

CHARLEMONT SELECTBOARD

MEETING MINUTES

Monday, March 2thnd, 2026, 6:00 pm

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

Members in attendance: Kim Blakeslee, Jared Bellows, Wilder Sparks

Others in attendance: Sarah Reynolds, Star Atkeson, Cheryl Handsaker, Amy Wales, Madison Schofield, Ken Roche

Others on Phone: Robert Ide

Jared Bellows called the meeting to order at 6:00pm.

Appointments:

**6:00 pm – Ken Roche** RE: school assessment error

Ken Roche went over his interest and his credentials. He was a superintendent in 2 school districts; he was on the task force in Heath for the tuition agreement with Hawlemont. He is looking at the Chapter 70 funding in general, and the Mohawk Trail and Hawlemont 5-year enrollment numbers brought to light by the study done by Berk 12.

In Oct of 2021, incorrect numbers of students (48 as opposed to 36) were entered into the assessment formula. The correction was made in 2026, but there should be corrections going all the way back from 2022-2025.

Ken said that while Charlemont's assessment number went down, other towns' numbers went up. His aim is not to pit towns against each other, but rather to have them ally together, and when the numbers are known, to ask the legislature to make towns whole for the mis assessments.

Ken is offering to lead some sessions for interested members of town and school leadership about chapter 70 funding and state minimum contributions, he will walk them through the Mohawk Trail and Hawlemont Regional School District's way of assessing. Working with the Towns and school districts will allow him access to the data, specifically school choice separated by grade level; 5-year enrollment worksheets and the final budgets from 2021 to 2026. (10 years would be ideal) he'd like participants to watch a webinar from the State of Massachusetts about Chapter 70 funding, and to have working knowledge of excel.

The Board is appreciative of his interest and offer to help and made plans to follow up with the sessions.

**6:15 pm- Dana Johnson** Re: Ambulance Discussion

Dana came in to ask for a modest raise for the EMTs and first responders. He'd like to reinstate the on-call system. Jared asked Dana to write up a proposal with an estimation of the additional cost. The Board will review the proposal and discuss with the Finance Committee.

Dana updated the board on the study that FRCOG is doing towards a three-town shared ambulance service. They should have the results of the initial study soon.

**6:30 pm- Robert Ide** Re: Legate Hill Pole Project Discussion will Town Remove hearing stipulation placed at February 24th, 2025, hearing?

The Board went over Robert's request on behalf of National Grid to remove the stipulations placed on the motion back in February 2025, that National Grid would have to pay for the re attachment of the Town's broadband and Broadband must be allowed to re attach. Town Counsel confirmed that the town legally cannot place those stipulations on the motion.

**Jared Bellows made a motion to rescind the two stipulations as advised by our Town Counsel. Kim Blakeslee seconded the motion. All in favor. The motion passed unanimously.**

#### **Administrator's Report:**

1) Website accessibility requirements update for America with Disabilities Act Standards Sarah attended a webinar about the accessibility requirements. Montague webworks also attended, and sent an email to the Town, they will audit the websites and let them know what they can't do by the end of the year. FRCOG is also aware. Sarah may be able to get a grant to get money to do the upgrade.

2) Town Telephone System update Sarah let the board know about the new phone system she is researching. Verizon has discontinued its service which allows the Town's multiple lines to work. The new system is more expensive, but she chose the cheapest and most local provider— Ulatel; it will provide better features than what they currently have. It will be a \$1500. per year increase. Sarah will check with Broadband and see if the phone company has a business plan.

3) Town bylaw recommendations from Attorney General review of bylaw document Thorne's General bylaw organization project brought to the Attorney General's offices attention to some Town bylaws that should be removed. There was a curfew bylaw that should be removed and a now redundant, and outdated sex offender bylaw. They Board can bring it home to read it.

#### **Liaison Reports:**

1) Committee meeting for the school sustainability study review committee. Wilder reported on the school sustainability committee meeting he had attended. They spoke about the:

- Building and MSBA ramifications, potential loss of access to grants to replace the roof etc., or
- use of building for other educational purpose.
- Transportation and bus route impacts and costs
- Enrollment data vs. foundational enrollment
- Financial and social impacts
- Floodplain considerations
- The regional agreement, unlikely to get passed if all 8 towns must be unanimous, if fails, what then?
- Identified questions

- A goal was made to verify data
- Cheryl H. noted that it was a terrific group encompassing different perspectives.
- Minutes will be available from the meeting.

**Agenda items (Discussion/Vote):**

1) Modification of February 24, 2025, National Grid pole location approval for Legate Hill Road, Potters Road, Phipps Road, Laurel Lane and Mountain View Drive – conditions of approval.

2) Selectboard Report for Annual Town Report

**Kim Blakeslee will put the report together.** Sarah suggested Bill Harker and Tommy Shields have the dedication this year. Bill especially has consistently served on boards and committees and is due to be the longest serving constable.

3) Shared Fire Chief Job Description Draft for review

The Rowe administrator drafted it. Sarah, Jared and Dennis have gone over it.

**Jared Bellows made a motion to approve the job description. Wilder Sparks seconded the motion. All in favor.**

**Approve and Sign:**

1) Minutes of February 9, 2026

**Jared Bellows made a motion to accept the Minutes as written. Wilder Sparks seconded the motion. All in favor.**

2) Payroll and Vendor Warrants

**Jared Bellows made a motion to approve and sign the payroll and vendor warrants. Wilder Sparks seconded the motion. All in favor.**

**Jared Bellows made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 7:15 PM Wilder Sparks seconded the motion. All in favor.**

Documents reviewed in meeting

- Agenda of March 2, 2026
- Minutes of February 9, 2026
- Letter to Thorne Palmer from the office of the Attorney General re: Charlemont Special Town meeting of July 22, 2025 — case #12001 Warrant Article #1 (General) dated December 22, 2025
- Page with Town Council advice on February 24, 2025, Legate Hill Pole Stipulations
- Memorandum from the Department of Public Utilities department of telecommunications and cable dated January 30, 2026, re: Eleventh Extension of the memorandum of Agreement Between the department of Public Utilities and the Department of Telecommunications and Cable.