

TOWN BOARD MEETING

August 26, 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: Absent
- Council Member Cassara: Present
- Council Member Courtenay: Present
- Council Member Diffley: Present

Determination of Quorum: Yes X No

Also present: Attorney Cassidy

Pledge of Allegiance

All present stood for the Pledge of Allegiance. Supervisor Holdridge then requested that those present remain standing for a moment of silence for the families and residents affected by a fire in Sugar Loaf the previous evening, as well as the firefighters and first responders who assisted them.

RESOLUTION TO ACCEPT 8/12/26 TOWN BOARD MEETING MINUTES

Supervisor Holdridge asked if everyone had reviewed the minutes from the August 12, 2026. No questions or debate points were raised.

MOTION by Council Member Courtenay, seconded by Council Member Diffley to accept the August 12, 2026 Meeting Minutes as presented by Town Clerk Zappala.

The motion carried.

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

ADOPTED

SUMMARY OF BILLS

Supervisor Holdridge reported that the Town would be paying bills in the amount of \$652,084.48.

PROCLAMATION HONORING VIRGINIA BATTIATO

Supervisor Holdridge noted that he had recently attended an event in Cornwall honoring a special member of the Chester community, and that the Board would be formally recognizing her at this meeting. Supervisor Holdridge read into the record a proclamation honoring Virginia Battiato upon her designation as a Super Ager by the Orange County Office for the Aging.

TOWN OF CHESTER

**A PROCLAMATION HONORING VIRGINIA BATTIATO
On Her Distinction As A Super-Ager**

August 26, 2026

WHEREAS, Virginia Battiato has been a born-and-raised, lifelong, and honorable member of the Chester community; and

WHEREAS, Virginia Battiato has been designated and honored by the Orange County Office of the Aging as a Super-Ager; and

WHEREAS, Virginia possesses the traits of a Super-Ager as she maintains an active lifestyle, physically, mentally, and socially; and

WHEREAS, Virginia Battiato has been a member of the Chester Golden Age Club and having served as Treasurer of this organization demonstrates her acuity; and

WHEREAS, Virginia continues to attend meetings, play Bingo and cards and partake in the Club's events; and

WHEREAS, Virginia Battiato is much younger than her chronological age of 94; and

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the Town Board of Chester formally recognizes Virginia Battiato as the model representation of what it means to be a Super-Ager with this official proclamation.

**TOWN OF CHESTER,
ORANGE COUNTY, NEW YORK**

Brandon Holdridge
Supervisor, Town of Chester

Supervisor Holdridge signed the proclamation, and Town Board members came forward for a photo with Ms. Battiato. Ms. Battiato expressed her gratitude, thanking the seniors of the Chester Golden Age Club for electing her and noting with warmth and humor that four of her own children are themselves seniors, with her oldest son being 74 years old. She remarked, "I don't feel old until I think of that." Supervisor Holdridge also conveyed a congratulatory public comment submitted by Erle Vandebogart.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

Supervisor Holdridge called for a motion to enter into Executive Session for the purposes of contract negotiations and personnel matters.

MOTION to enter into Executive Session at 6:50pm was made by Council Member Cassara and seconded by Council Member Courtenay.

The motion carried.

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

ADOPTED

The Board convened in Executive Session and joined by Attorney Melissa and Justice Haislip.

MOTION to come out of Executive Session was made at 7:45pm by Council Member Courtenay and seconded by Council Member Diffley.

The motion carried.

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

ADOPTED

PUBLIC HEARING ON COMMUNITY PRESERVATION PLAN LOCAL LAW

The following is the notice as appearing in the Times Herald Record on August 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 ($\frac{3}{4}$ %) 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 called for a motion to open the Public Hearing on the Community Preservation Plan Local Law.

MOTION to open the Public Hearing was made by Council Member Courtenay and seconded by Council Member Cassara at 7:46pm.

The motion carried.

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

ADOPTED

Town Attorney Cassidy provided an overview of the Community Preservation Plan for the benefit of the Board and the public. Attorney Cassidy explained that the Town has been working toward implementing a Community Preservation Plan and Fund, authorized by state legislation signed by Governor Hochul in October of the prior year. She outlined that there are three components required for implementation, two of which had already been accomplished: the creation of the Community Preservation Fund and its associated Advisory Committee, and the adoption by local law of the 3/4 of 1% real estate transfer tax, which has been submitted to the Board of Elections to appear on the November 3rd general election ballot. The item before the Board and public this evening was the third component—the plan itself—which Attorney Cassidy described as a list of properties that are targets for use of Community Preservation Fund dollars, characterizing it as a goal; a wish list rather than a binding commitment to acquire any specific parcel. She noted that the plan must be revised within three to five years of adoption, and that funds from the Community Preservation Fund may not be expended on any property not included in the plan. The plan was developed by the Advisory Committee in conjunction with the Town's planner Kristen O'Donnell, Lanc & Tully, and had been posted publicly online along with a map of all relevant parcels.

