

TOWN BOARD MEETING

January 28, 2026

6:45pm

Call to Order

Supervisor Holdridge called the Town Board meeting to order at 6:45pm.

Attendance

Town Clerk Zappala called the roll:

- Supervisor Holdridge: Present
- Council Member Becker: Present
- Council Member Cassara: Present
- Council Member Courtenay: Present

Determination of Quorum: Yes X No

Also Present: Attorney Cassidy

Pledge of Allegiance

All present stood for the Pledge of Allegiance.

SUMMARY OF BILLS

Supervisor Holdridge announced that the Town would be paying bills in the amount of \$778,990.77.

PUBLIC COMMENT

There were no public comments.

**REPORTS/ANNOUNCEMENTS – RURAL & MIGRANT MINISTRY PRESS CONFERENCE/RALLY
OPPOSING ICE PROCESSING FACILITY**

Supervisor Holdridge announced that a protest rally and press conference would be held the following day at 5:30 PM at Chester Commons Park parking lot due to snow on the ground. He noted that the Chester Police Department would provide safety coverage, and other security forces from the Congressman's office would be present. The federal government will reimburse the Town for police presence through a program they have. Supervisor Holdridge stated he would attend and likely speak at the rally.

Town Clerk Zappala announced the rescheduling of the Historical Society's annual meeting to Sunday, February 8th from 2:00 to 4:00 PM at the Chester Senior Center, featuring a presentation on the history of the Yelverton Inn.

Council Member Courtenay expressed gratitude to the Police Department and other agencies that assisted with handling recent protests related to the proposed ICE facility. He emphasized that regardless of which side of the issue residents were on, the facility would impose a significant financial burden on the Town if established. He reported that the three protest events held in the previous week had cost the Town \$15,000, and that ongoing protests could potentially cost the Town \$1-2 million. He expressed concerns about how these costs would be covered, noting that additional officers, equipment, and vehicles might be needed if the facility were established.

Council Member Cassara thanked the Highway Department for their efforts during the recent storm.

Supervisor Holdridge also commended the emergency services and Highway Department for their excellent work during the storm, noting that there were only a few power outages affecting individual homes. He reported participating in a series of Zoom meetings with local school districts and New York State's Agriculture and Markets department regarding better food programs and farm-to-table initiatives in schools. He continues to maintain communication with Mayor Bell, Congressman Pat Ryan, County Executive Steve Neuhaus, Senator Skoufis, Assemblyman Maher, and the Governor's office regarding the proposed ICE facility. He noted that the Town, Village, and Orange County submitted letters of opposition by the January 16th deadline, and many residents had also submitted emails expressing opposition.

Supervisor Holdridge piggybacked off of Council Member Courtenay's comments, reiterating that the Congressman won't be at every rally, so we will not get reimbursed unless there is a presence from the federal government. So, he said, that is a definite concern for our budget.

He concluded his report by asking for grace with returning calls, texts, and emails as he is directly dealing with this ongoing town issue and, unfortunately, an ongoing family emergency.

ACCOUNTING DEPARTMENT REQUEST TO ATTEND THE ORANGE COUNTY HUMAN RESOURCES CIVIL SERVICE TRAINING ON FEBRUARY 10TH FROM 9:30AM TO 12:30PM

The Board reviewed the request from the Accounting Department to attend the Orange County Human Resources Civil Service Training.

MOTION TO approve the request Accounting Department request to attend the Orange County Human Resources Civil Service training on February 10th from 9:30am to 12:30pm was made by Council Member Becker, seconded by Council Member Courtenay. All voted in favor.

VOTE: AYES(4): Holdridge, Becker, Cassara, Courtenay

ADOPTED

HIGHWAY DEPARTMENT REQUEST TO AMEND LOCAL LAW 92-11 TO INCLUDE ROAD OPENINGS BEING PROHIBITED FROM NOVEMBER 1 TO APRIL 1 EACH YEAR

Supervisor Holdridge explained that the request was to authorize the Town Attorney to work with the Highway Department to draft a law prohibiting non-emergency road openings by contractors and developers between November 1st and April 1st each year. Council Members agreed this was a necessary measure that should have been implemented earlier.

MOTION TO authorize the Town Attorney to work with the Highway Department to draft the local law was made by Council Member Becker, seconded by Council Member Cassara. All voted in favor.

