

CHARLEMONT SELECTBOARD

MEETING MINUTES

Monday, January 26th, 2026, 6:00 pm

in person and via conference call, Town Hall, 157 Main Street, Charlemont MA

Members in attendance: Kim Blakeslee, Jared Bellows

Members on phone: Wilder Sparks

Others in attendance: Sarah Reynolds, Star Atkeson, Nic Miller, Jon Mirin

On phone: Ellen Landau, Kent Chamberlin, and others.

Jared Bellows called the January 26th Selectboard meeting to order at 6 o'clock

Appointments: 6:00 pm- Jonathan Mirin

Re: Telecom Bylaw follow up from Annual Town Meeting

- Jonathan Mirin reviewed his attempt to submit a proposed telecommunications bylaw revision at the last Annual Town Meeting. He explained that the proper procedural steps were not followed, and therefore the citizen's petition could not be forwarded to the Attorney General. A public hearing is required.
- Mr. Mirin attended with residents in support of his proposal, including Nic Miller, a downtown Charlemont resident. Mr. Miller expressed concern about the potential placement of a small-cell antenna directly in front of his son's street-facing bedroom window.
- Mr. Mirin stated that cellular service companies are increasingly attempting to compete with municipal broadband by offering lower-cost internet service, which he believes could undermine the Town's broadband investment. He also raised concerns about potential impacts on property values if antennas are located immediately adjacent to residences. Under current zoning, there is no setback requirement. His proposal would establish a 350-foot setback from residential structures, providing the Town with an additional regulatory tool. Cellular providers could still seek variances through the Zoning Board of Appeals.
- Town Administrator Sarah Reynolds explained that this appointment was a procedural step toward placing the bylaw on a future Town Meeting warrant. The proposal must first be submitted to the Selectboard, which then refers it to the Planning Board. The Planning Board would hold the required public hearing(s) and issue a recommendation.

Jared Bellows moved to pass the citizen's petition to the Planning Board. Kim Blakeslee seconded the motion. Kim Blakeslee – Aye; Jared Bellows – Aye; Wilder Sparks – Abstained (participating by phone and unable to hear portions of the discussion).

Administrators Report:

- 1) District Local Technical Assistance Request Forms from Franklin Regional Council of Governments
Sarah reviewed the DLTA request form. Two of the available options are already underway in Charlemont: The West County Regionalization Initiative and the Roadway Speed Study. She recommended prioritizing those efforts and suggested asking the Board of Health to select a third option, such as training or action on the abandoned and distressed properties. Kim Blakeslee expressed interest in the Pollinator Habitat Plan.

2) Recreation Tax hearing Tuesday January 27th, ways to submit testimony in support and letter from Selectboard and Finance Committee

Sarah reported that the legislative hearing on the proposed recreation tax would be held the following day. She has registered to testify and encouraged written testimony as well. Written submissions are accepted for up to 53 days, and separate letters are encouraged. The tax would function similarly to the meals and rooms tax, at a rate of 3%, and would apply only to recreation-based businesses.

Wilder Sparks stated he plans to sign the unified letter and submit an individual letter. The Finance Committee will also submit a collective letter in addition to individual letters from members.

Jared Bellows moved that the Board would all sign the Recreation Tax letter. Kim Blakeslee seconded the motion. All in favor; Wilder Sparks—Aye

3) Health Insurance meeting summary from meeting on January 21st

Sarah reported that a mid-year health insurance increase of 20% had already been added to the budget, and an additional 15% increase is anticipated, for a total increase of 35%. The Town's insurance trust has hired consultants and is negotiating with pharmacy benefit managers and insurers. Discussions will continue throughout budget season.

4) Fire Truck Earmark from Congressman Neals Office through the US Department of Agriculture

The fire truck earmark from Congressman Neal's office has passed through the U.S. Department of Agriculture and is included in the federal budget. The funding would cover **75%** of the cost, with the Town responsible for **25%**. Sarah has contacted the USDA representative to discuss next steps.

Liaison Reports:

1) Shared Fire Chief with Rowe – Vendor for hiring process discussion

Sarah reported on a meeting with the Town of Rowe regarding the shared Fire Chief position. A consultancy firm is proposed to assist with recruitment, including applicant vetting, assessments, and ranking. Funding may come from existing fire budget or a reserve fund transfer.

Current Fire Chief Dennis will extend his services for approximately three months to assist with administrative transition. He will not engage in active firefighting duties.

Jared Bellows moved to contract with the company and let them do their thing. Kim Blakeslee seconded the motion. All in favor; Wilder Sparks - Aye

Agenda items:

(Discussion/Vote):

1) Cannabis Community Host Agreements and policies

Sarah presented a draft host community agreement template. Existing zoning is in good shape but will need a few additions which the Planning Board will take care of.

Jared Bellows moved to adopt the host community plan. Kim Blakeslee seconded the motion. All in favor; Wilder Sparks – Aye

- 2) Letter about replacement of Representative Blais (due to no special election decision) Members discussed concerns regarding the lack of district representation until the November election, and supported signing and sending the letter that Wilder Sparks wrote.

Jared Bellows moved to sign the letter and send it in, Kim Blakeslee seconded the motion. All in favor; Wilder Sparks - Aye

- 3) Capital Improvement Committee – Appoint Gordon Hathaway to open seat

Jared Bellows moved to appoint Gordon Hathaway to the capital improvement committee. Kim Blakeslee seconded the motion. All in favor; Wilder Sparks - Aye

- 4) Meeting February 5th of the School District about the 2D8T plan of action discussing building re-use, regional agreement changes, and the building process. Committee would like a Selectboard and Finance member present

Wilder Sparks plans on being there, so volunteered to be the representative.

Approve and Sign:

- 1) Minutes of January 5, 2026

Kim Blakeslee moved to approve the January 5, 2026, minutes with the revisions and the January 12, 2026, minutes. Wilder Sparks seconded the motion. Kim - Aye, Wilder Sparks - Aye. Jared Bellows abstained.

- 2) Payroll and Vendor Warrants

Jared Bellows moved to approve and sign the payroll and vendor warrants. Kim Blakeslee seconded the motion. All in favor; Wilder Sparks – Aye.

Jared Bellows moved to adjourn the Charlemont Selectboard meeting at 6:44 p.m. Kim Blakeslee seconded the motion. All in favor; Wilder Sparks - Aye.

Documents reviewed in meeting

- Agenda of January 26, 2026
- Minutes of January 12, 2026
- Proposed Telecommunications Bylaw Revisions (Jonathan Mirin)
- Correspondence from Jonathan Mirin to Selectboard (January 25, 2026)
- Letters regarding House vacancy (three versions)
- Recreation Tax support letters (four versions)
- Cannabis Host Community Equity Plan
- Municipal Resources, Inc. Professional Services Agreement – Shared Fire Chief Recruitment