CHARLEMONT SELECTBOARD
MEETING MINUTES
Monday, November 2nd, 2026, 6:00 pm
in person and via conference call, Town Hall, 157 Main Street, Charlemont MA

Members in attendance: Wilder Sparks, Kim Blakeslee, Jared Bellows
Others in attendance: Sarah Reynolds, Star Atkeson, Noah Duarte, Johnny Deppin, Fred Bezio, Beth Bezio

Jared Bellows called the November 2nd Charlemont select board meeting to order at 6:00 pm

Appointments:
6pm- Planning Board RE: appoint Noah Duarte to one of the vacant seats
Noah told the board a little about himself and explained his interest in joining the planning board. Aside from wanting to participate, serve, learn and engage with how things work in town, he would like to help the board with data center and battery energy storage systems zoning bylaws. Thorne Palmer had suggested he join the Planning Board. He has perused the bylaws and sat in on a few meetings and is happy to join.

Jared Bellows made a motion to appoint Noah Duarte to the Planning Board. Wilder Sparks seconded the motion. All in favor.

Noah will visit Thorne to get sworn in.

Administrators Report:
1) Tennis Court Construction update, Vote on equipment and shed
Sarah asked the board if they would authorize $5,000. of the recreation grant money to go towards a shed to store equipment and fine tuning the equipment needs, not to exceed $5,000.

There will be a court rules sign, with the grant program logo. The board talked about how to lock away the equipment in a shed nightly with a combination lock. Sarah has been in touch with the pickleball league. Relevant users could know the combination. Sarah volunteered to lock the shed at the end of the day. The board suggested that at some point the Parks and Rec Committee may be up to the task. This has worked in Shelburne Falls; they hope that it can work in Charlemont.

Wilder Sparks made a motion to authorize that ($5,000. of the recreation grant money to go towards a shed to store equipment and fine tuning the equipment needs, not to exceed $5,000.)
Jared Bellows seconded the motion. All in favor.

2) Update on shared services meetings for Fire, Ambulance and Police
Buckland declined to pursue the shared ambulance services proposal. There was no meeting last week, and FRCOG is considering how to proceed. Another possibility being discussed for Charlemont is incorporating ambulance services into the new fire district with Rowe. Jared Bellows has met with the Fire Chief who is developing options for a first responder truck in Rowe. He has some good ideas and is working through potential approaches.

FRCOG is also exploring shared police services, including hiring a police administrative person to serve multiple departments and establishing a pool of part-time officers who could be assigned to towns as needed. The goal would be to provide additional coverage and help address staffing shortages. Current coverage by Fred Bezio and Jim Galeas, at 40 hours each, still leaves gaps, particularly on nights, weekends, and during vacations. A part-time officer position has been included in the budget. Sarah suggested reviewing call volume and staffing

needs to determine where additional coverage would be most useful. Wilder Sparks expressed interest in hearing what the police chief thinks about the admin help and the part time officers.

3) Report on meeting on the river warning system at Berkshire East

A meeting was held at Berkshire East to discuss the river warning system. FRCOG had circulated discussion points for consideration. There was general agreement that no one wanted sirens installed at Zoar Gap or farther upstream, nor did anyone want trees cut down.

There was interest in providing Wi-Fi access at Zoar Gap and at the previously considered siren locations, where cell service is inadequate for emergency calls. The discussion appears to have resolved the concerns, and a letter from the SB is not necessary.

Brookfield Renewable will pay for the Wi-Fi hotspot.

4) Report from the Franklin Regional Council of Governments Council meeting

Sarah attended the FRCOG council meeting in which they presented the rural policy plan. It's in the SB packet, a long document as well as on FRCOG's website, it gives information regarding legislative priorities including new attention to rural schools.

5) Notice from Verizon about remaining Town Phones (transfer station, fairgrounds)

A notice was received from Verizon regarding the discontinuation of copper telephone wiring. The fairgrounds currently would not be able to support the VoiceOver option.

Sarah suggested that internet service at the fairgrounds, including phone and facility-related infrastructure needs, could be funded with the Recreation Grant. Kim noted that cell coverage at the fairgrounds is good. Event organizers could potentially use Square or tap-to-pay services; events currently operate on a cash-only basis.

Internet infrastructure had previously been considered but was not pursued, as Parks and Rec did not want to take on the expense of running a connection. The possibility of installing a connection will be revisited with Whip City Fiber. Wilder suggested asking event organizers whether internet access is currently needed.

Liaison Reports:

1) Park and Recreation Meeting Report

Kim is Select Board liaison to the Parks and Recreation Committee and attended the October 22 meeting. She reported on agenda item "New Business " 1) that The Select Board was satisfied with the payments made by the Charlemont Lions Club following the Stars and Stripes Auto Event and considers the matter resolved. 2) The Select Board supports Parks and Recreation revising its winter storage and fairgrounds event applications, including rental fees and the fee schedule, to prevent similar conflicts in the future.

Kim explained that there have been discrepancies in how rental fees and discounts are applied. town residents and organizations have received discounted rental rates, but there is no written policy on these discounts. Kim said that all fees and discounts must be clearly documented in the application and fee schedule and applied consistently. The committee is reviewing the fee structure, including vendor fees and charges for utilities.

Kim also recommended strengthening event contracts to clearly identify requirements for porta-potties, police presence, alcohol service, and other event-related conditions. Members discussed the importance of establishing these requirements in advance rather than leaving them open to interpretation on the day of an event.

Members agreed that contracts should clearly spell out expectations, required provisions, and the consequences of noncompliance. Wilder Sparks emphasized that requirements should be established and verified before an event to avoid last-minute surprises. Kim noted that the town could face liability if an incident occurred and the agreed-upon requirements had not been met.

