

Town of Charlemont Newsletter February 2023

Housing Rehabilitation Program Updates

The Town of Charlemont with the town of Wendell as the lead town, is applying for funding through a Community Development Block Grant to run a housing rehabilitation program . Charlemont participates in this program through the Franklin County Regional Housing and Redevelopment Authority. This program offers loans that are 0% interest and deferred payment (meaning you make no monthly payments) and provide an affordable means for homeowners to bring their homes into compliance with building codes, perform needed repairs, and weatherize their homes. Depending on the severity of the building code violations on the property, applicants may be eligible for loans of up to \$50,000. For more information about the program visit the Franklin County Regional Housing and Redevelopment website: <https://fcrhra.org/housing-rehabilitation-program/>

News From the Tree Warden

Our Village Center corridor improvement project has been complete, and the Office of Tree Warden is seeking to establish a Tree Commission. Its purpose is to select, plant, protect, maintain, plan for, and increase the health, beauty, quantity, diversity, and vitality of Village Center trees. Responsibilities may include advising the Tree Warden and other City officials with respect to the adoption and amendment of plans, programs and regulations pertaining to the protection of Public Trees in the Town, including a Tree Plan and Tree Regulations; Monitor the health and protection of Public Trees, creating and updating inventories of such trees; Identify the importance of tree plantings to scenic landscapes and rural roadways, identify issues relative to the health and protection of Public Trees and recommending solutions to problems identified; Advise the Tree Warden and other City officials with respect to the planting and replacement of Public Trees and on tree-related issues; Seek grants and conducting fundraising to assist the Commission's mission, such funds to be deposited into a Tree Fund; Actively design, select, plant and maintain the tree ecology of Charlemont in coordination with the Tree Warden and a Town Tree Plan. Please contact Andy Mueller at andy.mueller@townofcharlemont.org if you would like to express your interest.

A Note on Taxes and the Tax Rate

Many factors go into the Town's tax rate and can affect the total amount of your property tax bill and often many influences are at work at the same time. Historically, the annual cost of running the Town increases each year, much in the same way the cost of maintaining a household increases each year.

Most of the money needed to fund the Town's government must be raised through property taxation. The remainder of the revenue comes from other sources, such as state aid, local receipts and the Town's certified free cash balance.

Growth plays an important role in the calculations of the Town's tax levy. Growth is essentially property value eligible for taxation this year that was not there last year. The reason it is so important is that the addition of this new revenue assists in defraying the impact of budget increases on the overall tax levy. New building projects such as additions or new homes, new personal property accounts, a previously exempt property being returned to the tax rolls and value increases to existing accounts all contribute to the growth figure. The cumulative effect of growth on the Town's tax levy can often reduce a tax bill by a couple of percents over what it would have been had this growth not been picked up.

Of course, there are factors that contribute to increases or decreases in individual tax bills; the following factors could contribute to an increase: improvement to a property such as an addition, finished basement or other alteration that would increase the property's market value, the addition of a new outbuilding, discovery of incorrect property information, such as an additional bathroom, or finished basement, which was not recorded in the previous assessment.

These factors could contribute to a decrease: the demolition of a building on the property, the deterioration of the property as a result of neglect, disaster, or accident, discovery of incorrect property information, such as an incorrect account of bathrooms being assessed.

Every year the Assessors adjust all the Town's taxable property according to a procedure outlined in the Massachusetts General Law. The new assessed value is intended to reflect the property's full and fair cash value on the first day of January prior to the December bill on which it appears (3rd quarter "actual" tax bill). It is important to note that your assessed value is not intended to be a reflection of the property's current value. The assessors then add up the total assessed value of all the Town's taxable property.

Then annually, the Assessors with the assistance of the Town's financial team (Town Accountant, Treasurer, Town Clerk, etc.) determine the amount that must be raised, less receipts and revenues, through property taxation. This figure, divided into the total assessed value of the Town's taxable property, determines the basic equalized tax rate per \$1,000 of assessed value.

The Fiscal Year 2023 tax rate saw a decrease of .10 in the tax rate from the prior year, as a result of several factors: a record amount of growth, due to a comprehensive appraisal of the Deerfield #3 hydroelectric dam, growth per the appraisal of the large utility properties (Massachusetts Electric, New England Power and NStar Electric) as well as a full year of operation of the large-scale solar electric generation plant. In addition to picking up growth on various accounts and new construction throughout Town and a large amount of free cash used to defray the Town's costs (\$520,000).

So, as you can see, many dynamics go into each year's tax rate and any single factor, but usually a combination thereof, will influence the amount of your tax bill. Remember, the Town's budget and the part of those funds that comes from property taxation determines the amount property owners are asked to contribute in the form of their tax bills. The property assessment and tax rate are the mathematics involved in determining that sum.

Charlemont Board of Assessors: Karen Rau; Chair, Jacqueline Cashin, Member, Anthony Ostroski, Member
Carlene Hayden, Assessor's Clerk

Hawlemont School Committee News

The Hawlemont School Committee is engaged now in the annual budget process and invites your participation.

The next regular meetings of the committee and its Budget Subcommittee are on Monday, February 13 (4pm Budget Subcommittee; 5pm Hawlemont School Committee). A public hearing on the budget is tentatively scheduled for Thursday, March 9, at 5pm (although this may change). Meetings take place at Hawlemont and virtually.

Hawlemont School Committee information and materials are available at:
<https://sites.google.com/a/mohawkschools.org/hawlemont-school-committee/home>. Another way to be informed and involved is the Local Education Council, which dives deep into Hawlemont programs. The LEC will meet next, both at Hawlemont and virtually, on Tuesday, Feb. 28, at 4:30pm. All are welcome both to School Committee and LEC meetings.

The [Hawlemont Regional School](#), under the leadership of Principal Amber Tulloch, of course is very busy in pre-K through 6th grade education, with emphasis on the core subjects of reading and math. Among many other initiatives, perhaps the most distinctive is the unique and wonderful HAY agricultural program.

The Hawlemont district is led by Superintendent Sheryl Stanton, who also leads the Mohawk Trail Regional School District. The districts in January extended for three years the "Two-District Agreement" on shared services. The Superintendent and our Central Office staff are engaged in several key initiatives, including development of a Hawlemont strategic plan, as well as working with the School Committee on the budget.

The Charlemont representatives to the Hawlemont School Committee are Cheryl Handsaker (chandsaker@mtrsd.org), Anne Kaplan (akaplan@mtrsd.org) and Ellie Van Iderstine (evaniderstine@mtrsd.org).

For information on our school, see [Smore Hawlemont News](#). --Ken Bertsch (kbertsch@mtrsd.org)



John Porcino

Storyteller and Musician

February 25, 2023*

3 - 4 PM

Hawlemont School Gym



Winter Fun

Stories and Songs to
Celebrate Winter

Storyteller/musician John Porcino will spin a patchwork quilt of his most beloved tales and songs to warm up the chilly winter's day.

Join us for joyful, warm, playful stories and songs and celebrate winter.

For All Ages
FREE

*Snow date: Sunday, February 26



Sponsored by the
Tyler Memorial Library and
the Charlemont-Hawley
Cultural Council.

