

CHARLEMONT SELECTBOARD
MEETING MINUTES
Monday, September 9, 2024, 6:00 pm
Via Conference call and in person, Town Hall Meeting Room

Members in attendance: Kim Blakeslee, Valentine Reid

Members on phone: Jared Bellows

Others in attendance: Pat Shea, Jean Charles, Madison Schofield, Sarah Reynolds, Cheryl Handsaker, Bob Handsaker, Star Atkeson

Others on phone: Riordan Hoffman, Danielle Aretz

Valentine Reid called the meeting to order at 6:00 PM.

Appointments:

6:00 PM National Grid Re: Electrical Upgrade Project

Pat Shea and Jean Charles were in person, Riordan Hoffman and Danielle Aretz were on the phone.

- Jean Charles is the National Grid stakeholder engagement person and went over a handout on the project. Pat Shea is the project manager. Because of a poor performing regional feeder, National grid will do work on 7 miles in Charlemont. 155 poles will be replaced with 11' taller poles; 54 poles will be added. The electric on the poles will be updated from 1 phase to 3 phase. A new Line will be installed along Burrington Rd. to Heath. A mainline right of way will be relocated to South River Rd. There will be tree trimming and some tree removal. The project start is September/October2024 and expected finish date is May 2025.
- Questions can be directed to Jean.Charles@nationalgrid.com, 508-613-5627, or online at nationalgridus.com/construction-projects/Community-Projects/Heath-to-Charlemont-Improvement-project/
- Charlemont MLP manager Bob Handsaker asked whether as part of the pole leasing process they need to include surveys, as with previous leases, since the poles are brand new. Pat will reach out to third party team to get the answer. Bob and Val asked for engineered drawings of where the poles will be located so that they can do cost planning with Whip City Fiber. Normally, Pat Shea said, National Grid does not provide those. The SelectBoard wants to know the cost to the town that the upgrade will have, with licensing the poles and relocating all the fiber to new poles. Val said this information is important to understand the financial impact on the town.
- Kim mentioned that the Avery Brook Road residents have concerns about the pole installation. Jean Charles said he had been in touch and was waiting to hear back.
- Val asked whether they had spoken to tree warden yet. They will get a meeting together with the warden before the hearing.
- Phase 2 of this work will be on the Bear Swamp substation in Rowe, no other work is planned for Charlemont.
- There is not a date for the pole hearings yet.

** 6:30 PM- Broadband Re: Recommendation on digital equity plan approval

Bob and Cheryl were updated on the latest version of FRCOG's digital equity Plan and have two changes to make. Excerpted from an email:

“The only thing we noticed tonight was a particular sentence on page 10 that has escaped our notice before:

Two issues that are particularly salient in small rural communities are the lack of internet service providers (ISPs), preventing consumers from having any choice in their ISP, and severely limited staff capacity within town hall to implement municipal programs or apply for funding.

We were a little worried that this is perhaps misleading and doesn't represent the situation in our town. We suggested perhaps the following alternative wording:

Two issues are particularly salient in small rural communities: For communities dependent on commercial ISPs, there is lack of price competition to benefit consumers; for town-owned broadband networks, available funding programs can be complex and difficult to access.”

Valentine Reid motioned to accept the MLP recommendation to accept the digital equity plan with the changes. Jared Bellows seconded the motion. All in favor.

Kim and Bob discussed what was most important in terms of digital equity. Kim said getting equipment into the hands of low income and marginalized people and providing them with an in-person support person would be key. (As opposed to a class in Northampton for example.) Sarah said that covering or subsidizing the hook-up cost of internet would also be helpful, as well as a subsidy for the monthly cost. Bob would like to do a need-based program and would like to partner with an organization to do the needs assessment.

Bob and Kim planned to talk further on the issue.

Administrator reports:

1) Bissell Bridge quotes from Fire Alarm Company and Electrician

The quote came in from the Fire alarm company at \$6,898.00. Sarah is still waiting for the electrician's quote.

2) Town Hall Flooring Project Quotes

The Booska quote for supply and installation of luxury vinyl came to \$9,002. He has a showroom in Turner's Falls that board members can visit.

Hilltown Flooring left samples of wood flooring. Sarah is waiting for the quote.

3) McCloud Property on Avery Brook Road research update

There is a contract with Hawley, Charlemont and Heath which prohibits future residential use or any use requiring excavation or use of drinking water. The DEP ordered water testing in perpetuity. Val suggested to sell the land as chapter land. Jared said they need to find out from the DEP what they can use it for or sell it for. The responsibility to test water could be put in the purchase and sale agreement. Sold as is, chapter land with restrictions, would be better, at reduced cost on the tax roll, then nothing.

Val asked Sarah to ask the DEP if they would allow any drilling, it's possible that it wouldn't be appropriate for solar if they can't drill.

Sarah will reach out to Mass DEP to find out what DEP will or won't allow.

Sarah said that they can bring the options to Town Meeting for them to decide.

4) Recreation Economy Grant opportunity

Sarah let the Board know that the new Recreation Director and the Rural Director recommended that Sarah apply for the grant to create a Recreation Economy planning document. There may be funding following the creation of the plan. It deals with residents and businesses being able to access and benefit from a recreational economy, as well as a focus on Main Street and downtown revitalization. Sarah asked that they read the synopsis and bring back to next meeting.

Liaison reports and actions:

1) Fire District Meeting Update

There was a scheduling conflict, so the meeting has not happened yet. Hawley is interested. Monroe is not.

