

**Town of Chester
Official Town Election
March 16th and 28th, 2023**

The Town of Chester election for officers and zoning amendments was held on Tuesday, March 28th, 2023, to act on Articles #1 through #4. The election was postponed from March 14th due to inclement weather. The election was held in the Chester Multi-Purpose Room. The polls were opened at 7:00 AM. Moderator Michael Scott officially closed the polls at 7:00 PM.

The Town Meeting was held on Thursday, March 16th, 2023 at 6:00 PM in the Chester Multi-Purpose Room. Article #5 through #28 were taken up at that time. One hundred and twenty-one voters were present.

The Moderator called the meeting to order at 6:00 PM and read the preamble. The Pledge of Allegiance was taken and the Moderator explained the procedure for voting.

The results of Articles #1 through #4 were as follows:

Article #1 - Elections (held on March 28th)

To choose all necessary Town Officials for the ensuing year.

781 ballots were cast. The results of the election were as follows:

Board of Selectmen for 3 years:
(Vote for not more than 2)

Stephen D'Angelo	-	99	
Kevin Dolan	-	143	
David A. Lavita	-	145	
Jeremy Owens	-	154	
Jacob William Rutledge	-	21	
Saul Shriber	-	158	
Dana Theokas	-	306	*
Richard Trask	-	217	*
Robert Brown	-	211	

There were 3 write-in votes.

Town Clerk / Tax Collector for 3 years:
(Vote for not more than 1)

Justine Celentano	-	545	*
Jodi Boeske	-	132	

There were 4 write-in votes.

Budget Committee Member for 3 years:

(Vote for not more than 3)

John (Jack) Cannon	-	467	*
Kathy Guilmette	-	480	*
Robert (Rob) Varsalone II	-	454	*

There were 46 write-in votes:

Beth Swanson	-	46
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Budget Committee Member for 1 year:

(Vote for not more than 1)

There were write-in votes:

Beth Swanson	-	186	*
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Supervisor of the Checklist – 6 years:

(Vote for not more than 1)

Elizabeth Lufkin	-	679	*
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There were 6 write-in votes.

Town Treasurer for 3 years:

(Vote for not more than 1)

Rhonda Lamphere	-	617	*
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There were 6 write-in votes.

School Board Member for 3 years:

(Vote for not more than 2)

Chris Kozura	-	544	*
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There were write-in votes:

Kristina Bickford	-	195	*
Joseph Denenno	-	139	
Robert Day	-	68	

School District Clerk for 3 years:

(Vote for not more than 1)

Robert Scott Grimm	-	644	*
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There were 5 write-in votes.

School Treasurer for 3 years:

(Vote for not more than 1)

Rhonda Lamphere	-	624	*
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There were 11 write-in votes.

School Moderator for 3 years:

(Vote for not more than 1)

David Scott	-	669	*
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There were 5 write-in votes.

Trustee of the Trust Funds for 3 years:

(Vote for not more than 1)

Colin M. Costine	-	614	*
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There were 8 write-in votes.

Library Trustee for 3 years:

(Vote for not more than 1)

Andrea Veronica Brown	-	651	*
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There were 4 write-in votes.

Wilcomb Townsend Trustee for 5 years:

(Vote for not more than 1)

Beth Swanson	-	667	*
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There were 5 write-in votes.

Great Hill Cemetery Trustee for 5 years:

(Vote for not more than 1)

John T. Coleman	-	649	*
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There were 9 write-in votes.

Village Cemetery Trustee for 3 years:

(Vote for not more than 1)

Aaron E. Mansur	-	647	*
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There were 13 write-in votes.

Article #2 - Frontage

Are you in favor of the adoption of **Amendment #1** to the Town's Zoning Ordinance as proposed by the Planning Board?

Amend: Section 5.3.5 – Dimensional and Area Requirements – by adding 5.3.5.3 - Frontage, and amend Table 1 - Table of Dimensional and Area Requirements by adding “See Note 4” under the column heading “Minimum Frontage”, and adding “(Note 4).”

Purpose: This amendment does not create a new requirement but is intended to make it easier to identify the zoning ordinance's collective requirement of minimum lot frontages along Town approved roads.

Yes 339 / No 137 Article #2 carries.

Article #3 - Setbacks

Are you in favor of the adoption of **Amendment #2** to the Town's Zoning Ordinance as proposed by the Planning Board?

Amend: To amend Section 5.7.5.4 - Building Setbacks to replace the word “building” with “structure”.

Purpose: To make the wording of this section consistent with a prior zoning amendment to Zoning Table 2 - Table of Setbacks and No Clearing Buffer Zones which was approved back in 2019.

Yes 485 / No 219 Article #3 carries.

Article #4 - Sprinklers

Are you in favor of the adoption of **Amendment # 1** to the Town's Building Code as proposed by the Planning Board?

Amend: Section 3.1.1.1 – Sprinkler Systems of the Building Code to remove the words “all” and “and mobile homes” and add the words “not situated in a manufactured housing park as defined in RSA 205-A:1.

Purpose: To bring this section of the code into conformance with RSA 674:51, V.

Yes 520 / No 174 Article #4 carries.

The Moderator announced the results of Articles #5 through #28:

Article #5 - Revaluation Capital Reserve Fund

Special Warrant Article. Shall the Town raise and appropriate the sum of fifteen thousand dollars (\$15,000) to be added to the *Town Revaluation Capital Reserve Fund* established at the 2009 Town Meeting in order to prepare for the next Town revaluation in 2024.

Estimated Tax Impact:	\$0.02
<i>Recommended by Board of Selectmen</i>	<i>Tally Vote – 4 yes / 1 no / 0 abstain</i>
<i>Recommended by Budget Committee</i>	<i>Tally Vote – 8 yes / 0 no / 0 abstain</i>

The article was moved to the floor and seconded. The Moderator called for discussion.

