

Minutes of the Charlemont Selectboard Monday March 6,2023

Charlemont Town Hall and via telephone

Present: Valentine Reid, Jared Bellows, Bill Harker, Representative Natalie Blais, Legislative aide Corrine Coryat and Sarah Reynolds

Selectboard Chair Valentine Reid opened the meeting at 6:05 pm

The Rural Schools report was then discussed, there are 36 recommendations in the report.

The new Governor increased rural school aid by two million dollars. Chapter 70 and the Special Ed Circuit breaker were increased.

It was acknowledged that towns can not continue to absorb the school cost in their budgets as they are butting up against the 2 ½ ceiling. Letters like the ones the town sent in about the rural school funding are helpful.

Representative Blais mentioned that they are working to hopefully create an office of rural policy, she is hopeful because she has seen items like rural schools, food systems, agriculture, and recreation all start to be individually addressed.

The legislature is also looking into a public safety/public building commission. It was also mentioned there was an increase to the State-owned land pilot program, which will be helpful to small towns in Western MA.

The Recreation tax was discussed it was suggested that the town get letters/testimonies to send to the revenue committee once the Recreation Tax has been assigned a new bill number.

The Police Reform effects on Charlemont were then discussed, the training requirements are particularly burdensome for communities with part time police departments and retention once officers are trained will be difficult when a community only offers part time hours.

The cost of training to the Post standards is also a burden. Representative Blais mentioned funding for the training through EOPPS program.

It was discussed that possibly towns should combine officer positions so the officer would get full time hours between neighboring towns.

Relying on state police for the gaps was also discussed as they are short staffed in Franklin County, it was mentioned that Charlemont should check with the state police about their availability.

Housing was also touched on, it was mentioned that FRCOG was doing a housing study, and items like affordable and rural housing are on the legislative radar.

Meeting was adjourned at 7:25 pm on a motion by Jared Bellows and second by Bill Harker.