

TOWN BOARD MEETING AND PUBLIC HEARING

July 22, 2026

6:45 PM

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: Absent
- Council Member Diffley: Present

Determination of Quorum: Yes X No

Pledge of Allegiance

All present stood for the Pledge of Allegiance. Supervisor Holdridge asked all to remain standing for a moment of silence for our lost military members.

RESOLUTION TO ACCEPT 7/8/26 TOWN BOARD MEETING MINUTES

Supervisor Holdridge asked if everyone had reviewed the minutes from the July 8, 2026. With no questions or debate points raised, the Minutes were accepted.

MOTION by Council Member Becker, seconded by Council Member Cassara to accept the July 8, 2026 Meeting Minutes as presented by Town Clerk Zappala.

The motion carried.

VOTE: AYES(4): Holdridge, Becker, Cassara, Diffley, ABSENT(1): Courtenay

ADOPTED

SUMMARY OF BILLS

Supervisor Holdridge reported that the Town would be paying bills in the amount of \$337,491.42.

EXECUTIVE SESSION – PERSONNEL

MOTION to enter Executive Session for the purpose of discussing personnel matters was made by Council Member Diffley and seconded by Council Member Becker at 6:50pm.

The motion carried.

VOTE: AYES(4): Holdridge, Becker, Cassara, Diffley, ABSENT(1): Courtenay

ADOPTED

The Board entered Executive Session. Upon conclusion, a motion was made to return to open session.

MOTION to come out of Executive Session was made by Council Member Becker and seconded by Council Member Diffley at 7:20pm.

The motion carried.

VOTE: AYES(4): Holdridge, Becker, Cassara, Diffley, ABSENT(1): Courtenay **ADOPTED**

PUBLIC HEARING ON INTRODUCTORY LOCAL LAW 4 OF 2026 - Will put a referendum to approve or deny the new community preservation fund transfer tax (that's applied to buyers of new properties) on the 11/3/26 Election Ballot

MOTION to open the public hearing Introductory Local Law 4 of 2026 was made by Council Member Becker and seconded by Council Member Cassara 7:21pm.

The motion carried.

VOTE: AYES(4): Holdridge, Becker, Cassara, Diffley, ABSENT(1): Courtenay **ADOPTED**

The following is the notice as appearing in the Times Herald Record on July 3, 2026.

TOWN OF CHESTER
1786 KINGS HIGHWAY
CHESTER, NY 10918

NOTICE OF PUBLIC HEARING

**INTRODUCTORY LOCAL LAW 6 OF 2026
A LOCAL LAW TO ADOPT A COMMUNITY PRESERVATION PROJECT PLAN PURSUANT TO
TOWN LAW § 64-L.**

Section 1. LEGISLATIVE PURPOSE AND INTENT

The Town of Chester possesses a rich heritage of scenic, agricultural and natural resources the preservation of which is vital to the future economic success and quality of life of the community. To further the objective of preserving the natural, scenic and historical treasures, the Town Board of the Town of Chester finds it necessary to establish a plan for their conservation. Such fund has been authorized under Section 64-L of the New York Town Law. Under this statute the creation of this Fund is a prerequisite to the enactment of a (¾ %) percent real estate transfer tax, which is also authorized by Town Law Section 64-L and Article 31-F of the New York Tax law.

The purpose of the Local Law is to meet and implement the requirements of Town Law Section 64-L by hereby establishing and creating the Town of Chester Community Preservation Project Plan to help guide the Town's efforts to preserve open spaces, agricultural lands and historic places.

Please take notice that the Town Board of the Town of Chester will hold a public hearing on Wednesday, August 26, 2026 at 6:45 P.M. or as soon thereafter as may be heard in Town Hall, located at 1786 Kings Highway, Chester, NY 10918. Said public hearing is to hear comments on the above captioned proposed local law.

A copy of the proposed local law is on file in the Town Clerk's Office and is available for inspection during normal business hours (Monday-Friday, 8 am to 5 pm).

Any person interested in the proposed local law may appear in person or by agent. All written communications should be addressed to the Town Clerk at the above address.

BY ORDER OF THE TOWN BOARD
TOWN OF CHESTER

LINDA A. ZAPPALA
TOWN CLERK

DATED: JULY 28, 2026

Supervisor Holdridge read the following letters into the record.



July 6, 2026

Town of Chester
Linda Zappala
1786 Kings Highway
Chester, NY 10918

Re: Letter of Support for Authorization of Real Estate Transfer Tax to Protect Farmland and Open Space

Dear Linda,

The Orange County Land Trust expresses its support for the Town of Chester's authorization of a real estate transfer tax to implement a Purchase of Development Rights program (PDR).

If approved, this measure will serve as a sound investment in the Town of Chester's agricultural economy, natural resources, and quality of life now and in the future. This self-sustaining funding mechanism will generate the revenue necessary to fund the protection of family farms, vital habitats, and iconic landscapes.

Look no further than the Town of Warwick as a thriving example of how beneficial a PDR program is to a municipality. Since it was overwhelmingly passed by voters, Warwick's PDR program has resulted in the protection of nearly 5,000 acres of land to date, while enhancing property values, boosting revenue from outdoor recreation and tourism, safeguarding water quality, and providing access to fresh, local food in the process – without burdening current residents as this tax is applied only to new homebuyers. Like the Town's longtime residents, newcomers also seek assurance that their community is taking an active role in protecting the lands that make the Town of Chester such an appealing and desirable place to live.

As a non-profit organization dedicated to the protection of our region's most important agricultural, scenic, and wild landscapes, we enthusiastically endorse the authorization of the transfer tax; a once in a lifetime opportunity for Town of Chester residents.

Sincerely,


Jim Delaune
Executive Director



PO Box 721
Chester NY 10918
www.thepreservationcollective.com

Town of Chester
1786 Kings Highway
Chester NY 10918

(sent via email) Re: Local Law 4 of 2026; Transfer Tax

Dear Supervisor and Town Board,

Thank you for the opportunity to provide comments on the proposed Local Law to create a dedicated funding source for the Town of Chester's Community Preservation Fund, a measure that will ultimately go before voters in a mandatory public referendum.

Residents have consistently told their public officials how protecting open space, historic character, and environmental resources is a core community priority. Yet the Town currently lacks a stable, long-term funding mechanism to achieve these goals. While existing planning tools; such as zoning provisions and budget allocations are valuable, they are insufficient and too inconsistent to meet the scale of preservation required looking into the future.

A modest closing fee, paid only at the point of sale by the buyer, offers a fair and effective solution. It ensures that new growth contributes to safeguarding the qualities that make Chester unique, without placing additional financial burden on current taxpayers. We know other municipalities that have adopted similar funds have successfully advanced open space preservation, farmland conservation, water-quality initiatives, and the safeguarding of historic landscapes. Their experience demonstrate that a dedicated preservation fund can deliver measurable, long-lasting benefits.