Selectman Myette noted there was a fact sheet explaining the Warrant Articles available to the legislative body. He explained the ongoing Town revaluation process.

Discussion being ended, the question was called. The vote was in the affirmative. **Article #5 carries.**

A motion was made to forego a second reading of the Articles in their entirety before voting; this motion was seconded. The vote was in the affirmative. **Warrant Articles will only be read once.**

Article #6 - Solar Array

Shall the Town authorize the Board of Selectmen to enter into a long-term lease for a solar energy company to install a solar farm on the Town-owned parcel at 84 Chester Street, also known as Map 5 Lot 12, on such terms and conditions as determined by the Selectmen and to authorize the Selectmen to take any other actions necessary to carry out this vote.

Estimated Tax Impact:	\$0.00
<i>Recommended by Board of Selectmen</i>	<i>Tally Vote – 5 yes / 0 no / 0 abstain</i>

The article was moved to the floor and seconded. The Moderator called for discussion.

Selectman Couture shared the background and details of this Warrant Article. There was a Warrant Article last year to install a solar array at the capped landfill, which was determined not to be viable due to the danger of piercing the cap and was tabled. The field behind the Town Offices has been identified as an alternate location to install a solar array.

Chris Stage, 252 Chester Street, asked who would be responsible for disposing of the array materials once they are no longer viable. Selectman Couture responded the solar energy company would be responsible for this.

Mike Oleson expressed concern over the possible future need of the property. Selectman Couture responded that the array will not take up the entire field, so there is room for potential expansion.

Bob Somers, 5 Ledge Road, asked where the panels and batteries were made and who will install them. Selectman Couture said there is no lease agreement yet, so the specifics have not been determined.

Dana Theokas, 9 Muskrat Circle, agreed this is a long-term lease on a valuable piece of Town-owned property. She said this project was not presented to the Budget Committee but Selectman Couture disagreed. Town Administrator Doda clarified that the Budget Committee was aware of the Warrant Article but only votes on items that have appropriations.

Kathy Guilmette, 16 Isaac Foss Road, clarified the Budget Committee discussed this issue but did not vote on it. She opined that the cost of the power for the Town Offices will not be covered by the power generated by the array. The Town will still pay for the power but at a reduced rate. Selectman Couture clarified that the power produced by the panels will offset what is needed by the Town Offices and the Town will receive a credit for any power generated above and beyond what is required for the Town Offices, so it will provide revenue. Ms. Guilmette said there are offsets that go on and Selectman Couture agreed it is a lease arrangement.

Jacob Rutledge, 146 Rand Drive, asked who will maintain the panels. Selectman Couture said the power company will maintain the array.

Mr. Somers said he did not believe this topic has been researched enough and feels it takes up a lot of land. A thorough proposal should have been presented. There are environmental issues with solar and the long-term ramifications are unknown. Selectman Couture explained this company is reliable and well vetted. No company will provide the level of detail Mr. Somers is requesting until a signed lease agreement is in place due to the cost of doing so.

Brendan Bickford, 18 Knowles Mill Road, asked if the degradation of the solar cells was considered as part of the long-term cost estimate and Selectman Couture said it was.

Beth Swanson, 108 Chester Street, asked if there is a way out of the lease, if the project does not work out as intended. Selectman Couture said as an agreement has not been negotiated, this has not been discussed. There will be an option to buy out the lease. Ms. Swanson noted concern over the panels being broken or abandoned and Selectman Couture said the power company is responsible for maintaining the panels. The Town is only responsible for providing the land to install the array.

Sabrina Harris, 140 Crawford Road, asked if the escalator clause was included in the calculations of the long-term revenue and Selectman Couture said it was. She asked if the Town decides to buy out the lease, would this be brought before the legislative body for approval and Selectman Couture said it would have to. She asked about the cost of this buyout and Selectman Couture said the estimate is \$188,000.

Robert Day, 52 Sheepwash Drive, asked if the Town was aware of the number of solar installation companies that have gone bankrupt in the last 15 years. He said the array will not be maintained if the company does not exist. He believes this is a poor investment for Chester and said the technology will be superior in four to five years than what exists today.

Ann Podlipny, 98 Birch Road, said she trusts the Board of Selectmen's judgment. She knows of the power company and is impressed with the work they have done in other towns. She is proud of Chester for moving forward in a direction that is the wave of the future. She thanked the Board of Selectmen for considering this project.

Discussion being ended, the question was called. The vote was in the negative. **Article #6 fails.**

Article #7 – Operating Budget

Shall the Town raise and appropriate the Budget Committee and Selectmen recommended amount of five million seven hundred thirty-two thousand six hundred twelve dollars (\$5,732,612) for the operating budget for the support of Town government for the payment of salaries and for the payment of statutory obligations of the Town. This article does not include appropriations voted in other warrant articles.

	BOS	BC
General Government	\$2,660,862	\$2,660,862
Public Safety	\$1,647,824	\$1,647,824
Highways, Streets, Bridges	\$829,853	\$829,853
Sanitation	\$235,999	\$235,999
Health & Welfare	\$41,272	\$41,272
Culture & Recreation	\$315,794	\$315,794
Conservation & Eco. Dev.	\$5,506	\$5,506
Debt Service	\$2	\$2
Total Appropriation	\$5,732,612	\$5,732,612

Estimated Tax Impact: \$7.72

Recommended by Board of Selectmen Tally Vote – 5 yes / 0 no / 0 abstain

Recommended by Budget Committee Tally Vote – 8 yes / 0 no / 0 abstain

The article was moved to the floor and seconded. The Moderator called for discussion.

