

# **Town of Charlemont Volunteer Handbook**

*A resources for members of the  
Town's Boards, Committees, Commissions, and Ad Hoc Workgroups*

**September 13, 2015**

# Introduction

- Welcome/ Thank You for Participating in Town Government
- This handbook covers the Types of Boards and Committees, and Advisory Groups in Charlemont

# Membership

## **Joining a board, committee, or ad hoc workgroup**

Most volunteers in Charlemont's Town government roles are elected. Others, depending on the position, may be appointed by the Select Board or the Moderator. (Please see Appendix A for a list of volunteer positions in Town government.) The Select Board also can appoint people to fill vacancies that arise between elections. As the need arises, the Select Board also can appoint members to *ad hoc* work groups.

To be elected to a board or committee, you must follow these steps:

- 1) Register to vote in Charlemont
- 2) Take out nomination papers for the office to which you would like to be elected. These papers are available from Town Clerk Kathy Reynolds in Town Hall during regular office hours.
- 3) Collect at least 20 valid signatures from other registered voters in Charlemont on your nomination papers
- 4) Submit your nomination papers to the Town Clerk by the deadline, usually in April before Town elections.
- 5) Receive more votes than your opponents in the Town-wide election.

It also is possible to run for office as a write-in candidate. Please contact Kathy Reynolds about this option if you have missed the nomination papers deadline but would like to be considered for a position during the upcoming election. Your name will not appear on the ballot in this case.

Once elected or appointed to your position of choice, you will need to be sworn in by the Town Clerk, Kathy Reynolds. This step often can be handled at the time of election or appointment, but it also is possible to schedule another time to be sworn in, if necessary. When you are sworn in, Kathy will give you information about Open Meeting and Conflict of Interest laws that must be followed in your role with the Town. For more information, please call her at 339-4335, extension 7.

## **When your term is up**

If you would like to continue serving you will need to take out nomination papers for re-election

### **Resigning from your role with the Town**

If you are unable to serve the full length of your term as an elected or appointed Town volunteer, you will need to follow these steps to officially resign from your position:

- 1) Notify your board or committee immediately.
- 2) Submit a written and signed letter of resignation to the Select Board.
- 3) Return any keys or other Town property you may have to the BOS office

### **Filling vacancies on boards, committees, and ad hoc workgroups**

A list of vacancies will be kept in Town Hall and posted on the Town website.

Filling vacant positions on Town boards and committees can be a very difficult task.

Because it is important to have the members of boards and committees work well together, the Select Board and Moderator prefer to appoint new members to fill vacancies who have been approved by the board or committee with a vacancy. In some cases, such as when a committee has become inactive for a certain length of time and/or fails to nominate someone to fill a vacancy after 30 days, the Select Board reserves the right to find someone to fill that vacancy without approval of the board or committee. Ideally, however, your group will nominate someone to fill a vacancy. If your group has difficulty finding someone to fill a vacancy, please ask the Select Board for assistance.

Once your board or committee has found someone to fill a vacancy please:

- 1) Vote to nominate that person to fill the vacancy.
- 2) Send a letter to the Select Board or Moderator, as appropriate (please see Appendix A for the appointing body for your group), asking that the nominated person be appointed to fill a vacancy.

The Select Board may ask to have a brief appointment with the nominated person before appointing him or her. Once appointed, the new member of your group will need to go through the swearing in process described above.

### **Training**

Some Town volunteers, such as members of the Board of Assessors, must take formal training within a specified amount of time after appointment or election. Please see Appendix A to learn about any training that may be required to serve on your board or committee.

In addition to required trainings, you may find it helpful to pursue other types of education that will help you be the best volunteer board or committee member you can be. Other members of your board or committee can recommend training sessions that

they have found helpful in the past. You can find other training opportunities listed in Appendix B, Other Resources, at the back of this handbook.

If your board or committee would like assistance obtaining a particular type of training, please reach out to your Select Board liaison.