It is also important to recognize the bipartisan support this concept has received both in Chester and in other communities. Supervisors and board members, past and present, representing different political parties, have worked to advance the enabling legislation needed to consider this proposal. Those efforts are what helped secure authorization at the state level, reflecting a shared understanding that preservation is not a partisan issue, but a community responsibility. This history underscores that the question before the Board is not about politics, but about allowing residents to decide how best to plan for Chester's future.

Thank you for allowing residents the chance to weigh the benefits, and choose a path forward they feel can help to preserve the character of Chester for generations to come.

Respectfully,

Tracy Schuh
President TPC, Inc.

The Preservation Collective, Inc. is a non-profit 501(c)(3) tax-exempt corporation whose mission is to educate the community by bringing attention to and defending against the environmental impacts of new development and advocating for open space and meaningful environmental preservation practices that protect the region's scenery, natural resources, and cultural heritage.

Susannah Devine, Rocky Road, spoke in strong support of Introductory Local Law 4, urging the Board to vote yes to place the Community Preservation Fund (CPF) on the November 3rd ballot and urging residents to support it at the polls. She described the Hudson Valley as rapidly changing and warning that once family farms and wetlands are converted into subdivisions or sprawling warehouses, they are gone forever. She said you cannot unpave paradise. She emphasized that the CPF is not a property tax and will not raise your annual tax bill, but is instead a modest 0.75 percent real estate transfer tax paid only once, at closing, by the buyer when a property is sold. She pointed to the Town of Warwick as a model, noting that since 2006, Warwick's preservation plan has permanently shielded roughly 5,000 acres of open space and farmland from suburban sprawl. By contrast, she urged residents to look towards Monroe and Blooming Grove where there is no CPF, and where, she argued, one finds acres of trees and hillsides forever gone, buildings upon buildings with no protected open space. She addressed concerns that realtors would oppose the fund, noting that while many originally voiced strong opposition and predicted economic gloom and doom in Warwick, they have since acknowledged it enhanced local property values. She also noted that Chester's plan leans heavily toward purchasing development rights from farmers, which keeps the land in private hands, the property remains on the tax rolls and continues to generate revenue for Towns and schools.

Town Attorney Cassidy interjected to clarify for the public that the exemption structure in Chester's CPF mirrors Warwick's exactly: the first \$100,000 of a residential property is exempt from the tax, and unimproved real property carries a \$50,000 exemption. She noted that the exemption is a flat \$100,000 off the purchase price, not tied to the Orange County median, so that on a \$500,000 home, the tax applies to \$400,000.

Ryan Senning, Pine Hill Road, also spoke in support of Local Law 4. He stated what remains of Chester's open space, farmland, and historic character are what make this Town worth living in. He addressed affordability concerns, stating that at 0.75 percent, the tax amounts of a few thousand dollars on a typical home sale, is not the kind of number that is going to price someone out of a home in a real estate market like Chester. He did, however, raise a fairness concern, proposing that the first-dollar exemption threshold be raised from \$100,000 to \$200,000, which he argued would still result in the majority of home sales being taxed while being more equitable. He pushed back on the argument that the tax unfairly burdens only those actively buying or selling, contending that those buyers and sellers directly benefit from preserved open space and that it is fair that they contribute a small share to keep it that way. He closed by urging the Board to proceed with the November referendum with an exemption closer to \$200,000.

Don Serotta, Bull Mill Road, former Planning Board Chairman, offered a nuanced perspective. He first sought clarification from Attorney Cassidy on whether properties in the Village of Chester would be subject to the transfer tax and whether the Village would receive its own share of revenues. Attorney Cassidy confirmed that village properties would broadly be subject to the tax, while noting that an incorporated village does not have specific separate authorization under the governing statute.

Mr. Serotta spoke from his perspective as a long-time resident since 1982 and a licensed realtor who considers himself a strong advocate for land preservation. He drew a distinction between Chester and Warwick, noting we have hardly any active farms left at this point in time. He identified the Talmadge farm as likely the primary target for development rights purchase, but cautioned that if the Town were to purchase farmland outright those properties would be removed from the tax rolls, resulting in a loss of revenue. He expressed concern over maintenance costs, questioning whether a 10 percent cap from the preservation fund for property maintenance would be sufficient to maintain properties like Talmadge's farm, which he described as impeccably maintained.

Mr. Serotta also noted that the Town has already preserved a significant amount of land without a CPF. He calculated that approximately 2,700 acres of large parcels, including Goose Pond Mountain, conservation subdivision open space, the Town park, Camp LaGuardia, and others have been preserved at no cost to the public, representing roughly 18 percent of the Town's total acreage. He also addressed warehouse concerns, stating that in his professional view as a former Planning Board chairman, we are not going to be putting large warehouses in Chester, given the limited availability of appropriately zoned parcels.

Turning to affordability, Mr. Serotta presented detailed closing cost figures for a \$500,000 home purchase with a 10 percent down payment. He itemized closing costs of approximately \$70,665. Adding the CPF transfer tax of approximately \$3,000 would bring the total to approximately \$73,665. He also noted ongoing monthly housing costs of approximately \$4,100 per month. He said, it's a lot of money especially for a young person.

Mr. Serotta also expressed a preference for the community preservation project plan to have been available to the public and the Board for review prior to voting on the local law. A brief exchange followed in which Attorney Cassidy clarified that these are two legally distinct actions: the transfer tax local law, which is the subject of the public hearing, and the community preservation project plan, which was being introduced separately this evening. She explained that by state law the plan must be adopted more than 60 days before the

referendum. Attorney Cassidy further confirmed that any individual property acquisition using fund monies would require its own separate public hearing.

Lisa Moriarty asked a brief question, inquiring when the CPF would go into effect if the referendum passes. Attorney Cassidy confirmed the effective date would be February 1, 2027.

Robert Klein, N Hudson Street, asked whether the Board would have authority to increase the \$100,000 exemption threshold as home prices rise. Attorney Cassidy clarified that the exemption amounts of \$100,000 for residential and \$50,000 for unimproved property are set in state legislation, and any change would require amendment by the State Legislature, an acknowledged limitation of the program.

Supervisor Holdridge noted that the Town has been asking for this legislation for almost a decade and that past and present board members, along with state legislators and the Governor's office, worked for many years to secure the enabling authorization at the state level. He noted that as a 29-year-old who is currently looking to purchase a home, he would personally be more than happy to pay a few extra to preserve the character of the Town he grew up in and hopes to raise a family in.

Council Member Becker offered remarks, drawing a size comparison between Chester and Warwick. He noted that Warwick is over 100 square miles and has saved approximately 5,500 acres, while Chester is only 25 square miles and has already exceeded, proportionally, what Warwick achieved without a PDR program.

Attorney Cassidy clarified in response that this local law does not establish a PDR program per se, but rather establishes a funding mechanism. A PDR program would commonly follow, though fund monies may also be used for other permissible purposes, including appraisal and conservation costs.

Council Member Diffley noted, for the public, that the vote before the Board was not to enact the CPF legislation, but to place the question before the voters via mandatory referendum. Attorney Cassidy confirmed this to be correct.

