

**Town of Charlemont**  
**Joint Finance Committee and Select Board Meeting Minutes**  
**March 27th, 2024**  
**Town Hall and via Conference Call**

Board Members Present: Lynn Hathaway, Rich Filoramo, Amy Wales, Bill Harker

On phone: Ron Smith

Others present: Sarah Reynolds, Star Atkeson

Rich called the meeting to order at 4:03PM

**ADMINISTRATOR'S REPORT:**

1) Leasing / financing, update on procurement piece

- The procurement procedure required for a municipality to lease heavy equipment on their own would require a Town Meeting vote and then a vote every 5 years to re-up the lease.
- The company to do the lease is in Westfield Mass
- Rich wondered about getting the police car that way. Sarah thinks that with a smaller vehicle, it may make sense to buy.
- Amy thinks if the Town borrows for a police car, they could still do the math as if it was for a lease, to come up with the annual expense.

2) Stabilization / revolving Accounts

- Over the years there have been questions about creating a capital stabilization account for Departments' capital items like cars and trucks. Mass General Law requires a general stabilization account. Rich doesn't understand why they would create a second account when the general stabilization account is for capital items. Amy says that it could also be used for emergencies, like if there was not money enough for an audit in free cash, it could always be voted to take money out. (the vote is how to take the money out, not put the money in.)
- The Capital Planning Committee makes recommendations on whether the time is right to make a purchase. There is currently \$389,770 in stabilization, invested in MMDT (State Street.)

Amy Wales suggested making a statement in the Minutes, Rich and Lynn agreed:

***\*\*The Intent of The Finance Committee is to use the general stabilization account for capital items.***

3) Update on cherry sheet and revenue numbers

- Unrestricted Government Aid is up. The State numbers are using the Governor's budget.
- Exemptions, Elderly/Vets is down. Veterans Benefits are up, reflecting the payments out. State Owned land is up a bit. (Again, The Town / SB is advocating for formula change. Charlemont currently gets 12\$ an acre, the State average is \$20 an acre.)
- FRTA bus charge is down, air pollution charge is up.
- Chapter 90 is down. Sarah put together 25 yrs of chapter 90.
- Room and meals tax revenue has increased: FY24 Jun-Aug (\$32,109.18)
- Meal tax is down
- Sarah is working on how to track the transfer station revenue. FY23, it was at 21,000. FY 24, it will be over 20,000. The compost is reducing the number of shipments. Stickers are less expensive than bags.

- Collecting on Ambulance continues to be a problem. FY24 is at \$45,000. But a lot of it is outstanding. Call volume has decreased in the last few years.
- 4) Grants that Sarah brought in in 2022 and 2023 amounted to \$1,866,825: FY 24 so far \$565,852, grants were for the 8A project, body worn cameras, sidewalk, speed signs, legate hill bridge, engineering the small bridge, the deck repair on the long bridge. Repair to the subdivision roads, EV chargers, police department tasers, AED for police department, the wood bank, the Woodland Trail Grant (new trailer for boat and water and land rescue equipment.) The Ambulance will come in July, they have until the end of the year to file. 2 USDA grants, a community block grant. Some are reimbursed and some are paid by the grant. The fire truck will be federal.

#### **ACTION ITEMS:**

1. Review / approve minutes from 3/13/2024

**Rich Filoramo motioned to accept the 3/13 Minutes. Lynn Hathaway seconded, all in Favor.**

2. Budget review

- The 5% COLA has been added to the salaries.
- The SelectBoard has chosen some budget lines to collapse to try and shorten the time spent at town meeting.
- Hawlemont has been level funded. The transportation cost went up, the state only paid 50% and there was only one bid.
- The Accounting services costs went up 10%. It's a 3-year contract. Some of it is reimbursed by the Broadband enterprise fund.
- \$9500 town wide fuel.
- Town Clerk expected to work up to 30 hours a week unless an election requires more.
- Will ask TM on a warrant to forego the printing of the Annual Town report to save on printing cost.
- The Tree Warden would like a warrant article for his budget, Sarah will put it on the next meeting agenda.
- The Board questions whether to lessen the Smith Vocational, Franklin Tech line, as long as there is no sign of increase in students. The average is 9 students. The new transportation contract is a lot of money.
- There is no Town Debt except for Broadband
- Rich brought up the Highway line. He said he had a different impression of what was happening. He wondered if the job could be done with 3 laborers. Sarah said there were 4 plow routes, 4 trucks. Sarah explained how the transition happened: When Gordy left they upped the foreman and the 2 laborers (using the balance of Gordy's salary) and kept Gordy on as a consultant. The consultant cost was covered by chapter 90. The salaries were not adjusted when the new Super was hired. Rich wondered if there could be a part time Super for the paperwork. Sarah let them know that the paperwork was more involved than when there were 3 laborers with Wally at the helm. Costs were lower back then. Rich thinks they need to seriously look at it. HWY salary is up 25%, the line is at ½ mil and will grow to 600,000.
- Bill would like to discuss Highway in the future, but it is not on the agenda.
- Amy Wales thinks it could be helpful to see a 2022-2023 salary breakdown, they can do next meeting, it's hard to look at the lump sum and understand what's going on. They want a full explanation of what's going on.

- The Little red Schoolhouse came up again. They rarely use the \$ 850, but Bill Harker likes to have the budget available in case of repairs, to fix roof, windows.
- The Warrant articles are due April 26 to Town Clerk. Amy will look at them.

3. Capital planning items and status.

- Ron will get the members together to meet soon. They don't have a quote for the cruiser yet. The SelectBoard put in for Infrastructure, and the cost of an audit, no other capital items yet.
- All the department requests are in: Police, Fire, HWY, \$20,000., \$40,000., Annual Audit, Mohawk late bus (\$6,000), School 911 system 2,996

**Rich Filoramo motioned to adjourn the meeting at 5:09 seconded by Amy Wales. All in favor.**

Next regularly scheduled meeting will be held on Wednesday, April 10 at 4:00 PM.

Documents viewed at meeting:

Minutes of 3/13/2024

FinComm and Select Board Agenda for March 27, 2024

25 years of Chapter 90 sheet

Room and Meals TaxFY22-FY24

Cherry Sheet Info list

Draft 3 FY 2025 Budget Worksheet