

Town of Charlemont
Joint Finance Committee and Select Board Meeting Minutes
January 31st, 2024
Town Hall and via Conference Call

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

On phone: Valentine Reid, Bill Harker

Others present: Dana Johnson, Dennis Annear, Marguerite Willis, Sarah Reynolds, Star Atkeson

Rich Filoramo called the meeting to order at 4:05 PM.

APPOINTMENTS:

4:15 Dana Johnson —Ambulance

- Radio services went up.
- A new ambulance is coming in August or September. Sarah got an extension to pay the offset of \$120,000 until Jan 19, 2025. It is expensive to transfer the radios to the new ambulance. The ambulance requires new licensing and new inspecting. It needs to be weight certified for the state.
- Licenses and dues went up 25%.
- The capital request will be for portable radios, Dana is getting quotes to give to Sarah. Last year they got pagers. They need the radios to give to EMTs. Dana had gotten a FRCOG grant for some.

4:30 Dennis Annear —Fire department

- Rundown of increases: Maintenance is a big thing for fire. Currently over budget with two bills outstanding. The pickup won't pass inspection. They did not get the grant for the fire truck (3rd attempt.) Charlemont doesn't have the call volume. The five fire vehicles are 20 years old on average. USDA community facilities grant is a 35% matching grant, FEMA is 5% if awarded.
- Sarah said the Senators sent paperwork for earmark and they would choose the fire truck. They would advocate on the federal level.
- The pumper truck is required to participate in Mutual Aid. (Pumper truck had failed at the Monroe Fire) Dennis also warned that when he and Doug retire there will be no one to do cheaper in-house maintenance.
- The Tahoe transfer was more expensive than planned.
- Last year, Generator failed and cost \$2000.
- \$4000. was the cost for the front brakes, they haven't done the rear brakes because of cost, and didn't change oil.
- Regarding shopping for used vehicles— Dennis sees a severe limitation, compressed air doubles value of water and he can't find a used truck which would have that capability.
- Rowe combined a new chassis and tanker, it cost \$340,000. Chassis alone was \$138,000. Pump \$200,000.
- It is possible to municipally lease a fire truck, with annual payment, voted on TM, one vote to buy truck, one vote to do lease, at the end of lease you own it, if one year the Town fail to vote, it would be taken back. Financing is used to not increase debt limit. Leasing is a financing mechanism. Sarah said municipal lease interest rates are 6-8%
- Dennis recommended an increase in salary. Sarah said Charlemont fell in the middle of salaries in the area. Dennis says that as the weather changes emergency management is becoming more and more time

consuming— watching the rivers. They are also in the middle of relicensing the dams. Brookfield's has two days of meetings. They have 5 more after that. Each one will be time-consuming.

- Fire chief extension is not quite okayed, the bill is on the third reading.
- Val said FEMA offers grants for fire chief hiring, which opens in March.
- Dennis is getting quotes for the building project to enlarge the doors they need to open walls to find I-beams or wood, and then expand to 12 Ft doors.
- All federal fire grants sunset this year, they all go away this year.
- Quebec Forest Fires, presumably regional fire grants, shore up local assets? The Bureau of Forest Fire Control does but only \$2,500. Per year. Used matching grants for tools and gear. Western States get more \$, they are higher risk. There is a changing risk, Federal program passes through DCR forest Fire Control.
- Fire service must fight to get the fire towers staffed part time. 2 full time people in Franklin County and 3 trucks.
- Regarding the municipal complex bldg., they did space needs study— 2 acres for police, Fire and Ambulance, estimating a 10 mil. cost. Ron asked about grants. Sarah said it is still based on call volume. Grants and earmarks are based on population, income, number of calls, Charlemont hasn't hit the threshold. Grants would pay a percentage but is 2-3 years of budget. And the town still has failing bridges and road issues.
- Rowe was talking about a fire district. Problems are real across towns. They could have satellite buildings. Rich supports regionalization, however there is a need for a fire station in each town. Insurance rates are astronomical if a home is located further than 5 miles from a station.
- Rich likes the idea of a fire district. Val asked how the budgeting would work with a district. Send out taxation, own town meetings, people have same option discuss budget every year. Alleviate problems with this budget. Manage with fewer trucks.
- Dennis let the Board know that once he and Doug are retired, there won't be that in-house capability to do a lot of the maintenance, repairs, and emergency repairs.
- A fire district with satellite buildings could be a solution.

ADMINISTRATOR REPORT:

1. Cherry Sheet numbers
 - Unrestricted government aid and veterans benefits went up a bit. State owned land is up by 100\$, public library is up by 10\$, the total estimated cherry sheet numbers are \$367,332.
 - Senator Paul Mark and Representative Natalie Blais will be at Town Hall for remarks and refreshments on February 16th from 5-7:30 PM. Sarah will post it as a meeting.
 - Rich asked about the rec tax. Sarah let him know that they are considering doing it statewide.

ACTION ITEMS:

1. Review first draft of FY 2025 Budget
 - There was a large increase in the Town report. Sarah is keeping it on there for now, to then propose not printing the same quantity of town reports. She can put in online and print a few. That will be a discussion at Town Meeting.
2. Review/ Approve minutes from 1/17/2024

Amy Wales motioned to accept the Minutes from 1/17/2024 as presented, Rich Filoramo seconded the motion. All in favor.

Rich Filoramo motioned to adjourn the meeting seconded by Ron Smith. All in favor.

Next regularly scheduled meeting will be held on Wednesday, February 28 at 4:00 PM.

Documents viewed at meeting:

Minutes of 1/17/2024

FinComm and Select Board Agenda for January 31, 2024

Explanation of budget request from Dennis Annear.

Fire FY 2025 Budget

Draft 1 Budget worksheet w allocation chart (002)

Ambulance FY2025 Budget