

TOWN OF CHARLEMONT SELECT BOARD MEETING MINUTES
October 26, 2016, 11:00am
Massachusetts State House, Boston, Massachusetts

On October 26, 2016, Select Board members Beth Bandy and Toby Gould attended a hearing of the Joint Committee on Revenue at the State House about a proposed recreation tax for the Town of Charlemont (H.4700). Their meeting began at 11:00 in Representative Paul Mark's office. They went to State House Room B-1 with Representative Mark for the hearing, which began at 11:30am. After the Joint Committee heard testimony about other matters, Ms. Bandy delivered the following testimony. She and Mr. Gould answered a few brief questions about economic development and the need for this new tax before they left the meeting at 11:50am. Following their meeting, they toured the State House with Representative Mark, departing at 12:30pm.

Testimony of Ms. Bandy:

Charlemont is located in a rural corner of Franklin County, in northwestern Massachusetts. Our town is home to a long stretch of the Deerfield River, the Mohawk Trail State Forest, and miles of surrounding mountains – all of which offer wonderful outdoor recreation opportunities. Outdoor recreation has become the primary economic driver of our town.

Over the last several years, the recreation companies in Charlemont have expanded from being seasonal businesses – open in the winter months for downhill skiing or in the warmer months for whitewater kayaking and rafting – to year-round operations, with the addition of ziplining, mountain biking, and outdoor endurance racing events.

All of these activities require services from the Town, including an ambulance, policing for events, as well as infrastructure improvements, such as road and bridge maintenance projects that allow tourists to arrive safely at their recreation destinations in Charlemont.

The costs of these services and maintenance projects are very high, especially when you consider the fact that our town only has about 1200 people. The revenue that would be generated from this proposed recreation tax would be significant. Indeed, there is no other potential source of revenue for the Town that would be as large as what we anticipate could be raised through this proposed recreation tax, which is supported by the recreation companies in Charlemont.

We hope that you will understand the extreme financial pressures faced by our small town and approve our request for this new way to make our town financially sustainable and economically vibrant in the future.