MOTION to close the public hearing was made by Council Member Becker and seconded by Council Member Diffley at 8:05pm.

The motion carried.

VOTE: AYES(4): Holdridge, Becker, Cassara, Diffley, ABSENT(1): Courtenay

ADOPTED

Attorney Cassidy read the formal resolution into the record:

**TOWN OF CHESTER
TOWN BOARD**

RESOLUTION TO ADOPT INTRODUCTORY LOCAL LAW 4 OF 2026, A LOCAL LAW IMPOSING A THREE QUARTERS OF ONE PERCENT (.75%) REAL ESTATE TRANSFER TAX ON THE CONVEYANCE OF INTERESTS IN REAL PROPERTY IN THE TOWN, WITH THE REVENUES DERIVED FROM THIS TAX TO BE DEPOSITED IN THE TOWN OF CHESTER COMMUNITY PRESERVATION FUND FOR THE PURPOSE OF PRESERVING THE NATURAL, SCENIC, AND HISTORICAL TREASURES WITHIN THE TOWN

WHEREAS, The Town of Chester possesses a rich heritage of scenic, agricultural and natural resources, the preservation of which is vital to the future economic success and quality of life of the community. To further the objective of preserving the natural, scenic and historical treasures, the Town Board of the Town of Chester finds it necessary to establish a dedicated fund for their conservation. The Town has established a Community Preservation Fund pursuant to Town Law § 64-L and now seeks to implement a transfer tax in the amount of 0.75% on real estate transfers within the Town of Chester as authorized by New York State Tax Law Article 31-A-4.

WHEREAS, Introductory Local Law 4 of 2026 was introduced before the Town Board on June 24, 2026; and

WHEREAS, a duly noticed public hearing was held on July 22, 2026; and

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, after hearing and considering public comment, Introductory Local Law 4 of 2026, entitled A LOCAL LAW IMPOSING A THREE QUARTERS OF ONE PERCENT (.75%) REAL ESTATE TRANSFER TAX ON THE CONVEYANCE OF INTERESTS IN REAL PROPERTY IN

THE TOWN, WITH THE REVENUES DERIVED FROM THIS TAX TO BE DEPOSITED IN THE TOWN OF CHESTER COMMUNITY PRESERVATION FUND FOR THE PURPOSE OF PRESERVING THE NATURAL, SCENIC, AND HISTORICAL TREASURES WITHIN THE TOWN is hereby adopted subject to mandatory referendum.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Town Clerk shall cause the proposition as set forth in Section 4 of Introductory Local Law 4 of 2026 to be transmitted to the Board of Elections for the November 3, 2026 general election, and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that, upon approval by referendum, the Town Clerk shall assign this local law the next successive local law number and file the same with the New York Secretary of State

MOTION to adopt Introductory Local Law 4 of 2026 subject to mandatory referendum was made by Council Member Diffley and seconded by Supervisor Holdridge.

Vote Rollcall:

Supervisor Holdridge	Yes	X	No	Abstain	Absent
Council Member Becker	Yes	X	No	Abstain	Absent
Council Member Cassara	Yes	X	No	Abstain	Absent
Council Member Courtenay	Yes		No	Abstain	Absent X
Council Member Diffley	Yes	X	No	Abstain	Absent

ADOPTED

Supervisor Holdridge announced that a referendum on the Community Preservation Fund transfer tax will appear on the November 3, 2026 ballot, and urged the public to vote yes.

PUBLIC HEARING ON INTRODUCTORY LOCAL LAW 5 OF 2026 - Will put a referendum to change the Highway Superintendent position from elected to appointed at the start of 2028

Supervisor Holdridge provided background for the public. He explained that an election is currently taking place in 2026 to fill the remainder of the term left vacant by the previous Highway Superintendent. The winner of that election will serve a one-year term in 2027. If this local law is not passed, there would be another election in 2027 for a three-year term. If the local law passes and the referendum is approved, there would be no election in 2027; instead, the Town Board would interview candidates and appoint a Highway Superintendent at the start of 2028. He noted that the local law also provides that the appointed Superintendent need not be a resident of the Town of Chester, so long as they reside in Orange County, a provision intended to broaden the eligible applicant pool. Additionally, the law changes the term of the position from three years to two years.

Attorney Cassidy added those two points formally: broadening residency eligibility to Orange County and changing the term to two years, both of which would be subject to mandatory referendum.

MOTION to open the public hearing Introductory Local Law 5 of 2026 was made by Council Member Becker and seconded by Council Member Diffley at 8:15pm.

The motion carried.

VOTE: AYES(4): Holdridge, Becker, Cassara, Diffley, ABSENT(1): Courtenay

ADOPTED

The following is the notice as appearing in the Times Herald Record on July 3, 2026.

TOWN OF CHESTER
1786 KINGS HIGHWAY
CHESTER, NY 10918

NOTICE OF PUBLIC HEARING

INTRODUCTORY LOCAL LAW 5 OF 2026

**A LOCAL LAW TO CHANGE THE OFFICE OF HIGHWAY SUPERINTENDENT FROM AN
ELECTED OFFICE TO AN APPOINTED OFFICE**

Section 1. LEGISLATIVE PURPOSE AND INTENT

The Town of Chester desires to eliminate the elected position of Superintendent of Highways and replace it with an appointed position of Superintendent of Highways. By doing so, the Town Board anticipates it will be able to assert greater oversight and accountability in the operation, function, and responsibility of upkeep and maintenance of Town highways, attract a wider Applicant pool for the position of appointed Superintendent of Highways, and minimize the risk of vacancies and ensure continuity in leadership.

Please take notice that the Town Board of the Town of Chester will hold a public hearing on Wednesday, July 22, 2026 at 6:45PM in the Town Hall Meeting Room, 1786 Kings Highway, Chester, NY. Said public hearing is to hear comments on the above captioned proposed local law.

A copy of the proposed local law is on file in the Town Clerk's Office and is available for inspection during normal business hours (Monday-Friday, 8 am to 5 pm).

Any person interested in the proposed local law may appear in person or by agent. All written communications should be addressed to the Town Clerk at the above address.

BY ORDER OF THE TOWN BOARD
TOWN OF CHESTER

LINDA A. ZAPPALA
TOWN CLERK

DATED: JUNE 26, 2026

Bill Geiler, Speranza Court, spoke in strong support of making the Highway Superintendent an appointed position. He stated that he spent 28 years in the Department of Public Works and served as superintendent for 22 of those years, and that he was never in agreement with an elected superintendency. He said, the Town board and public mostly have no control over an elected highway superintendent. They give the Town board a number for a budget. The Town board approves that number. He argued that an appointed superintendent would be accountable to the Board and that tying the position to civil service testing would help ensure a pool of qualified candidates across Orange County, rather than being limited strictly to Town residents.

