

Town of Charlemont
Joint Finance Committee and Select Board Meeting Minutes
January 28th, 2026 4:00 p.m.
Town Hall and via Conference Call

Board Members Present: Lynn Hathaway, Amy Wales, Ron Smith

Others present: Scott Sullivan, Sarah Reynolds, Star Atkeson

Members On phone: Rich Filoramo, Wilder Sparks

Amy Wales called the meeting to order at 4:02 PM.

Appointments:

4:00 Scott Sullivan, Highway Super to discuss highway budget

- Scott Sullivan reviewed the proposed Highway Department budget and explained that he attempted to keep costs as level as possible. A two-year rolling average was used for winter contracted services rather than a five-year average due to recent variability.
- Costs are already over budget this fiscal year due to necessary repairs to pickups and trucks. Two injector pumps have been replaced in the past two years.
- Fuel pricing remains unpredictable, particularly diesel.
- The department is currently near the expected mid-year usage point for diesel.
- 2,300 gallons were budgeted for FY27 as they still need to go through 4,000 gallons from FY25.
- Fuel is town-wide and not stored on site; usage is difficult to predict months in advance.
- Salt is close to being over budget due to a statewide shortage. Primary and secondary vendors are backordered, with supply delays caused by shipping issues.
- Ink prices are increasing, and the Highway Department furnace will require servicing this year.
- A potential 2.8% COLA was discussed.
- Health insurance costs have increased significantly, now totaling 35%.
- Scott discussed the potential future purchase of a 5500-series truck, estimated at approximately \$170,000, and expressed interest in contributing to a stabilization account for capital planning.
- Amy noted that a stabilization fund would require Town Meeting approval.
- Sarah advised that updated rules are forthcoming and will be shared when available.
- The Freightliner would remain as a spare vehicle; it can be used by an employee learning to drive manual transmission.
- Questions were asked regarding fuel assumptions, winter contracted services, and whether certain repair costs should fall under maintenance or contracted services. Scott clarified that vehicle repairs are categorized under contracted services.
- Amy indicated Scott would be invited back for a future discussion focused specifically on equipment planning.

Agenda items:

Review/ Approve minutes from May 23, 2025, and October 29, 2025

Ron Smith moved to approve the May 23, 2025, Minutes as presented, seconded by Lynn Hathaway. All in favor. (Rich Filoramo not present.)

Lynn Hathaway moved to approve the October 29, 2025, Minutes, seconded by Ron Smith. All in favor. (Rich Filoramo not present.)

Administrator's Report:

Sarah provided an update on preliminary FY27 budget figures:

- Not all departmental budgets or assessments have been received.
- Health insurance remains a major cost driver.
- VEAC tuition: Two additional students have been approved, increasing costs. The committee continues discussions with the Town regarding future process and projections for budgeting.
- Veterans' benefits: A 7% increase was anticipated.
- Franklin Regional Council of Governments (FRCOG): Assessments are trending upward, largely due to insurance costs.

Cherry Sheet highlights:

- Chapter 70 aid is proposed 120, 531, up from \$106,868.
- Unrestricted General Government Aid (UGGA) increased from \$217,000 to \$223,000.
- State-owned land payments remain unchanged.
- Regional transit and air pollution figures are largely unchanged; additional clarification will be requested regarding FRTA transit usage.

Fire Truck Earmark has come through

The town has received confirmation that 75% of the \$450,000 cost will be reimbursed by the Federal Government. The town's share is \$113,000.

Letter in support of Recreation Tax (discussion and possible letter signing) Discussion and Possible Action

- The committee discussed submitting a letter in support of proposed recreation tax legislation following a recent hearing attended by Bob Handsaker and Sarah Reynolds.
- The tax would apply a 3% point-of-sale tax on ticketed recreational activities
- The mechanism is straightforward and minimally burdensome for businesses.

- Charlemont experiences significant seasonal tourism impacts, with weekend populations far exceeding the number of residents, resulting in increased strain on roads, public safety, and municipal services.
- Members were encouraged to submit individual letters, in addition to an official Finance Committee letter.
- A draft letter was distributed for the Board to review; written testimony may be submitted within approximately 50 days.

Representative for 2D8T meeting on February 5th at 6:30

Rich Filoramo volunteered to attend.

Ron Smith agreed to attend the school committee site visit.

Motion by Amy Wales, seconded by Lynn Hathaway, to adjourn the meeting at 4:46 PM. All in favor.

The next regularly scheduled meeting will be held on Tuesday, February 11, 2025, at 4:00 PM.

Documents viewed at meeting:

Agenda of 1/28/2026

Minutes of May 23, 2025, and October 29, 2025

Highway FY2027 Budget sheet