

Town of Charlemont
Joint Finance Committee and Select Board Meeting Minutes
March 25th, 2026, 4:00 p.m.
Town Hall and via Conference Call

Board Members Present: Lynn Hathaway, Amy Wales, Jay Healy, Kim Blakeslee, Wilder Sparks, Ron Smith

Others present: Sarah Reynolds, Star Atkeson, Carlene Hayden

Amy Wales called the meeting to order at 4:00 pm

1) Review/ Approve minutes from March 11, 2026

Lynn Hathaway made a motion to approve the March 11th Minutes as written. Jay Healy seconded the motion. All in favor. Ron Smith abstained (not present at meeting)

2) Administrator's Report:

- Update on Tech tuition and bussing. Tech has implemented a lottery system to deal with the influx of applications. Charlemont is not a member town and may only have one student admitted this year. The tuition line will reflect a \$26,000. increase for tuition and bussing. Smith is a year behind with their lottery policy. It would cost hundreds of thousands of dollars to become a member town now, as the share of the new building cost is part of it. People have been calling, upset about the situation.
 - The Board talked about the lottery system which was a result of a vote of member towns. People were told to call DESE to complain.
 - School assessment numbers the numbers are in the budget sheet. The capital items are for parking lot lights and numbers for this year are all here.
 - There is an upcoming meeting held by the Mohawk budget subcommittee on April 8th about the error in assessment, everyone was copied. It is said that there is no legal way to recoup the \$109,000. The legislature could vote on bailing out a community, but it may take a long time.

3) Capital planning items

- Assessor's software \$14,000. upfront cost, with a yearly subscription of \$4559 and annual license fee of \$2247 (both will rise 6% per year) Carlene said it had good IT support, same vendor, no problems, other towns like it.
 - The ongoing costs will be added to the operating budget.
 - The assessors have a licenses and dues line but not a contracted services line.
 - Amy Asked to decrease the assessor's line by the current annual fee of \$2120, but Carlene clarified that there will be overlap of the two systems in FY 27 and the funding is needed. The board would like to know the impact on future operating budget
- Annual bridge money
- HWY is asked for a for a Ford truck, (\$168,000) replacing the 1-ton dump truck, use for plowing, wants new gas truck instead of diesel. Gordon said it was a good choice, all season body, stainless steel. Provision that the standard truck used for training should be gotten rid of. Scott will do so by September.
 - Sarah can get bids and get fair market value that way.
- \$6500 mowing fee for cemetery—May-October mowing. East Charlemont, Village, and Zoar.

4) Full FY27 proposed budget review and discussion

- The town hall building maintenance line went up \$5,000 for upgrades on the building. Amy would like to move that to be a warrant article so it can be carried over for longer term projects. Some money is left for throw rugs etc, to preserve the new floors. \$5,000 will be pulled out for a warrant 3,600 kept in townhall building maintenance.
 - Wilder suggests separating the elevator project from the smaller priced essential things to avoid confusion.
 - Jay suggests that cutting costs, rather than new items added, as the entire budget is up 10%.
 - There is 465,000 in stabilization that can be used for capital items. DOR doesn't recommend using free cash to offset the operating budget, and it isn't a long-term solution.
 - Telephone costs went up.
 - Pensions and insurance, not correct yet, should be \$6,000. left.
 - Property, casualty and line of duty, put the full amount in, sometimes there are other lines that are short. A 9,000\$ check (credits) would be applied to this line.
 - Health insurance increased earlier and is up another 12%
 - The police request for Full time and 2 fulltime officers may need to be phased in.
 - They discussed the concerns about the police staffing.
 - Jay asked if they could get someone part time and raise the hourly wage and put in the contract that they wouldn't be available to do detail. The thought is that that would be as expensive as a FT position.
 - Lynn brought up the problem that officers on the roster do detail and the town gets stuck with the tax. Amy said she thought it could be funded out of the special revenue account in deficit.
 - People agree that it is too much to ask in one year.
 - Kim thinks it is valuable to bring to Town, The Finance Committee can make their recommendation, but town should still know what he's asking and why. The Select Board voted on option 2 with the understanding that it may change.
 - Option 4 is one officer instead of 2. Options 1 and 3 should be taken off the list because they don't budget in a buffer for a part time person to come in and cover vacation.
- Jay Healy made a motion that the finance committee would support option #4 (Chief and 1 Officer with Part-time officers) Lynn Hathaway seconded the motion. All in favor.**
- There was discussion about how to explain the discrepancy in salary between the police, HWY and Fire.
- Jay would like to know the consequences of this price hike on insurance and liability etc., and asked Sarah to quantify it.
- HWY is up 16% they are all getting 2\$ raises.
 - Wages are a town problem. The SB needs to do a wage comparison. The amount of time at the job hasn't been considered in.
 - The fire pump truck loan will be paid for by the earmark as well as turnout gear
 - They talked about the warrant timeline, need to be sent to attorney beginning of May.
 - They will put an on the warrant equipment stabilization fund; Town moderator to be 3-year term instead of 1; The McCloud property is on there (someone interested in building without drilling a well, and a school sustainability committee survey about how people feel about regionalization.

Ron Smith made a motion to adjourn at 5:30 PM, Amy Wales seconded the motion. All in favor.

Wilder Sparks made a motion to adjourn the select Board meeting at 5:30, Kim Blakeslee seconded the motion. All in favor.

Documents viewed at meeting:

Agenda of 3/25/2026

Minutes of 3/11/2026

Police Salary options

Town of Charlemont FY 2026 budget

Proposed Warrant Article for the Annual Town Meeting May 26, 2026