## **Conduct**

- Open Meeting Law Requirements

Massachusetts open meeting, public records and conflict-of-interest laws

<http://www.mass.gov/ago/government-resources/open-meeting-law/>

- Conflict of Interest Law for Public Officials and Public Employees
- Campaign Finance Law
- Civil Discourse
- Speaking for a Board or Committee
- Recusal Process
- Using Email

## **Use of Town Equipment/ Resources**

- Board and Committee Expenses
- Staff Support
- Use of Town Counsel

## **Communication**

### **Select Board Liaisons**

Members of the Select Board serve as liaisons to the Town's other boards, committees, and departments. The liaison roles are an important means of sharing information in Town. For a current list of Select Board liaison assignments, please see:

<http://www.charlemont-ma.us/town/select-board>

Your liaison will reach out periodically for updates. If your board, committee, or department has important news or questions, please keep your liaison informed.

### **Town Administrator**

The Town Administrator, Peg Dean, also serves as a point of contact for the Town's volunteers. Since she is in Town Hall on a daily basis, Peg can be of assistance when immediate questions or concerns arise. She can be reached at 339-4335, extension 8.

Peg also maintains a spreadsheet with details about the activities and concerns of the Town's boards and committees. The chair of your group provides updates to Peg on a

monthly basis for this document, which is a useful tool for staying up-to-date about the numerous activities of Town government.

### **Town Meeting**

Representatives of the Town's boards and committees should plan to be in attendance at the Annual Town Meeting in the spring. You may be called upon to answer important questions about the work of your board or committee.

### **Annual Report**

Each board, committee, and department must submit an annual summary of activities to be included in the Town's Annual Report. These summaries help town residents understand the scope of work undertaken by volunteers and town employees during the previous year and provide an opportunity to preview any upcoming issues that may be of interest to voters. Distributed at Annual Town meeting in each spring, these Annual Reports cover the time frame of the previous calendar year. For instance, the Annual Report presented in the spring of 2016 will include summaries of work done between January and December 2015. Annual report submissions should be prepared in January and submitted by email to the Select Board via Kathy Reynolds ([select@bcn.com](mailto:select@bcn.com)) **no later than January 31.**

# **Appendix A**

## **Information about Town Boards and Committees**

### **Select Board**

*Role:* To manage town affairs between Town Meetings.

*Number of members:* 3

*Appointed or elected?* elected

*Length of term(s):* 3 years

*Meeting nights:* Every other Monday

*Time commitment:* 10+ hours per week

*Suggested qualifications:* background volunteering on other Town boards or committees; management, financial, and organizational experience.

*For more information:*

- Massachusetts Selectmen's Association: <http://www.mma.org/members-mainmenu-109/selectmen>
- "A Guide to Financial Management for Town Officials," Massachusetts Department of Revenue Division of Local Services <http://www.mass.gov/dor/docs/dls/publ/misc/town.pdf>

### **Finance Committee**

*Role:* Oversee of town finances; review, research, and make recommendations about town financial matters, including warrant articles presented at town meetings; financial planning

*Number of members:* 5

*Appointed or elected?* Appointed by the Moderator

Length of term(s): 3 years

Meetings: One monthly meeting, plus additional meetings during budget season.

Time commitment: Most of the year, the monthly time commitment involves attending one two-hour meeting, plus spending five additional hours reading emails and reports. This time commitment doubles or triples during budget season.

Suggested qualifications: Previous financial oversight experience; ability to read a profit and loss statement, audit reports, and spreadsheets. Interest in the long-term good of the town.

For More information: "A Guide to Financial Management for Town Officials," Massachusetts Department of Revenue Division of Local Services

<http://www.mass.gov/dor/docs/dls/publ/misc/town.pdf>

## **Board of Health**

Role: "required by state statutes and regulations to perform many important and crucial duties relative to the protection of public health, the control of disease, the promotion of sanitary living conditions, and the protection of the environment from damage and pollution." - Duties of Local Boards of Health in Massachusetts, Massachusetts Association of Health Boards

Number of members: 5

Appointed or Elected? elected

Length of term(s): 3 years

Meeting nights: 2nd and 4th Wednesdays of each month

Time commitment: Can be as much as 12 hours per month, with 2 - 4 hours in meetings

Suggested qualifications: A commitment to protecting the public health is required. Willingness to train and attend meetings. Some health background (e.g., public health, nurse, doctor), experience with septic tanks and wells are advantages but not required.

For more information: Massachusetts Association of Health Boards,  
<http://www.mahb.org/Library/Duties%20of%20BOH.pdf>

### **Council on Aging**

Role: The COA provides "social and support services to elders, families and caregivers" in Charlemont, including running the Senior Center programming and meals each Wednesday in the community room at the Federated Church.

