

CHARLEMONT SELECTBOARD
NOTICE OF MEETING
Monday, February 12th, 2024, 6:00 pm
Via Conference call and in person, Town Hall Meeting Room

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

Others in Attendance: CJ Lammers, Will Cosby, Bob Maclean, Hussein Hamdan, Jonathan Mirin, Bob Handsaker, Thorne Palmer, Sarah Reynolds, Star Atkeson.

Val called the meeting to order at 6:03

Appointments:

6:00 pm: Job Descriptions – Town Administrator

Valentine Reid made a motion to accept the job description as amended verbally, to add associate degree preferred under education, and grant writing experience a plus, under experience. Bill Harker seconded the motion. All in Favor.

Police, Fire and Ambulance will be the next job descriptions to go over.

Val will ask The Municipal Light manager, Bob Handsaker to write up his job description, albeit a volunteer position, it could be a position that they hire for instead of appointing.

Appointment 6:15 pm -CJ Lammers, Conway School of Landscaping

RE: Fairgrounds Recreation Earmark project

- CJ Lammers presented a proposal to have the Conway School work on the landscaping portion only (will use footprints of buildings) of the Fairgrounds for the rec grant. Sarah needs these design drawings to then get the real engineered drawings from an engineering firm. She needs these preliminary design drawings to get additional grants. Every grant needs an end goal. The Select Board hope to use the rec money to get more grant money. Using the rec grant to be a match for other matching funds that could be available.
- 2 community engagement sessions
- Asked the Board to have a look at the examples included in the emailed proposal.
- The school will deliver 3 scaled options.
- The Conway school would like to know soon as they will be scheduling their activities soon. In a week or a week and a half is when CJ was hoping. Val would like to see a few more proposals.
- The Select Board plans to decide at the Feb 26 Select Board meeting if they will choose The Conway School to do the design part of the Fairgrounds landscaping for the Town. Bill said the other park Commissioners could come to that meeting or to the previous meeting to discuss.

6:30 pm- Jonathan Mirin Re: Safe tech, Cell Tower Bylaw

- Jonathan told that Hawlemont took down a redundant router lessening unnecessary radiation exposure for the students. Also DESE wants to reduce exposure to kids.
- He told the Board of the Cell Tower bylaw update to be brought to Town Meeting, many supporters had written letters regarding their concern. As a result of an updated bylaw Wireless Companies would have to apply for a special permit, giving the town a say on the placement. The updated bylaw has the wireless companies hold their own insurance in case of lawsuits instead of the town being liable. Jonathan said that the Planning Board cut a lot out, including any setbacks for the

small cell antennae located on telephone poles. Residents would potentially not have a say about antennae in close proximity to their houses. He hopes to keep working on it.

- Val would prefer Jonathan not revisit the bylaw, he said that the Planning Board has other priorities that they should be busy with primarily to help the tax rate and working on the master plan, to prep Charlemont to be development friendly and to bring families with children in. Jonathan agreed that the housing crisis is a national issue, and that having a safer environment would be a draw for families. He is in touch with the ever-growing population of EMF sensitive people and gets monthly inquiries about how Charlemont ranks as a safe place to live. It would also give EMF sensitive families that live here the security to stay.
- Val would prefer that Jonathan do a citizens' petition. Sarah also doesn't want to work on one bylaw two years in a row.
- Bill Harker spoke favorably about bringing the bylaw to town meeting to let the people decide.
- Val would like to have the BoH take more of a role as opposed to the Planning Board.
- They spoke about excess wireless at Town Hall and said there was nothing they could do. Jonathan said it could be lessened with some setting changes.
- Jonathan wanted to let the Board know about the upcoming town wide wireless repeater network. National Grid is planning to swap out the electric meters for wireless meters in 2024. Which is another layer of unnecessary electromagnetic pollution. Senator Markey is in favor of a no fee opt out. The current plan is to charge a monthly fee of \$25. to opt out.

6:54 pm- Discuss Town Clerk Position and appoint a permanent Town Clerk

Bill Harker made a motion to appoint Thorne Palmer to be Town Clerk. They asked if he wanted to be appointed. If he was sure, and if he would stay in town. He said Yes. Jared Bellows seconded Bill's Motions. All in Favor.

The board debated the Clerk salary based on surrounding towns and Clerk averages. **Valentine Reid made a motion to set the clerk at \$25 an hour, not to exceed 30 hours per week with the expectation that there will be a raise to \$26 after completion of training. Jared Bellows seconded, All in Favor.**

Jared Bellows brought up the extended hours required for election season. They would like to make the 30 hours "soft" hours. **Valentine Reid made a motion to set the office hours as "soft" 30 hours a week. Jared Bellows seconded. All In Favor.**

7:15 pm- Town of Hawley RE: Broadband project

- Will Cosby, Bob Maclean, Hussein Hamdan came to speak to Bob Handsaker and the Select Board about the possibility of using Charlemont's dark fibers to light up Hawley as a back up plan if their other attempts at wireless internet didn't work out. The Hawley Select Board told of the history of their attempts to bring reliable internet to Hawley. They aren't particularly confident in the application that is being considered now for various reasons.
- If Charlemont would agree, Hawley would be the connection from the Northern Tier to The Southern Tier.
- Val said that if it was free of cost for Charlemont, he would be in favor of helping. Bob Handsaker said that he would be happy to look at what they have so far if they do want to go the Whip City route, and he will show them Charlemont's books so they can see how the financing works. The 5 northern Tier towns would all need to agree. At this point there is 4x the capacity and adding Hawley wouldn't change that. Each town would be responsible for repairs and maintenance within

their borders. Valentine Reid said “you have our support, we will be good neighbors.” Jared Bellows “seconded that.”

