CHARLEMONT SELECTBOARD
MEETING MINUTES
Monday, October 20th, 2025, 5:30 pm
in person and via conference call, Town Hall, 157 Main Street, Charlemont MA

Members in attendance: Jared Bellows, Kim Blakeslee, Wilder Sparks
Others in attendance: Sarah Reynolds, Martha Thurber, Sheryl Stanton, Anne Kaplan, Victoria Valenti, Stephanie Gelfand, Cheryl Handsaker, Bob Handsaker, Star Atkeson
On phone: Liz Bouyea, Ashley Sparks, and others

Jared Bellows called the Charlemont Select Board meeting to order at 5:30 PM.

Appointments:
5:30 pm Mohawk Trail/Hawlemont Superintendent and Mohawk School Comittee Chair RE –2D8T Action Plan and Timeline update, building discussion

- Martha Thurber and Sheryl Stanton are visiting the 8 towns' Select Boards to share updates. Ken Birch was absent.
- A copy of the 2D8T plan of action, as voted on April 16th by 2D8T Steering Committee, and timeline was provided.
- The current proposal involves moving toward a single campus for prek-12, as well as creating a grade 6–8 middle school program, at Mohawk Trail.
- It will take 5-7 years with the first phase consolidating some or all elementary schools, based on geography rather than town boundaries.
- The district has submitted a Statement of Interest (SOI) to the Massachusetts School Building Authority (MSBA) to explore creating a lower elementary wing within the middle school building at Mohawk Trail.
- A site visit was conducted by MSBA representatives in late September.
- The district expects to learn in early December whether it will move into the Eligibility Phase of the MSBA process.
- ○ The district has raised 2/3rds of $255,000. to engage Berk12 for Educational visioning for a single-campus model,
- and The Hanover Group to do further research. $45,000. is earmarked to analyze parts of the following where data is already available:
  - Transportation times
  - Projections on Economic impacts on towns
  - Tax rate implications
  - Best practices overview of other districts' reuse of school buildings
- Plans for the coming months include site visits and field trips to other schools and conversations with superintendents, students, and faculty.

Next Steps:

- If the MSBA application is accepted, the district will move forward with developing a revised regional agreement.
- If not accepted, progress will continue at a slower pace.
- Hawlemont School is jointly owned by the town and the school district-- the question remains whether the town or the district would lead that process for reuse of the building.
- The final phase envisions a single Mohawk campus, with a comprehensive plan to be brought to voters.
- Possible revisions to the regional agreement may include changes to how assessments are calculated among towns.

Timeline:

- The 2D8T Committee aims to have a regional town agreement in place before Fall of next year, in preparation for Special Town Meetings to vote on the proposal. There was concern that there wouldn't be enough people in attendance at a STM. Martha said that when it is a high interest topic, people do show up. Jared suggested that the Town spread the word.

Sequence:

- Public meetings to evaluate cost of construction is the first step. They need to crunch the numbers after receiving a reimbursement amount from MSBA. Towns will know rate applied to cost of entire project before the vote.

- Vote on regional agreement and feasibility capital. They then decide how much the 8 towns can pay over 30 years up to the cap, (30 million for example,) maybe it will need to be renovation instead of new construction. An option is to repurpose another district's plans to save on cost, like Amherst and Athol or Orange— all MSBA projects are searchable on the MSBA website.

- At the end of the feasibility phase there will be a vote to approve the financing.

- Cheryl Handsaker questioned whether the plan would be re-evaluated after the construction cost is known, if there isn't a savings. Liz Bouyea also questioned how much would be saved. Sheryl Stanton, is trusting in the process to tease out all the questions and answers, as there is a vote at many stages of the process.

- If Rowe chooses to be a part of it, the equation will change. Rowe has asked Jake Eberwein for a base level analysis, they can look and make their own decision. They still need to vote to pay for it.

- A resident on the phone got confirmation that elementary kids would not be mingling with middle schoolers in the same space. It would be a single campus, but the elementary aged students will be separated from the older students.

- Martha said that many programs will be tapped to get funding for the construction or renovation.

- Bob Handsaker would like a a non-binding town vote about whether a single campus is what Charlemont wants, in case there is a mismatch of aspirations between the steering committee and the town. Ashfield got a vote of 2/3rds yes and 1/3rd no at their town meeting.

- Sheryl let the Board know that the question has been asked of engaged focus groups from the community, "if it means we close schools, make shifts for better academic programming would you be opposed, even if it means closing your local elementary school" They did not get one single no answer in all of those meetings. There was some discussion about how the question is worded. There was interest in putting it on the warrant for Town Meeting

- A resident voice concern about losing the small schools and urged that they continue to brainstorm about options. Sheryl told her that all those conversations and configurations could be viewed on the 2D8T website.

- Kim asked whether Hawlemont and Sanderson schools could continue to be used, as both are in good structural condition. Martha will determine whether those schools have sufficient capacity to accommodate the approximately 480–500 elementary students in the district.

6:30 pm- Joe Pellegrino – Park and Recreation Commission possibility of some sort of stipend for all their work

Joe came to advocate for Tommy Shields and Bill Harker getting a stipend as a show of appreciation for their work at the Fairgrounds. Sarah said it would have to be a town meeting vote. She'll look to see what other towns are doing. There has been concern about recognizing one board and not other boards that do site visits.
Wilder Sparks made a motion to put it on the agenda for the next meeting to discuss. Jared Bellows seconded the motion. All in favor.