Number of members: 8

Appointed or Elected? Appointed

Length of term(s): no fixed term

Meeting times: First Wednesday of the month

Time commitment: Minimum of 2 hours a month, more time required for other duties if you choose to try them examples: Treasurer and Chairperson

More information: Massachusetts Executive Office of Elder Affairs, "Overview of Councils on Aging" <http://www.mass.gov/elders/service-orgs-advocates/overview-of-councils-on-aging.html>

Qualifications: None needed but computer skills helpful.

### **Emergency Service Ambulance**

Role: To provide emergency ambulance services to the towns of Charlemont and Hawley.

Number of members: not fixed/ varies

Appointed or Elected? Appointed

Length of term(s): 1 year

Meeting nights: The Ambulance Association meets on the first Wednesday of the month.

Time commitment: 3-4 hours per ambulance run; training

Qualifications: EMT Basic Responder

For more information: Contact Dana Johnson, Ambulance Director by phone (413-339-4335) or email (ambulance@charlemont-ma.us).

## **Fire Department**

Role: Provide volunteer fire fighting services

Number of members: not fixed/ varies

Appointed or Elected? Appointed

Length of term(s): 1 year

Meeting nights: every other Monday night, plus occasional trainings

Time commitment: varies

Qualifications: Fire Fighter 1 and Fire Fighter 2

For more information: Contact the Fire Chief

## **Board of Assessors**

Role: Property assessments, maintaining an abutters list, reviewing and approving abatement and exemption applications.

Number of members: 3

Appointed or Elected? Elected

Length of term(s): 3 years

Meeting schedule: 2nd and 4th Mondays of the month at 7:00 in the Assessor's office

Time commitment: 6-10+ hours per month, depending on the number of inspections

Qualifications/ required training: "Course 101, Assessment Administration: Law, Procedures and Valuation" must be completed within two years of original election or appointment.

For more information:

- <http://www.charlemont-ma.us/town/board-assessors>
- <http://www.mass.gov/dor/local-officials/training-and-seminars/course101/>

## **Planning Board**

Role: The Planning Board grants special permits for residence new construction, renovations and additions, if required by the Building Inspector. Special permits are also required for all new businesses, change of use or any new commercial construction.

Number of members: 5, plus 1 associate member

Appointed or Elected? Elected

Length of term(s): 5 years or 3 years (associate member)

Meeting nights: 1st and 3rd Thursdays at 7:00pm

Time commitment: Depending on current slate of issues, 3-6 hours per week. Taking minutes and writing decisions on behalf of the board takes additional time. Planning board members need to be accessible, answering phone calls and emails in a timely fashion.

Additional notes: The planning board needs to be dynamic and move quickly as the growth of the town depends on it and any potential business owners have a big financial stake in their companies and the board needs to be a facilitator not obstacle to continued economic development. If a potential member is planning to advocate for a political agenda then s/he will slow down the process and find it frustrating.

Suggested qualifications: Ability read and understand complex information; communicate personal understanding of issues and positions on them; make decisions quickly based on facts presented in a hearing and in alignment with guidelines and Massachusetts General Law;

For more information: Any potential member should read the Town's current bylaws and have an understanding of the definitions therein. S/he should also read the previous meeting minutes for several months and have a conversation with current and past board members to understand the scope of authority and mission of the Planning

Board. It also would be helpful to read bylaws from neighboring towns to see how things differ from what we do here.

### **Zoning Board of Appeals**

Role: The Zoning Board of Appeals (or ZBA) responsibilities include, but are not limited to, serving as the body that hears the appeals for the zoning decisions of the Planning Board, Building Inspector, and other Zoning Administrators.

Number of members: 3, plus 1 associate member

Appointed or Elected? appointed

Length of term(s): 3 years

Meeting nights: as needed

Time commitment: varies

Suggested qualifications: none

For more information: Contact the Select Board

### **Conservation Commission**

Role: "One of the important functions of the Conservation Commission is to administer the state wetland regulations within our town. Generally, any activity within 200' of a year-round stream, brook or river, or activity within 100' of a marsh, pond, flood plain or other wetland requires Conservation Commission review."