Colin Costine, Halls Village Road, presented an amendment to the article, changing the amount to \$5,550,112, which is \$182,500 less than the original amount, which will be drawn from the bottom line.

Moderator Scott read the amendment, which was moved to the floor and seconded.

Mr. Costine said Article #9 is funded from Article #8; however, Article #9 is replenishing what wasn't spent in Article #8. Article #8 had zero tax impact, but Article #9 pays for it. So, there is no zero tax impact. He also noted that a number of Warrant Articles concern funding capital reserve accounts from the anticipated Unassigned Fund Balance (UFB). He defined the UFB and said during his tenure as a Selectman, nothing was funded from the UFB. This is a practice that started after 2001. He said the capital reserve funds are invested but the return on the investments is not good. He noted the importance of having a cushion (the UFB), so the Town does not run out of money. If the UFB is depleted, taxes will be increased to cover the shortfall.

Jack Cannon, Fiddlehead Lane, asked where the reduction in the budget will come from. He encouraged the legislative body to vote no on this amendment.

Kevin Dolan, 219 Shepard Home Road, asked if Mr. Costine was proposing taking money from the UFB and allocating it toward the budget. Mr. Costine explained he is asking to reduce the overall bottom line of the budget, as the Selectmen know there are plenty of reserves available.

Stephen Landau, 662 Candia Road, has been on the Board of Selectmen for many years and pointed out the Town is debt free. He looks at the capital reserve funds as an insurance policy—funds saved to cover potential future problems and issues. He noted that the work on Stevens Hall and the recent snowfall were covered by capital reserve funds. Money does not need to be drawn from the UFB when there are capital reserve funds to cover the associated expenses. The state requires the UFB to be between 5% and 17%. The Town percentage is at 14%. By using the capital reserve funds, taxpayers are not being charged taxes to cover these expenses. He asked the legislative body to support the "insurance policy" of these capital reserve funds.

Andrew Hadik, 135 Chester Street, seconded Mr. Cannon's comments. From 1995 through 2005, the Town and School District embarked on bonds, as there was no long-term plan. The Budget Committee became an elected body to have another set of eyes on the Town's expenditures. He noted the Budget Committee carefully examined the proposed budget. He explained the UFB is funded by budget surplus. The surpluses are far fewer than they were 20 years ago. He said the funds in the UFB do not earn much interest either. Capital reserve funds are spent with the approval of the legislative body, which is not the case with the UFB. The Board of Selectmen can apply to the Department of Revenue Administration to spend these funds, with no input from the legislative body.

Ms. Guilmette noted the Budget Committee goes through the budget line by line. They left no margin in the line items. She noted that Mr. Costine's statements about Articles #8 and #9 were false.

Mr. Costine said he served on the Budget Committee for ten years. He believes there is a fair amount of cushion in the UFB. He also believes in the use of capital reserve funds, but the Town does not need as many as currently exist.

Discussion being ended, the amendment was called. The vote was in the negative. **The Amendment to Article #7 fails.**

The Moderator called for discussion on the Warrant Article. Hearing none, the question was called. The vote was in the affirmative. **Article #7 carries.**

Article #8 – CIP Funding

Special Warrant Article. Shall the Town raise and appropriate the sum of six hundred thousand (\$600,000) to be added to the capital reserve fund known as the Town's *Municipal Capital Improvement Plan Capital Reserve Fund* established at the 2013 Town Meeting.

Estimated Tax Impact: \$0.81
Recommended by Board of Selectmen Tally Vote – 5 yes / 0 no / 0 abstain
Recommended by Budget Committee Tally Vote – 7 yes / 0 no / 1 abstain

The article was moved to the floor and seconded. The Moderator called for discussion. Hearing none, the question was called. The vote was in the affirmative. **Article #8 carries.**

Article #9 – CIP Projects

Special Warrant Article. Shall the Town raise and appropriate the sum of two hundred ninety-five thousand one hundred dollars (\$295,100) for the following projects:

GGB	Post Office Basement Steps & Bulkhead	\$9,600
GGB	Floor Scrubber	\$8,500
GGB	IT Hardware & Software Upgrades	\$6,200
Police	Personal Protective Equipment	\$10,000
Fire	Personal Protective Equipment	\$20,300
Fire	Two (2) Mobile Dispatch Terminals	\$15,000
Fire	Thermal Imagers	\$15,500
Highway	Surveying & Engineering Services	\$15,000
Highway	Loader	\$195,000

and withdraw two hundred ninety-five thousand one hundred dollars (\$295,100) from the *Municipal Capital Improvement Plan Capital Reserve Fund* created for these purposes.

This will be a non-lapsing article per RSA 32:7-a, IV, and will not lapse until the work is complete, or December 31st, 2025, whichever comes first.

Estimated Tax Impact: \$0.00
Recommended by Board of Selectmen Tally Vote – 5 yes / 0 no / 0 abstain
Recommended by Budget Committee Tally Vote – 7 yes / 0 no / 1 abstain

The Moderator called for discussion on the Warrant Article.

Mr. Dolan pointed out what he considered to be an error. *Mobile Dispatch Terminal* should be *Mobile Data Terminal*, which is the industry term. Chief Gladu stated that a Mobile Dispatch Terminal is what the Fire Department uses to communicate with Dispatch and thus the name.

Mr. Dolan proposed an amendment and moved to change Mobile Dispatch Terminals to MDTs in the Warrant Article. The motion was seconded.

The Moderator called for discussion on the Amendment. Hearing none, the question was called. The vote was in the affirmative. **The Amendment to Article #9 carries and the Warrant Article now reads:**

...
Fire Two (2) ~~Mobile Dispatch Terminals~~ MDTs \$15,000

...

The Moderator called for discussion on the Warrant Article as amended.

