Regular Meeting

The Town of Chester Council held the Regular Scheduled Council meeting on October 14, 2026, at 6:00 pm at the City Office

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

Members Absent: Tina Neer

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

Guests: Justin Wickum, Liberty County Commissioner

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. Rachel Ghekiere made the motion to approve the minutes of the Regular Council Meeting, September 9, 2026, and Special Council Meeting, October 6, 2026. Sonja Dahlen seconded the motion. Motion to approve all minutes passed with all voting ayes.

5. Mayor Dahlen moved to New Business Agenda item number four.

6. New Business:

    - Liberty County Joplin Sewer Interlocal Agreement Request: Liberty County Commissioner, Justin Wickum, presented the council with information regarding the County's need for a Certified Sewer Operator for the Joplin Sewer System. Joplin has about 142 users. The system does not discharge, has no lift stations or SCADA system, and is all gravity flow. There is one flow-meter at the lagoon. The County did extensive repairs to the lagoon and some line repair with ARPA money. They have had all the lines camera and jetted and new maps created. The County would create an agreement that would cover the Town's responsibilities, and the County would be financially responsible for all repairs and maintenance, with the work being contracted out. After the lagoon project they did have to add water to the lagoon, this was done with Hill County Water District's help from the bulk water location. This isn't something that has to be done often. The County is presenting a $15,000 per year contract with the Town. Jim Sivils wanted to know how this would affect the crew. Mayor Dahlen discussed an increase in wages across the board, he believes the impact will be minimal on the crew as there is no SCADA system or lift stations that would require callouts. Call-outs would be for actual emergencies, that would require an operator to respond and then Lakeside would be called to do the work. Dave Ghekiere is not present at the meeting as he's home sick, but the Council would like his input. Garrett Graff wanted to know what timeframe the County is looking at. The County has been without an operator since June. They were fortunate to have Rob Moog for many years and would like to move forward as soon as possible but also understand that the Town needs time to review the information and would want Dave's input as well. Garrett Graff asked what the

length of the contract would be, one year or more? The County would love for this to be a multi-year contract but again understands that a trial year or a year-to-year contract might work best. Liberty County Commissioner, Justin Wickum, left at 6:20 PM. The council discussed it further. Rachel Ghekiere wondered if $15,000 a year would be enough for time and travel. Ashley Wickum created a spreadsheet with this, and it would depend on the number of trips to Joplin. Garrett Graff suggested doing this as a stipend like the on-call pay rate instead of a per hour raise. The Council will continue to look at this and discuss this with Dave Ghekiere.

7. Claims were presented to the council for approval. Rachel Ghekiere made the motion to approve the claims submitted for payment. Ck#21830-21856, electronic payments –99903-99904, October payroll advances, Ck# 21816-21817. September payroll checks were processed: Ck#21802-21815 and electronic payroll liability payments -88868-88875. Check numbers 21791-21801 were voided due to misprinting. Sonja Dahlen seconded the motion. Motion to approve claims passed with all voting ayes.

8. The council reviewed the adjustments and journal entries made in September. Ashley Wickum made an adjustment to Dennis Hanson's bill. Sonja Dahlen made the motion to approve the JV & Adjustments. Garrett Graff seconded the motion. Motion passed with all voting ayes.

9. Public Comments: none

10. Sheriff's Office Report: Copy was provided by the Sheriff's office.

11. New Business continued:

- MET Proposal: Computer IT and Security- MET is still gathering information for their proposal. They will hopefully have information for next meeting.
- Approval: Updated Signers of Bank Accounts- The current bank accounts need to have the signers updated. Removing past employees and adding Public Works Director, Dave Ghekiere, as a signer. Rachel Ghekiere made the motion to approve the undated signers for both the Altana account and First Bank of Montana account. Garrett Graff seconded the motion. Motion passed with all voting ayes.
- Review: Water/Sewer Policy- The council was provided with a rough draft and will continue to review it. Bill Hunts' comments will be emailed to the council for their review as well.
- Building Permits
  - John and Francis Kammerzell-554 West Madison Ave New Attached Garage
  - Pete Habel- 34 West Jefferson Ave -Deck

  Building Permits were presented to the council. Sonja Dahlen made the motion to accept the building permits as presented. Rachel Ghekiere seconded the motion. Motion to approve all building permits passed with all voting ayes.

12. Old Business:
    - North Central Montana Regional Water Authority update: Ashley Wickum provided the council with an email response from Jody with North Central Montana Regional Water Authority with her answers to the council's questions. Garrett Graff would like to look at the Towns water loss and Rachel Ghekiere would like to know what other towns are requesting and what they are paying for. Ashley Wickum will reach out to Jody for a clearer answer as well as work on gathering the information on water loss and what other Towns are paying.

13. Mayor Report/ Additional Agenda Items: none

14. PWD update: Ashley Wickum reported for Dave Ghekiere, PWD. Both water towers and the clear well have been cleaned. All the mowing is done, and they have completed the winterization of the park and the pool. The landfill passed the DEQ inspection. Ashley added that the email reported that the inspectors were very impressed with the landfill. Codie Camba and Russell Seidlitz are at Water School in Bozeman and will test for their distribution license on 10/15/26. COP Construction is supposed to be back in November to install pumps and the effluent meter at the water treatment plant.

15. Clerk update: Ashley Wickum updated the council that the annual Trick or Trunk will be held downtown on October 31, and the One Way will be blocked for a very short period for this. She is currently working with Craig Shepherd on the AFR. Ashley provided an update for the council from the Montana Department of Transportation on the removal of the trees. Ashley also updated the council on the Chester Motors Project. She will be doing grant management for the project going forward, as Bear Paw has not met the requirements for the grant. Ashley has been working with DNRC and with their assistance she has provided them with all the information they requested and is making sure that everything is being submitted as required. She did have to cancel the check to Granite Peak from June and reissue a new one as the draw-down request was different. Ashley requested that the council move the November meeting from November 11 to November 18. November 11 is Veterans Day and Ashley will be gone November 4 through the 10th and will not be able to prepare for the meeting. The council agreed to move the November meeting to the 18th, Ashley will notice this on the website.

16. Council: Rachel Ghekiere has a Bear Paw meeting on November 19th. The November NCMRWA meeting will be held at the new Water Treatment Facility for a tour. Garrett Graff asked about snow removal and how much would be done. Council discussed changing the ordinance from December 1st to November 1st for moving campers and vehicles off the side of the streets for sweeping and snow removal. Ashley will investigate this.

17. Rachel Ghekiere made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Sonja Dahle seconded the motion. The meeting was adjourned at 7:03 pm.

Submitted by_____ Approved by_____

Clerk Mayor