Supervisor Holdridge noted that the plan had been available online for some time, including a map listing all subject-based lots and properties, praised the work of the volunteer committee and the planner, and echoed Attorney Cassidy's characterization of the plan as a living document that can and must be updated over time.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Ryan Senning, Pine Hill Road, addressed the Board in support of the plan, stating he did not anticipate the plan being controversial but nonetheless wished to speak to its merits. He identified three strengths of the plan. First, he argued it supports the vision of the Town's Comprehensive Plan, noting that the Comprehensive Plan itself calls for the creation of the fund and that adopting this plan fulfills a commitment. Second, he emphasized that all tools in the plan, including the purchase of development rights and conservation easements, are entirely voluntary and do not compel property owners to sell or take any action, asking that this be understood clearly by the community. Third, Mr. Senning stressed the permanence of inaction: "The Black Dirt farmland, once it's paved over, you can't unpave it". He said about the wellheads and the aquifer areas, once they are contaminated, you cannot uncontaminate them. He closed by reiterating his support for the transfer tax ballot measure in November, calling a roughly \$2,000 average fee on a home sale a reasonable means of funding the protections contemplated by the plan.

Richard Logothetis, Kings Highway, spoke in strong support of the plan, invoking the "drawbridge effect"—the tendency of new residents to want to preserve the character of the community they chose to move to. He argued that while a buyer who has just spent half a million dollars on a home may initially balk at an additional cost, they would almost certainly conclude that "another \$2,000 is not going to kill anything" in exchange for preserving what they value about Chester.

Vincent Herlihy, Mari Road, asked how the properties on the wish list would be selected, and how the community could be assured that designations are merit-based rather than, as he put it, "a sweetheart deal for some developer that can't get rid of his property." Supervisor Holdridge explained that a committee of five residents, including two local farmers, worked with a planner to evaluate all properties in Chester and assemble a wish list of approximately 25 to 30 parcels important to the town in terms of open space, farmland, aquifer protection, historical significance, and similar considerations. He emphasized that the list is subjective and that spending from the fund on any listed property would require the property owner's willingness to participate, and could take the form of a conservation easement rather than an outright sale, allowing a farmer, for example, to continue farming his land while the Town holds an easement on it. Mr. Herlihy asked whether the evaluations for the wish list properties were available for public review, to which Supervisor Holdridge confirmed that everything is posted on the Town's website.

Attorney Cassidy added that each property entry in the draft plan identifies a category of preservation rationale: agricultural, watershed protection, aquifer protection, trail connectivity. She also emphasized a critical procedural safeguard: any acquisition, whether it's purchasing development rights, a conservation easement, is subject to a public hearing before the Board before we can spend a dime.

No further public comment was received.

MOTION to close the public hearing was made at 7:50pm by Council Member Courtenay and seconded by Council Member Diffley.

The motion carried.

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

ADOPTED

Attorney Cassidy then read into the record the formal resolution language for adoption of Local Law 7 of 2026.

**TOWN OF CHESTER
TOWN BOARD**

**RESOLUTION TO ADOPT 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

WHEREAS, Introductory Local Law 6 of 2026, entitled A Local Law to Establish a Community Preservation Project Plan to Town Law § 64-L was introduced on July 20, 2026

WHEREAS, the Town Board declared lead agency and further declared that this action is an unlisted action under the State Environmental Quality Review Act; and

WHEREAS, a duly noticed public hearing was held on August 26, 2026; and

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, that after review of the draft Community Preservation Plan, the recommendations of the Town of Chester Comprehensive Plan and public comment, the Town Board hereby adopts a negative declaration incorporating the findings set forth in the Negative Declaration adopted in connection with the 2026 Comprehensive Plan and Local Law 6 of 2026 as the proposed Community Preservation Plan is in furtherance of the goals and recommendations enumerated in the Comprehensive Plan; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED THAT Introductory Local Law 6 of 2026 is hereby adopted as Local Law 7 of 2026.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Town Clerk shall cause said local law to be filed with the New York Secretary of State.

MOTION to pass Local Law 7 of 2026, A Local Law to Establish a Community Preservation Project Plan Pursuant to Town Law Section 64-L, was made by Council Member Courtenay and seconded by Council Member Diffley.

**Local Law No.# 7 of 2026
Community Preservation Project Plan**

Local Law adopting a plan pursuant to Section 64-L of the New York Town Law, for the preservation of open space and historic places within the Town of Chester, including the incorporated villages therein, said plan to be known as the "Town of Chester Community Preservation Project Plan," said Local Law to read as follows:

BE IT ENACTED BY THE TOWN BOARD OF THE TOWN OF CHESTER, ORANGE COUNTY, NEW YORK, as follows:

Section 1. - LEGISLATIVE FINDINGS.

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.

