

Town of Charlemont
Joint Finance Committee and Select Board Meeting Minutes
February 28th, 2024
Town Hall and via Conference Call

Board Members Present: Lynn Hathaway, Rich Filoramo

On phone: Ron Smith, Amy Wales

Others present: Marguerite Willis, Jake Eberwein, Frank Cote, Elizabeth VanInderstine, Bill Lataille, Evie Locke , Anne Kaplan, Cheryl Handsaker, Sarah Reynolds, Star Atkeson

Rich Filoramo called the meeting to order at 3:59 PM.

APPOINTMENTS:

4:00 Jake Eberwein re: School Sustainability Study

- Jake Eberwein, Project manager of Berk12, secured by Hawlemont and Mohawk Trail presented his plan for the sustainability study. He gave a slide deck handout.
- A recent project culminated in a proposal combining 2 regional school districts: Berkshire Hills and Southern Berkshire. It was voted down at their town Meeting.
- Communication and community engagement are priority therefore reaching out to Select Board Fin-Comm and each school community. They will tour the schools and meet with faculty. The website will be the hub for information.
- **www.2districts8towns.org**
- use website for resources; all outreach; historical documents, and work plan.
- They will survey families that opt out, to understand why.
- They will work with a steering committee with a rep from every town, and advisory teams regarding finance (capital projections, interest rates etc., run a few scenarios), educational quality and community outreach. If people would like to serve on a team, please click on the link.
 - They will look at buildings to see if could sustain students in different configuration, now until end of school year.
 - This Summer will organize ideas, get every idea on the table, choose realistic solution which will have a positive fiscal impact. With all the data, they will forecast models into future, what will continue to work 5 years down the line.
 - Fall/winter, will present ideas.
- Rich mused: Hawlemont, Shelburne, Colrain need to coalesce, which building is best to support? What can be done?
- Berk12 plans to use studies of entire Franklin County, done in mid 2000s, learn from previous work. Will try to understand entire ecosystem of Franklin County.
- Frank Cote, on the Berk12 team, knows Chapter 74, regarding Vocational schools.
- Solution is partnership at local and state level.

4:30 Hawlemont School Committee re: Hawlemont Draft Budget for FY 2025

- Hawlemont Principal Amber Tulloch got a grant which helped to reduce the budget,
- extra rural aid 2024, not 2025.
- School Choice \$ is keeping money down. \$157 less on local fund budget, 2 district expenses budget went up.

- See links on business services webpage. The budget is presented in different ways, as well as monthly reports and DESE code.
- Minimum contribution has gone down last 3 years.
- State reimburse transportation 90% in FY24, and only 60% in FY25
- FY 24 assessment went up and transportation costs went up.
- School committee received money from state 23' transportation revolving fund, use 23's 'in 25' 24's in 26, there is a lag year.
- Enrollment declining, lost large 6th grade class, less came to kindergarten.
- Rich hopes to see a reduction in assessment, harder to get budget passed at TM. Hope they can find further savings.
- They have a simple presentation for voters and some one pagers.
- Anne Kaplan commented that a lot of the improvements made are yet to be seen in results (Very strong principal and other changes) but will increase the likelihood of higher enrollment
- Bill Lataille thinks that the previous volatility of the 2 school districts was damaging to enrollment. There has been a culture change and a great working relationship currently.
- The E911 System required by the state to be installed in Mohawk (already in Hawlemont) asking to consider as a capital expense or free cash. School can put it on and assess you for it so you can vote to appropriate.
- Evie Locke will bring the Mohawk regional agreement amendment regarding foundation enrollment vs. bodies in seats.

1. Review/ Approve minutes from 1/31/2024

Rich Filoramo motioned to accept the Minutes from 1/31/2024 as presented, Lynn Hathaway seconded the motion. All in favor.

Rich Filoramo motioned to adjourn the meeting at 5:15 seconded by Lynn Hathaway. All in favor.

Next regularly scheduled meeting will be held on Wednesday, March 12 at 4:00 PM.

Documents viewed at meeting:

Minutes of 1/31/2024

FinComm and Select Board Agenda for February 28, 2024

4 double sided pages of Hawlmeonts budget plus E911 cost break down.

Berk12 Sustainability Study: Phase II slide deck