Brian Ross, Ridgefield Rd, spoke in opposition to converting the position to an appointed one. He began by thanking the Town Board and Supervisor Holdridge for their assistance in advancing a resolution to the Village of Chester Board of Trustees seeking installation of a traffic light at the intersection of Academy Avenue and State Route 94. He noted that the Village Board unanimously approved the resolution and forwarded it to traffic control in Poughkeepsie, supplemented by letters and a petition from area businesses. Turning to the matter at hand, Mr. Ross argued that he could not find one problem that happened between the Town or problems and any of the constituents in that elected role. He acknowledged that the incident on May 2nd and the dismissal of the previous superintendent was a horrible incident. However, he contended that removing the position from the electorate was an overreaction to a single event in 55 years. He added when voters are left out of the selection process, there are times where the selection process for an appointment becomes skewed. He emphasized his point: let the voters vote.

Richard Logothetis, Kings Highway, spoke in favor of an appointed position. He recalled that the position had at one time been appointed before being switched to elected. He echoed the accountability argument, recounting that he had personally been told by a highway superintendent "this is the way it's going to be, I don't care what you think." He characterized the Highway Department as one of the biggest expenditures of the Town, and argued, that we hired a group of people to make that decision on the public's behalf and would like to see it go back to an appointed position. This way the Board could be voted in or out if the public likes what they are doing or not.

Ryan Senning again addressed the Board, offering four reasons in favor of an appointed position: 1) you want someone who's good at the job, not someone who's good at running for office—plowing roads, fixing equipment takes an actual skill; 2) accountability is easier to enforce with an appointed position; as when it's an elected position you need to wait for the next election to do something about a failing superintendent unless they commit a crime; 3) an appointed position allows for longer-range planning without the disruption of election cycles; and 4) there is less opportunity for foul play in politics, especially in a position like this that does a lot of hiring.

Vincent Maniscalco, via online comment, said there actually was a problem around 1977 with the highway superintendent. Elected does not always hire the most qualified person. Appointed position will find the better candidate. Voters do not have a clue as to the better candidate, as witnessed in past primary elections.

Council Member Becker explained that one practical barrier to an elected position is that current Highway Department employees who have grown through the ranks and have the most relevant experience predominantly do not reside within the Town of Chester. Because an elected official must be a resident and registered voter, those most qualified individuals are categorically excluded from running.

Council Member Becker added that the salary for the elected Highway Superintendent is structured as a part-time position—25 hours per week plus benefits totaling approximately \$43,000 per year in addition to the \$80,000 salary—whereas an appointed superintendent would be hired as a full-time employee with a full-time salary and full accountability for that role.

Supervisor Holdridge noted that in an appointed position, the Board could set explicit standards for full-time employment, hours, and compensation, whereas as an elected official, there is no legal requirement to work full time. Supervisor Holdridge further noted, this situation involved misconduct by an elected official, a criminal act committed that we had to wait another year and a half before anything could be done. An appointed position would allow the Board to make a correction much sooner. Supervisor Holdridge also noted that competitive elections for the highway superintendent position have been rare.

Council Member Cassara stated his dissent, saying this position has always and should always stay elected. He argued that the solution to past friction was not to remove the position from the voters, but to build better working relationships with the superintendent and to use the board liaison system more effectively to put our differences apart and work together, not take away the vote from the people.

MOTION to close the public hearing Introductory Local Law 5 of 2026 was made by Council Member Becker and seconded by Council Member Diffley at 8:35pm.

The motion carried.

VOTE: AYES(4): Holdridge, Becker, Cassara, Diffley, ABSENT(1): Courtenay

ADOPTED

Attorney Cassidy read the resolution into the record:

**TOWN OF CHESTER
TOWN BOARD**

**RESOLUTION TO ADOPT INTRODUCTORY LOCAL LAW 5 OF 2026,
A LOCAL LAW TO CHANGE THE OFFICE OF HIGHWAY SUPERINTENDENT FROM AN ELECTED
OFFICE TO AN APPOINTED OFFICE**

WHEREAS, The Town of Chester desires to eliminate the elected position of Superintendent of Highways and replace it with an appointed position of Superintendent of Highways. By doing so, the Town Board anticipates it will be able to assert greater oversight and accountability in the operation, function, and responsibility of upkeep and maintenance of Town highways, attract a wider applicant pool for the position of appointed Superintendent of Highways, and minimize the risk of vacancies and ensure continuity in leadership.

WHEREAS, Introductory Local Law 5 of 2026, entitled A LOCAL LAW TO CHANGE THE OFFICE OF HIGHWAY SUPERINTENDENT FROM AN ELECTED OFFICE TO AN APPOINTED OFFICE was introduced on June 24, 2026; and

WHEREAS, a duly noticed public hearing was held on July 22, 2026; and

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that Introductory Local Law 5 of 2026, entitled A LOCAL LAW TO CHANGE THE OFFICE OF HIGHWAY SUPERINTENDENT FROM AN ELECTED OFFICE TO AN APPOINTED OFFICE is hereby adopted subject to mandatory referendum; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Town Clerk shall cause the proposition as set forth in said Introductory Local Law 5 of 2026 to be transmitted to the Board of Elections for the November 3, 2026 general election, and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that, upon approval at said referendum, the Town Clerk shall assign this local law the next successive local law number and file the same with the New York Secretary of State.

MOTION by: Council Member Becker, second by Council Member Diffley To Adopt Introductory Local Law 5 Of 2026, A Local Law To Change The Office Of Highway Superintendent From An Elected Office To An Appointed Office.

Vote Rollcall:

Supervisor Holdridge	Yes X	No	Abstain	Absent
Council Member Becker	Yes X	No	Abstain	Absent
Council Member Cassara	Yes	No X	Abstain	Absent
Council Member Courtenay	Yes	No	Abstain	Absent X
Council Member Diffley	Yes X	No	Abstain	Absent

ADOPTED

Supervisor Holdridge announced that a referendum on converting the Highway Superintendent position from elected to appointed will appear on the November 3, 2026 ballot.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Richard Logothetis, Kings Highway, made two remarks. First, he formally confirmed his intention to transfer a prior donation for the Sugar Loaf Park into the general parks fund, to support all ongoing park improvements. Supervisor Holdridge acknowledged and thanked him. Second, he addressed the ongoing debate about water billing methodology—taxation versus usage-based charges. He argued strongly that individual users should be responsible for their own consumption and that no resident should be subsidizing somebody else's water use. He drew an analogy to electric bills: just as a resident can reduce their electric bill by adjusting their air conditioning, a resident can control their water bill by regulating usage. He argued that usage-based billing preserves individual control, whereas tax-based billing eliminates it entirely and has no connection to actual consumption.

Ryan Senning followed up on a question he had raised at the June 24, 2026 meeting regarding the quality and completion of a sidewalk project in Sugar Loaf completed by Consorti. He noted that at the prior meeting, Council Member Cassara had indicated he had not yet reviewed the documentation but would look into it and follow up. Mr. Senning asked Council Member Cassara to share what he had found. Council Member Cassara explained that quality assurance and quality control are the responsibility of the Town's hired engineer, who reviewed the work and signed off that it was done correctly. He noted that one disputed element—the color specification of the stamped concrete—was, in his professional opinion as someone with over 20 years of concrete experience, essentially impossible to execute: He indicated he could not independently confirm the color match because no physical samples were made available for comparison prior to the pour, only digital samples. Council Member Cassara expressed frustration at being asked to account for a project he had no involvement with prior to joining the Board, and Mr. Senning clarified he was not alleging wrongdoing but simply following up on the commitment that was made. Supervisor Holdridge closed the back-and-forth in the interest of time.