Number of members: 7

Appointed or Elected? appointed

Length of term(s): 3 years

Meeting nights: 1st Wednesday of each month

Time commitment: Varies

Suggested qualifications: Construction and environmental interest are helpful but not required

For more information: Please contact Carlene Millett, Secretary to the Town Boards, by phone (413-339-4335, option 6, 3) or email (sectobds@charlemont-ma.us)

## **Agricultural Commission**

Role: Voted as an Agricultural/Forestry Commission to represent the Charlemont farming/forest community. Said commission shall serve as facilitators for encouraging the pursuit of agriculture and forestry in the town both as a business and a resource, the preservation of farm and forest land, the promotion of natural resource based farm and forestry economic opportunities, and the expression of planning needs and the visibility of farming and forestry in Charlemont. The commission shall consist of five members appointed by the board of Selectmen. They shall serve staggered terms of three years each. Up to three voting alternates may also be appointed by the board, each for a one-year term. Vacancies shall be filled by the board

Number of members: 5

Appointed or Elected? appointed

Length of term: 3 years

Meeting nights: varies

Time commitment: varies

Suggested qualifications: Knowledge of agriculture and forestry a plus

For more information:

## **Tree Warden**

Role: The Tree Warden is governed by the Public Shade Tree Law and takes care of removal of dead or diseased trees on Town byways. The Tree Warden holds hearings for trees marked for pruning or removal and issues permits for the removal of trees.

Number of members: 1

Appointed or Elected? Elected

Length of term: 1 year

Meeting nights: varies

Time commitment: varies

Suggested qualifications: tree identification, cutting skills

For more information:

### **Park and Recreation Commission**

**Role:** The Charlemont Fairgrounds is open daily to the public; we encourage residents and guests to view our beautiful fairgrounds, and participate in the many events that are scheduled throughout the year. The Park and Recreation Commissioners work closely with other town organizations; such as the Friends of the Charlemont Fairgrounds, the Board of Selectmen, the Board of Health, and individuals to promote the use of these grounds and maintain them.

Number of members: 5

Appointed or Elected? elected

Length of term: 5 years

Meeting nights: Tuesdays

Time commitment: Winter time 1 hour per month, summertime 2 hours per month plus events which average 4-5 hours per month

Suggested qualifications:

For More information:

### **Tyler Memorial Library Trustees**

Role: Board overseeing the public library serving Charlemont and Hawley.

Number of members: 3

Appointed or Elected? elected

Length of term(s): 3 years

Meeting times: varies, usually every 1 – 2 months

Time commitment: occasional meetings and related duties; usually < 5 hours per month

Suggested qualifications: A general interest in books and public libraries. Library experience would be welcomed but is not necessary.

For more information: Contact Librarian

### **Broadband Committee**

Role: The Broadband Committee studies ways to increase the availability of high speed internet service and other related services to improve the economic vitality and quality of life in our town. The committee serves as a forum for discussion and research into potential options and makes recommendations to the Select Board and to the town as a whole.

Number of members: 7

Appointed or Elected? appointed

Length of term(s): no fixed term

Meeting nights: varies

Time commitment: varies

### **Historical Commission**

Role: For the preservation, protection and development of the historical or archaeological assets of Charlemont

Number of members: 3

Appointed or Elected? appointed

Length of term(s): 3 years

Meeting nights: varies

Time commitment: varies

### **Local Cultural Council**

Role: The Charlemont-Hawley Cultural Council is responsible for reviewing grant applications and awarding funds to local individuals, schools, and cultural organizations.

Number of members: At least 5 but no more than 22

Appointed or Elected? Appointed

Length of term: 3 years, with a maximum of two consecutive terms or a total of 6 years

Meeting schedule: 1 (sometimes 2) meetings per year

Time commitment: Most members of the LLC need to review grant applications and attend one annual meeting. Additional time is required by those members who are elected by the LLC to serve as chair, secretary, and treasurer.

Qualifications/ training requirements: none

More information: <http://www.massculturalcouncil.org/programs/lccgrants.asp>

### **Charlemont Cemetery Committee**

**Role:** The Board of Selectmen have created a Cemetery Committee to assist with the restoration, maintenance, and recording of our Town Cemeteries.