Royal Richardson, 18 Town Farm Road, asked how much is in this fund. Selectman Myette said the fact sheet provides clarity to the items being discussed at the Town Meeting. It notes the total in the fund as of February 28th, 2023 was \$1,946,643.

Mr. Stage asked if there is a basement in the Post Office and if it is used. Selectman Landau said there is a boiler in the basement that feeds the Post Office and the space upstairs. The company that services the heating unit has asked for the repairs. Mr. Stage asked which floor the floor scrubber is for. Selectman Landau said it is for the MPR floor, which requires a different type of cleaning than other floors in the building. The current scrubber is old and takes months to get parts for repairs.

Mr. Andrew Hadik said the Capital Improvements Plan (CIP) is updated annually and is on the Planning Board website, which includes all backup materials.

Michael Weider explained the intent of Warrant Article #8 is to fund the CIP at the same level it has been funded for approximately the last eight to ten years. The intent of the CIP is to stabilize the tax rate and ensure there are funds set aside to purchase things the Town needs without going into debt. There is approximately \$2.8 million in the UFB.

The Moderator called for further discussion on the Warrant Article. Hearing none, the question was called. The vote was in the affirmative. **Article #9 carries.**

Article #10 – Highway CIP Funding

Special Warrant Article. Shall the Town raise and appropriate the sum of nine hundred thousand dollars (\$900,000) to be added to the capital reserve fund known as the *Highway Capital Improvement Plan Capital Reserve Fund* established at the 2015 Town Meeting with one hundred forty-nine thousand sixty-five dollars (\$149,065) which is the anticipated grant amount this year from the New Hampshire Highway Block Grant to be used to offset this appropriation, two hundred fifty thousand dollars (\$250,000) from the June 30th, 2023 unassigned fund balance to be used to offset this appropriation, and the remainder of five hundred thousand nine hundred thirty five dollars (\$500,935) to be raised through taxation.

Estimated Tax Impact:	\$0.67
<i>Recommended by Board of Selectmen</i>	<i>Tally Vote – 5 yes / 0 no / 0 abstain</i>
<i>Recommended by Budget Committee</i>	<i>Tally Vote – 5 yes / 2 no / 1 abstain</i>

The article was moved to the floor and seconded. The Moderator called for discussion.

Hearing none, the question was called. The vote was in the affirmative. **Article #10 carries.**

Article #11 – Highway CIP Projects

Special Warrant Article. Shall the Town raise and appropriate the sum of seven hundred thirty-eight thousand eight hundred dollars (\$738,800) for the following roadwork in the Town of Chester:

Holman Way	\$59,400
Jennifer Drive	\$257,400
Parker Road	\$79,200
Rand Drive	\$217,800
Halls Village Road	\$125,000
Total	\$738,800

and withdraw seven hundred thirty-eight thousand eight hundred dollars (\$738,800) from the *Highway Capital Improvement Plan Capital Reserve Fund* created for these purposes.

This will be a non-lapsing article per RSA 32:7-a, IV, and will not lapse until the work is complete, or December 31st, 2025, whichever comes first.

Estimated Tax Impact:	\$0.00
<i>Recommended by Board of Selectmen</i>	<i>Tally Vote – 5 yes / 0 no / 0 abstain</i>
<i>Recommended by Budget Committee</i>	<i>Tally Vote – 5 yes / 2 no / 1 abstain</i>

The article was moved to the floor and seconded. The Moderator called for discussion.

Mr. Rutledge asked how the funds are being used, as these roads were redone last year. James Piper introduced himself as the new Supervisor of Roads. He explained the repairs on these roads are only halfway completed and the wearing course needs to be applied in order for the project to be finished.

Discussion being ended, the question was called. The vote was in the affirmative. **Article #11 carries.**

Mr. Cannon moved to take Article #23 out of order. The motion was seconded. The question was called. The vote was in the affirmative. **Article #23 was taken out of order.**

Article #23 – Transportation Improvement Capital Reserve Fund

Special Warrant Article. Shall the Town establish a Transportation Improvement Capital Reserve Fund under the provisions of RSA 261:153 for the purpose of supporting Town transportation improvement, including but not limited to roads, bridges, culverts, electric charging stations, and bike lanes, and further to impose and collect an additional motor vehicle registration fee of up to \$5.00 per vehicle, the entirety of such fees to be placed in this fund, and further to raise and appropriate the sum of \$1 to be placed into this fund. The Board of Selectmen will be named as agents to expend from this fund. If passed, this article will have no tax impact. Ballot vote required.

Tax Impact	\$0.00
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Not recommended by Board of Selectmen Tally Vote – 2 yes / 2 no / 1 abstain
Not recommended by Budget Committee

The article was moved to the floor and seconded. The Moderator called for discussion.

Mr. Cannon noted the budget and Warrant Articles have been passed to fund the Highway Department. This Warrant Article has no tax impact but requires a \$5 fee on every car registration. The Board of Selectmen did not support this article. It should have not been presented to the legislative body and he recommended tabling this article.

Mr. Cannon moved to table this article. The motion was seconded. The question was called. The vote was in the affirmative. **Article #23 was tabled.**

Article #12 – Funding Fire Department Apparatus Capital Reserve Fund

Special Warrant Article. Shall the Town raise and appropriate the sum of twenty-five thousand dollars (\$25,000) to be added to the Capital Reserve Fund known as the *Fire Department Apparatus Capital Reserve Fund* established at the 2021 Town Meeting. Further to authorize the transfer of twenty-five thousand dollars (\$25,000) from the June 30th, 2023 unassigned fund balance for this purpose with no amount to be raised from taxation.

Estimated Tax Impact:	\$0.00
<i>Recommended by Board of Selectmen</i>	<i>Tally Vote – 5 yes / 0 no / 0 abstain</i>
<i>Recommended by Budget Committee</i>	<i>Tally Vote – 7 yes / 0 no / 1 abstain</i>

The article was moved to the floor and seconded. The Moderator called for discussion.