Elizabeth Barrett-Zahn commended the Town Board for the excellent maintenance of Knapp's View, one of the Town's scenic open spaces. She highlighted the species-sensitive mowing schedule that has helped maintain the area's natural beauty and the paths maintained by Parks and Recreation. She reported that on July 9th, the Chester Conservation Advisory Council, in partnership with Orange County Audubon, hosted their second

annual Birds in Bloom walk at Knapp's View, drawing 16 birders and nature enthusiasts who observed purple martins and bobolinks, with attendees coming from as far as Westchester County. She also noted that on the evening of the walk, the space was simultaneously being used for two wedding photography sessions, family photos, exercise walking, dog walking, and picnicking. She said, it's a wonderful reminder that this special place serves many purposes while continuing to provide that valuable habitat for wildlife as well. She distributed the first edition of the resurrected Sugar Loaf News, a quarterly publication of the Sugar Loaf Community Foundation, to Board members and attendees.

Dylan Skriloff asked about the status of the crosswalk painting in Sugar Loaf and inquired why it had taken approximately six months. Supervisor Holdridge explained that the crosswalks had originally been painted but faded. He confirmed the project is not yet complete: Orange County is expected to pave Kings Highway in August at no cost to the Town, after which Consorti will be brought in to complete the stamped pattern on the two raised crosswalks, repaint all lines and road markings, and add a new painted crosswalk near Sugar Loaf Square and Cancun Inn. He noted the final completion of the project is contingent on timing from Consorti and Orange County.

Mr. Skriloff also asked Council Member Becker about his prior votes against the Community Preservation Fund resolution. Council Member Becker clarified that he had never voted against the resolution itself, but had sought to bring information to the public regarding the nature of the tax. He described himself as generally opposed to additional taxes but made clear he is not against letting a referendum go through and allow people to make their own decision.

A question was raised about the status of the solar speed monitoring signs in Town. Supervisor Holdridge reported that the Police Department confirmed the signs are now operational and being calibrated and should be fully accurate by the end of the week.

COMMUNITY PRESERVATION PLAN LOCAL LAW INTRODUCTION - Plan outlining Chester's preservation vision and goals

MOTION to move agenda item #15 up was made by Supervisor Holdridge and seconded by Council Member Becker.

Motion carried.

VOTE: AYES(4): Holdridge, Becker, Cassara, Diffley, ABSENT(1): Courtenay

ADOPTED

Town Planner Kristen, Lanc & Tully, presented the Community Preservation Project Plan, describing it as essentially a road map for how to use the Community Preservation Fund. She emphasized that the plan functions as a toolbox; the fund cannot be spent on anything that is not addressed in this plan.

She outlined the plan's primary objective and priorities. The highest priority is the preservation of farmland. Additional preservation priorities include: establishment of additional parks; preservation of land with exceptional scenic value; preservation of wetlands; preservation of aquifer recharge areas (particularly near Glenmere Lake); establishment of wildlife refuges for maintaining biodiversity; preservation of unique or threatened ecological areas; preservation of streams and stream buffers; preservation of unique forested lands; establishment and preservation of public access to those lands for trail connectivity; preservation of historic places on the National Historic Registry; and linkage actions to connect those protected spaces.

Town Planner O'Donnell directed the Board's attention to a chart listing all target parcels by tax identification number, address, size, applicable target area category, and zone. She also described an accompanying map on which currently conserved properties appear in green and target parcels appear in cream or yellow, many of which are situated adjacent to already-protected lands for connectivity and buffering purposes. She noted the plan identified 3,341 acres of targeted land. She was careful to state for the record and public that the plan creates no obligations on any listed property owner and does not restrict current development rights and there is nothing in this plan that says for now these individual properties are no longer able to be developed in the manner in which zoning dictates today. She explained what the plan does is identify properties of conservation value so that, if they come before the Planning Board for development or go up for sale, the Town has a toolkit to respond; including transfer of development rights, outright purchase by the Town, conservation easements held by the Town or a land trust, and funding for associated fees and costs.

The plan was developed by the Community Preservation Fund Advisory Board established by the Board a few meetings prior, comprising two farmers, a zoning board member, a village board member, a preservation

collective member, and a land use attorney, working in conjunction with Town Planner. Supervisor Holdridge noted that the plan drew extensively from existing regional plans, including the Orange County Comprehensive Plan, recommendations by the New York–New Jersey Trail Conference, the Orange County Land Trust, and the Open Space Institute. Supervisor Holdridge stated encouraged the public to review the map and plan online to see the full scope of targeted areas before forming a final opinion.

Council Member Becker raised a question about a specific parcel on Greycourt Road, as Johnson's Farm, that is currently being developed with solar installations. Town Planner O'Donnell acknowledged that the farm has multiple tax parcels and that a portion of the property continues to be actively farmed. She also pointed out that solar installations typically have a 15-to-20-year window before removal, and that preserving the actively farmed portion remains important. Attorney Cassidy reiterated for the public that listing a parcel in the plan does not restrict the current owner's rights in any way; it merely makes fund money eligible to be used for that parcel if an opportunity arises. She also noted the plan may be updated: the first revision may not occur until at least three years after adoption, and thereafter not less than once every five years, making it a living, breathing document.

Supervisor Holdridge noted that the final draft of the Community Preservation Project Plan had been distributed to Board members that day, and that this action is an introduction only. The plan will be voted on two meetings from the current date, providing ample opportunity for Board members and the public to review it.

Town Attorney Cassidy read the resolution into the record.

**TOWN OF CHESTER
TOWN BOARD**

**RESOLUTION TO INTRODUCE INTRODUCTORY LOCAL LAW 6 OF 2026
A LOCAL LAW TO ADOPT A COMMUNITY PRESERVATION PROJECT PLAN PURSUANT TO TOWN
LAW § 64-L.**

WHEREAS, The Town of Chester possesses a rich heritage of scenic, agricultural and natural resources, the preservation of which is vital to the future economic success and quality of life of the community. To further the objective of preserving the natural, scenic and historical treasures, the Town Board of the Town of Chester finds it necessary to establish a dedicated fund for their conservation. Such fund has been authorized under Section 64-L of the New York Town Law. Under this statute the creation of a fund and a community preservation project plan is a prerequisite to the implementation of a three-quarter (3/4%) percent real estate transfer tax, which is also authorized by Town Law Section 64-L and Article 31-A-4 of the New York Tax Law ("Tax on Real Estate Transfers in the Town of Chester"). The purpose of this Local Law is to meet the requirements of Town Law Section 64-L for a Preservation Project Plan and thereby set the stage to continue the Town's open space preservation plans.

