

CHARLEMONT SELECTBOARD
NOTICE OF MEETING
Monday, January 8th, 2024, 6:00 pm
Via Conference call and in person, Town Hall Meeting Room

Members in attendance: Jared Bellows, Valentine Reid, Bill Harker

Others in Attendance: Charlotte Dewey, Jay Pelletier, Ben Duga, Evie Locke, Martha Thurber
Sarah Reynolds, Star Atkeson.

Val called the meeting to order at 6:00

Appointments:

Charlotte Dewey public comment/ not foreseen within 48 hours —Charlotte said she had intended to be on the agenda. She had heard from potential buyers that the Charlemont Inn was said to have had a dangerously failing roof, as reported in the Greenfield recorder by Bella Levavi, who said it was mentioned in the previous Select Board meeting. She clarified that the roof was in good shape and offered to show drone photos. She also said that she was currently getting the building insured and had potential buyers for the Inn. There would be a retraction of the misinformation from the newspaper. Bill Harker assured Charlotte Dewey that what he had meant was something quite different than what was printed. Charlotte clarified that the roof was not leaking. If the reporter gets in touch with the Select Board, they will confirm the updated information.

6:00pm: Jason Pelletier & Ben Duga- Police Department Administration, Succession—Jason Pelletier will go on a temporary, 10-month leave of absence on February 1st and brought forward Ben Duga to be in charge while he is away. Sargeant Ben Duga is the second officer in command or 2IC and may act as Chief while remaining a sergeant while Pelletier is away.

- Ben Duga is on call as a member of Franklin County Regional Special response Team.
- Pelletier will most likely reduce police office hours to one day while he is gone (like other towns) and there will be less patrol hours. With the new speed signs, which record speed, they can tailor the patrol times to the problem hours.
- Pelletier will have contact while he is away and will still approve gun permits.
- The Board spoke with Sargeant Officer Duga and Chief Pelletier and are good with the decision.
- Val highlighted Duga’s leadership experience: 9 years of leadership and the completion of various courses and academies on leadership. His experience includes leading 7-30 person teams in combat.
- If Duga needs to spend more than \$2000 out of the Police budget, The Select Board asked that he come to them for authorization. They will vote at the next meeting.

6:30 pm: Job Descriptions – Town Administrator, Assessors Clerk—The Board will look at Sarah’s updated job description at home and vote to accept it at the next meeting. The Assessor’s Clerk job description does not stray from the MGL mandated duties except that Carlene will continue to update the budget spreadsheet versions as she has been doing.

Administrator reports:

1) Budget requests for FY 25

The assessments are not in yet, but the few things that are in have gone up between 5-10%. The Town tried to level fund as much as they could. Sarah will send it to them this week. The Finance Committee would like to meet on Wednesday Jan 17th.

2) KP Law Price Increase

KP law has increased their hourly rate by \$10, to \$245 an hour. The specialty rates are higher, from \$330 to \$375. For the last few years, the town has come under budget with the attorney costs. They are also careful to communicate efficiently with the attorney to take up less of their time. KP Law is midrange and is experienced in municipal law.

3) Buy Recycled Memo

Same Policy memo each year, part of the DEP grant for the transfer station. Sarah wanted to bring it to their attention.

4) Fair Share Amendment apportionment, or "The millionaire's tax." The State divided it up like chapter 90 money, using local road mileage, population, and employment, and divided a portion of it using only road miles. Charlemont ended up with 114,954. The first way of calculating it yielded 44,379. The road miles way of dividing the money yielded 70,575. Did not yet get education side of Fairshare.

5) Request for Bids update for the Recreation Money Designs at the fairgrounds and Hawlemont. 12 RFPs were sent out. 3 companies are interested. For the work to be carried out in the spring and summer they need to get going. They need to have the money spent by 2026.

Liaison reports:

1) Vocational Busing Bids, January 4th VEAC meeting

- Bill told of the increase in busing that will take effect this year. It went from 12% to 33%.
- Martha Thurber said that Mohawk's busing cost (12.5%) will rise 2.5 % the first year and then 5.5 % every year thereafter. It will reach 33% in 5 years.
- Bill wonders why it's a 5 yr. contract and not 3. Only one bid was received from Kuzmeskus.
- There was talk of going from 4 to 3 buses. Bill wants to know how many students are being bused.
- They must have a seat for every student whether or not they ride.
- There is a statewide problem of bus companies getting together and only one company bidding. Mohawk joined with 8-9 other districts and did a joint bid which helped a little. There is statewide funding which is not worth applying for. Only \$250,000 is allocated for the whole state.
- They spoke about possibilities of electrification (not good for the hilly routes.) They wonder about offering parents who have time stipends to shuttle the kids to school. They assume there would be liability but would be worth finding out about. Martha will ask Robin Pease how the stipend system works and get back to them.
- The cost of busing works out to 91\$ per person per day.