Section 2. -TOWN CODE AMENDED:

For the reasons set forth in Section 1 above, the Town Board of the Town of Chester hereby amends the Town of Chester Town Code by adding thereto the following:

Chapter XX¹, entitled "Community Preservation Fund", Article III, entitled Community Preservation Project Plan to read as follows.

Article III – Community Preservation Project Plan

§ xx-28. The Community Preservation Project Plan dated July 6, 2026 is intended to be the community preservation project plan required by Section 64-L of the New York Town Law and Chapter 7 ("Community Preservation Fund") of the Town of Chester Town Code. A copy of said plan is on file with the Town Clerk and attached hereto and incorporated as if fully set forth herein.

Section 3. -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 not affect, impair or invalidate the remainder thereof, but shall be confined in its operation to the clause, sentence, paragraph, section or part thereof directly involved in the controversy in which such judgment shall have been rendered.

Section 4: EFFECTIVE DATE:

This Local law shall take effect immediately upon filing with the Secretary of State as provided by law.

¹ Chapter XX is a representative chapter number pending codification. It is the intent of the Town Board that this local law, upon adoption, be codified in the same chapter as Local Law 5 of 2026.

The motion carried.

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

ADOPTED

Attorney Cassidy noted for the record that, because more than 60 days had elapsed since a required triggering threshold, the adoption of the plan now satisfies all statutory criteria for the 3/4% transfer tax to appear on the November 3rd ballot. Supervisor Holdridge urged residents to vote yes on the referendum and thanked the volunteers who contributed to the plan's development.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Robert Klein, North Hudson Street, addressed the Board regarding the upcoming agenda item concerning the Police Department's drone purchase request. Mr. Klein stated at the outset that he was not speaking to privacy concerns or opposition to the concept, but rather to the question of timing and fiscal prudence. He noted that drone technology has been improving rapidly and that prices have continued to fall, suggesting that a delay in the purchase could result in acquiring a higher-quality device at a lower cost. He also noted that he had learned from a county legislator that the Orange County Sheriff's Office currently operates several drones available to municipal agencies within minutes, and suggested the Town explore shared services before committing to its own purchase. He further referenced a drone already owned by the Town's Building Department, suggesting the Police Department might experiment with that device before acquiring a new one. He closed by urging the Board to evaluate, investigate and not jump to buy as soon as we have a proposal on the floor.

Supervisor Holdridge responded to each of Mr. Klein's points in turn. He noted that the drone was priced at the lower end of three options reviewed, and that the purchase is funded entirely through asset forfeiture funds. He explained that the Building Department's existing drone does not come close to the specialized law enforcement capabilities of the proposed DJI Matrice 4T. On the question of the Sheriff's Office drones, Supervisor Holdridge acknowledged that the Police Department is aware of their availability but noted that those drones are not always accessible, and that travel time from elsewhere in Orange County to Chester can be the difference, according to the police department, in terms of minutes or hours, particularly in life-safety situations. He indicated he would read the Police Chief's full statement when the item appeared formally on the agenda.

Christine Koenig, Jackie Court, expressed privacy concerns regarding the drone's capabilities, noting that the device features facial recognition technology, thermal imaging capable of detecting body heat signatures from thousands of feet, and the ability to operate without the knowledge or consent of those being observed. She asked where is the data stored, or how safe is the data? What kind of identification is happening when monitoring traffic and crowds during large events? Ms. Koenig expressed that while cost is one consideration, the community deserves a substantive discussion about the limits of the technology and the safeguards around its use. She acknowledged she had not yet reviewed the policy manual, but stressed the importance of understanding data retention practices and the circumstances under which the drone's surveillance capability would be activated.

Supervisor Holdridge responded by reading from the Police Chief's statement. The Chief indicated that the concerns raised are addressed in the Department's drone use policy manual, and that operators have been trained and are required to obtain warrants when operating over areas with a reasonable expectation of privacy. The Chief cited several operational examples: the deployment of a drone with Blooming Grove PD over Goosepond Mountain Park to check on a hiker believed to be in distress; traffic monitoring at the Town's fireworks event to identify congested roads and direct resources accordingly; and monitoring pedestrian and vehicle traffic at Anti-ICE facility events earlier in the year to allow appropriate resource deployment. Supervisor Holdridge noted that the policy manual outlines data storage and privacy requirements in detail, that data is stored internally to the Town of Chester, and that a warrant or exigent circumstance is required for law enforcement to actually record using the drone—mere observation does not automatically constitute a recording. He offered to share the policy manual with Ms. Koenig and stated that the Board would be open to adding provisions to the manual if residents identified anything that was missing.

Vincent Herlihy, noted that while the purchase price of the drone is relatively modest—approximately one dollar per household—the real ongoing cost lies in the time of the trained police officers required to operate it. Supervisor Holdridge clarified that no additional stipend or overtime would be paid to officers for drone use; they would operate it in the field as part of their regular duties.