VOTE: AYES(4): Holdridge, Becker, Cassara, Courtenay

ADOPTED

CHESTER PUBLIC LIBRARY REQUEST FOR THE TOWN BOARD TO APPOINT BETH PECHMAN TO A FULL-TERM LIBRARY BOARD SEAT – TERM WOULD END 1/31/30

The Board considered the request to appoint Beth Pechman to a full-term Library Board seat ending January 31, 2030.

MOTION TO approve the appointment of Beth Pechman to a full-term Library Board seat ending January 31, 2030 was made by Council Member Courtenay, seconded by Council Member Cassara. All voted in favor.

VOTE: AYES(4): Holdridge, Becker, Cassara, Courtenay

ADOPTED

POLICE DEPARTMENT REQUEST FOR TOWN BOARD TO APPROVE AUCTION OF 2016 FORD POLICE INTERCEPTOR AT \$2,500 AND 2009 CHEVY IMPALA AT \$1,000

The Board reviewed the request to auction two Police vehicles.

MOTION TO approve the auction the following vehicles was made by Council Member Courtenay, seconded by Council Member Cassara.

- 2016 Ford Police Interceptor utility bearing VIN **1FM5K8AR8GGA72248**
- o Sold for \$2,500.00
- 2009 Chevrolet Impala bearing VIN **2G1WS57MX91310046**
- o Sold for \$1,000.00

All voted in favor.

VOTE: AYES(4): Holdridge, Becker, Cassara, Courtenay

ADOPTED

RESOLUTION IN OPPOSITION TO A PROPOSED ICE FACILITY IN THE TOWN AND VILLAGE OF CHESTER

Supervisor Holdridge read a resolution formally opposing the proposed ICE processing facility in Chester. The resolution reiterated the concerns previously expressed in the Town’s January 16th letter to ICE, emphasizing the facility's potential impacts on the Town’s resources, infrastructure, and public safety services. The resolution directed the Town Clerk to send copies to Village, county, state, and federal officials.

TOWN OF CHESTER

A RESOLUTION OPPOSING THE LOCATING OF A UNITED STATES IMMIGRATION AND CUSTOMS ENFORCEMENT PROCESSING OR DETENTION FACILITY IN WAREHOUSES WITHIN THE TOWN AND/OR VILLAGE OF CHESTER

WHEREAS, the Town Board of the Town of Chester has become aware of the United States Federal Government’s desire to convert the Pep Boys warehouse in the Village of Chester to a U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) processing facility; and

WHEREAS, the Town Board of the Town of Chester submitted a letter to ICE on January 16 outlining various concerns and our opposition against any ICE facility coming to the Town and Village of Chester; and

WHEREAS, any largescale project like an ICE processing facility that would be established in the Village of Chester would have substantial impacts on the Town of Chester and Village of Chester residents who are, at the same time, Town of Chester residents; and

WHEREAS, neither the Town of Chester, nor the Village of Chester, have been approached, inquired, or solicited by the federal government for the placement of such a facility within the Village of Chester; and

WHEREAS, given the lack of any communication or contact regarding the realistic potential of a plan to convert an industrial warehouse or warehouses into a detainee processing facility within the Village, it is impossible for the Village or Town to make informed policy decisions; and

WHEREAS, the Town and Village of Chester are predominately residential communities located in Orange County, with limited water, sewer and other public resources and municipal services; and

WHEREAS, the conversion of industrial warehouses within the Village would place unanticipated demands upon the Village and Town’s water, sewer, public safety services, and other public resources in structures and areas not intended for human occupancy; and

WHEREAS, it is a primary objective of the Town Board of the Town of Chester to ensure the public safety and welfare of its residents, business community, and visitors to the Town; and

WHEREAS, it is the position of the Town Board of the Town of Chester that the Town and Village of Chester are not appropriate municipalities for the placement of a detainee processing facility.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the Town Board of the Town of Chester, in the County of Orange and State of New York, hereby unequivocally opposes the conversion of existing industrial warehouses within the Village and Town of Chester for the creation of an ICE processing facility, or any other facility that disregards the Town and Village’s land use and regulatory ordinances and creates unanticipated burdens upon the Town and Village’s infrastructure, resources, and services.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Town Clerk of the Town of Chester send a certified copy of this resolution to the Village of Chester, County of Orange, State Assemblyman Brian Maher, State Senator James Skoufis, Congressman Pat Ryan, Governor Kathy Hochul, Senator Kirsten Gillibrand, Senator Chuck Schumer, and the United States Department of Homeland Security for their review.

MOTION TO adopt by Supervisor Holdridge and seconded by Council Member Courtenay. The vote was 4 ayes to 0 nays with 0 abstentions. The resolution was declared adopted on January 28, 2026.

