

CHARLEMONT SELECTBOARD

MEETING MINUTES

Monday, February 24th, 2024, 6:00 pm

Hawlemont Regional School, 10 School Street Charlemont

Members in attendance: Kim Blakeslee, Valentine Reid

Members absent: Jared Bellows

Others in attendance: Sarah Reynold, Star Atkeson, Matthew Singer, Michael Tatro, Cheryl Handsaker, Andrea Santos, Nick Bilgri, Anna Otto, Thorne Palmer, Colleen Champ, Anna Cronin, Luke Torrito, Walker Metcalfe, Matt Gaspar, Mark D'Avino, Ken Hall

Appointments:

6:00 PM – In accordance with the provisions of Section 22, Chapter 166, of the Massachusetts General Laws, a public hearing will be held on the Massachusetts Electric Company d/b/a National Grid and Verizon New England, Inc request permission to locate poles, wires, and fixtures including the necessary sustaining and protecting fixtures, along and across the following public way Legate Hill Road, Potters Road, Phipps Road, Laurel Lane and Mountain View Drive.

Valentine Reid called the meeting to order at 6:00 PM, and read the public hearing notice. He went over the rules for the hearing.

Val asked about the two questions that were posed for National Grid at the last hearing, regarding National grid paying for the broadband fiber reattachment and concerns with vegetation management. The answers, conveyed in an email from Robert Ide, were that 1) no, National Grid would not pay for the Broadband fiber reattachment onto the new poles and that 2) National Grid would continue to partner with the Town's tree warden on the vegetation management.

Cheryl Handsaker, representing the Charlemont Broadband Committee hopes that in the future National Grid will collaborate with Broadband to try and keep costs down for changes to the poles that are not "acts of God," as Broadband had not budgeted for Grid's decision to do upgrades.

Valentine Reid motioned to close the portion of the hearing which was the collection of evidence and to move on to Select Board public deliberation. Kim Blakeslee seconded the motion. All in favor.

Val said that it was the first pole application that has a financial impact to the Town's fiber network. He is supportive of the application but would add the stipulation that National Grid pay for the reattachment for broadband on all poles applied for in the pole hearing. He'd like to set the precedent with the stipulations. They will continue to work with Grid on the issue. Cheryl pointed out that Broadband wants to make sure that they have permission to attach to poles and want Grid to pay for the attachment.

Cheryl and Kim spoke about the previous agreements that led to where they are now. Broadband committee voted to approve the original contract, but under protest, so this is continuing the history of protest. It puts the town at a disadvantage. Other regulated utilities in commonwealth do cover costs.

Valentine Reid Made a motion to approve the National Grid Pole Application for Legate Hill Road, Potters Road, Phipps Road, Laurel Lane and Mountain View Drive with two stipulations: National Grid takes the financial liability for the town Municipal Fiber Network to attach to new poles including midspans, and, National Grid grants the right for the town to attach to new poles including midspans. Kim Blakeslee seconded the motion. All in favor.

Valentine Reid motioned to close the hearing at 6:23. Kim Blakeslee seconded the motion. All in favor.

7:45 PM – Luke Torrito re: Pump Track Proposal for the Charlemont Fairgrounds

Luke presented his proposal to the Select Board. There was a good amount of discussion about the pros and cons of the project. The Select Board let him know that there were other plans already designed by The Conway School of Landscape Design, with public input, for the fairgrounds and that they would send him alternate Town owned sites to consider, as well as suggesting that he contact The Franklin Land Trust and the person who owns the gravel bank.

Agenda items:

- 1) Set Date for Pole Hearing Continuation if needed N/A
- 2) Vote on Pole, Wire and Fixtures covered by the hearing, if a continuation is not necessary. Please see motion above.
- 3) Division of Local Technical Assistance Project request from Franklin Regional Council of Governments. FRCOG reached out and offered to help Charlemont apply for grants for the ongoing projects. They know about some funding before the Town. It will be free. Sarah said yes to them and wanted to let the Board know.
- 4) Appoint Two Town Representatives to the resilient Deerfield River Watershed; Interest received from Ashley Sparks, Andrea Santos and Star Atkeson. **Kim Blakeslee motioned to appoint Andrea Santos and Star Atkeson to represent Charlemont. Valentine Reid seconded the motion. All in favor.**
- 5) Advanced Life Support Agreement from South County Emergency Medical Services. Val gave Sarah the authority to send the 3-year contract to the attorney to look over.
- 6) February 15-17th storm impact, recovery and after-action discussion.
 - The Board and meeting attendees did a debrief about the large outage caused by the big storm and how it was handled to improve procedures for the next one. They went over the timeline of events.
 - The main takeaways were that people needed an honest repair timeframe from National Grid so they could make decisions about whether to stay in place or seek shelter at a warming center or elsewhere.

Also, some stayed in place because they didn't know that pets are welcome at the Charlemont warming shelters.

- Val suggested getting in touch with Blais, and MEMA telling them that people needed realistic information.
- There was a suggestion that the BOH put together a risk awareness fact sheet for people's homes, especially useful for new residents.
- Cheryl suggested creating a handout about what to bring to the warming shelter.
- Val suggested creating a broad outline of a shelter plan including the space for pets.
- If there is no power, there is no internet and people need information. Reviving the emergency communication system came up. (The siren)
- During Irene, people were islanded. People who had lived in Charlemont for a while knew who a local resource person would be. Val volunteered to be put on a list as a local resource person, as he has solar panels and battery storage. He could fill water jugs and charge phones. Cheryl suggested spreading the word and talking about it at a town picnic.
- The spoke about the free version of a SAR topomap product which has overlays of where there is cell coverage and not.
- They spoke about the status of the Avery Brook Rd Feeder project and if that had existed would it have helped. There will be an official write up to explain what happened.
- Someone suggested making sure that infirm people are registered.
- Some neighbors are part timers, so it's hard to know whether they are there or not. Sarah suggested spreading the word that they should verify their phone numbers with the Town's emergency call system through the blackboard program.

**** 7) Letter to support Regional Municipal Digital Equity Implementation Grant application. (Cyber Seniors)**

Northfield is the lead for this grant for Cyber Seniors. It will provide funds for training, for furniture for the library and extending library hours. **Valentine Reid moved to approve and sign the Cyber seniors grant application letter. Kim Blakeslee seconded the motion. All in favor.**

Valentine Reid motioned to adjourn the meeting at 8:30 PM Kim Blakeslee seconded the motion. All in favor.

Documents reviewed in meeting

- February 24, 2025 Select Board Agenda
- Notice of Public Pole Hearing
- Letter to the Select Board from Rober Ide, Senior Program Manager, National Grid, dated February 21, 2025, re: Legate Hill Road Project answers
- Agreement for Advanced Life support Billing between Charlemont Emergency Ambulance Service and South County EMS
- Email from Valentine Reid to Sarah Reynolds, dated Feb. 19, 2025, re: After Action for Storm
- 2 Sartopo maps of Charlemont

- Email from Kimberly MacPhee to Sarah Reynolds, dated February 11th, 2025, Re: Resilient Deerfield River Watershed Coalition
- Signed Letter from the Charlemont Select Board to Michael Baldino, Director and MBI General Counsel, dated February 24, 2025 Re: Regional Digital Equity Implementation Grant Application
- Proposal for the construction of a Mountain Bike Dirt Pump Track in Charlemont