Mr. Herlihy then raised the matter of the drone's deployment at the Anti-ICE demonstration earlier in the year, which he had personally attended. He stated that the drone appeared to be monitoring the crowd during speeches rather than managing traffic, operating approximately 30 feet above the crowd and moving around on multiple occasions. He expressed concern that such use could have a chilling effect on First Amendment activity: He urged the Board, if it approves the purchase, to impose clear, publicly adopted restrictions on its use—limiting deployment to explicitly designated emergency situations—and to establish meaningful oversight mechanisms to ensure the policy is followed in practice.

Supervisor Holdridge acknowledged the concerns and confirmed that the Police Department had admitted to monitoring pedestrian and vehicle traffic at that event in order to deploy resources appropriately. He noted again that the policy manual addresses oversight and use restrictions, and offered to share it with Mr. Herlihy. Mr. Herlihy pressed further on the question of oversight, distinguishing between a written policy and actual accountability for compliance, and asked whether there would be any annual review of how the equipment is being used. Supervisor Holdridge indicated that the policy can be reviewed and revised at any time by the Board. He reiterated the Board's openness to additional provisions in the manual.

REPORTS

Supervisor Holdridge delivered the reports.

Carpenter Park Improvements

- Phase 1 Complete

Supervisor Holdridge announced the completion of Phase 1 of improvements to Carpenter Community Park: a \$95,500 ADA-compliant walkway extending from the left ball field through the snack shack, connecting to the bleachers, the playground, the swing set, the T-ball field, and returning to the parking lot. Supervisor Holdridge expressed satisfaction that the project was completed quickly, which he described as unusual for Town projects, and reported that he had already received compliments from parents who use the park, particularly those involved with Little League.

He then outlined the planned future phases:

- Phase 2: A \$175,000 grant already awarded for renovated ADA bathrooms and additional lighting near the bathrooms and snack shack at Carpenter Park, expected to be completed the following August and September.
- Phase 3: A pending grant application to repave the entire parking lot and add ADA-compliant lighting and handicap spaces.

Supervisor Holdridge explained that all of this grant funding comes specifically to Carpenter Community Park because it is the only location within Chester that falls within the eligible census tract for the CDBG grant program.

He also mentioned that the Town is exploring a potential community build for a new playground, modeled on an effort in Warwick involving a private community organization, and that the basketball court is being evaluated for repaving and new hoops. Regarding the ball field lights, which are currently non-operational, Supervisor Holdridge reported that the Town has submitted a grant application to cover half of the approximately \$39,000 repair cost. He noted that while there is pressure to repair the lights in time for fall ball season, the Town Board believes it is more prudent to await the grant decision, expected in December, rather than expend the remaining approximately \$40,000 in parkland funds. He acknowledged this means the fall ball season will proceed without operational field lights and stated that the Little League has already been informed.

Upcoming Events and Announcements

- 2nd Annual Family Fun Day / Field Day: September 19th, 12:00 PM to 3:00 PM at Chester Commons Park (off Laroe Road near the police station and senior recreation center). Activities include a petting zoo, hot dogs, ice cream, face painting, balloon twisting, cotton candy, flag football, and giant sports. RSVP requested by September 14th. Funded by a \$5,000 county grant. Geared toward children ages 5 to 12, though all are welcome.
- Sugar Loaf Community Annual Picnic: August 29th, 4:00 to 9:00 PM in Sugar Loaf.

- 3rd Annual Senior Picnic: September 22nd, 11:00 AM at Carpenter Community Park, held in conjunction with the Town of Warwick and funded by a \$10,000 contribution from Senator Skoufis' office. Residents were encouraged to RSVP through the Chester Parks and Recreation Office.
- Emergency Preparedness Meeting hosted by the Department of Homeland Security: September 9th, 10:00 AM at the senior center. RSVP requested through Department of Homeland Security.

POLICE DEPARTMENT DRONE PURCHASE REQUEST

Supervisor Holdridge formally introduced the Police Department's request to purchase a DJI Matrice 4T drone from B&H Photo Video at a cost of \$7,849, to be funded through asset forfeiture funds. He read the Police Chief's statement into the record, which addressed the concerns raised during public comment and provided additional context for the proposed uses of the drone.



Town of Chester
Police Department

**79 Laroe Road
Chester, NY 10918**

Office: (845) 469-7000
Fax: (845) 469-7994
police@thetownofchester.org
Chief Daniel J. Doellinger, NA

TO: Supervisor Holdridge and Town Board members

FROM: Chief Dan Doellinger *DM*

DATE: July 17, 2026

RE: Request to purchase drone

I am requesting permission to purchase a DJI Matrice 4T Drone. This was not a budgeted expense, however the purchase will be made using Asset Forfeiture Funds that the department received several years ago. Drones are an excellent tool for locating missing or wanted persons travelling on foot in the suburban and rural areas of the town. They are also useful during large events such as the fireworks or rallies we had earlier this year for monitoring traffic and crowd movement by providing an overhead view of a large area.

We currently have two officers who have successfully completed the Unmanned Aircraft Systems Operator Course and are certified to operate this equipment.