WHEREAS, as required by Town Law § 64-L, the plan provides a detailed evaluation of all available land use alternatives to protect community character, including but not limited to: (a) fee simple acquisition, (b) zoning regulations, including density reductions, cluster development, and site plan and design requirements, (c) transfer of development rights, (d) the purchase of development rights, and (e) scenic and conservation easements. Said evaluation is as specific as practicable as to each parcel selected for inclusion in such plan. Such plan establishes the priorities for preservation and includes the preservation of farmland as its highest priority. Funds from the community preservation fund may only be expended for projects which have been included in such plan. Such plan shall be updated not less than once every five years, but in no event until at least three years after the adoption of the original plan; and

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, that Introductory Local Law 6 of 2026, entitled A Local Law to Establish a Community Preservation Project Plan to Town Law § 64-L is hereby introduced.

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

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Town Board hereby declares lead agency and further declares that this action is an unlisted action under the State Environmental Quality Review Act; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Town Board incorporates the materials considered as part of its SEQR review for the 2026 Comprehensive Plan and the Zoning Amendments (Local Law 6 of 2026) into the record

by reference as the proposed Preservation Project Plan implements several recommendations as set forth in the 2026 Comprehensive Plan.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that a public hearing shall be held on August 26, 2026 at 6:45 P.M. or as soon thereafter as may be heard in Town Hall, located at 1786 Kings Highway, Chester, NY 10918

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Town Clerk shall cause to be published public notice in the official newspaper as is required by law.

MOTION to introduce Introductory Local Law 6 of 2026, entitled, A Local Law to Establish a Community Preservation Project Plan Pursuant to Town Law Section 64-l, was made by Supervisor Holdridge and seconded by Council Member Diffley, and set a public hearing for August 26, 2026 at 6:45 PM at Chester Town Hall.

The motion carried.

VOTE: AYES(4): Holdridge, Becker, Cassara, Diffley, ABSENT(1): Courtenay

ADOPTED

**ROAD CLOSURE REQUEST FOR SUGAR LOAF COMMUNITY FOUNDATION CAR SHOW
Kings Highway closure from 10AM to 2:30PM between Pine Hill Rd and Creamery Pond Rd
intersections**

David Turetsky addressed the Board on behalf of the Sugar Loaf Community Foundation, explaining the intent to establish an annual classic car show in the Hamlet of Sugar Loaf to drive foot traffic to local shops and restaurants. He noted that the event was scheduled for October 3rd and would require closure of Kings Highway from 10AM to 2:30PM. He acknowledged that the Sugar Loaf 5K run would also be taking place that morning, closing Kings Highway and the Kings Highway Bypass from approximately 8:30 to 10:00 AM, after which the car show closure would take effect.

Supervisor Holdridge noted that the Police Chief had reviewed the request and had no objection, but raised a scheduling complication: the Best Buddies bicycle tour also passes through that section of Town on the same date. Supervisor Holdridge stated his personal view that the bike tour is not native to Chester, not originating from Chester. He said we should give deference to a community group that is trying to make a Chester event happen and ask that the bicycle tour either work with or work around that event. He noted that the Town has not yet formally committed to the Best Buddies event for this year, and that the presence of the new speed humps on Kings Highway might also make the bypass a more practical route for cyclists. The Chief's email also indicated that Best Buddies has previously navigated similar conflicts with other community events.

Council Member Becker expressed some reservation about voting before coordinating with Best Buddies, but deferred to the majority view. He noted the Chief's assurance that officer coverage for the event could be provided by officers already on duty without incurring overtime costs, which addressed his concern about additional policing expenses given prior budget impacts. Mr. Turetsky also confirmed that the Foundation would provide volunteers to assist with traffic management, reducing the burden on the Police Department.

MOTION to grant the road closure request to the Sugar Loaf Community Foundation for the car show on October 3rd from 10 AM to 2:30 PM was made by Supervisor Holdridge and seconded by Council Member Cassara.

The motion carried.

VOTE: AYES(4): Holdridge, Becker, Cassara, Diffley, ABSENT(1): Courtenay

ADOPTED

Supervisor Holdridge will coordinate with event representatives and the Police Department to address the Best Buddies route conflict.

REPORTS

The Town Clerk, the Comptroller, and Supervisor Holdridge were prepared to deliver semi-annual reports but, given the late hour, those reports were deferred to the next regular meeting by consensus. Town Clerk Zappala made the following announcements: Bellvale Farm stand will be held on July 25th at 359 Gibson Hill Road

from 10 AM to 2 PM, with proceeds benefiting ALS United Greater New York. Freedom Fest will be held on the same date at Thomas Bull Park. Town Clerk Zappala also reported that mortgage tax receipts for the month of June had been received from Orange County in the amount of \$25,387.50.

BUDGET AMENDMENT – Remove the Purchase of a Single Axle At \$310,000

Comptroller Neil Meyer explained that the Highway Department had decided to switch from the originally budgeted single-axle truck to a tandem dump truck, which is more necessary for operations. The tandem truck costs approximately \$60,000 more than the budgeted amount. Because the truck manufacturer is fully booked for the year and cannot accept new orders for delivery in 2026, the purchase cannot be executed this year. The Board agreed to remove the \$310,000 purchase from the current budget and place it in a reserve account for future purchase.

MOTION to remove the \$310,000 budgeted amount from the DA 5130.2 vehicle account was made by Council Member Becker and seconded by Council Member Diffley.

The motion carried.

VOTE: AYES(4): Holdridge, Becker, Cassara, Diffley, ABSENT(1): Courtenay **ADOPTED**

BUDGET AMENDMENT – Budget \$310,000 In an Equipment Reserve Line in The DA Fund for The Purpose of Purchasing a Tandem Dump Truck

MOTION to place \$310,000 in an equipment reserve line in the DA Fund for the purpose of purchasing a tandem dump truck was made by Council Member Becker and seconded by Council Member Cassara.

The motion carried.

VOTE: AYES(4): Holdridge, Becker, Cassara, Diffley, ABSENT(1): Courtenay **ADOPTED**

CHESTER BILLBOARD PSA REQUEST – Sugar Loaf 5k Graphic to Start Being Advertised on Labor Day Weekend for Their Event on October 3rd

MOTION to accept the PSA request to advertise the Sugar Loaf 5K on the Chester Billboard beginning Labor Day weekend was made by Council Member Cassara and seconded by Council Member Diffley.

The motion carried with one abstention.

VOTE: AYES(4): Holdridge, Cassara, Diffley, ABTSTAINED(1): Becker, ABSENT(1): Courtenay **ADOPTED**

ORANGE COUNTY – TOWN OF CHESTER ASSESSOR SERVICES CONTRACT 2027 - 2029 – Three-year contract with Orange County to continue providing Assessor services to the Town of Chester. Payments of \$250,800, \$262,000, and \$275,900 each year respectively

Supervisor Holdridge explained the Town contract with Orange County to provide the Assessor's office staff: one full-time Assessor and two part-time assistants. Following a period of negotiation, the three-year contract was agreed upon. Annual payments are \$250,800 in Year 1 (2027), \$262,000 in Year 2 (2028), and \$275,900 in Year 3 (2029). There were no debate points raised by Board members.

