

Charlemont Planning Board
March 19th, 2026, 6:00 PM Meeting Minutes
Via conference call and in person, Town Hall

Members Participating: Bob Nelson, Lori Shulda-Merrigan, Molly Cantor, Jennifer Mooney

Members Absent: Bill Harker

Others: Jordyn Holland, Madi Tichenor, Bob Handsaker, Cheryl Handsaker, Ron Smith, Star Atkeson, secretary

Others on phone: Sarah Reynolds

Bob Nelson called the meeting to order at 6:00 PM.

6:15 updates from the Chair

- Marijuana inquiry

Bob had received an inquiry about a cannabis growing facility at 2151 and 2153 Route 2. Madi and Jordyn came to the meeting.

The Board spoke to Madi and Jordyn about their plans. They wanted a 100,000 square foot outdoor grow facility. The board spoke about issue with odor and the abutters and found that the bylaws capped the square footage at 20,000. They spoke about ways to possibly split the parcel to get it up to 60,000 square feet. The Board told them that they may apply for a special permit, but there would most likely be opposition because of the odor issue.

Bob found the bylaw section that made greenlighting the project unlikely: 46.9 Safety, design and Performance Standards A. Nuisances: No Marijuana Establishment and/or MMTC shall be allowed which creates a nuisance to abutters or to the surrounding area, or which creates any hazard, including but not limited to, fire, explosion, fumes, gas, smoke, odors, obnoxious dust, vapors, offensive noise or vibration, flashes, glare, light pollution, excessive water use, objectionable effluent of stormwater and/or wastewater, or electrical interference, which may impair the normal use and peaceful enjoyment of any property, structure or dwelling in the area

The Planning Board and Madi and Jordyn both agreed to research and reconnect at another meeting if either party had an idea of how it would be feasible to pursue.

- overview of February 26th FRPAB meeting

The next FRPAB meeting will be in May. State of Massachusetts has a program that if a town can add 2% housing per year, they are eligible for grants. ADUs count towards this program. There are ways for small towns to be eligible with less than the 2% increase. There is a list of actions a town can take that gives them points towards this program, like the Planning Board attending the CPTC meeting at Holy Cross, for example.

Someone had raised the issue of data centers, warning Towns to be proactive to not allow data centers, tons of computer, electricity and water use for cooling. Most towns don't have 3 phase power.

- Unforeseen within last 48 hours: The Oxbow The building inspector has issued a violation letter to The Oxbow; Sarah explained what the issue was, he was advertising long term apartments on Facebook, but needs a sprinkler system to be installed if the classification is to be R-2. He had lost his appeal to the state regarding the sprinkler system. The Planning Board may need to rescind the Special Permit

Agenda Items:

1. Review / Approve Minutes from February 19, 2026

Bob Nelson made a motion to approve the minutes of February 19th as amended. Molly Cantor seconded the motion. All in favor.

2. Last minute review of zoning bylaw revisions, vote to give to Select Board to start zoning bylaw revision timeline. Lori said there needs to be a slight modification to the Special Permit package for Marijuana applicants. She hasn't gotten to that yet. Jen suggested keeping it separate and plugging it in if necessary.

Lori Shulda - Merrigan made a motion for Star to send over the proposed bylaw revisions to the Select Board. Jennifer Mooney seconded the motion. All in favor.

3. Town Report: Star will compile the items and send to Bob for approval.

7:00 pm Master Plan implementation meeting kick-off_

The participants talked about what their ideas were for starting up the master plan implementation committee.

Cheryl H. — Diversification of Local Economy

Cheryl emphasized the importance of diversifying the local economy beyond recreation. She suggested convening a small group of local stakeholders as an initial step toward forming an economic development roundtable.

Jen and Sarah noted that a business association already exists. It was originally organized by the Niensens (Hinata) and has since been transitioned to Kristie Faufaw. They recommended connecting with Kristie, who is currently working to identify businesses registered with Town Hall.

It was noted that some farm businesses and home-based businesses are not captured in existing Town records, and developing a more complete business inventory would be beneficial. Plans are underway to set up a kiosk at Cold River and another location (TBD) to support outreach.

Participants also noted that certain grant opportunities may be available to support small businesses if a formal business association is established.

Cheryl also announced that the Charlemont Picnic will be held at the Fairgrounds on June 14.

Bob H. — Economic Development and School Funding

Bob advocated for a comprehensive economic development study focused on increasing high-wage employment opportunities.

Bob raised concerns about the previous economic development plan, noting that it was originally commissioned as a recreation-focused plan. He stated that subsequent use of this data by Master Plan consultants as representative of the broader local economy may have resulted in inaccuracies.

Cheryl noted that she had previously worked to correct issues in the recreation plan, but those revisions were not incorporated.

Bob expressed interest in participating in initial business stakeholder discussions.

Ron S. —Town Beautification Ron brought up the subject of the undecorated state of the town during holidays especially Christmas. It was suggested that he be part of a “Beautification Committee”

LSM — Town Beautification

LSM noted that seasonal decorating can require significant time and funding. A potential approach discussed was organizing seasonal decoration competitions for businesses and residents.

Bonnie Jo Radish was recognized for maintaining flower planters and organizing a holiday display at the Fairgrounds. It was noted that existing decorative elements (e.g., stars acquired from Shelburne Falls) may be available for reuse.

Additional ideas included:

- Installing solar-powered lights on Town Hall due to limited electrical access
- Adding decorations to the Long Bridge and nearby railings
- Coordinating with Berkshire East regarding potential sponsorship of prizes

Seasonal decorating could include Christmas, Halloween, and Easter. Cheryl noted interest in reviving a past Christmas tree bonfire event at the Fairgrounds.

Jennifer Mooney moved to close the meeting at 8:10 pm. Lori Shulda-Merrigan seconded the motion. All in favor.

Documents reviewed in meeting

- Agenda for 3/19/2026
- Minutes from February 19, 2026