VOTE: AYES(4): Holdridge, Becker, Cassara, Courtenay

ADOPTED

RESOLUTION IN SUPPORT OF THE NY MELT ACT – PROPOSED NYS LAW THAT WOULD PROHIBIT LAW ENFORCEMENT FROM COVERING THEIR FACES WHILE CONDUCTING OPERATIONS IN THE STATE OF NEW YORK AND REQUIRE OFFICERS TO BE IDENTIFIABLE BY THEIR UNIFORM

Supervisor Holdridge presented a resolution supporting the MELT Act (Mandating End of Lawless Tactics Act), explaining that the state legislation would prohibit law enforcement from covering their faces during operations in New York State and require officers to be identifiable by their uniform. He noted that SWAT and tactical units would be exempt from these requirements. Council Member Becker expressed reservations about the resolution, stating she was unsure about supporting it.

TOWN OF CHESTER

A RESOLUTION IN SUPPORT OF THE NYS LEGISLATURE AND GOVERNOR PASSING AND SIGNING THE MELT ACT (S8462 /A8908)

WHEREAS, in January 2025, the Department of Homeland Security issued new directives to supersede and rescind sensitive location policies, such as churches and schools, removing rules regarding where immigration laws could be enforced, and authorizing immigration agents to make their own determinations on where immigrant enforcement actions could occur; and

WHEREAS, in June 2025 the United States Immigration and Customs Enforcement began conducting widespread raids searching for individuals who they thought may be undocumented immigrants in local communities; and

WHEREAS, since the issuance of the new directives, immigration agents have conducted multiple enforcement actions in and around schools and universities, and outside immigration courts, grabbing individuals off the street and transporting them to unknown locations; and

WHEREAS, in June 2025 the United States Immigration and Customs Enforcement began conducting widespread and publicized raids searching for individuals who they thought may be undocumented immigrants in local communities; and

WHEREAS, individuals who are conducting raids and covering their faces may be impersonating police officers and immigration agents, which erodes trust in law enforcement and undermines community safety; and

WHEREAS, immigration agents are commonly seen covering their faces with masks and wearing plainclothes while undertaking these raids, avoiding accountability and making it difficult to determine precisely who had conducted the immigration operation; and

WHEREAS, currently pending before the State Legislature is the Mandating End of Lawless Tactics (MELT) Act (S.8462 /A.8908), which would prohibit law enforcement from covering their faces while conducting operations in

the state of New York, and require officers to be identifiable by their uniform, whether with name or another identifier; and

WHEREAS, the MELT Act would apply to local, state, and federal law enforcement agencies, but also ensure that Special Weapons and Tactics team officers (SWAT) can continue to utilize gear necessary to protect their faces from physical harm as they perform their duties.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that by adoption of this resolution, the Town Board of the Town of Chester calls on the New York State Legislature to reintroduce and pass, and the Governor to sign, the MELT Act, which would prohibit law enforcement from covering their faces while conducting operations in the state of New York, and require officers to be identifiable by their uniform, whether with name or another identifier.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Town Clerk of the Town of Chester will send certified copies of this resolution to Senator James Skoufis, Assemblyman Brian Maher, Speaker of the Senate Majority Leader Andrea Stewart-Cousins, Lieutenant Governor Anthony Delgado, and Governor Kathy Hochul.

MOTION TO adopt by Supervisor Holdridge and seconded by Council Member Courtenay. The vote was 3 ayes to 0 nays with 1 abstention. The resolution was declared adopted.

VOTE: AYES(3): Holdridge, Cassara, Courtenay, ABSTAIN(1): Becker

ADOPTED

RESOLUTION TO APPROVE AMENDED 2026 ANIMAL CONTROL CONTRACT WITH WARWICK VALLEY HUMANE SOCIETY – NEW SHELTER GUIDELINES AND PROCEDURES FOR DANGEROUS DOGS

The Board reviewed amendments to the 2026 Animal Control Contract with Warwick Valley Humane Society, which included new shelter guidelines and procedures for dangerous dogs. Town Attorney Cassidy noted there was a minor reference to a statute that needed correction, but indicated it would not affect approval of the contract.

MOTION TO approve the amendments to the 2026 Animal Control Contract with Warwick Valley Humane Society was made by Council Member Becker, seconded by Council Member Courtenay. All voted in favor.