Hearing none, the question was called. The vote was in the affirmative. **Article #12 carries.**

Article #13 – PACT

Special Warrant Article. Shall the Town raise and appropriate the sum of thirty-eight thousand dollars (\$38,000) for the purpose of providing public, educational, and governmental access television in the Town of Chester. Said funds to be withdrawn from the Special Revenue Fund known as the *“PACT” Fund* established at the 2003 Town Meeting, separate from the General Fund and funded by Comcast subscribers in the Town of Chester. If passed, this article will have no tax impact.

Estimated Tax Impact:	\$0.00
<i>Recommended by Board of Selectmen</i>	<i>Tally Vote – 4 yes / 0 no / 1 abstain</i>
<i>Recommended by Budget Committee</i>	<i>Tally Vote – 7 yes / 0 no / 1 abstain</i>

The article was moved to the floor and seconded. The Moderator called for discussion.

Ms. Theokas thanked the PACT members who have brought programming to the community. A current PACT project is to add closed captioning to their programs. They are doing a great job and she believes the team should be supported.

Mr. Stage asked if PACT is also available online; he was informed that it is. He also asked, by a show of hands, how many people in the room watch PACT.

Discussion being ended, the question was called. The vote was in the affirmative. **Article #13 carries.**

Article #14 – Master Plan

Special Warrant Article. Shall the Town raise and appropriate the sum of eight thousand dollars (\$8,000) to be added to the *Town Master Plan Capital Reserve Fund* established at the 2019 Town Meeting.

Estimated Tax Impact:	\$0.01
<i>Recommended by Board of Selectmen</i>	<i>Tally Vote – 5 yes / 0 no / 0 abstain</i>
<i>Recommended by Budget Committee</i>	<i>Tally Vote – 8 yes / 0 no / 0 abstain</i>

The article was moved to the floor and seconded. The Moderator called for discussion.

Hearing none, the question was called. The vote was in the affirmative. **Article #14 carries.**

Article #15 – Winter Road Maintenance Fund

Special Warrant Article. Shall the Town raise and appropriate the sum of one hundred five thousand dollars (\$105,000) to be added to the expendable trust fund known as the *Winter Road Maintenance Fund* established at the 2006 Town Meeting and increased at the 2017 Town Meeting for the purpose of plowing, salting, sanding, and general winter road maintenance in the Town of Chester. The Winter Road Maintenance Expendable Trust Fund shall not exceed one hundred five thousand dollars (\$105,000).

Estimated Tax Impact:	\$0.14
<i>Recommended by Board of Selectmen</i>	<i>Tally Vote – 5 yes / 0 no / 0 abstain</i>
<i>Recommended by Budget Committee</i>	<i>Tally Vote – 8 yes / 0 no / 0 abstain</i>

The article was moved to the floor and seconded. The Moderator called for discussion.

Hearing none, the question was called. The vote was in the affirmative. **Article #15 carries.**

Selectman Landau noted that the Board of Selectmen considered proposing an Amendment to increase the amount to \$155,000. However, they decided not to, as they are trying to be responsible in what they ask in taxes and how the funds and the UFB are used. He thanked the legislative body for approving this Warrant Article.

Selectman Landau moved that Article #27 be taken out of order. The motion was seconded. The question was called. The vote was in the affirmative. **Article #27 was taken out of order.**

Article #27 – Renaming of Municipal Complex Improvement Capital Reserve Fund

Shall the Town rename the *Municipal Complex Improvement Capital Reserve Fund*, established in 2006, to the *Municipal Property Improvement Capital Reserve Fund* per RSA 35:16 for the purpose of utilizing funds to improve all Town-owned properties. 2/3rds ballot vote required.

Estimated Tax Impact:	\$0.00
<i>Recommended by Board of Selectmen</i>	<i>Tally Vote – 5 yes / 0 no / 0 abstain</i>

The Moderator noted that Town Counsel had stated that a ballot vote was not necessary, and that the vote could be conducted by a show of hands, which will be counted.

The article was moved to the floor and seconded. The Moderator called for discussion.

Hearing none, the question was called. The vote was 106 for, 1 against. **Article #27 carries.**

An intermission was called at 7:30 PM.

Mr. Saul Shriber, Fremont Road, moved to not take a break. The Moderator pointed out a break was needed and there were presentations to be made.

Selectman Myette thanked the 300th Anniversary Celebration Committee for their work on the celebration, which was a great success. He invited Committee members Chairman Jean Methot, Rhonda Lamphere, Chris Hadik, Ed Stuart, Sue Rieter, Nancy Jolin, and Jeff Dinopoulos to come up and be recognized.

Selectman Myette commended former Road Agent Mike Oleson for the work he has done over the past 16 years. Mr. Oleson thanked the legislative body for voting for him.

Selectman Myette recognized Dianna Charron for 40 years of service to the Town.

The Moderator resumed the Town Meeting at 7:45 pm.

Article #16 – Legal Costs Expendable Trust Fund

Special Warrant Article. Shall the Town establish an expendable trust fund under the provisions of NH RSA 31:19-a, to be known as the *Legal Costs Expendable Trust Fund* for the purpose of funding any unanticipated increases in the cost of providing legal services over and above those budgeted for and to raise and appropriate the sum of thirty thousand dollars (\$30,000) to be placed in this fund from the June 30th, 2023 unassigned fund balance for this purpose with no amount to be raised from taxation. The *Legal Costs Expendable Trust Fund* shall not exceed thirty thousand dollars (\$30,000).