We would like to purchase the drone from B&H Photo and Video, which is a vendor we have purchased equipment from in the past. We received three quotes for the drone which are listed below.

- | | |
|-----------------------|------------|
| • B&H Photo and Video | \$7,849.00 |
| • UVT | \$7,849.00 |
| • Drone-Works | \$7,929.00 |

Community Commitment

He also read into the record a written statement submitted by resident Chris Maurer,

I write to urge you to reject the police department's proposed purchase of the Matrice 4T drone, a compact but highly capable multi-sensor aircraft. It features three 48-megapixel visual cameras, including a telephoto lens with up to 112× hybrid zoom that can capture fine detail from significant distances; a 640×512 thermal camera (with super-resolution options) that detects heat signatures in complete darkness or through light obscurants; a laser rangefinder with a range of up to 1,800 meters; AI-powered detection and tracking of people and vehicles; near-infrared illumination for night operations; and flight times approaching 49 minutes.

This device would place continuous aerial observation capability in the hands of local law enforcement. High-resolution cameras, thermal sensors, and other onboard technology can capture images and data over private yards, homes, streets, and public spaces, often without the knowledge or consent of those being observed. Such capability undermines the reasonable expectation of privacy that residents of this community currently enjoy.

Beyond individual privacy, the technology invites broader, routine surveillance. Tools acquired for limited purposes: search-and-rescue, major-event monitoring, or officer safety, rarely remain limited. Over time they tend to expand into everyday patrols, traffic enforcement, observation of gatherings, and general data collection. The result is a shift toward treating ordinary residents as subjects of ongoing aerial scrutiny. That shift curtails the simple freedom to go about daily life without feeling watched from above.

Additional concerns reinforce the case against acquisition:

Ongoing costs for equipment, training, maintenance, software, data storage, and future upgrades divert resources from community-oriented policing.

- Without strict, publicly debated limits enacted before purchase on data retention, facial recognition, sharing with outside agencies, and use at protests, mission creep is almost inevitable. Policies written afterward usually accommodate the technology rather than restrain it.
- Stored video and sensor data create security risks, potential for misuse or error, and long-term records of private activity.
- Public trust is strained when residents perceive that surveillance is expanding faster than accountability.
- Practical issues: noise, crash risk, airspace conflicts, and liability add further complications.

While legitimate public-safety needs exist, they do not require permanent local ownership of aerial surveillance platforms. Mutual-aid arrangements, targeted warrant-based tools, and stronger community partnerships can address genuine emergencies without normalizing overhead monitoring of the entire town.

I ask the Council to vote against the drone purchase.

Chris Maurer

Supervisor Holdridge noted that he personally holds conflicting thoughts about the use of drones and cameras, but stated his belief that the overall benefit to the community's health and well-being, when carefully regulated, justifies the purchase. He invited debate among Board members.

Council Member Cassara stated that he would like to review the policy manual before voting, citing resident concerns about data storage in particular, and moved to table the item. Council Member Diffley agreed, stating he too would prefer to review the manual prior to any vote.

MOTION to table the Police Department Drone Purchase Request was made by Council Member Cassara and seconded by Council Member Diffley.

The motion carried.

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

ADOPTED

EVENT REQUEST

A request from Michelle Deshler and Kristin Palmer to attend the Senior Luncheon on October 19th at a cost of \$45 each. No questions or debate were raised.

MOTION to approve the event request for Michelle Deshler and Kristin Palmer to attend the Senior Luncheon on October 19th was made by Council Member Courtenay and seconded by Council Member Diffley.

The motion carried.

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

ADOPTED

BUDGET AMENDMENTS

Various budget amendments in the General Fund and Lake Hill Farms Water District were presented for Board review. All members confirmed they had reviewed the amendments. No questions or debate points were raised.

Description	Account	Increase/Decrease	Amount
<u>General Fund</u>			
Labor Attorney	A1420-442	Increase	10,000
Code Enforcement	A1420-443	Decrease	10,000
Software	A1620-424	Increase	3,400
Friendly Visitor Program	A8676-471	Decrease	(3,400)
<u>Lake Hill</u>			
Water Repairs	SW3 8320-432	Increase	7,500
Fund Balance	SW3 0599	Increase	7,500
IT Support	SW3 8310-422	Increase	250
Education & Training	SW3 8310-413	Decrease	(250)

MOTION to accept the budget amendments was made by Council Member Courtenay and seconded by Council Member Diffley.

The motion carried.

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

ADOPTED

RESOLUTION TO SET A PUBLIC HEARING FOR ANNUAL PREPARATION OF SPECIAL DISTRICT ASSESSMENT ROLLS ON SEPTEMBER 23, 2026

Supervisor Holdridge described this item as an annual routine resolution required for all special districts—including garbage, drainage, and ambulance districts, among others. No questions or debate were raised.

MOTION to set the public hearing for Annual Preparation of Special District Assessment Rolls on September 23rd was made by Council Member Courtenay and seconded by Council Member Cassara.