Number of members: 5

Appointed or Elected? appointed

Length of term(s): no set length

Meeting nights: Varies, some daytime meetings

Time commitment: Varies usually 2 hours a month

Suggested qualifications:

For more information: Bonnie Lee Nugent

### **East Charlemont School House**

Role: Maintain the Little Red School in East Charlemont. Hold occasional open houses and other events at this historic property.

Number of members: 7

Appointed or Elected? appointed by the Moderator

Length of term: 4 years

Meeting nights: varies

Time commitment: varies

Suggested qualifications:

For more information: Contact Jay Healy or Mary Boehmer

### **Flag Committee**

Role: to maintain, raise money, purchase & replace flags & bunting as needed and to install those along Main Street, the Town Hall & The Fairgrounds for the sole purpose of community and patriotism.

Number of members: 3

Appointed or Elected? Appointed

Length of term(s): 1 year

Meeting schedule: varies

Time commitment: varies

Suggested qualifications: None

For more information: <http://www.charlemont-ma.us/town/flag-committee>

### **Mohawk Trail Regional School Committee**

Role: "It is the mission of the MTRSD School Committee to ensure that the District consistently provides the highest possible quality of education to every District student while wisely managing the financial resources available to do so. The School Committee will carry out its functions openly, with civility and integrity, seeking participation and input from educators and administrators, local officials, parents, students and citizens of our member communities."

Number of members: 2

Appointed or Elected? elected

Length of term: 3 years

Meeting nights: 2<sup>nd</sup> Wednesday of each month (full committee), plus additional nights for subcommittee meetings

Time commitment: varies 4-8 hours per month

For more information:

<https://sites.google.com/a/mohawkschools.org/mohawk-school-committee/home>

### **Hawlemont Regional School Committee**

Role: Mission statement being revised now

Number of members: 3

Appointed or Elected? elected

Length of term: 3 years

Meeting time: 3<sup>rd</sup> Tuesday of each month at 4:30pm

Time commitment: 3-5 hours per month, more if interested in a particular project

For more information:

<https://sites.google.com/a/mohawkschools.org/hawlemont-school-committee/minutes/minutes-2015>

### **Board of Registrars**

Role: Every city and town must have a Board of Registrars or Election Commission whose responsibilities include registering voters, making local listings of residents, certifying nomination papers and petitions, processing absentee voter applications, and administering election results.

Number of members: 4

Appointed or Elected? appointed

Length of term: 3 years

Meeting nights: varies

Time commitment: varies

For more information: Contact the Town Clerk

### **Earth Removal Committee**

Role: Earth removal operations in Charlemont require an Earth Removal Permit (ERP) from the Earth Removal Committee.

Number of members: 5 (1 on the Select Board, plus 1 additional member appointed by the Select Board; 1 member each from the Board of Health, the Planning Board, Conservation Commission)

Appointed or Elected? appointed

Length of term(s): 3 years

Meeting nights: varies

Time commitment: varies

For more information: Contact a planning board member

# Appendix B

## Resources

### **Town Contacts**

A general Town directory can be found here:

<http://www.charlemont-ma.us/town-directory>

A list of Town Departments, Boards, Committees, and Commissions – with links to further information about each one – is available on the town website:

<http://www.charlemont-ma.us/town/charlemont-municipal-government>

### **Charlemont's Bylaws, policies, and procedures**

Official paper copies of the Town's Bylaws will be given to you. In the meantime, a draft electronic version, dated 12/18/2013, is attached to this email for your reference.

### **Town Zoning Bylaw**

A copy of the Town's Zoning Bylaw is available on the Charlemont Planning Board's webpage: [http://charlemont-](http://charlemont-ma.us/sites/default/files/Attachments/zoning_bylaws_2014.pdf)

[ma.us/sites/default/files/Attachments/zoning\\_bylaws\\_2014.pdf](http://charlemont-ma.us/sites/default/files/Attachments/zoning_bylaws_2014.pdf)

### **Select Board Policies**

A document containing policies passed by the Select Board is attached to this email. This list of policies was current as of February 19, 2014.

### **Personnel Handbook**

In 2014, the Select Board appointed an ad hoc workgroup to update the Town's existing personnel policies and create an official Personnel Handbook. A copy of that new document is available.

### **Town Website Policies**

A new version of this document is attached to this email.