Estimated Tax Impact:	\$0.00
<i>Recommended by Board of Selectmen</i>	<i>Tally Vote – 5 yes / 0 no / 0 abstain</i>
<i>Recommended by Budget Committee</i>	<i>Tally Vote – 8 yes / 0 no / 0 abstain</i>

The article was moved to the floor and seconded. The Moderator called for discussion.

Kenneth Biel, 3 Croft Lane, asked about the purpose of this fund. He also noted that a large legal cost would be covered by insurance. Selectman D'Angelo explained the Town negotiated a ten-year contract with the Town of Derry for a person to prosecute cases on behalf of the Chester Police Department. The Town also has a similar ten-year contract with Derry for the ambulance service. This fund is to ensure there are adequate funds to cover any potential overages from the Town of Derry for this service.

Mr. Rutledge asked if the prosecutor for the Chester Police Department is being eliminated. Selectman D'Angelo said he retired.

Discussion being ended, the question was called. The vote was in the affirmative. **Article #16 carries.**

Article #17 – Change in Town Meeting Date

Shall the Town effect a change in the date of the annual Town Meeting so that the first session for choice of Town Officers elected by an official ballot and other action required to be inserted on said official ballot shall be held annually on the second Tuesday in May, and the second session for the transaction of other business on a date set by the Selectmen, effective January 1st, 2024.

Estimated Tax Impact:	\$0.00
<i>Recommended by Board of Selectmen</i>	<i>Tally Vote – 5 yes / 0 no / 0 abstain</i>

The article was moved to the floor and seconded. The Moderator called for discussion.

Selectman D'Angelo pointed out it appears the same individuals attend the Town Meeting, regardless of the date. The May date is closer to the end of the fiscal year, which makes it easier to prepare budgets.

Dianna Charron, 297 North Pond Road, noted the same number of participants attend the March and the May Town Meeting. There are 3,782 voters and 120-130 people attend the Town Meeting. So, it makes no difference when the meeting is held.

Discussion being ended, the question was called. The vote was in the affirmative. **Article #17 carries.**

Article #18 – Warfield Road Conservation Easement

Shall the Town place a Conservation Easement on the Town-owned property designated by Map and Lot 004-004-001, consisting of 7.55 acres on Warfield Road in the South Woods, in order to permanently protect said area for nature study and recreation, and to enhance and maintain the scenic, wildlife, and open space that are an intrinsic part of Chester's valuable rural character for the benefit of the Town of Chester and its citizens.

Estimated Tax Impact:	\$0.00
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Recommended by Board of Selectmen *Tally Vote – 5 yes / 0 no / 0 abstain*

The article was moved to the floor and seconded. The Moderator called for discussion.

Victor Chouinard, 181 Harantis Lake Road, introduced himself as the Chair of the Chester Conservation Commission. He explained the lot in the South Woods has no deeded access. He described the location of the parcel and that a survey needs to be completed and a conservation easement drafted.

Jeff Legault, 40 Donna Street, asked what activities will be allowed on the property. Mr. Chouinard explained conservation parcels are open to trespass, hunting, and all recreation purposes. No permanent structures are allowed.

Mr. Stage asked if there is a road into the property. Mr. Chouinard said Warfield Road terminates at the parcel, although it is not passable.

Dave LaVita, 235 Raymond Road, asked if a tree stand could be erected on the property. Mr. Chouinard responded state laws are followed, unless there is a safety issue. So, tree stands are permitted.

Discussion being ended, the question was called. The vote was in the affirmative. **Article #18 carries.**

Article #19 – Pomp Road Conservation Easement

Shall the Town place a Conservation Easement on the Town-owned property designated by Map and Lot 002-028-001, consisting of 66.37 acres with frontage on Pomp Road, in order to permanently protect said area for nature study and recreation, to protect the watershed and wetlands, and to enhance and maintain the scenic, wildlife, and open space that are an intrinsic part of Chester's valuable rural character for the benefit of the Town of Chester and its citizens.

Estimated Tax Impact: \$0.00

Recommended by Board of Selectmen *Tally Vote – 5 yes / 0 no / 0 abstain*

The article was moved to the floor and seconded. The Moderator called for discussion.

Mr. Chouinard explained the Conservation Commission is working to catch up on one of their primary responsibilities, which is to regularly monitor properties on which the Town holds conservation easements. An inventory has been created of these properties and it has been discovered that some do not have easements placed on them. This lot is not covered in its entirety, which appears to be an oversight. This article will remedy that situation. This parcel is primarily wetlands.

Discussion being ended, the question was called. The vote was in the affirmative. **Article #19 carries.**

Article #20 – Creation of Town Forest

Shall the Town designate the following Town-owned properties, comprising 151.43 acres more or less, as Town Forest per RSA 31:110: Map and Lots 8-14-1, 8-15, 8-16, 8-18-3, 8-18-3A, 8-18-4, and 8-18-4A. Further as per RSA 31:112 to appoint the Conservation Commission as managers of the property.

Estimated Tax Impact:	\$0.00
<i>Recommended by Board of Selectmen</i>	<i>Tally Vote – 4 yes / 0 no / 1 abstain</i>

The article was moved to the floor and seconded. The Moderator called for discussion.

Mr. Chouinard described the property and why the Conservation Commission wants it to be designated as a Town Forest. It has been identified as a high-ranking prioritized habitat by the New Hampshire Fish & Game Department and is a wetland area. This is undeveloped property due to the topography. He explained that Article #21 can be tabled, if this article passes. Survey work is needed to protect this land, as many parcels in this area are owned by a developer. If this is designated as a Town Forest rather than simply Town-owned land, the Conservation Commission will carry the cost of the surveying. A sign will be erected identifying the property as a Town Forest and acknowledging the voters at this Town Meeting were responsible for it being created.

