

**CHARLEMONT SELECTBOARD**  
**NOTICE OF MEETING**  
**Monday, December 11<sup>th</sup>, 2023, 6:00 pm**  
**Via Conference call and in person, Town Hall Meeting Room**

**Members in attendance:** Jared Bellows, Valentine Reid, Bill Harker

Assessors in attendance: Karen Rau, Jackie Cashin, Carlene Hayden

**Others in Attendance:** Greg Rowehl, Bella Levavi, Thorne Palmer, Sarah Reynolds, Star Atkeson.

**Val called the meeting to order at 6:04**

Appointments:

6:00pm: Job Descriptions – Tax Collector,

**Valentine Reid motioned to approve updated tax collector job. Jared Bellows seconded the motion. All in favor**

Town Administrator job description The Board will take home the current job description that put into the template with a few additions, along with the sample job descriptions from other towns and MMA. Val mentioned the discussion at last meeting about some towns voting to authorize Town Clerk at Town Meeting vs. thru job description and hiring process.

The next descriptions to do are Assessors' Clerk, Fire and Ambulance. They expect to finish the process in early January.

6:15 pm: Annual Tax rate Hearing- with Board of Assessors

Valentine Reid opened the Tax rate hearing at 6:21 PM. The assessors presented three sheets with three options for tax rate.

- 1) Levy below the limit (using tax levy figure from Page 1 of Tax rate Recap)
- 2) Using 100,000 excess levy capacity
- 3) Levy to the limit (using all maximum allowable levy from Levy limit worksheet)

The assessors recommended the Select Board not split the tax rate, which would raise rates on businesses. They recommend going with option 1 with the 20.70 tax rate, levied below limit.

There has been growth, sales have been consistently higher.

Sarah brought up the fact that property valuations have gone up and they should prepare an explanation for Town Meeting. Carlene confirmed that land and house values are going up and that everything needs to be adjusted to reflect that according to DOR rules. The market dictates the values.

The assessors do what they can with abatements to keep people in their homes. They also said that there are exemptions, but they go contrary to what Charlemont needs. The higher value houses and properties get the abatement, not the median and lower value houses. And it raises the tax rate.

Val would like this abatement policy to be brought to the attention of the rural government liaison as another policy not working for Charlemont. Business owners are having problems with staffing, which is a housing adjacent topic.

Val wondered if in the future the tax rate could differentiate between large business and small business. Jackie and Carlene say they are beholden to state rules.

Val got confirmation that the recommendation from the Assessors is to not split the tax rate and to levy below the limit as outlined in option 1.

**Valentine Reid made a motion to accept the Assessors' recommendation. Bill Harker seconded the motion. All in Favor.**

**Valentine Reid motioned to close the tax assessors hearing at 6:50. Jared Bellows seconded, All in Favor.**

6:45 pm: Jim Sinclair re: Warfield Road Parking Hazard

Jared confirmed that the specific event was resolved. Sarah spoke to the policy—after receiving a complaint, HWY looks at the road and parking, if there is a hazard, a sign goes up. Charlemont has a bylaw which prohibits parking in intersections and rural roadways obstructing normal flows of traffic.

Bill Harker thinks that in the future a policeman should be called about a parking violation before HWY is called. As it is currently written, the highway boss has the authority to put up signs when there is a complaint. Bill had an issue with the process and did not like that it wasn't brought to his attention as HWY liaison and thinks it should be in the future. Sarah pointed out that the complainant had voiced concern after the sign was removed about Bill Harker's involvement as it could be seen as a conflict.

Val suggested they work on a policy change to placement of no parking signs involving police and reaching out to the property owners.

Jared said they should put it on the next agenda to review the policies in place and keep everyone informed with communication.

#### **Administrator reports:**

1) Budget requests for FY 25 — Sarah flagged 2 items that will go up. The annual website hosting fee and the Town Accountant fee will go up next year. There are no assessments yet. Property insurance at Town Hall will be up because of the added value of the internet hub in the basement. Val wants to address the idea that Amy Wales had last year, which was to collapse line items by departments, but to give townspeople access to all the line items for their reference, so that each item doesn't need to be voted on separately. Sarah mentioned that she can do an "ask the administrator" night and address budget items then as well.

