

**CHARLEMONT SELECTBOARD**  
**MEETING MINUTES**  
**Monday, November 4, 2024, 6:30 pm**  
**in person, Town Hall Meeting Room, 157 Main Street, Charlemont**

Members in attendance: Jared Bellows, Kim Blakeslee, Valentine Reid

Others in attendance: Sarah Reynolds, Amy Coates, Bob Handsaker, Madison Schofield, Star Atkeson

Valentine Reid called the meeting to order at 6:30 PM.

**Appointments:**

6:30 Pm - Amy Coates Re: Discuss issues around Charlemont being a Franklin Tech School District Nonmember Town

Charlemont and a few other towns are non-members of Franklin Tech School District. Amy attended a presentation in June, and was told by Nate May that it was the ideal time for a Town to become member, before the new school building is built. Tech is the closest preferred school and there is high demand. They accept 180 students (There 353 appl. this year.) If 180 students are accepted from member towns, there won't be spaces for non-member towns. People buy houses in tech member towns. Charlemont pays the 2<sup>nd</sup> highest taxes in the state, yet Charlemont kids would be at a disadvantage. A lot of parents don't understand that Charlemont is not a member town, and think it is automatic.

Sarah said the buy in cost to become a member was \$500,000. to pay back in to the building cost. Sarah has reached out to get the new numbers and hasn't heard back yet. It would have to be brought to Town Meeting. Currently 12 kids go from Charlemont the tuition and bussing amounts to 280,000. The SB will investigate and put it on the list of warrants for next Town Meeting.

**Administrator Report:**

1) Flooring Quote from Booska Flooring for Wood Flooring for Town Hall

The quote from Booska wood flooring came in for a prefinished ¾" hardwood, and a ½" plywood subfloor, labor and incidental costs, it is almost \$5,000 more than what is allotted to the project. The board discussed the project. Everyone would prefer wood. They may bring it back to TM and ask for more money. Val suggested donating the SB stipend to the floor, although it wouldn't get them to the right number. Possibly a donation campaign could be done, or a volunteer effort to do the work, or bringing back to Town Meeting to ask for more money for the project.

2) Playground Quote from Hawlemont for main part of playground

Bears Playground company quoted new equipment for the playground at \$68,387.40. It would replace playground equipment which is 25 years old. Val asked Amber Tulloch if the school can contribute some of the cost from their budget. The Playground is on town owned land so it could double as a public park on the weekend. They could use some signs "open to the public." Val wants to know how it works to share public parks with schools.

3) Massachusetts Municipal Association legislative breakfast report on legislative priorities discussed – New regulations on tax title, Large Vehicle Emissions update, Accessory Dwellings, Federal Funding Matching Bill, and Firefighter turnout Gear requirements.

There are new regs that the MMA went over in a presentation in Leyden that Sarah attended. Along with the new regs for Tax Title, and the requirements for a new EV fleet, which they have discussed, there is a new law granting ADU's by right in the Affordable Home act. This could require a bylaw change; Sarah will send it to the Planning Board. The law will be in effect before the Town Meeting, therefore if someone wants an ADU sometime between Feb and May there could be the added expense of using the attorney. Other updates included a Federal Funding Matching grant, some new PFAS regulations and new requirements for getting PFAS out of firefighting equipment. Sarah is looking into writing grants with other communities to get the equipment switched out.

4) Update on Fire Truck Earmark Funding Request from Congressman Neals Office.

There was an update from Neal's office. At the end of September \$599,000. was appropriated in FY25. However, it is not scheduled yet to be voted on the House floor. They will keep Charlemont updated.

**Liaison Reports:**

1) Letter to State Representatives regarding Broadband Concerns

Bob Handsaker went to meet John Gould from Paul Mark's office in Heath with their Selectboard and Broadband committees. Val had drafted a letter, but Bob H and Sheila Litchfield didn't give it to Gould because they weren't sure if some parts were accurate. They believe that Eversource and National Grid have a different policy in terms of changes made to poles. Eversource has that if the change to a pole was for the benefit of one entity, then that entity would reimburse everyone else on the pole to make the switch to the new pole. They do not see the same in the National Grid's policy. Val will contact DPU regarding the difference in policy.

Bob learned that 12" of the pole will be free, if there is a second connection they would have to pay. He is worried about new license fees. If it is an upgrade for their own benefit, he questions if and why all others attached should have to pay.

2) New Town Hall telephone System update

Val's friend is volunteering his time to help Val with the new phone system. Val returned some equipment that was old and bought some better equipment.

\*\* 3) Abandoned and Derelict Property work on bylaws, building list, resources.

Val and Kim both attended meeting. There are many BoH action items that need to be done to move the process forward. 1401 Rte 2, the house next to the academy is a contender for rehab, as well as the 394 Sherman property. They will talk to the Academy at Charlemont to see if they would be willing use the receivership program. Kim thinks a deadline for the BoH for next steps would be reasonable. As the BoH liaison, Kim can bring the issue to them. Kim is also concerned about the block of apartments in town; what is the recourse to get that back in good order and if there should be a deadline on that. Again, Sarah said it is a Board of Health action

that is required. Kim can put a list of BoH questions together for them, re: septic, condemnation, falling down barn etc. Kim said she will call them. It is suggested to have a joint SB and BOH meeting.