### **2014 Financial Management Review**

In 2014, the Select Board requested a Financial Management Review for the Town from the Massachusetts Department of Revenue's Division of Local Services. (Background information about this type of technical assistance report can be found on the DLS website:

<http://www.mass.gov/dor/local-officials/municipal-data-and-financial-management/financial-mgt-assistance/technical-assistance-services.html>

Charlemont's Financial Management Review, which contains recommendations we are in the process of addressing, is available online:

<http://www.mass.gov/dor/docs/dls/mdmstuf/technical-assistance/finmgtrrev/charlemontapr2014.pdf>

## **Schools**

Charlemont is a member of two regional school districts. Our elementary school students attend Hawlemont Regional Elementary School, which also serves the town of Hawley. This school located at 10 School Street in the Charlemont village center. Our students in grades 7 to 12 join their peers from seven other member towns at the Mohawk Trail Regional Middle and High School, which is located in Buckland. (The other Mohawk member towns are Ashfield, Buckland, Colrain, Hawley, Heath, Plainfield, and Shelburne.) Hawlemont and Mohawk share a superintendent and central office support. Information about these schools, including budget materials and the January 2015 Mohawk Long Range Planning Committee report can be found on this website:

<http://mohawkschools.org/>

Charlemont is not a member of any technical school district at this time. We currently tuition students to Franklin County Technical School in Turners Falls (<http://www.fcts.org>) and Smith Vocational and Agricultural High School in Northampton (<http://www.smithtec.org>).

## **Massachusetts Municipal Association**

This organization's website ([www.mma.org](http://www.mma.org)) contains valuable information about municipal government in the Commonwealth.

## **2014 Massachusetts Municipal Association Handbook for Selectboards**

This valuable resource was recently updated. Written for Select Board members, it also contains useful information about the Town Administrator role and the functioning of municipal government. A PDF version of the new handbook is attached to this email.

## **More resources from the Division of Local Services website**

In addition to the resources listed under the "2014 Financial Management Review" topic above, the DLS website (<http://www.mass.gov/dor/local-officials>) has extensive information about municipal finance, grant opportunities, training, and more. The DLS also produces a helpful weekly email called "City and Town." You can subscribe to that email here: <http://www.mass.gov/dor/local-officials/dls-newsroom/ct/>

### **Massachusetts Department of Housing and Community Development**

This department is part of the Massachusetts Office of Housing and Economic Development. Its website ([www.mass.gov/dhcd](http://www.mass.gov/dhcd)) has useful information about a wide range of programs and resources, including Community Block Grants (<http://www.mass.gov/hed/community/funding>).

### **Franklin Regional Council of Governments (FRCOG)**

FRCOG (<http://frcog.org/>) is located in Greenfield and serves towns throughout Franklin County. This organization provides numerous services to the Town of Charlemont, including Accounting, the Town's Public Health Nurse, health inspections, and more. FRCOG also hosts training sessions related to municipal government that may be of interest.

### **Charlemont Economic Development Roundtable (CEDR)**

This citizen advisory group was founded by the Charlemont Planning Board and later spun off as an independent organization that is no longer affiliated with Town government. CEDR meets monthly. Approximately once per quarter, CEDR meets with the Select Board, Planning Board, and Board of Health to work on the Town's key economic development issues, currently identified as: internet access, cell phone access, water / DEP regulations, and the sustainability of the Sewer District (which serves the village center and is not part of the Town government). You can subscribe to the CEDR listserv here:

[http://charlemont-ma.us/mailman/listinfo/charlemont-roundtable\\_charlemont-ma.us](http://charlemont-ma.us/mailman/listinfo/charlemont-roundtable_charlemont-ma.us)

### **Greater Shelburne Falls Area Business Association**

Based in Shelburne Falls but serving 10 surrounding hilltowns, including Charlemont, the GSFABA works on economic development issues in West County.

<http://www.gsfaba.org>

### **WiredWest and the Massachusetts Broadband Institute**

The Massachusetts Broadband Institute recently finished a "middle mile" project bringing high-speed internet to anchor institutions (town halls, schools, community centers, etc.) in these towns. WiredWest, a cooperative of rural western Massachusetts towns including Charlemont, and MBI are now working together on the "last mile," connecting homes to the new "middle mile" infrastructure.

For more information about MBI: <http://broadband.masstech.org/building-network/massbroadband123>

For more information about WiredWest: <http://wiredwest.net>