

**Town of Charlemont**  
**Joint Finance Committee and Select Board Meeting Minutes**  
**March 11th, 2026, 4:00 p.m.**  
**Town Hall and via Conference Call**

Board Members Present: Lynn Hathaway, Amy Wales, Jay Healy, Kim Blakeslee  
Others present: Jason Pelletier, Jim Galeas, Sarah Reynolds, Star Atkeson

**Amy Wales called the meeting to order at 4:02 pm**

**4:00 Bob Handsaker, Municipal Light Plant manager to discuss Broadband Budget**

- Overall, broadband finance good shape
- Lifeline subsidy is up 50% this year (people were notified during the device distribution)
- Take rate is at 72% of residents, income is strong, they are paying down the debt
  
- Broadband would like to start issuing a Memorandum of Understanding every year regarding indirect costs to the town, (which include accountant cost, treasurer cost, 1 hour a month for administrator, and the debt service out of Broadband which is a town line item which gets reimbursed by Broadband.) They'd like to have the SB vote and sign it, and have the MLP manager sign it, and annually review the cost structure. This will be done for transparency and be part of public record Amy will work with Sarah to get it to the Select Board
  
- Bob proposed a policy change that would increase first time installation subsidy from \$700 to \$900, subject to the budget approval, effective July 1<sup>st</sup>. He'd like the Select Board to discuss the subsidy around the time they get the Memorandum of Understanding.
  
- Some members expressed interest in limiting the subsidy to low-income households. The Broadband Committee doesn't have a secure, verifiable process for determining low-income eligibility and is uncomfortable taking on that role. Kim indicated she was comfortable with the topic, though it was presented as administratively complicated. Sarah noted that the purpose of the installation subsidy is to encourage sign-ups and build a base of long-term customers.
  
- They use Lifeline as an indicator for the additional low-income subsidy 30\$ of per month.
- The National Grid Feeder project and the Legate Hill project still pose cost uncertainties for Broadband.
- They are careful to maintain the strong retained earnings and are holding back reserves to pay for putting fiber on the new town roads.
- There are 2 years left on the Whip City Contract, the internet cost should stay the same for the next few years

#### **4:30 Chief Jason Pelletier, to discuss Police budget**

- Jason said the increase to the Police budget would be \$132,532.95. Some of it is due to the Town's increase in the insurance. He based the increase, \$25,992 per employee, using the "family plan" insurance, which is the most expensive option, and won't necessarily be chosen.
- His ask is for a Full-time police chief and 2 full time officers at \$31.25 and hour amounting to \$65,000. a year, which is on the lower end of the average wages in the area. In Shelburne they pay \$72,500 (shared with Buckland.)
- Jay explained the situation, in 2020 Massachusetts became a post state, there are no more Part time options, everyone must go to full-time academy, so they go to where they can make a living.
- Chief salary would get rid of stipend and be a salary position at \$100,000. The Shelburne Chief gets \$126,000.
- Met with considerable skepticism, Jason assured the board that it is not greed, but rather to set Charlemont up for the future, as the current pay structure is not sustainable if they want to keep a local police department running.
- It came up the townspeople that they don't see the police patrolling, that the office is here, and that it shouldn't be work from home situation. Jay said that the Post requirements take up a substantial amount of time. He is already working 40 hours a week as admin. They get domestic calls and river calls, they have been lucky lately that there haven't been alcohol related drownings, but it had been a yearly occurrence 5 years ago.
- Sarah had emailed around to nearby police departments like Savoy, Cummington, Plainfield and Ashfield, and found that some of them have been doing one FT chief and one FT patrol officer.
- Amy questioned Kim on whether she understood the ramifications for the budget because of the increase. Kim said the Select Board had voted to have Chief Pelletier bring his proposal to Town Meeting to be voted on. Kim is prepared to speak to it at Town Meeting as well as being open to negotiating the salary and number of full-time officers.
- Amy emphasized the need for the Selectboard to have a comprehensive understanding of the needs of all departmental staffing and pay and the impact on current and future budgets.

#### **Agenda items:**

1) Review/ Approve minutes from February 25, 2026

**Jay Healy made a motion to accept the February 25<sup>th</sup> Minutes as written. Lynne Hathaway seconded the motion. All in favor.**

**2) Administrator's Report:**

Remaining Budget numbers update,

Sarah is still waiting for 2 numbers, the Select board will do salaries on Monday, and they are waiting for the property and casualty insurance.

School assessment numbers.

Franklin Tech school tuition and bussing—Franklin Tech has started to use a lottery for non-member towns.

They told Sarah to budget for 3 students, 5 applied from Charlemont. They will know the real number closer to Town Meeting and can change the line. Charlemont currently has 12 students at Franklin Tech and 1 at Smith Vocational. There is a 26% increase on that line with bussing and tuition combined.

**Amy Wales moved to adjourn at 5:00 pm; seconded by Lynn Hathaway. All in favor**

Documents viewed at meeting:

Agenda of 3/11/2026

Minutes of 2/25/2026

Requested Emergency Services numbers form Dana Johnson dated 3/11/2026

Police FY2027 Budget, letter dated 1/16/2026 from Jason Pettetier re: budget increase

Broadband pro forma Operating budget

Broadband FY 2027 budget request