Kim recommended consulting Town Counsel regarding appropriate contract language, including the committee's authority to shut down an event if the terms of the contract are not met. The revised applications, fee schedule, and contracts will be made available on the town website.

Agenda items (Discussion/Vote):

1) Police Chief: Status of Hiring and Contract discussion – candidate has some amendments.

Jared Bellows abstained from the discussion and vote. Fred Bezio, who accepted the Police Chief position, had received the contract, made amendments, and returned it to the Select Board.

Fred's amendments included adjusting the contract term so that it ends on June 30, aligning it with the town's fiscal year. This would result in an initial term of three years and eight months. Kim noted that the Board would also review the employee handbook, including proposed changes to bereavement leave.

The contract includes four weeks of vacation, sick leave, holiday pay, and provisions for professional and personal activities outside the Police Chief position, including detail work and other interests. Fred discussed the importance of critical incident debriefing and access to mental health support following traumatic events. He also noted that the Police Chief typically works approximately three holidays per year. The Board discussed language regarding college tuition and police-related education, with Sarah emphasizing that any such funding would be subject to town appropriations at Town Meeting.

Fred also discussed provisions in the unlikely event of discipline, suspension, and discharge —the Police Chief's right to appeal disciplinary actions. The Board agreed that the contract language, including the proposed amendments, should be reviewed by Town Counsel.

Kim Blakeslee made a motion to accept the Police Chief contract as amended, contingent upon approval of the changes by the town attorney. Wilder Sparks seconded the motion. All voted in favor, with Jared Bellows abstaining.

Jared will continue his river patrol, parking enforcement, and detail work. Kim Blakeslee will serve as the Select Board liaison to the Police Department and act as its point of contact.

2) Vote to include Smith Vocational as a preferred Technical School with Franklin County Technical, due to lottery system for admissions.

Wilder noted the town had previously decided against doing so when Val Reid was on the Board. The tuition is $600 more than Franklin County Tech.

Sarah explained that the vocational school admissions process has changed. Previously, around half of the students were accepted, but the new system gives priority to students from member towns, with remaining spaces filled through a waitlist. If students could apply to both Smith and Franklin County Technical School, it would improve their chances of acceptance. Wilder still has some resistance but is prepared to accept it.

Wilder Sparks moved to approve Smith Vocational and Agricultural High School as a preferred technical school. Jared Bellows seconded the motion. All in favor.

3) Question from Berkshire East about additional streetlight at end of Thunder Mountain Road

The first section of Thunder Mountain Road is a Town road. There are currently no streetlights along this section. Berkshire East contacted National Grid about installing a streetlight and was advised that the Town would need to arrange the installation. Berkshire East agreed to pay for the installation of a high-efficiency streetlight, matching the existing frequency planned for the town.

Jared Bellows moved to approve the streetlight installation, contingent upon Berkshire East paying the associated costs. Wilder Sparks seconded the motion. All voted in favor.

4) One Day Liquor License Application Academy at Charlemont 1359 Route 2 for a November 7 event.
On November 7 the Academy is doing the Cornucopia Auction event, Brandon and Amy Long from Amongst the Oaks are doing beer and wine.
Jared Bellows has made motion to approve the one-day liquor license. Wilder Sparks seconded the motion. All in favor.

** 5) Sell Surplus Highway Truck to the Town of Hawley
The Board discussed the sale of the 1999 Highway vehicle, which is worth less than $10,000. Hawley had approached Scott Sulivan about the truck. Jared Bellows, SB liaison, was involved in the discussion. The Board considered $5,000 to be a fair value for the vehicle.

Wilder Sparks moved to approve the sale for $5,000. Jared Bellows seconded the motion. All in favor.

Approve and Sign:
1) Minutes of October 19, 2026
Wilder Sparks made a motion to approve the minutes of October 19, 2026, Kim Blakeslee seconded the motion. Kima and Wilder in favor. Jared Bellows abstained, he was not at the meeting.

2) Payroll and Vendor Warrants
Jared Bellows made a motion to approve and sign the payroll and vendor warrants. Kim Blakeslee seconded the motion; all in favor.

3) Request for November 5 day off from Town Clerk
Thorne is requesting the day off after the election. **Wilder Sparks made to motion to approve Thorne's request for a day off after the election. Jared Bell seconded the motion; all in flavor.**

4) **KPLaw invoice
Wilder Sparks made a motion to approve and sign the attorney invoice, Jared Bellows seconded the motion; all in favor.

Jared Bellows made a motion to adjourn the select board meeting at 7:19 PM Wilder Sparks seconded the motion; All in favor.

Documents viewed in meeting:

- SB Agenda November 2, 2026
- SB Minutes from October 19, 2026
- Employment contract "by and between Town of Charlemont and Fred Bezio Police Chief" 10 pages.
- Email to Sarah Reynolds from Katrina O'Brien re: install 200 watt LED street light, dated 10/29/2026
- 2 screenshots from Amazon of tennis court, basketball and pickleball equipment to purchase, totaling 997.73
- Bear Swamp Power Company's Warning System. How did we get here? Discussion points for meeting on Oct 14, 2026, Including copy of letter from Linda Dunlavy, FRCOG to Jason Seyfried, Brookfield Renewable dated Oct 23, 2026, 4 pages
- Executive summary 2026 Rural Policy Plan
- Letter from Verizon to Transfer Station about copper wire discontinuation dated September 8, 2026
- Email from Thorne Palmer, Town Clerk to Sarah Reynolds with vacation day request dated October 27, 2026