2) Economic Development Incentive Program- tax incentive program from the state, report from meeting with state program representative A regional director reached out to Sarah to let her know that there were incentives for business development (tax credits, private investment etc.) there is funding that businesses may not know about.

Val thinks it's a good idea to pass that info on to the local businesses, as well as putting the flyer in the newsletter and in the hall. She will also forward the regional director's info to the businesses so that they can follow up directly with him. She will include the Town Boards

3) Report on Administrator meetings with Mohawk Trail Regional Superintendent. — Budget meetings will take place early, questions may be asked. At the end of the month, they can go to the school or zoom into the meeting. Ebie Locke, the Mohawk representative will come to a meeting if The Select Board requests it.

4) South River Road Bridge update, Approve and sign Mass works grant paperwork.

**Valentine Reid made a motion to approve and sign the Mass Works grant repair of South River Rd Bridge. Bill Harker seconded it. All in favor.**

5) Charlemont Inn update—The whole building has been condemned. At the BoH hearing on the condemnation, the appeal was denied. Charlotte Dewey has filed for Chapter 13 bankruptcy. Charlemont cannot collect on judgement until after the discharge in 4-6 months.

Val asked about securing the property. The town can secure the property for safety reasons and add the cost to the tax title. Sarah will talk to Doug Telling, BoH and Charlotte Dewey. They don't want anyone to get hurt.

6) Outlet in the assessor's office. The outlet in the assessor's office needs repair. The wiring needs to be run to the generator and below to the panel in the basement. The lowest bid was Palmeri Electric at \$1,010.

**Valentine Reid made a motion, seconded by Bill Harker, to authorize Sarah to proceed with the lowest bidder to repair the outlet in the tax assessor's office. All in Favor.**

#### **Liaison reports:**

1) Report on Mohawk Trail Regional Meeting with the State Representatives about rural school funding. — Val met with Mohawk Trail and reps Blaise. High taxes, low growth and choice out is hurting them. Hawley brought up state owned land payment in lieu of taxes. Was nice to hear an abutting town speak up about the issue. It could be nice to coordinate with other towns. 3 top tax rate towns in Mohawk School district. Program allows students to attend GCC.

#### **Agenda items:**

1) Letter to MBI about unserved homes—

The letter is not ready or due yet. They are interested in definitions. The "unserved" **definition** could include subdivision roads, and residents that cannot afford the installation or monthly payment, and the state park. Existing houses that are unserved because of cost vs. unserved because houses are not in place yet on subdivision roads. They don't want the result of the letter to negatively affect our internet as a whole (like fixing with hotspots for example), want to reach all with Town of Charlemont broadband.

2) Draft public comment from the town on MBI statewide digital equity plans. — Three points were brought up in the letter from Broadband: 1) Reduce cost of internet for low-income houses. 2) increase installation subsidies for low-income households 3) Suggest that when doing studies, to carry them out in an unbiased way.

**Valentine Reid made a motion to accept the communication from Broadband. Bill Harker seconded, All in Favor.**

Sarah Reynolds will submit it to the online system.

3) Letter to support Town of Hawley Broadband Application— The letter is to voice Charlemont’s support for Hawley and to offer to help in a non-financial way, by offering to feed their internet from Charlemont.

**Valentine Reid made a motion to submit the letter signed by the SelectBoard to Hawley for them to use for their grant applications. Bill Harker seconded the motion. All in favor.**

4) Gift cards for town employees for Christmas—

**Valentine Reid motioned to allow department heads to determine where they buy the holiday gift cards for the employees. Bill Harker seconded the motion. All in favor.**

**Valentine Reid made a motion to accept donations from Greg Rowehl of Berkshire Pizzeria for cards, amount to be determined. Bill Harker seconded. All in favor.**

**Approve/sign/approve and sign:**

1) Liquor licenses: Sarah confirmed that there were no violations.

A) Berkshire East Ski Resort LLC.