Mr. Stage asked about the difference in land usage between a Town Forest and conservation land. Mr. Chouinard explained a Town Forest can be designed for timber harvest or for recreation. In this case, the goal is preserving the property for recreational use. The Board of Selectmen approves the use of land such as this. He urged the voters to attend Conservation Commission meetings to provide input as to how this land will be utilized in the future.

Ted Broadwater, 364 Chester Street, a member of the Conservation Commission, pointed out the Town of Chester is 16,700 acres. This parcel is a small portion of the Town to be designated as a Town Forest. It is a shared resource for the Town to enjoy and should be protected.

Mr. Legault asked if the Conservation Commission would be responsible for bringing up changes in the use of this property to the Board of Selectmen and Mr. Chouinard said yes. He asked if the Commission would retain the property for recreational use or if they had another purpose in mind for it. Mr. Chouinard pointed out the track record of the Commission and how they emphasize low-impact recreation.

Mr. Shriber, 194 Jennifer Drive, asked if a fee could be charged for non-residents to use the Town Forest. Mr. Chouinard replied the Conservation Commission has no say in that.

Selectman D'Angelo asked if the Town Forest would be named after anyone. Mr. Chouinard replied there are a number of people in town the Commission would like to recognize, but they have no one in mind.

Selectman Myette noted this is Town land. The intent is to keep it open to the public. By charging a fee, this presents a barrier and this is not the Town's intent.

Mr. Biel expressed his opinion that making the property a Town Forest protects it by state law. There are also laws that protect the Town, if it is used in a negligent way, as long as there is no charge to use it. By charging a fee, it removes the Recreation Immunity and makes the Town liable.

Mr. LaVita noted there was a problem at Wason Pond this summer and the Fire Department had to be called. He noted establishing it as a Town Forest might open the property to people being able to access it for any purpose.

Mr. Weider stated by putting a conservation easement on this property, it takes away the rights of the people to decide to use the land in another fashion in the future (i.e., ballfields, park pavilion). He said the Budget Committee supports the property being left as it is now.

Kristina Snyder, 181 Harantis Lake Road, said this is a tremendous opportunity. If this does not become a Town Forest, it will not be protected for future generations. There are other Town parcels that can be used for other purposes.

Deborah Munson, 382 Haverhill Road, said this property is appropriate for wildlife and nature walks. There are other properties in Town that are suitable for ballfields and gas stations, but this parcel is not suitable for that kind of development, due to the nature of the terrain.

Mr. Weider said it is not true that the property will change if it is not designated as a Town Forest. It will remain Town-owned land and the legislative body would have to vote on any changes in the future.

Mr. Chouinard noted this Warrant Article locks up the property for conservation. If the property is not protected, there is nothing to stop the legislative body from selling it to a high bidder. There is no guarantee that the Town will keep the property in the future.

Mr. Broadwater noted this is not a vote on a conservation easement. It is a vote for the property to become a Town Forest. There is a distinction between the two. An easement does lock up a property in perpetuity. A Town Forest is a different type of agreement.

Selectman Landau noted he abstained as he believes this is something the legislative body needs to decide on. This parcel is less than one percent of all property in the Town of Chester. The Town recently acquired a piece of property from the Noyes family, who owned the land since 1814. He asked the legislative body to consider what the family thought about in 1812.

Discussion being ended, the question was called. The vote was in the affirmative. **Article #20 carries.**

Article #21 – Surveying of Town-Owned Properties

Special Warrant Article. Shall the Town raise and appropriate the sum of thirty thousand dollars (\$30,000) for the purpose of surveying the outer boundaries of the following parcels of Town-owned land: Map and Lots 8-14-1, 8-15, 8-16, 8-18-3, 8-18-3A, 8-18-4, and 8-18-4A. Further to authorize the transfer of thirty thousand dollars (\$30,000) from the June 30th, 2023

unassigned fund balance for this purpose with no amount to be raised from taxation. If Warrant Article #20 passes, this article can be tabled.

Estimated Tax Impact:	\$0.00
<i>Recommended by Board of Selectmen</i>	<i>Tally Vote – 5 yes / 0 no / 0 abstain</i>
<i>Recommended by Budget Committee</i>	<i>Tally Vote – 7 yes / 1 no / 0 abstain</i>

A motion was made and seconded to table Article #21. The question was called. The vote was in the affirmative. **Article #21 was tabled.**

Article #22 – Funding Historic Building Capital Reserve Fund

Special Warrant Article. Shall the Town raise and appropriate the sum of fifty thousand dollars (\$50,000) to be added to the Capital Reserve Fund known as the *Historic Building Capital Reserve Fund* established at the 2020 Town Meeting. Further to authorize the transfer of fifty thousand dollars (\$50,000) from the June 30th, 2023 unassigned fund balance for this purpose with no amount to be raised from taxation.

Tax Impact	\$0.00
<i>Recommended by Board of Selectmen</i>	<i>Tally Vote – 5 yes / 0 no / 0 abstain</i>
<i>Not Recommended by Budget Committee</i>	<i>Tally Vote – 2 yes / 6 no / 0 abstain</i>

The article was moved to the floor and seconded. The Moderator called for discussion.

Mr. Weider explained the Budget Committee did not support this Warrant Article, since the CIP exists. The CIP should be used instead of capital reserve funds, as it provides the ability to charge impact fees. Building a capital reserve fund circumvents the CIP. The CIP gives the legislative body the opportunity to decide how the funds should be used.

Selectman Landau said there is \$1,600 in this fund for the three historical buildings in Town: Stevens Hall, the library, and the Post Office. Work was done on Stevens Hall for the 300th anniversary, during which a problem was found with the tower. More funds are needed to hire an engineer to examine it and to have the tower repaired. No tax dollars are incurred with this article. This fund serves as an insurance policy. The Board would like to protect these historic buildings.