The motion carried.

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

ADOPTED

INTRODUCTORY LOCAL LAW 7 – 100% DISABLED VETERAN TAX EXEMPTION

Supervisor Holdridge introduced this item, explaining that New York State has authorized local municipalities to opt into expanded tax exemptions for veterans who have been designated as 100% disabled by the Department of Veterans Affairs. He expressed the Town Board's support for expanding benefits to veterans, and noted that the Town is simultaneously researching additional exemptions for veterans who may not be 100% disabled, for senior citizens, and for the spouses of fallen law enforcement officials—the latter having recently been authorized by the state legislature.

Attorney Cassidy read the formal resolution language into the record.

TOWN OF CHESTER TOWN BOARD

RESOLUTION TO INTRODUCE INTRODUCTORY LOCAL LAW 7 OF 2026, A LOCAL LAW AMENDING ARTICLE V (VETERANS TAX EXEMPTIONS) OF CHAPTER 87 (TAXATION) OF THE TOWN OF CHESTER TOWN CODE TO PROVIDE FOR AN ADDITIONAL EXEMPTION FOR THE PRIMARY RESIDENCE OF DISABLED VETERANS

WHEREAS, the New York State Legislature through the adoption of § 458-a (11) of the Real Property Tax Law (RPTL) has authorized municipalities to adopt a local law providing that the primary residence of any seriously disabled veteran shall be fully exempt from taxation and special district charges, assessments and special ad valorem levies, provided that such veteran meets all other requirements of RPTL § 458-a (11).

WHEREAS, the Town of Chester Town Board desires to authorize such exemption to the limited number disabled veterans with a primary residence in the Town of Chester; and

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, that the Town Board of the Town of Chester hereby Introduces INTRODUCTORY LOCAL LAW 7 OF 2026, A LOCAL LAW AMENDING ARTICLE V (VETERANS TAX EXEMPTIONS) OF CHAPTER 87 (TAXATION) OF THE TOWN OF CHESTER TOWN CODE TO PROVIDE FOR AN ADDITIONAL EXEMPTION FOR THE PRIMARY RESIDENCE OF DISABLED VETERANS, and

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, that the proposed local law is not an action subject to the State Environmental Quality Review Act (SEQR)

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that a public hearing shall be held on September 23, 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 to be published public notice in the official newspaper as is required by law.

Richard Logothetis asked whether the State reimburses the Town for the resulting loss in tax revenue. Supervisor Holdridge confirmed that it does not—the cost falls entirely on the Town, effectively shifting the burden to remaining taxpayers. He acknowledged this as a real consideration, but expressed his personal belief that veterans deserve the benefit.

MOTION to introduce Introductory Local Law 7 of 2026 and set a public hearing for September 23, 2026 was made by Council Member Courtenay and seconded by Council Member Diffley.

The motion carried.

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

ADOPTED

PUBLIC ASSEMBLY PERMIT REQUEST

A Public Assembly Permit request from the Sugar Loaf Community Foundation for their annual picnic on August 29th was presented. Town Clerk Zappala confirmed the permitted hours as 3:00 PM to 8:00 PM. No questions or debate were raised. Supervisor Holdridge expressed his regrets at being unable to attend and

thanked the Community Foundation and the Chamber of Commerce for the renaissance of events in Sugar Loaf in recent years. Council Member Cassara noted he would be on the grill cooking hot dogs that afternoon.

MOTION to approve the public assembly permit request for the Sugar Loaf Community Foundation Picnic on August 29th was made by Council Member Courtenay and seconded by Council Member Cassara.

The motion carried.

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

ADOPTED

2026-27 SRO AGREEMENT WITH CHESTER UNION FREE DISTRICT

Supervisor Holdridge clarified for the record that under this agreement, the Town is not paying the school district. The school district is paying the Town a maximum of \$126,000 for the services of a School Resource Officer. He described the agreement as long-standing and renewed annually. All members confirmed they had reviewed the agreement. No questions or debate points were raised.

MOTION to approve the 2026–2027 School Resource Officer Agreement with the Chester Union Free School District was made by Council Member Courtenay and seconded by Council Member Cassara.

The motion carried.

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

ADOPTED

RESIGNATION OF JACKIE ELFERS AS PLANNING BOARD INTERIM CHAIRWOMAN AND FROM THE PLANNING BOARD

Supervisor Holdridge reported that Planning Board Interim Chairwoman Jackie Elfers had submitted her resignation, effective August 17th, from both the chairmanship and from the Planning Board entirely, citing personal commitments that prevent her from continuing to serve. Supervisor Holdridge noted that he had attempted to persuade her to remain, but that she was firm in her decision.

Supervisor Holdridge read Ms. Elfers' resignation letter into the record in full.

Please accept this letter as my formal resignation as Chairman of the Planning Board, effective August 17, 2026.

