

Town of Charlemont
Joint Finance Committee and Select Board Meeting Minutes
April 29th, 2026, 4:00 p.m.
Town Hall and via Conference Call

Board Members Present: Lynn Hathaway, Amy Wales, Jay Healy, Wilder Sparks, Rich Filoramo, Ron Smith

Others present: Amber Tulloch, Ken Bertsch, Anne Kaplan, Ashley Sparks, Sarah Reynolds, Star Atkeson

Amy Wales called the meeting to order at 4:02 pm

Appointment: 4:30 Hawlemont principal and School committee representatives to discuss Hawlemont budget

- Amber went over the increase—costs have gone up, funding options and sources have lessened, grants are hard to come by. Grants had covered special ed, co-teaching, student growth in math, acceleration academy for Feb and April break.
- Amber Started working on the budget early, planning for reductions and tightened lines.
- Budget still provides incredible education and is a trim budget.
- Talked about student population: 17 students in preschool, some families are on a waiting list. 1st grade and K are combined. Need more to sign in to kindergarten, incoming class is forecast at 8.
- Rich suggested reduction in salary and combining classes. Amber did it with one position when the first grade teacher retired, but not others.
- If a position is reduced to .6 an applicant may go elsewhere.
- Amber wants best education opportunities for the students, believed they had magic at Hawlemont, but willing to bring the magic elsewhere.
- Need more affordable properties in town if wanting to attract families with kids to school.
- Jay pointed out declining state aid, increased costs. Being put at a disadvantage from above. Insoluble problem from the bottom up; the top could help.
- Ken Bertsch pointed out that the State funding formula is a 5-6 yr process.
- Anne says that kids are coming to school more stressed than ever, needing extra attention and resources.
- Rich suggests to build at Mohawk and to keep Sanderson open. Rich spoke of 500 hundred elementary students, how to split it up in a way that it will be voted on to move forward. Rich thinks one school west, one east. Cut down transportation costs. 1 district two school. By geography, not town line.
- Wilder thinks there are a lot of options but notes that only one is being looked at by 2D8T
- There was talk about procedure if a budget is defeated. 1/12 of current budget. If budget defeated, Amber would be forced to cut positions
- Amy said the school had a \$104,000 increase, (7.4% increase)

The Board spoke about the rest of the town budget. People could decide to use free cash to offset tax rate, there is an option to do that. Cannot use Free Cash for salary and does not apply to a budget line item. Don't want to use Stabilization. If School budget is approved, would be \$142 on average tax bill of \$300,000 assessed value. DLS has a tool that can calculate the impact on the tax rate. With the police proposal, it could rise to an additional \$667. increase.

- Jay put school as priority, ahead of police

- The Town budget total is up \$500,000.
- Finance Committee will come back to rediscuss police and schools on May 13th, possibly change the recommendation on the police.

Agenda items:

1. Approve / Sign Minutes from April 15, 2026

Rich Filoramo made a motion to approve the Minutes of April 15, 2026. Lynn Hathaway seconded the motion. All in favor.

2. Capital Articles

- Warrant not done yet. Bridge number is double. Sarah will talk about the many bridge projects on TM floor and the need for easement work funding.
- Cemeteries received a quote to have both mowed a few times a month throughout the summer.
- Highway truck: \$168,500, and \$6,000 extended warranty.
- Assessors' software: Assess Pro 5.
- Town Hall bathrooms: floor is buckling.
- If stabilization funding is created for departments, funding could begin next year.
- Chapter 90 is almost double. Scott has the number. He plans to hold it for a few years so the town can complete a road project. Also possible to buy equipment.
- Highway 110 truck replacement for Ford will have a stainless-steel body and a 6-year extended warranty. Gordy on committee in favor of truck. Uses gas instead of diesel.
- Will wait to vote once they know the free cash amount.
- At the pre town meeting info session, Sarah will provide a budget book to explain increases.
- Rec tax is out of committee. Sarah will keep people apprised of the next hearing date.

Re: Mohawk's Overcharge to Charlemont,

- Wilder said that John Gould was receptive to the information. Wilder brought it to him with a detailed explanation from Bill Lataille. It was a Town ask. He'll give it to Paul Mark and team as well.
- Jay said a clean-cut ask is easier than one with regional ties. John Gould told Wilder that there were several opportunities for an earmark throughout the year. Getting a letter of support from other towns supporting the payback would be helpful. Also stressing that it's a clerical error. \$109,000. Was the amount overcharged to Charlemont.

3. Free Cash number – No Free Cash number yet.

4. Pre Town meeting information session

the_SB voted Candidates night and Town Meeting info May 18th, 6 PM at Hawlemont

Rich Filoramo made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 5:40, seconded by Lynn Hathaway. All in favor

Documents viewed at meeting:

Agenda of 4/29/2026

Minutes of 4/15/2026