VOTE: AYES(4): Holdridge, Becker, Cassara, Courtenay

ADOPTED

RESOLUTION ACKNOWLEDGING RECEIPT OF PETITION TO FORM A WATER DISTRICT FOR THE CHESTER GREENS DEVELOPMENT

The Board acknowledged receipt of a petition to form a water district for the Chester Greens development, which had been received on January 12th.

MOTION TO acknowledge receipt of petition to form a water district for the Greens of Chester development was made by Council Member Courtenay, seconded by Council Member Cassara. All voted in favor.

VOTE: AYES(4): Holdridge, Becker, Cassara, Courtenay

ADOPTED

RESOLUTION AUTHORIZING TOWN ENGINEER JOHN QUEENAN TO REVIEW PROPOSED WATER DISTRICT

MOTION TO authorize the Town Engineer to review the proposed Greens of Chester water district was made by Council Member Courtenay, seconded by Council Member Becker.

VOTE: AYES(4): Holdridge, Becker, Cassara, Courtenay

ADOPTED

RESOLUTION TO ESTABLISH A \$3,000 ESCROW ACCOUNT FOR PROPOSED WATER DISTRICT

Council Member Becker inquired about the expected cost of the review, and it was noted that the \$3,000 would cover both the Engineer's time and attorney's time, with the Engineer's portion estimated at around \$2,250.

MOTION TO establish the escrow account in the amount of \$3,000 was made by Council Member Becker, seconded by Council Member Courtenay. All voted in favor.

VOTE: AYES(4): Holdridge, Becker, Cassara, Courtenay

ADOPTED

EXECUTIVE SESSION – PERSONNEL

The Board entered into executive session to discuss a personnel matter and later returned to open session.

MOTION BY Council Member Becker and second by Council Member Courtenay to enter into Executive Session at 7:15pm on a matter of personnel.

VOTE: AYES(4): Holdridge, Becker, Cassara, Courtenay

ADOPTED

MOTION BY Council Member Becker and second by Council Member Courtenay to adjourn the Executive Session at 8:10pm.

VOTE: AYES(4): Holdridge, Becker, Cassara, Courtenay

ADOPTED

New Business

Following executive session, Town Attorney Cassidy introduced a proposed local law to extend the temporary land use moratorium on large-scale battery energy storage system installations for an additional six months. She explained that the current moratorium expires at the end of February, and recent fires in nearby Warwick have raised safety concerns that the Town wishes to further evaluate. The proposed extension would allow time for the comprehensive plan committee and consultants to develop adequate regulations for such facilities.

**TOWN OF CHESTER
TOWN BOARD**

**RESOLUTION TO INTRODUCE INTRODUCTORY LOCAL LAW 1 OF 2026,
A LOCAL LAW TO EXTEND THE TEMPORARY LAND USE MORATORIUM PROHIBITING LARGE
SCALE BATTERY ENERGY STORAGE SYSTEM INSTALLATIONS WITHIN THE TOWN OF CHESTER
ESTABLISHED BY LOCAL LAW 8 OF 2024 BY SIX MONTHS**

WHEREAS, the Town Board of the Town of Chester recognizes that Battery Energy Storage System Installations are being developed throughout the Hudson Valley, and

WHEREAS, the Town Board desires to put a temporary halt on such development to allow the Town of Chester, its Comprehensive Plan Committee and its consultants to develop and implement adequate regulations for the siting and operation of such facilities in the interest of the residents' health, safety and welfare; and

WHEREAS, the Town Board adopted a temporary moratorium on large-scale battery energy storage systems through the adoption of Local Law 8 of 2024 which went into effect on August 23, 2024 and extended by LL 10 of 2025 until February 24, 2026; and

WHEREAS, since that time, the Town Board had developed a draft local law to regulate large-scale battery energy storage systems and had anticipated action in the fall of 2025, however multiple fires at area battery energy storage facilities has given the Town Board concern as to the safety of such systems and the Town Board wishes to further evaluate such systems and has determined that an extension of the moratorium is necessary and appropriate;

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, that INTRODUCTORY LOCAL LAW 1 OF 2026, A LOCAL LAW TO EXTEND THE TEMPORARY LAND USE MORATORIUM PROHIBITING LARGE SCALE BATTERY ENERGY STORAGE SYSTEM INSTALLATIONS WITHIN THE TOWN OF CHESTER ESTABLISHED BY LOCAL LAW 8 OF 2024 BY SIX MONTHS is hereby introduced before the Town Board of the Town of Chester;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that a copy of the aforesaid introductory local law be laid upon the desk of each member of the Board, and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, after comparing the thresholds in 6 NYCRR 617.4 and 617.5, the Board hereby determines that the proposed action is a Type II action for purposes of SEQR and that no further environmental review is required; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that a public hearing shall be held on February 25, 2026, at 6:45 P.M. or as soon thereafter as may be heard at Town of Chester Town Hall, 1786 Kings Highway, Chester, NY 10918. The Town Clerk shall cause public notice to be published in the official newspaper as is required by law.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that said Introductory Local Law be referred to the Orange County Department of Planning and the Town of Chester Planning Board.