There is a list of abandoned and derelict houses that is used by emergency services. Some towns create a licensing fee or a graduated fee schedule to incentivize getting the units back into service. Possibly they can have no fees for the first few years, if they are going through probate or could get a waiver for financial hardship.

Some towns go through the BOH with a hearing to get going with the Abandoned and Derelict properties procedures bylaw. Val and Jared would prefer to do it with a bylaw amendment that they bring to Town Meeting.

Sarah would like to get the assistance sheet out; requests have been coming in about programs. She'd like to have it mailed along with the tax bills. They will vote on it at the next regular meeting.

#### **Agenda items:**

##### 1) New Budget Software Grant – Proposal Paperwork

Sarah got the grant for the new budget software, which pays you upfront. Rich Filoramo and Carlene Hayden know about the software. She sent a few examples of websites of towns that use the software (Malden and Easton) to see what you can do with it.

##### 2) Letter from Department of Fish and Game about purchase of fee interest in properties located in Charlemont and Rowe near Todd Mountain Road

- The Board looked at the two letters with two different parcels off Todd Mountain Rd, 330 acres and 98 acres to notify of Fish and Game's "purchase of fees interest."
- Fee interest is basically a private lease agreement, leasing to own. It is a way to sell land that doesn't trigger a chapter 61 sale. The owner (Banish Land) is listed as receiving the right of first refusal. The land was in Chapter; If 61 Timber, most likely everything was cut and then got put in recreation.
- They discussed that using that option to buy land removes the option for the Town to buy the land and shows harm. It will become like State Owned Land. This is another opportunity to express dissatisfaction for State Owned Land payment in lieu of taxes. Val will draft a letter.
- Bob Handsaker pointed out that taxes for land in Chapter 61 are less, however when logging, you are supposed to pay a stumpage fee, that it, when you have revenue from logging.
- Jared will draft a letter to Fish and Wildlife.

##### 3) Scheduling an All-Board Meeting for Open Space Plan Work, other agenda items?

- Monday November 18th at 6:00 at Hawlemont. The Selectboard can start their meeting at 5:30. On the agenda will be short term rental bylaw, the Open Space Plan and the Fairgrounds and recreation grant.
- November 25<sup>th</sup> will be Tax rate hearing 6:30 PM

- December 9<sup>th</sup> the pole hearings at Town Hall.

#### 4) Short Term Rentals research data and early draft bylaw

Val brought up the issue of being unable to reconcile DOR tax revenue from short term rentals with the BoH STR permits. When asked, The DOR said financial information is confidential. Currently there is no way of knowing who of the permitted or unpermitted STRs are paying the STR tax. Val would like to send a more official request for data explaining how it hinders Charlemont's ability to check on the health permits without data from the DOR. Sarah will call Natalie Blais about it.

Val pointed out the packet of short-term rental bylaw changes from South Hadley. People can bring it home and look it over. Shelburne and Buckland passed a STR bylaw which may be more relevant to Charlemont than South Hadley's.

#### 5) Transfer Station Western Massachusetts Recycling Facility Contract Extension

The pricing is being negotiated for the MRF contract. The extension is a solution. Jan Amin did a good job negotiating. **Valentine Reid made a motion to sign the Facility Contract Extension as written from the Solid Waste District. Kim Blakeslee seconded the motion. All in Favor.**

#### **Approve and sign:**

- 1) Payroll 2515 and vendor warrants 2515 **Valentine Reid made a motion to sign the payroll and vendor warrants. Jared Bellows seconded the motion. All in Favor.**
- 2) Minutes from October 15, 2024 **Valentine Reid made a motion to sign the Minutes from October 15th. Jared Bellows seconded the motion. All in Favor.**
- 3) New budget Software Proposal **Valentine Reid made a motion to accept the ClearGov proposal for new budget software based on the proposal as written. Kim Blakeslee seconded the motion. All in favor.**

**Valentine Reid motioned to adjourn the meeting at 8:33. Jared Bellows seconded the motion. All in favor.**

#### Documents viewed at the meeting:

- Minutes of October 15, 2024
- Agenda for November 04, 2024
- Email from Amy Coates to Town Administrator dated Oct 16, 2024, Re: Amy Coates (scheduling)
- Designated Community Contract Amendment #1 Page 5 (Recycling)
- Merged MRF contract and amendment between the Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection the Contractor and a Dual Stream Designated Community
- 2 Letters from Department of Fish and Game to the Charlemont SelectBoard dated Nov 8, 2023, re: purchase the fee interest in land in Charlemont with enclosures: Map Track No. 2024-1-2 and 2024-1-3
- Email from Reilly Lee to Town Administrator dated September 26, 2024, re: FY25 CPF Update (re: Charlemont Fire Truck procurement)

- *Looking for Assistance in Charlemont?* Programs that cover multiple types of assistance- 2-page sheet
- Slides from MMA Legislative update held in Leyden
- Quote to Hawlemont Regional Elementary from Bears Playgrounds for new playground equipment
- Quote from Booska's dated 10/16/2024 for Hardwood installation
- ClearGov service order dated Oct 28, 2024, ClearGov Setup Services and Subscription Services
- email from Valentine Reid, dated Oct 22, 2024, To Sheila Lichfield re: connecting with Paul Mark's office
- email from Alan Hope to Town Administrator, dated Oct 11, 2024, re: Fwd: Eliminating Problem Properties at no cost to you and enjoy many benefits
- Town of Charlemont Vacant and Foreclosing properties Bylaw Draft