Agenda items:

1) Letter to 180 Rte. 8A about conditions for license voted on December 18,2023

Valentine Reid motioned to sign the letter. Bill Harker seconded it, All in Favor.

2) Town priority items for Rural Director and State Representative discussions:a) legislative petitions (school aid, rec tax, chapter 90, payment in lieu of taxes) b) town priorities (tax rate, school, housing)

- Val went over his comprehensive presentation of Charlemont's 2024 Priorities in preparation for a meeting with the rural director and with state representative Anne Gobi. There is also a meeting with the new aide to Senator Markey on Thursday. The presentation outlines "What's working, what's not working and what we need." Val said Charlemont is in crisis.
- Sarah said that there is money available to get a list of Charlemont's abandoned and derelict houses together towards revitalizing housing in Charlemont. The at-risk properties would be inventoried.

There could be grants from the State and assistance with actions towards revitalizing affordable housing.

3) Conservation Commission requesting Selectboard Alternate for lack of quorum situations. The Conservation Commission is short one board member. When time-sensitive ConComm business needs to be taken care of, a quorum is necessary. Sarah suggested putting it on a warrant at Town Meeting to allow any select person to step in and be an alternate when a quorum is needed.

4) 2024 Selectboard Calendar Look Ahead. Sarah worked with Thorne Palmer to make a Town calendar for Town staff and departments to see deadlines of what needs to get done for Town Meeting and throughout the year in the running of the Town. They will print hard copies a few months in advance to have on hand in the meeting room.

Approve/sign/approve and sign:

1) Vendor Warrants 2424,2425,2426,2427,2428 and Payroll Warrants 2422,2423,2425,2426.

Valentine Reid motioned to approve and sign Vendor and Payroll warrants. Bill Harker seconded. All in favor.

2) Minutes from December 11,2023, and December 18,2023

Valentine Reid motioned to approve the Dec 11th and 18th, 2023 Minutes, as written. Jared Bellows seconded. All in favor.

3) KP Law Invoices 145416 and 145417

Valentine Reid motioned to approve and sign the KP Law Invoices. Jared Bellows seconded. All in favor.

4) Approve and Sign Sustainability grant Contract for Hawlemont/Mohawk, (BERK 12 Contract) Next scheduled meeting, December 16th, 2023

- Martha Thurber ran through the progress on the Sustainability Grant contract. They put it out to bid and were happy to have the group they wanted with experience with rural district in Massachusetts. Jake Eberwein/ Berk12 (working with Berkshire Community college as fiscal sponsor) bid on it the 2nd time around. He uses subcontractors for data analysis. He will give invoices and backup data to Bill Lataille. They want equal monthly payments. Will provide hours worked, hourly rate and benchmarks required for the reporting on the community compact grant.
- The outcome will be analysis of what would happen if there were no change and what alternatives the district could enact and what that would look like. They would reach a consensus on a solution to propose to towns at the end. The district is doing their part, and they want the state to do their part. Transportation costs are high for rural districts. They will have something for Town meeting 2025.
- Val brought up the RFP that is out now which includes an upgrade to community space at Hawlemont including playground and tennis courts, sidewalk access, and river access.

Valentine Reid made a motion to approve and sign the sustainability grant contract for Hawlemont/Mohawk. Jared Bellows seconded it. All in favor.

Valentine motioned to adjourn the meeting at 8:00 PM Jared Bellows seconded it. All in Favor.

Documents reviewed in meeting:

- Vendor Warrants 2424,2425,2426,2427,2428
- Payroll Warrants 2422,2423,2425,2426

- SelectBoard Agenda for January 8th, 2024
- Memo to All Town Departments dated 12/07/2023 Re: Town Mandatory Buy Recycled
- Letter to Administrator from MassDOT dated 12/11/2023 re: Fair Share apportionment for FY 2024
- Town of Charlemont 2024 Priorities Presentation
- Contract dated January 8, 2024, between Town of Charlemont and BERK12
- Letter to Brian Dupree dated Jan 8, 2024 re: Class II License Conditions
- Letter to Administrator dated 12/29/2023 from KP Law Re: Notice of Rate Increases for FY25
- Assessors Clerk Job description
- Town Administrator job description
- December 11th and 18th 2023 Meeting Minutes
- KP Law invoices 145416, 145417
- Berk12 proposal response to RFP to Sheryl Stanton from Jake Eberwein dated Dec 1, 2023