

Town of Charlemont  
Finance Committee / Select Board  
Meeting Minutes April 13, 2022  
Via Telephone and at the Town Hall

People Present: Amy Wales, Marguerite Willis, Dan Girard, Sarah Reynolds, Star Atkeson (secretary)

Absent: Bill Harker, Rich Filoramo

Joined by phone: Lynn Hathaway, Jay Healy, Ron Smith

Start time - 4:02 p.m.

Approval of the minutes for 4/06/2022

Minutes not yet approved, pending more members being present.

Report from the Administrator—Sarah talked IT

- Sarah let the Board know that she may have to take items out of this year's budget lines for IT. It was supposed to be \$45,000 but it is currently \$23,000 so she has been creative including using hand-me-down computers from the library and shopping around for a cheaper telephone service. They are doing switches and dark fiber looping of the network now and will be doing additional work next year. There is \$7,000 communications grant money but they will be short for some equipment items. She said will have to present this on the Town Meeting floor. She has asked the insurance Company, and there may be a grant possibility, but she is looking at a level funded line and wants to know the procedure. She may need to take a few items out of the budget line. Amy responded the Town Hall telephone and internet cost has increased this year and is level funded for next year and that she may take items out this year as long as it is related to internet.
- Sarah also brought up the Parks and Recreation revolving fund which has \$2,300. She said they have the right budget number. She talked to Bill about it, and it will be discussed about whether they want the revolving fund.

Discussion of how to pay for School and Ambulance

The question of how to pay for the Ambulance is linked to the question of how to pay for the school.

Discussion on how to pay for the ambulance went as follows:

- The Ambulance Association helped pay for the last ambulance and the rest came out of stabilization. The Ambulance Association gave the In Memorial grant of \$30,000. toward the ambulance.
- Dan asked if the price included the stretcher, noted that stretcher costs \$18,000—The understanding is that it is all included.
- Jay noted that the past practices of using Free Cash was supposed to be for the lifetime of the equipment, which would point towards using the Free Cash towards an ambulance.
- Amy noted that they always use \$129,000. of the Free Cash to offset the tax rate and that they should ween themselves off of that practice.
- Amy noted that putting money into stabilization for capital articles is saving for future capital articles.
- Jay and Ron suggested paying for the ambulance with both the Free Cash and the stabilization money— some of each.
- It was noted by Dan that at Town Meeting you need to decide on the source for the money. Amy confirmed that once you appropriate at Town Meeting, that is the funding source. If you wanted to change it, you would need to rescind the article.

- Sarah went over the legal language from the attorney which would need to be used on a warrant article in case borrowing would occur for the ambulance: *“To see if the Town will vote to borrow, or otherwise appropriate, the sum of \$\_\_\_\_\_ to purchase a new ambulance; and that to meet this appropriation the Treasurer with the approval of the Select Board is authorized to borrow said amount under and pursuant to Chapter 44, Section 7 (1) of the General Laws or any other enabling authority, and to issue bonds or notes of the Town therefor, or take any other action relative thereto.”*
- Amy asked whether the article must specify whether it is debt excluded. Marguerite points out that to her stabilization and debt exclusion are six of one and half a dozen of the other. Amy agrees.
- Ron stated that they should pay for the ambulance and not borrow, and asks if the Town must buy a fire engine next year. Sarah answers yes that that is the plan because State guidelines may say the old fire engine, although just operational, may be too old.
- Jay asked if borrowing interest rate is still low would it make sense to borrow. Amy responded, yes, an ambulance is a long term asset, it would make sense to borrow, and then put more money into stabilization.
- Dan suggested borrowing while interest rate is low, but it is noted by Amy that the borrowing only occurs at the time of purchase and the rates will be unknown. Sarah pointed out that the availability of the ambulance is the hold up, the price could change and ordering the ambulance does not lock in the price. They need funding to order the ambulance and could go back to Town Meeting to appropriate more if necessary, either by borrowing or using free cash. Marguerite noted there is no down payment for the ambulance. Amy added with government purchases there is no prepayment. Ron added that no money is paid out for two years and then there would be the opportunity to reconsider. Amy replied that yes the Free Cash could be reserved for it, and if they wanted to change the source they would need to rescind the Free Cash article and vote to borrow, and the Free Cash would go back to the general fund. That leaves \$97,000. to offset tax rate, and schools would need an Override article if their number increases.

It was decided to appropriate money from Free Cash to pay for the ambulance.

**A motion was made by Ron Smith and seconded by Amy Wales to vote on appropriating money from Free Cash to pay for the ambulance.**

**It passed unanimously: Amy Wales— yes, Lynn Hathaway—yes, Ron Smith—yes, Jay Healy—yes**

### Schools

- Marguerite informed the Boards that a new school committee member was appointed on April 12th. Cheryl Handsaker volunteered. At the school committee meeting which Marguerite attended there was talk of making Hawlemont Sustainable, but she noted that the finances were not gone over.
- If the school amount is level funded, it would increase the tax rate by .86 cents
- Amy asked if they had an override vote for schools. Sarah explained that the school district will certify the assessment number and had agreed to put the number of the amount that exceeds level funding as an Override article on the Ballot. The Town Meeting will vote to raise and appropriate the funds.
- The consulted attorney made this recommendation: *“...vote the recommended budget but with a contingent override of some amount. If the override fails, you would need to come back for a Special Town Meeting to make cuts in the budget so as to be balanced.”*
- Sarah said they have to get the Override article on the ballot that day to start the process, then after Town meeting they can know whether passed or not. Marguerite added then they can vote to put it on

the tax rate, or if it fails, come back to special Town Meeting. Amy asked if they can get 30% Override of the school budget as Special article

**A motion was made by Dan Girard and seconded by Marguerite Willis to put a 2 1/2 override question on the Ballot for Hawlemont Regional School District Budget.**

**Marguerite Willis—yes, Dan Girard —yes**

- Jay asked that if the school committee comes in beyond the parameters of 20% they will come back for a revote, Marguerite confirmed that if it comes back greater than 20% they will need to re-discuss.

**A motion was made by Marguerite and seconded by Dan Girard to amend the previous motion to include the language “if the final number of the School Budget varies up to 20% from current dollar amount, to adjust the ballot question to reflect the new amount.”**

**Marguerite Willis—yes, Dan Girard —yes**

**Ron Smith makes a motion to vote on the same amended motion, seconded by Jay Healy: to put a 2 1/2 override question on the Ballot for Hawlemont Regional School District Budget; if the final number of the School Budget varies up to 20% from current dollar amount, the ballot question should be adjusted to reflect the new amount.**

**Lynn Hathaway—yes, Ron Smith—yes, Jay Healy—yes, Amy Wales—Abstained**

4:41 PM Ron made a motion for the Finance Committee to adjourn, it was seconded by Lynn Hathaway

The Select Board continued with one more discussion.

#### School Committee Resignation

Marguerite noted that the planned school committee resignation had not happened yet. If the resignation comes after today, there will be no meeting until after the date to put the new school committee on the Ballot.

**Dan made a motion seconded by Marguerite: If the resignation comes after today to give the Chair of the Select Board authorization to accept the resignation and put the new name on the ballot.**

**Dan Girard—yes, Marguerite Willis—yes.**

The next meeting is scheduled for May 4, 2022 at 4:00 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted on April 15, 2022

Star Atkeson, Secretary to the Boards

Documents viewed at meeting:

A document with the Division of Labor Services cherry sheet numbers and the town side numbers  
Voc Schools projected enrollment FY 22 and FY 23