MOTION TO introduce Local Law 1 of 2026, A Local Law To Extend The Temporary Land Use Moratorium Prohibiting Large Scale Battery Energy Storage System Installations Within The Town of Chester Established By Local Law 8 of 2024 By Six Months and set a public hearing for February 25, 2026, at 6:45 PM was made by Council Member Becker, seconded by Council Member Cassara. All voted in favor.

VOTE: AYES(4): Holdridge, Becker, Cassara, Courtenay

ADOPTED

TOWN OF CHESTER
Introductory LOCAL LAW 1 OF 2026

A LOCAL LAW TO EXTEND THE TEMPORARY LAND USE MORATORIUM PROHIBITING LARGE SCALE BATTERY ENERGY STORAGE SYSTEM INSTALLATIONS WITHIN THE TOWN OF CHESTER ESTABLISHED BY LOCAL LAW 8 OF 2024 BY SIX MONTHS

BE IT ENACTED by the Town Board of the Town of Chester as follows:

Section 1. STATUTORY AUTHORITY, PURPOSE AND INTENT

This Local Law is intended to be consistent with and is adopted pursuant to the authority granted to the Town Board of the Town of Chester under the New York State Constitution, and the Laws of the State of New York including, but not limited to the following authorities: New York State Constitution Article IX, Section 2 (c)(ii)(6(m)(10), Municipal Home Rule Law § 10(2); Municipal Home Rule Law § 10(3); Municipal Home Rule Law § 10 (4(a), and (b) and (15); Town Law § 135, Town Law Article 16 inclusive; and Environmental Conservation Law § 3-0301(2)(m) and 8-0113.

Section 2. Amendment of Temporary Moratorium

The expiration date of the temporary moratorium as set forth in Local Law 8 of 2024 and as modified by LL 10 of 2025 is hereby amended by extending the original twelve (12) month moratorium period by an additional six (6) months, said six months to commence upon the filing of said local law

The moratorium shall expire on the earlier of (i) August 26, 2026 or (ii) the effective date of a Town Board resolution affirmatively stating the Town Board has determined that the need for this moratorium and prohibition no longer exists. In all other respects, Local Law 8 of 2024 shall remain unaltered.

Section 3. SUPERSESION OF INCONSISTENT LAWS, IF ANY

The Town Board hereby declares its legislative intent to supersede any provision of any local law, rule, or regulation and any provision of the state Town Law or other special law that may be declared inconsistent or in conflict with this local law. The state law provisions that shall be, and hereby are, superseded include, but are not limited to, all of Article 16 of the State of New York Town Law, and any other provision of law that the Village may supersede pursuant to the state Municipal Home Rule Law and the Constitution of the State of New York, The courts are specifically requested to take notice of this legislative intent and apply such intent in the event the Town has failed to specify any provision of law that may require supersession. The Town Board hereby declares that it would have enacted this local law and superseded such provision had it been apparent.

Section 4. SEVERABILITY

If any clause, sentence, paragraph, section or part of this Local Law shall be adjudged by any court of competent jurisdiction to be invalid, such judgment shall be confined in its operation to the clause, paragraph, section or part thereof directly involved in the controversy in which such judgment shall have been rendered, and the remaining provisions shall remain in full force and effect.

Section 5. EFFECTIVE DATE

This Local Law shall take effect upon filing in the Office of the Secretary of State in accordance with Section 27 of the Municipal Home Rule Law.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Lydia Cuadros, via online, expressed her support and thanked the Board for the resolutions regarding the ICE facility and the MELT Act.

Ed Mullins, via online, expressed opposition to the Board's decisions regarding the ICE facility and the MELT Act.

ADJOURNMENT

MOTION TO adjourn the meeting at 8:25 PM made by Council Member Courtenay, second by Council Member Becker, and approved unanimously.

VOTE: AYES(4): Holdridge, Becker, Cassara, Courtenay

ADOPTED

Respectfully submitted,

Linda A. Zappala, RMC
Town Clerk
2026-1-28