Thank you for the opportunity to serve in this role. It has been a rewarding experience, and I am grateful for the trust that was placed in me. I believe we have accomplished several important objectives over the past year that will continue to benefit the Planning Board and the Town.

One of my primary goals was to establish a strong, well-rounded Planning Board, and I am proud that we have assembled a board whose members bring valuable experience from various aspects of planning. They are engaged, thoughtful, committed to continuing their education, and have a genuine vested interest in the future development of our community.

With the support of the Town Board, we also acquired MuniCollab to streamline the site plan review process. Melissa has been instrumental as lead; communicating the needs and specifications of our department to customize the platform, consequently the system is nearly complete. The training process will begin shortly, and I am confident it will greatly improve efficiency and organization moving forward.

Additionally, we established a productive working relationship with the Finance Department under Tanya's guidance, expertise, and patience. Through that collaboration, Tanya and Melissa developed a running financial document that has enabled the Planning Department to remain current with outstanding invoices. Building on that success, the Planning Department also created an internal financial tracking document for every applicant file. By placing financial information at the forefront of each file and incorporating it into MuniCollab, finances have become an integrated and transparent part of the review process.

I am sincerely thankful for the opportunity to serve, and I leave knowing that meaningful progress has been made.

As the Board considers its next Chairman, I respectfully recommend Mike Mallon. Mike is intelligent, knowledgeable, committed to continuing education in planning, and has demonstrated strong leadership qualities. As a retiree, he also has the flexibility to dedicate the time and attention the position requires. I believe he would serve the Board and the Town exceptionally well.

Thank you again for the opportunity to serve this community. I wish the Planning Board and the Town continued success in the years ahead.

Respectfully,

Jackie Elfers

Supervisor Holdridge expressed deep gratitude for Ms. Elfers' diligence, leadership, and experience, and stated his agreement with her recommendation.

MOTION to accept the resignation of Jackie Elfers as Planning Board Interim Chairwoman and from the Planning Board was made by Council Member Cassara and seconded by Council Member Courtenay.

The motion carried.

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

ADOPTED

APPOINTMENT OF MICHAEL MALLON AS PLANNING BOARD CHAIRMAN

Supervisor Holdridge stated that he had spoken with Michael Mallon, who confirmed his willingness to serve, albeit humbly. Supervisor Holdridge noted that Mr. Mallon was among his first appointments as Supervisor, an appointment of which he expressed pride. He stated that based on his review of Planning Board proceedings and feedback from both members of the public and fellow Board members such as Chairwoman Elfers, he was fully confident that Mr. Mallon is the right person to fill the role and build upon the progress that has been made. No debate points were raised.

MOTION to appoint Michael Mallon as Planning Board Chairman was made by Council Member Courtenay and seconded by Council Member Diffley.

The motion carried.

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

ADOPTED

The Town Board offered their congratulations to Chairman Mallon.

NEW BUSINESS

Introductory Local Law 8 – Annual Tax Cap Override Authorization

Supervisor Holdridge explained that this is a routine annual action taken by municipalities to preserve the legal option to override the state tax cap in the event that budget needs require it. He noted that last year the Town did not need to invoke the override, but having the authorization in place is a necessary precaution.

Attorney Cassidy read the formal resolution language into the record.

TOWN OF CHESTER
TOWN BOARD

RESOLUTION TO INTRODUCE LOCAL LAW #8 OF 2026,
A LOCAL LAW TO OVERRIDE THE TAX LEVY LIMIT ESTABLISHED
IN GENERAL MUNICIPAL LAW § 3-C

WHEREAS, the Town Board wishes to have the ability to override the tax cap in order to meet the financial needs of the Town.

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, that the Town Board of the Town of Chester introduces introductory Local Law #___ of 2026, entitled A Local Law to Override the Tax Levy Limit Established in General Municipal Law §3-C 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 a “Type II” action under the State Environmental Quality Review Act and no further environmental review is required.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that a public hearing shall be held on September 23, 2026 at 7:00 P.M. or as soon thereafter as may be heard in Town Hall, 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 8 of 2026 and set the public hearing for September 23, 2026 was made by Council Member Courtenay and seconded by Council Member Diffley.

The motion carried.

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

ADOPTED

Authorize Town Clerk Zappala to put out notices for Planning Board, Zoning Board, and Comp Plan Action Committee

Supervisor Holdridge explained that the Town currently has two vacant seats on the Planning Board, one vacant seat on the Zoning Board of Appeals, and the need to constitute a new five-member Comprehensive Plan Action Committee, tasked with helping the Town Board advance the goals of the recently adopted Comprehensive Plan. He requested authorization for Town Clerk Zappala to publish public notices inviting interested residents to apply for these positions.

MOTION to authorize Town Clerk Zappala to put out notices for Planning Board, Zoning Board, and Comprehensive Plan Action Committee open seats was made by Council Member Courtenay and seconded by Council Member Cassara.

The motion carried.

