

Meeting of the Charlemont Finance Committee and the Charlemont Selectboard November 10,2021

Committee and Board members present: Amy Whales, Rich Filoramo, Lynn Hathaway, Marguerite Willis, Dan Girard and Jay Healy (came on a little late)

Public present: Martha Thurber, Lindsey Rodriguez, Amber Tulloch, and Sarah Reynolds

Rich Filoramo opened the meeting at 3 pm

Rich Filoramo explained that with Heath withdrawing and the chances of negotiations reconvening highly unlikely, that the Hawlemont District could be short up to \$368,000, there also could be up to 32 less students in Hawlemont than the year before. Mohawk will not give any more extensions on the current tuition agreement for Heath Students into Hawlemont. This is leading to the boards having these discussions and trying to proactively do something to address the situation.

Joining Mohawk Trail Regional district for the elementary age children as well as the high school would be a course of action. It was asked of Martha Thurber if the Mohawk District had been asked to do any financial scenarios. She was not aware of any. She also explained that Mohawk is willing to discuss the two-district agreement, but they would be looking at how the central office staff has been treated and how much time is being demanded of Sheryl Stanton. Martha also explained that the school committee's role is going above what their defined role is. It was also explained that the assessment for joining the district would be based on enrollment and population this is separate from the two District agreement. Mohawk would not be interested in taking on the Hawlemont Building but the students being absorbed by Mohawk would not be a problem.

It was then discussed that the budget is untenable at its current course, Charlemont could not vote the budget and DESE would become involved, there is also concern for the staff at Hawlemont, and the lack of cooperation between the school committee and the boards as well as the Mohawk Central Office is concerning. The boards feel it is necessary to pursue dissolution of the Hawlemont District and breaking the agreement with Hawley.

The public asked what was driving the decision if it was the school committee's behavior or financial. It was explained that it was financial really, the numbers of students, cost to educate them is becoming beyond what the willingness to bear for most taxpayers. Although the lack of progress from the school committee is a concern as well.

It was then asked if DESE had a good track record in helping Town's in situations like these. IT was brought up that DESE should be aware of the issues, declining enrollment is not isolated to our area.

On a motion by Rich Filoramo and second by Lynn Hathaway the Finance committee voted to have the selectboard contact DESE and let them know of the desire of Charlemont to withdraw from Hawlemont and join Mohawk Trail School District, (without the building), as well as making them aware that they no longer have confidence in the school committee, and the understanding that a town meeting vote is required. The committee and board will also have a meeting with the Hawlemont Parents and the community within the first two weeks of December. Amy Whales abstained from this vote. The motion was also passed on a motion by Marguerite Willis and second by Dan Girard for the selectboard.

On a motion by Amy Whales and second by Lynn Hathaway the meeting adjourned at 4:04 pm.