**Valentine Reid made a motion to approve and sign Berkshire East liquor license. Bill Harker seconded. Jared Bellows abstained.**

B) Berkshire Pizzeria

**Valentine Reid made a motion to approve and sign the Berkshire Pizzeria liquor license. Jared Bellows seconded. All in favor.**

C) Cold River Inc

**Valentine Reid made a motion to approve and sign Cold River Inc. liquor license. Jared Bellows seconded. All in favor.**

D) Crab Apple Whitewater Inc

**Valentine Reid made a motion to approve and sign the CrabApple Whitewater liquor license. Bill Harker seconded the motion. All in favor.**

E) Sonivya Inc

**Valentine Reid made a motion to approve and sign Sonivya’s liquor license. Jared Bellows seconded. All in favor.**

F) 133 Warfield Realty LLC

**Valentine Reid made a motion to approve and sign 133 Warfield Realty Liquor License. Bill Harker seconded the motion. All in favor.**

Seasonal Liquor license:

A) Amongst the Oaks

**Valentine Reid made a motion to approve and sign Amongst the Oaks’ liquor license. Bill Harker seconded the motion. All in favor.**

2) Class II and III licenses:

a) Frank Taylor

b) Jeff Sparda

c) Matts Auto

**Valentine Reid made a motion to approve and sign Taylor’s class III license, Sparda’s class III license, and Matt’s Auto class II license. Bill Harker seconded the motions. All in Favor**

d) Brian Dupree/Stagecoach Auto

When asked earlier if any license applicants were in violation, Sarah did say that Stagecoach was waiting for an enforcement order from the ConComm. Valentine Reid discussed provisionally approving the license pending the good faith cooperation with the ConComm's enforcement order to come into compliance. The Board was okay with this but decided to table it until after the ConComm meeting so that they could read the enforcement order. They will approve and sign Stagecoach Auto next week, December 16<sup>th</sup> at 6:30.

3) Vendor Warrants AP 2422, 2423 and Payroll Warrants PR 2420, 2421

**Valentine Reid made a motion to approve and sign vendor payroll and warrants. Jared Bellows seconded the motion. All in favor.**

4) Minutes from November 13, 2023, and November 27,2023

**Valentine Reid made a motion to approve the 2 sets of Minutes. Jared Bellows seconded, All in favor.**

5) KP Law Invoice Number 145213

**Valentine Reid made a motion to approve and sign the KP Law invoice. Jared Bellows seconded the motion. All in favor.**

Next scheduled meeting, December 16<sup>th</sup>, 2023

Respectfully Submitted by Star Atkeson 12/15/2023

Documents reviewed in meeting:

- Select Board Agenda for December 11<sup>th</sup> 2023
- Letter of Support dated December 11<sup>th</sup> 2023, re: Hawley Broadband project
- Email dated Dec 1 between Will Cosby and Valentine Reid and Bob Handsaker regarding dark fiber availability, feeding Hawley's new internet and getting letter of support from Charlemont.
- 3 documents from the Assessors: Town of Charlemont Fiscal year 2024 tax classification options 1,2, and 3
- Massachusetts Internet for all plan executive summary Massachusetts Broadband Institute packet
- Massachusetts internet for All Plan Public Comment Form
- Letter from Broadband with three points to be entered into the public comment form.
- Current Charlemont Tax Collector and Administrator job descriptions; Charlemont Administrator job description in template; Southboro Administrator job descriptions; From MMA: City manager/Town Administrator job description; Town of Blandford Administrator job description.
- Liquor licenses: Berkshire East Ski Resort LLC; Berkshire Pizzeria; Cold River Inc; Crab Apple Whitewater Inc; Sonivya Inc; 133 Warfield Realty LLC; Amongst the Oaks (seasonal liquor license)
- Class II and III licenses: Frank Taylor; Jeff Sparda; Matts Auto; Brian Dupree/Stagecoach Auto
- Select Board FY 2025 Budget
- Animal control FY2025 Budget
- Vendor Warrants 2422, 2423 and Payroll Warrants PR 2420, 2421
- Minutes from November 13, 2023, and November 27,2023
- KP Law Invoice Number 145213