MOTION to accept the Orange County–Town of Chester Assessor Services Contract for 2027–2029 and to authorize Supervisor Holdridge to execute the agreement was made by Council Member Cassara and seconded by Council Member Becker.

The motion carried.

VOTE: AYES(4): Holdridge, Becker, Cassara, Diffley, ABSENT(1): Courtenay **ADOPTED**

RESOLUTION TO ACCEPT AMENDED STATE LAW FOR VOLUNTARY ANIMAL SHELTER CONTRIBUTIONS PURSUANT TO NYS AGRICULTURE & MARKETS LAW 109

Town Clerk Zappala explained that this resolution is required to comply with an amended state law allowing voluntary contributions to be made to an animal shelter through the dog licensing and renewal process. The resolution identifies the Warwick Valley Humane Society, the Town's existing animal control provider, as the beneficiary organization. The contribution is purely voluntary and would appear as an option on dog license forms.

**RESOLUTION
DESIGNATING RECIPIENT OF VOLUNTARY ANIMAL SHELTER CONTRIBUTIONS PURSUANT
TO NYS AGRICULTURE & MARKETS LAW §109**

WHEREAS, New York State Agriculture & Markets Law §109, as amended effective December 2025, requires that municipalities include in dog license applications and renewals an option for voluntary contributions to support an animal shelter; and

WHEREAS, pursuant to such law, voluntary contributions collected in connection with dog licensing are to be provided to the organization under contract with the municipality for animal shelter services; and

WHEREAS, the Town of Bedford currently contracts with the South Salem Animal Hospital to provide such services; and

WHEREAS, the Town Board wishes to acknowledge and implement the requirements of §109 in a manner consistent with applicable law;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the Town Board hereby acknowledges that, pursuant to New York State Agriculture & Markets Law §109, all voluntary animal shelter contributions collected in connection with dog licensing shall be for the benefit of the South Salem Animal Hospital, as the Town's contracted animal shelter provider; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Town Clerk is authorized and directed to update dog license applications, renewal forms, and related materials to include a clearly identified voluntary contribution option in compliance with §109, including language stating that such contributions are voluntary and not part of the license fee, and identifying the South Salem Animal Hospital as the recipient; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Town Comptroller/Treasurer is authorized and directed to establish a dedicated fund or budget line item for the receipt and accounting of such contributions; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that all funds collected pursuant to this program shall be remitted to the South Salem Animal Hospital no less than annually, and may be remitted on a more frequent basis as determined appropriate by the Town's financial officers; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the appropriate Town officials are authorized to take all actions necessary to implement this resolution, including administrative and system updates.

MOTION to adopt the resolution accepting the amended state law for voluntary animal shelter contributions, designating the Warwick Valley Humane Society as the beneficiary, was made by Council Member Becker and seconded by Council Member Diffley.

The motion carried.

VOTE: AYES(4): Holdridge, Becker, Cassara, Diffley, ABSENT(1): Courtenay

ADOPTED

HIGHWAY DEPARTMENT REQUEST ACCEPT \$15,926.64 BID FROM SEALCOAT USA FOR LINE STRIPING TO 20.1 MILES OF ROAD

The Highway Department requested acceptance of a bid from Sealcoat, USA in the amount of \$15,926.64 for line striping of 20.1 miles of roadway. This represented the lowest of three bids received: Safety Marketing LLC submitted \$22,085.02, and Seneca Pavement Marketing LLC submitted \$27,148.50. A brief discussion arose

from Council Member Diffley's question as to whether it has always been contracted out, to which the answer was yes. Supervisor Holdridge suggested this might be a topic to revisit at budget time.

MOTION to accept the \$15,926.64 bid from Sealcoat, USA for line striping of 20.1 miles of road was made by Council Member Becker and seconded by Council Member Cassara.

The motion carried.

VOTE: AYES(4): Holdridge, Becker, Cassara, Diffley, ABSENT(1): Courtenay

ADOPTED

BUDGET AMENDMENTS – Various Parks, Repairs, and Fireworks related amendments

Comptroller Meyer presented various budget amendments related to parks, repairs, and fireworks expenditures, shifting existing allocations to ensure timely and orderly payment.

Town of Chester			
Town Board			
Resolution of the Town Board of the Town of Chester			
Authorizing the following Budget Modifications			
It is hereby resolved , that the Town Board hereby authorizes and directs the Town Comptroller to make the following budget modifications for the 2026 Town Budget as follows:			
Description	Account	Increase/Decrease	Amount
<u>General Fund</u>			
Town Hall Water	A1620-462	Increase	1,000
Town Hall Supplies	A1620-411	Decrease	(1,000)
<u>PartTown Fund</u>			
Police Building Repairs	B1620-461	Increase	6,000
Fund Balance	B0599	Increase	6,000
Replace Furnace, received legislative grant			
<u>Surrey Meadows</u>			
Lab Testing	SW2 8330-413	Increase	750
Fund Balance	SW2 0599	Increase	750
<u>Lake Hill</u>			
Meters & Parts	SW3 8340-411	Increase	2,300
Fund Balance	SW3 0599	Increase	2,300

MOTION to accept the budget amendments for the various parks, repairs, and fireworks-related items as presented was made by Council Member Becker and seconded by Council Member Diffley.

The motion carried.

VOTE: AYES(4): Holdridge, Becker, Cassara, Diffley, ABSENT(1): Courtenay

ADOPTED

**SUGAR LOAF SQUARE METER AND VALVE REPLACEMENT - \$14,000 TAM Insertion Valve
Option which would result in a 2-day boil water notice for Wood Rd or no cost but a 2-day boil water
notice for half of the Sugar Loaf Water District.**

The Board considered two options for the Sugar Loaf Square meter and valve replacement. Option A was to authorize payment of \$14,000 to TAM for installation of an insertion valve, which would isolate the work area and limit any resulting boil water advisory to only the Wood Road area—affecting approximately two residences during the actual repair window. Option B was to proceed without the insertion valve using Town resources, which would require a two-day boil water notice for approximately half of the entire Sugar Loaf Water District, affecting residents along Kings Highway, Pewter Circle, and surrounding areas.

Council Member Becker provided detailed context. He explained that the absence of sufficient isolation valves in the current distribution system means that without the insertion valve, a large portion of the district must be shut down to perform what would otherwise be a contained repair. He noted this reflects a pattern seen elsewhere in the Town's water system, where insufficient intermediate valves were installed at intersections, and that additional valve installations should be a priority for future planning. He also noted that the \$14,000 would be funded from the Sugar Loaf Water District fund balance, not the general fund, so the cost would be borne only by district ratepayers.

Comptroller Neil Meyer recommended that, in conjunction with approving the expenditure, the Board also formally appropriate \$14,000 from Sugar Loaf Water District fund balance, providing the accounting authority to cover the cost. Council Member Cassara stated that if we have the money we should do the insertion valve, expressing support for Option A.