Administrator reports:

1) Request for funding for Porta Potties at Shunpike

Valentine Reid made a motion to commit to the funding and to determine how to pay it at the next meeting. Bill Harker seconded it, All in Favor.

2) Discussion with Rowe about Fire Chief/Fire District

- Sarah let the board know that Rowe is interested in sharing a Fire Chief, the subject of a Fire District had come up in a meeting. Succession planning Fire and Ambulance, Safer Grant personnel grant opens this next month. They would like to make a joint application with Charlemont as the lead. Grant gives Salary and benefits for 3 years to hire personnel. After 3 years the funding would need to be figured out.
- Jared noted that it can be used for Ambulance as well, to hire someone on through the Fire department as an EMT, it would help with response times.
- Sarah will do the paperwork.

3) Request for selectboard to approve deeming items as surplus from cellar project.

Sue found random items in the cellar while going through files: Part of horn system, a typewriter, toys etc.

Valentine Reid motioned to accept the list of items as surplus. Jared Bellows seconded the motion. All in favor.

Liaison reports:

1) Broadband ACP Program, letters to Senator Markey and Senator Warren

The internet subsidy provided by the Federal Government is ending. Cheryl Handsaker had drafted a letter. Bob recommended writing in support of a new subsidy in an official capacity. 9% of Charlemont’s internet subscribers use it. 23 million people nationwide. Losing the Subside won’t hurt Charlemont’s Broadband but would be a terrible loss for those that need the subsidy.

Valentine Reid motioned to approve the signing of the letter for Senators Markey and Warren. Jared Bellows seconded the motion. All in favor.

2) Ambulance Mutual Aid Letter. The Board spoke about Adam’s ambulance service ending. Hawley is in limbo. They want to see if there is a mutual aid agreement. Sarah will talk to Tinky in Hawley and Shelburne Falls, if they don’t have an agreement Charlemont can offer to cover Hawley.

Agenda items:

1) Advanced life Support Intercept Agreement with Colrain Ambulance.

This is a renewal of an existing agreement. Shelburne Falls has done it, the SelectBoard needs to do it. Val noted that it needs to be renewed in 3 years and asked Sarah to put it in the calendar.

Valentine Reid motioned to approve and sign the ALS agreement with Colrain. Jared Bellows seconded it, All in Favor.

2) Grant paperwork for Fire Department EMPG Award (Emergency Management Performance Grant)

Sarah wants permission to fill out on their behalf.

Valentine Reid motioned to accept EMPG on The Select Board's behalf and to esign on his behalf. Jared Bellows seconded. All in favor.

3) Missing Selectboard Budget items and presentation for FY 25 Budget

- Val figured out what differences in the budget affect the tax rate, he came up with \$900-1000 of budget expenditure amounted to one penny off of the tax rate. Pennies in the tax rate add up over time.
- They went over the narrative of some of the budget increases. They will not decide the cost of living adjustment tonight.
- Val wants to consolidate the budget and collapse items into a single line, expanded version can also be available. They spoke about COLA adjustments. Last year they were below the COLA two years in a row.
- Talked about school level-funding their budget.
- Val wants to come up with ideas on how to change the revenue of the town.

4) Selectboard to certify election positions- List from Interim Town Clerk

Accept open election with exception of Planning Board, will amend if there is a 3rd seat open.

Valentine Reid motioned to certify election positions, and to verify if 3rd member needed on Planning Board. Jared Bellows seconded the motion, All in favor.

Approve/sign/approve and sign:

1) Payroll and Vendor warrants

Valentine Reid motioned to approve and sign vendor warrants. Jared Bellows seconded it. All in Favor

2) KP Law Invoice #145861

Valentine Reid motioned to approve and sign KP Law invoice. Jared Bellows seconded it. All in Favor

3) Berkshire Highland Pentathlon Special Event Permit

Valentine Reid motioned to Authorize Valentine Reid to sign. Valentine Reid Seconded, All in Favor.

4) Fire Safety Equipment Grant FY24 Contract Documents

Valentine Reid motioned to approve and sign Fire safety Equipment Grant. Bill Harker seconded it. All in Favor

Valentine Reid motioned to adjourn at 8:24, Jared Bellows seconded. All in Favor.

****The next scheduled meeting will be held on February 20th, 2024 at 6:30 PM**

Documents reviewed in meeting:

Vendor Warrant

Payroll warrant

KP Law Invoice #145861

Agenda For February 12th, 2024, Select Board Meeting

Town Administrator Job Description

Charlemont Fiscal Years 2018-2023 revenue / expense Analysis

Proposal from the Conway School of Sustainable Landscape Planning and Design dated February 8th, 2024.

Department of Fire Services FY 24 Firefighter Safety Equipment Grant Final Report

A Feb 1st forwarded email dated Jan 8, 2024, from Dennis Annear to Sarah Reynolds regarding a request for digital signature on Charlemont FFY2023EMPG CASL from Lisa Hennessy, Grants management Specialist.

Outgoing letter dated January 29, 2024, from SelectBoard to Senator Ed Markey re: Affordable Connectivity Program

Outgoing letter dated January 29, 2024, from SelectBoard to Senator Elizabeth Warren re: Affordable Connectivity Program

ALS Intercept Agreements

Charlemont's Open Election Positions

Letter to Dennis Annear dated Feb 6, 2024, from Maura Healy re: Firefighter Safety Equipment Grant Program

Letter to Dennis Annear dated Feb 6, 2024, From John Davine State Fire Marshall re: Standard Contract Form for Grant use.