Administrator's Report:

1) Cybersecurity Grant Tabletop exercises at the end of October with Staff

During the week of October 27th there will be several tabletop exercises covering Business interruption and phishing scams. They will leave them with playing cards so the town can do their own exercises. Select Board members are encouraged to take part.

2) Franklin Regional Council of Governments procurement contract for Legate Hill Road Bridge, Discuss project and vote on contract.

Jared Bellows made a motion to approve and sign the FRCOG procurement contract. Wilder Sparks seconded the motion. All in favor

3) Fire Chief Project, update from calls to Chiefs in the area so far

Sarah found out that a lot of Chiefs are making on the lower end of the $70-75,000. Salary for Fire Chief. Also, many are not supplied vehicles, they use other departmental vehicles. The permanent Chief could use the brush truck.

4) Town Road Layout Project, Town Clerk pulling all town voted layouts to compile a complete list, for road and bridge projects

While working on the LEAP project (Legate Hill culverts are old and need an upgrade.) There were questions about road layouts. Sarah and Thorne started to put together all voted town ways, with layout and all roads' prescriptive uses. There is not a complete count. Some need to be replotted with real measurements. Sarah Thorne and Scott are putting information together. This will help with upcoming bridge grants and prevent overlooked road issues (like the piece of Potter's Rd.)

5) Cannabis Municipal Equity Plan and compliance items for Host Communities, need to put items on Annual Town Meeting Warrant

They will need to start getting material together for Town meeting. Sarah would like the board to take home reading material about the host community agreement and the host community equity plan. There is a bylaw template that CCC provided.

Agenda items (Discussion/Vote):

1) Highway Truck replacement, discussing possibility of funding through Chapter 90 instead of Taxes

Scott, HWY boss found a 2017 truck for sale in Dover VT, in excellent condition, for $120,000. The same truck would be @$600,000 new. It has @90,000 miles on it. Scott would like to buy it with chapter 90 money. It would replace the 1999 freightliner. Last year Scott put in for a truck and got the tractor instead.

Wilder Sparks made a motion to use chapter 90 funding to buy a truck for highway. Jared Bellows seconded the motion. All in favor

2) Police Detail Rate payment process.
Jared Bellows abstained. Sarah Bellows explained the situation. When police are used as detail for third party vendors it sometimes takes months to get paid. Some towns bill the vendors upfront to cover the cost, others create a revolving fund to keep the officers paid in a timely manner. The National Grid project is coming up. Kim Blakeslee, police liaison, will talk to Chief Pelletier to discuss. It would be a Town Meeting vote. Wilder is in favor of the Town helping out with this, in order to make Charlemont more attractive place for police to work.

3) Fire Department vehicles no longer in use 2007 Chevrolet Tahoe and 1996 International Fire pumper, does Selectboard want to deem as surplus and sell?
The firetruck mileage is low. 100,000 or so. Sarah suggested doing a request for bids process and retaining the right to reject. She can see if other towns are interested. The water system isn't working on it.
Jared Bellows made a motion to deem the items as surplus and allow Sarah to post the fire truck while reserving the right to refuse as part of it. Kim Blakeslee seconded the motion. All in favor.

4) Discuss/Vote giving the Friday after Thanksgiving off as a paid holiday.
This vote is done every year for full time employees; it could be made an official holiday for full time employees.
Kim Blakeslee made a motion to add language to the employee handbook to provide the day after Thanksgiving as paid time off for full time employees. Jared Bellows seconded the motion. All in favor.

Approve and Sign:
1) Minutes of October 6,2025
Jared Bellows made a motion to approve the minutes of October 6th. Kim Blakeslee seconded the motion. All in favor.

2) Payroll and Vendor Warrants October
Jared Bellows made a motion to approve payroll and vendor warrants. Kim Blakeslee seconded the motion. All in favor.

Jared Bellows made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 7:20. Kim Blakeslee seconded the motion. All in favor

Documents reviewed in meeting

- Agenda for October 20, 2025
- Minutes from October 6th, 2025
- Cannabis Control Commission Model Municipal Equity By-Law or Ordinance Template 6 pages
- Town of Charlemont – Host Community Equity Plan (draft?) 3 pages
- Copy of Title VII Chapter 44 Section 53C (Deposit and expenditure of compensation for off-duty or special detail work; appropriation for special fund; fee)
- Western Massachusetts Law enforcement mutual Aid Agreement, 7 pages and map.
- Copy of Title III Chapter 30B Section 15 laws relating to State officers, uniform procurement act, tangible supply: disposition
- Email from Dennis Annear to Sarah Reynoldsw dated 10/7/2025 re: Surplus vehicles
- Email form Erin Kelly to Sarah Reynolds re: LOI – 1772 Foundation Matching Preservation Grant
- 2D8T New/revised Regional Agreement timeline 2 pages
- 2D8T Recommendation to the Mohawk Trail and Hawlemont School Committees April 16, 2025, 3 pages

- FRCOG professional services agreement by and between FRCOG and the town of Charlemont Procurement of Public Works Construction Services, dated October 20, 2025, signed by SB members