Jean Methot explained the schoolhouse on Candia Road in 1962 was damaged in a storm and there were no funds to repair it. He noted that having the funds to repair historic buildings is vital.

Mr. Weider said the UFB can be used in emergencies. There is also insurance to cover damage to buildings. There is a cost involved with this article, as any funds left in the UFB at the end of the year could be used to reduce the tax rate. He is opposed to putting funds into a capital reserve account. It takes the legislative body out of the equation and lets the Board of Selectmen make the decision on how to use this fund.

Discussion being ended, the question was called. The vote was in the negative. **Article #22 fails.**

Article # 24 – Readoption of Optional Veterans Tax Credit

Shall the Town approve the readoption of the Optional Veteran’s Tax Credit (RSA 72:28 II) to allow for the expansion of the criteria needed to qualify for the Optional Veteran’s Tax Credit of \$750 to now include those service members that are currently serving and have not yet been honorably discharged from the armed services. The readoption of the Optional Veteran’s Tax Credit, if approved, would continue to offer a \$750 tax credit to all honorably discharged Veterans that qualify under the current requirements but as of April 1, 2023, it would expand the eligibility requirements to now include those individuals that have not yet been discharged from active service. If this Article does not pass the Optional Tax Credit would revert to the Standard Veteran Tax Credit under RSA 72:28-I, and as of April 1, 2023, the Standard Veteran Tax Credit would be in place and reduce the Veteran Tax Credit from \$750 to \$50 per year.

Tax Impact	\$0.00
<i>Recommended by Board of Selectmen</i>	<i>Tally Vote – 5 yes / 0 no / 0 abstain</i>

The article was moved to the floor and seconded. The Moderator called for discussion.

Hearing none, the question was called. The vote was in the affirmative. **Article #24 carries.**

Article #25 – Readoption of All Veterans Tax Credit

Shall the Town approve the readoption of the All Veteran’s Tax Credit (RSA 72:28.b) to allow for the expansion of the criteria needed to qualify for the All Veteran’s Tax Credit of \$750 to now include those service members that are currently serving and have not yet been honorably discharged from the armed services. The readoption of the All Veteran’s Tax Credit, if approved, would continue to offer a \$750 tax credit to all honorably discharged Veterans that qualify under the current requirements of (RSA 72:28.b) but as of April 1, 2023, it would expand the eligibility requirements to now include those individuals that have not yet been discharged from active service. If this Article does not pass the All Veteran Tax Credit would revert to the Standard Veteran Tax Credit under RSA 72:28-I, and as of April 1, 2023, the Standard Veteran Tax Credit would be in place and reduce the Veteran Tax Credit from \$750 to \$50 per year.

Tax Impact	\$0.00
<i>Recommended by Board of Selectmen</i>	<i>Tally Vote – 5 yes / 0 no / 0 abstain</i>

The article was moved to the floor and seconded. The Moderator called for discussion.

Hearing none, the question was called. The vote was in the affirmative. **Article #25 carries.**

Article #26 – Funding Municipal Improvement Capital Reserve Fund

Special Warrant Article. Shall the Town raise and appropriate the sum of ten thousand dollars (\$10,000) to be added to the *Municipal Complex Improvement Capital Reserve Fund* established in 2006. Further to authorize the transfer of ten thousand dollars (\$10,000) from the June 30th, 2023 unassigned fund balance for this purpose with no amount to be raised from taxation.

Estimated Tax Impact:	\$0.00
<i>Recommended by Board of Selectmen</i>	<i>Tally Vote – 5 yes / 0 no / 0 abstain</i>
<i>Not Recommended by Budget Committee</i>	<i>Tally Vote – 3 yes / 5 no / 0 abstain</i>

The article was moved to the floor and seconded. The Moderator called for discussion.

Mr. Weider noted the Budget Committee did not support this article, as it should be funded through the CIP instead of a capital reserve fund. He stated this fund no longer exists, as Article #27 renamed this fund.

Ms. Harris asked if since the fund has been renamed, can these funds be used outside of the Town Offices? If so, which properties could it potentially be used for? Selectman Landau said yes, it can be used for other properties, but the balance in the fund is \$815. Ms. Harris asked if this is a loophole to use on properties other than the Town Offices. Selectman Myette said it is not a loophole. The fund was renamed so a number of buildings could be included, not just the Town Offices. There are 108 structures in Town that could be covered by this fund. It is generally considered an emergency fund. Ms. Harris asked if there are specific properties targeted by this fund. Selectman Landau said there have been leaks in the Town Offices that have not been covered by the insurance company to this point. This fund would cover any Town-owned structures, but there are no specific projects.

Ms. Guilmette reiterated the fund cited in this article does not exist, so it can't be moved forward. She moved to table the article and it was seconded.

The question was called. The vote was in the affirmative. **Article #26 was tabled.**

Article #28 – Reports

To hear the reports of Agents, Auditors, and Committees of Officers heretofore chosen and pass any vote relating hereto.

To transact any other business that may legally come before the Town.

The Moderator reported he believes there should be term limits for moderators. He has been the moderator for 35 years and his predecessor had a life appointment. He will not run for reelection and expressed his gratitude to the town clerks, election officials, police chiefs, officers, and all people who make it possible for Chester to conduct free elections and to discuss how the political process is conducted in the Town. He would like to give someone else the honor of serving as moderator, although he will conduct the next Town Meeting.

A motion was made and seconded to adjourn the meeting.

A point of order was made regarding the need to continue the meeting to March 28th. The meeting stands not adjourned until after the Town elections.

The Moderator reiterated that all newly elected officials should contact him or the Town Clerk to be sworn in after the March 28th elections.

A True Copy.

Attest:

Elizabeth Lufkin

Elizabeth Lufkin, Town Clerk

Minutes taken by Beth A. Haggeli