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

ADOPTED

Town Hall Security Camera Relocation

Council Member Cassara raised the matter of the security camera mounted on a pole in front of Town Hall along Kings Highway, noting that it has generated considerable opposition from residents and that he personally favors relocating it elsewhere on the property. He stated that the camera is getting a lot of dislikes and described it as an eyesore.

Supervisor Holdridge agreed the camera is aesthetically problematic but noted that the Police Chief's perspective had influenced his own thinking on the matter. He had previously sought grant funding to cover

relocation costs and was awaiting a response. He suggested that any relocation discussion should involve consulting the Police Chief on feasibility and recommended Board members re-read the Chief's July 8th memo on the subject, which outlined the operational rationale for the camera's current position and the costs involved in moving it. Supervisor Holdridge noted that based on the memo, the current location costs the Town nothing in ongoing network expenses, whereas moving the camera to a utility pole across the road would require approximately \$6,794 in one-time costs plus \$900 annually for electric and telecommunication services, as well as a \$1,395 communications box and \$25 per month for cellular service if the Town Hall Wi-Fi can no longer be used.

He also read from the memo's conclusion that, in less than a year of operation, the cameras have already been used to provide evidence in several investigations, including footage of an alleged intoxicated driver striking a vehicle in the Town Hall/Library parking lot on April 3rd.

Council Member Diffley asked whether the concerns from residents were strictly aesthetic or also privacy-related. Supervisor Holdridge confirmed that residents have raised both, but acknowledged that privacy concerns would not be resolved merely by relocating the camera. He stated that a move to a less visible location would at least reduce the feeling of being watched near Town Hall.

Town Clerk Zappala expressed that she values the security the camera provides to staff who work late in the building, and while acknowledging its aesthetic shortcoming, questioned whether the cost of relocation is justified solely for aesthetic reasons. Council Member Diffley stated he supports retaining a camera at Town Hall and would have no objection to relocating it elsewhere on the property, provided it serves the same operational purpose and avoids ongoing costs. Council Member Cassara agreed, noting that relocation within the property should be less expensive than moving to a utility pole across the road.

Richard Logothetis inquired about the camera's current location. Supervisor Holdridge described it as positioned on a large pole directly adjacent to the Town Hall sign, perpendicular to the flagpole, and noted it is very hard to miss.

The Board reached general consensus that Supervisor Holdridge would return to the Police Chief to explore whether there is an alternative location on Town property that would serve the same purpose without incurring recurring costs. Supervisor Holdridge committed to doing so.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Richard Logothetis asked why the Town is investing in lighting at Carpenter Park ball fields, given that the parks officially close at dusk. He then pivoted to his principal concern: the lack of lighting at the dog park. He described residents bringing their dogs to the park after work as the days get shorter, with some resorting to parking their cars with headlights on for illumination. He noted that other communities provide lighting at their dog parks and urged the Board to reconsider its prior position. He also suggested the possibility of using solar lighting, citing a development in Tuxedo that uses small solar panels for street lights.

Supervisor Holdridge explained that ball field lighting serves scheduled events permitted after dusk, and that the prior Board position against dog park lighting had been driven by a combination of the park's general dusk closure policy and the cost of extending utilities to that location. He acknowledged that the policy is subject to change and encouraged Mr. Logothetis to continue raising the matter with the Board, having just done so, effectively.

Council Member Diffley suggested exploring whether Orange & Rockland Utilities could install a light on an existing pole near the dog park, as the Town has had O&R install lights in other parts of town. Supervisor Holdridge recalled that this had previously been explored and was not found to be an option, but agreed to revisit the question with O&R. Mr. Logothetis, who noted his professional background in municipal lighting—including having re-evaluated the Chester' street lighting system and redesigned park lighting in Sugar Loaf, suggested that O&R may in fact be able to attach a light to a nearby pole.

Supervisor Holdridge stated he would follow up with O&R and made note of the solar lighting option raised by Mr. Logothetis.

David Turetsky. submitted an online welcome to all for the Sugar Loaf picnic, asked about the Brookside and Kings Highway intersection work and as a possible location for relocating the security camera.

Ed Mullins suggested that a solar light may be a good solution for the remote dog park location.

Regarding the Brookside and Kings Highway intersection, Supervisor Holdridge noted that this falls under the broader Route 17 to I-86 conversion plan, which remains stalled at the environmental review stage. He reported that DOT has indicated the environmental review may be concluded by the end of 2026 or early 2027, but that the schedule remains uncertain, and no changes to Exit 127 or the 17M/Kings Highway intersection are imminent.

Regarding the suggestion to relocate the camera to the Brookside and Kings Highway intersection, Supervisor Holdridge noted that the intersection is technically within the Village of Chester, making it an unsuitable location for Town equipment.

ADJOURNMENT

MOTION by Council Member Courtenay, and second by Council Member Diffley to adjourn the meeting at 9:00pm there being no additional business brought before the Board.

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

ADOPTED

Respectfully submitted,

Linda A. Zappala, RMC
Town Clerk
2026-8-26