hunt recommended denying the request. Jim Sivils made the motion to deny Global Agro's request to be removed from inside Town boundaries. Sonja Dahlen seconded the motion. Motion passed with all voting ayes.
 - North Central Montana Regional Water Authority Nominated Water Capacity Request: Council discussed the Town's next steps to determine the nominated water capacity. There has not been a clear answer on whether the Town will pay for only the water we use or if they will require the town to pay for the amount requested. Garrett Graff would like to get as close as we can, so we aren't paying for a lot of extra, Dave Ghekiere stated that it is hard to pinpoint an amount. Garrett Graff asked if the line will be going to Shelby or if they will be separated? This has not been decided on. Garrett Graff stated that he doesn't think the Town should have to give an amount until we know if they will be going to Shelby with the line as this will make a difference in the line design. Mayor Dahlen believes the town would be safe to say somewhere between 500,000 and 700,000 gallons/day. Bill Hunt will contact North Central next week to get additional information on the billing. This agenda item will remain tabled. Bill Hunt left the meeting at 7:20 pm
10. Public Comments: none
11. Sheriff's Office Report: Copy was provided by the Sheriff's office.
12. New Business:
 - 2026 Harvest Festival-schedule: The schedule was provided to the council. Peyton Cole is working with Dave Ghekiere for all the set up and will provide all event insurance and alcohol/catering licenses to the town. She's done a great job with this event in the past. Sonja Dahlen made the motion to approve the 2026 Harvest Festival Schedule. Garrett Graff seconded the motion. Motion passed with all voting ayes.
13. Mayor Report/ Additional Agenda Items: Mayor Dahlen stated the council can create an agreement limiting the amount of water and requiring a flow restrictor until the Town is

connected to North Central. Garrett Graff would like to see the billing addressed and the EDU system looked at and to investigate the EDU by dwelling unit. Ashley Wickum will get the water policy and sewer policy ready for the council to look at to help address this.

14. PWD update: Dave Ghekiere, PWD, updated the council that the new dialer is installed and working. They are continuing to mow, cleaning the facilities, fixing fences, reclaiming at the landfill and installing meters. The budgeted meters have been ordered. They are working on the sweeper, and the guys were able to fix the brakes. They have fixed the list of curb stops that they had. Mayor Dahlen asked about the fire hydrant at 5th and Adams Ave, it hasn't been fixed, but Dave will look for parts. That is one of two fire hydrants that turn harder because they are a different model type. The one at the Courthouse is the same. Both Russell Seidlitz and Codie Camba are both enrolled for the Fall Water School and scheduled for testing in October and Codie Camba is also scheduled for his DOT physical. The guys did a great job picking up branches after the windstorm.
15. Clerk update: Ashley Wickum updated the council that the pool received another donation for \$1,000 from Nutrien Ag. The cost to paint the pool came in at almost 20k. There is currently just over \$9,000, including this new donation to use towards this, however, because of timing purposes, she would like to look at doing this next fall. Ashley Wickum and Bill Hunt spent time driving around making a list of problem properties including taking pictures. Bill Hunt will help Ashley look into the next steps to deal with these. The Sheriff's department has offered to help with getting the abandoned cars and stuff off the streets. The Public Health Nurse received a grant for the benches in town. The benches are currently at the East shop, but some will need to be returned because of damage. The information about the trees on Harrison has been gathered and the documentation will be put together and sent soon. The trees on the south side of Harrison are the Town's; however, it does appear that the road, Coffman Blvd, is on the property owner's property, further research needs to be done to see if there is an easement for the road.
16. Council: Rachel Ghekiere thanked Ashley for getting the information about the trees on Harrison. Jim Sivils is wondering about the scooters, as he sees that it is still a problem. The council was updated that they need to recommend that every time someone sees a problem, they need to call the Sheriffs office and report it.
17. Rachel Ghekiere made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Jim Sivils seconded the motion. The meeting was adjourned at 7:47 pm.

Submitted by _____ Approved by _____
Clerk Mayor