2) Transfer station Bottle and Can Shed, reach out to Shelburne Selectboard

Val wrote a letter to the Shelburne SelectBoard to see if they would like to expand the bottle shed to benefit all MTRSD and Hawlemont school programs. The Shelburne administrator put it on their Select board Agenda.

Agenda items:

1) Discuss and Nominate Animal Inspector.

The item is not ready for discussion, will bring back next meeting.

2) Town Telephone System

Sarah and Val are actively working on getting this taken care of but no response yet from consultants.

3) Town Resident financial and housing assistance programs flyer

Val and Sarah made a one-page flyer as clearinghouse for Charlemont specific social services. They will also create a stub on the website with additional links to more regional assistance. The Board brainstormed a bit about the different websites and services they can list.

4) Ambulance Agreement with Berkshire East

The agreement is back from the attorney, who had points and questions, including regarding liability. Jared (ambulance liaison) will get the update and work on it with Dana the ambulance director.

5) Request for Proposals for Fairgrounds Bathrooms, Parking and Exhibit Hall upgrades.

Sarah started 3 draft RFPs for the work at the fairgrounds. Mike Hayden will work with her. She invited the Board members to mark up the RFPs with their thoughts and edits. Parking Lot, handicap bathroom and exhibit hall upgrades are on the docket. If the exhibit hall is to be used as a command center, and year-round, it will need a bathroom. If they do winter events at the fairgrounds, there should be a stand-alone heated bathroom. Once the MVP plan is updated, (done in 2018 with consultant and will not be difficult to update) there are grants which could pay for a generator for the exhibit hall.

6) Sidewalks

Val walked the sidewalks and took pictures. The cracks are not getting worse. The crosswalks however are degrading and there are potholes near the post office. They will notify MassDOT that the crosswalks have deteriorated quickly.

At last Town Meeting, Town authorized the Town to clear the vegetation and snow from the sidewalk. Val proposed to notify the homeowner and give two weeks for them to clear vegetation from the sidewalk. After that time Highway will come and clear the right of way. The HWY super said it was okay. Val will write it up.

7) Northern Tier Rail comment period open, discuss sending letter of support.

Natalie Blais emailed encouraging municipalities to sign on to a group letter supporting the rail. Val will write a letter of support for the board to sign and will also personally write one. Sarah will put an announcement in the newsletter by October 1st. The letters and emails should be in by October 12th. Everyone is encouraged to write a letter or email to support the Northern Tier passenger Rail which would provide transportation from North Adams to Boston. The Blais email listed key administration officials to email as well.

8) Deerfield River Wild and Scenic Study Committee, Appoint a representative.

The organization got the grant. They are looking for a representative from Charlemont that is interested and knowledgeable about the river to attend 9 monthly meetings in person or virtually. Sarah will send an email to the Boards

Approve/sign/approve and sign:

1) Payroll and vendor warrants

Valentine Reid motioned to approve and sign payroll 2506, 2508 and vendor 2506, 2507,2508 warrants. Kim Blakeslee seconded the motion. All in favor. Jared Bellows —Aye

2) Minutes from August 19, and August 21,2024.

Valentine Reid motioned to approve the Minutes from August 19th and 21st. Kim Blakeslee seconded the motion. All in favor. Jared Bellows —Aye

3) Attorney Invoices for July 2024.

Valentine Reid motioned to approve the Attorney invoices for July 2024. Kim Blakeslee seconded the motion. All in favor. Jared Bellows —Aye

4) Gift of \$200 for residents in need- and recommendation for its use.

Valentine Reid motioned to accept the money and give it to Good Neighbors. Kim Blakeslee seconded the motion. All in favor. Jared Bellows —Aye

5) Request for vacation days from Secretary to the Boards.

Valentine Reid motioned to approve the vacation request. Kim Blakeslee seconded the motion. All in favor. Jared Bellows —Aye

*** 6) Alcohol license for Al Avery GS LLC.

Valentine Reid motioned to approve the alcohol license. Kim Blakeslee seconded the motion. All in favor. Jared Bellows —Aye

Executive Session: reason #3. To discuss strategy with respect to collective bargaining or litigation if an open meeting may have a detrimental effect on the bargaining or litigating position of the public body and the chair so declares- discuss Charlemont Inn

** Not foreseen in the last 48 hours #4 deployment of security personnel.

Valentine Reid motioned to enter executive session at 7:46 and to not return to open meeting. Kim Blakeslee seconded the motion. All in favor. Jared Bellows —Aye

Documents viewed at the meetings:

- Minutes of August 19, 2024 and August 21, 2024
- Agenda for September 9, 2024
- Minutes of SelectBoard meeting with Parks and recreation Commission August 21, 2024
- Quote from Booska flooring
- Quote dated 8/18/2024 RFP for Parking Lot and Driveway improvements from Fire Equipment incorporated for Bissell Bridge wiring job
- RFP for parking Lot and Driveway Improvements at the Charlemont Fairgrounds
- RFP for Weatherization, Window installation, electrical upgrades and Bathroom renovation for the exhibit Hall at the Charlemont Fairgrounds.
- RFP for Proposal for Stand Alone Handicap Accessible Bathrooms at the Charlemont Fairgrounds
- Email dated August 29, 2024, from Natalie Blais List re: Northern Tier Rail
- Email dated August 30, 2024, from Christopher Curtis re: Deerfield River Wild and Scenic River Study and Committee member
- Email from Star Atkeson to Sarah Reynolds re: request for 4 days off