MOTION to appropriate \$14,000 from Sugar Loaf Water District fund balance and authorize the \$14,000 TAM insertion valve procedure for the Sugar Loaf Square Meter and Valve Replacement Project was made by Council Member Becker and seconded by Council Member Cassara.

The motion carried.

VOTE: AYES(4): Holdridge, Becker, Cassara, Diffley, ABSENT(1): Courtenay

ADOPTED

WATER DEPARTMENT EDUCATION REQUEST

The Board considered a request from Water Department operator Joe Janots to attend a Grade B license upgrade course at SUNY Cortland from September 21–25, 2026, at a tuition cost of \$775, with additional travel and lodging reimbursements to follow as incurred. Council Member Becker expressed support, noting that a Grade B licensed operator strengthens the Town's operational standing and ensures redundancy in licensed personnel, which was particularly important given the requirements connected to the Lake Hill Farms water system. Supervisor Holdridge concurred and indicated registration needed to be completed promptly to secure a spot.

MOTION to approve the water department education request for Joe Janots to attend the Grade B license upgrade course at SUNY Cortland, authorizing \$775 in tuition and associated travel reimbursements, was made by Council Member Becker and seconded by Council Member Diffley.

The motion carried.

VOTE: AYES(4): Holdridge, Becker, Cassara, Diffley, ABSENT(1): Courtenay

ADOPTED

NEW BUSINESS

Retirement of Richard Perez

Supervisor Holdridge noted for the record that the agenda incorrectly listed this item as a resignation, when in fact Richard Perez has submitted a notice of retirement effective January 8, 2027, submitted on July 8, 2026. Supervisor Holdridge said he wanted to thank us for allowing him the opportunity to serve the people of Chester. He's truly grateful for all the friendships he's developed over the past 20 years and for all the officers he's been able to work with, past and present. He appreciated the guidance and leadership he received and considers it a privilege to have served this community.

MOTION to accept the retirement of Richard Perez, effective January 8, 2027, was made by Council Member Becker and seconded by Council Member Cassara.

The motion carried.

VOTE: AYES(4): Holdridge, Becker, Cassara, Diffley, ABSENT(1): Courtenay

ADOPTED

Resignation of Andrew Contarino, Building Inspector

Supervisor Holdridge announced that Building Inspector Andrew Contarino has submitted his resignation, effective August 4, 2026, to take a position with another municipality. Supervisor Holdridge expressed regret at losing him, noting that Mr. Contarino had come into a Building Department that was hundreds and hundreds of permits and inspections behind and an office that was a complete disaster in terms of organization. Working with Code Enforcement staff, Mr. Contarino had substantially righted the ship over the past two years. The Board wished him well. In the interim, the Town will likely contract with its engineering firm to provide building inspection coverage while a permanent replacement is sought through a civil service canvass and public advertising.

MOTION to accept the resignation of Building Inspector Andrew Contarino, effective August 4, 2026, was made by Council Member Becker and seconded by Council Member Diffley.

The motion carried.

VOTE: AYES(4): Holdridge, Becker, Cassara, Diffley, ABSENT(1): Courtenay

ADOPTED

Knapp's View Well Cap Cover

The Board considered a request forwarded by the Parks Advisory Board to purchase a decorative fake rock cover from Home Depot in the amount of \$409 to protect an exposed well cap at Knapp's View. A brief, lighthearted exchange occurred among Board members and members of the public regarding the composition of the fake rock (confirmed to be plastic). Supervisor Holdridge noted it would be anchored with four ground anchors. The \$442 alternative option was considered but rejected in favor of the \$409 option.

MOTION to authorize the purchase of the \$409 fake rock well cap cover from Home Depot for installation at Knapp's View was made by Council Member Diffley and seconded by Council Member Cassara.

The motion carried.

VOTE: AYES(4): Holdridge, Becker, Cassara, Diffley, ABSENT(1): Courtenay

ADOPTED

Building Inspector Civil Service Canvass and Advertisement

The Board authorized a resolution to canvass the civil service list for the Building Inspector position and, contingent on confirmation that no eligible list exists or that it is exhausted, to advertise for the position through the Town Clerk's office. Town Clerk Zappala noted that the canvass of the civil service list must occur first, as the existence of an active list would preclude open advertising. Supervisor Holdridge confirmed that Town Hall staff had already reached out to begin that inquiry. The pay scale for the position was set at \$80,000 to \$95,000.

MOTION to authorize the canvass of the civil service list for the Building Inspector position and, subject to confirmation by the labor attorney, to advertise for a Building Inspector with a pay scale of \$80,000–\$95,000 was made by Council Member Cassara and seconded by Council Member Diffley.

The motion carried.

VOTE: AYES(4): Holdridge, Becker, Cassara, Diffley, ABSENT(1): Courtenay

ADOPTED

Conservation Advisory Council Reappointments

Supervisor Holdridge noted that the terms of several members of the Conservation Advisory Council (CAC) had expired. The members requiring reappointment were identified as Aaron, Will, Bill, James (Jim), Susannah, and Martin. Member Simon was confirmed to have a term not yet expired and was excluded from this action.

MOTION to reappoint the previously stated Conservation Advisory Council members to their next terms was made by Council Member Becker and seconded by Council Member Cassara.

The motion carried.

Court Clerk Advertisement

Attorney Cassidy advised that the Board should authorize advertising for a clerk position in the court justices' offices, as a current clerk is out and a replacement or trained backup is needed. The exact title and employment classification were to be confirmed with the Town's labor attorney prior to advertising. Supervisor Holdridge described the intent as both filling an immediate operational need and training a potential long-term replacement for the position.

MOTION to authorize advertising for a clerk position for the court justices' offices, subject to confirmation of the correct title and classification with the labor attorney, was made by Council Member Cassara and seconded by Council Member Diffley.

The motion carried .

VOTE: AYES(4): Holdridge, Becker, Cassara, Diffley, ABSENT(1): Courtenay

ADOPTED

PUBLIC COMMENT

Robert Klein asked for clarification on the fake rock well cap cover approved earlier in the evening. Supervisor Holdridge provided a brief explanation, noting the Parks Advisory Board had identified the exposed well cap at Knapp's View as both a liability and an aesthetic concern, and that the plastic rock cover would protect the well while blending naturally into the park setting.

Lydia Cuadros, via online, expressed support for spending the money to have TAM repair the Sugar Loaf Square valve rather than inconveniencing a larger number of residents. Supervisor Holdridge confirmed that the Board had in fact taken that course of action earlier in the meeting.

ADJOURNMENT

MOTION by Council Member Becker, and second by Council Member Cassara to adjourn the meeting at 9:43pm there being no additional business brought before the Board.

The motion carried.

VOTE: AYES(4): Holdridge, Becker, Cassara, Courtenay, ABSENT(1):Diffley

ADOPTED

Respectfully submitted,

Linda A. Zappala, RMC
Town Clerk
2026-7-22