

CHARLEMONT SELECTBOARD

MEETING MINUTES

Monday, July 21st, 2025, 5:45 pm

in person and via conference call, Town Hall, 157 Main Street, Charlemont MA

Members in attendance: Kim Blakeslee, Jared Bellows, Wilder Sparks, Lynn Hathaway, Amy Wales

Members on phone: Ron Smith

Others in attendance: Sarah Reynolds, Jason Pelletier, Star Atkeson

Others on phone: Amber Tulloch

Jared Bellows called the meeting to order at 5:45 PM.

Appointments:

5:45 PM – Finance Committee – Re: End of Year Budget Transfers

Amy Wales called the Finance Committee Meeting to order.

Amy explained the procedure briefly to the new Select Board members.

Sarah Reynolds read the transfers to be made.

Amy Wales made a motion to approve the transfers as presented. Lynn Hathaway seconded the motion. Ron Smith -- yes, Lynn Hathaway – yes, Amy Wales – yes.

The SelectBoard went over the reasons for the surplus in the few budget lines. (EMT, police, tax title)

Jared Bellows made a motion to approve the transfers also. Wilder Sparks seconded the motion. All in favor.

**Unforeseen within 48 hours. Dennis Annear found a new Fire truck for the same price that was allotted for a used truck at Town Meeting. They will consider a 5-year loan for purchasing it, 90,000. a year for 5 years.

Amy Wales made a motion to adjourn @ 5:55 pm. Lynn Hathaway seconded the motion. All in favor.

6 PM – Jason Pelletier (Police Chief) Re: plans for department for year, and

department needs The SelectBoard will be conducting meetings with each of the department heads to better understand staffing, department plans and needs. Kim Blakeslee is now the Select Board liaison to police.

- Jay said signs on the river and in the parking lots would be very helpful. A lot of the calls the police get are for tubers that are simply lost because they didn't know where to get out of the river.
- Sarah mentioned that quite a few of the recently placed mile marker signs are gone. Sarah did an exit map with FRCOG and was going to do related exit signs. She'll talk to FRCOG. Jay would like the police to have a copy of the map.
- Sign spots: Hawlemont ("Last stop for tubers and access to parking and downtown Charlemont", Shunpike, Zoar (could be labeled as private,) Great Outdoors. As well as signage in the parking lots.
- The large alcohol prohibited sign that was on Zoar Road is gone. That should be replaced. Sarah suggested a metal sign about the Town's alcohol bylaws, and that Highway could plant it.
- Jay suggested extending the no parking signs on North River Rd, and using less signs, and making sure the signs are consistently worded. Sarah said that the signs were originally placed because the sides of the road were broken by the parked cars.

- Jay spoke about the department's budget needs. The mandate from Post about requiring the 6-month full time Police Academy, (part time academy has been done away with) has made it really hard for police departments to attract officers.
- Jay warned that if things don't change, there will not be a local police department for much longer.
- Jay went over the current budget (\$128,532.) compared to Shelburne's (w/similar amount of calls, \$702,413)
- \$26,800 is for expenses (paying for radios and CJIS axis, and IMC records management) and \$100,000 goes towards salaries.
- He went over the pay of the officers, sergeants and chiefs. In Charlemont it is the same across the board- \$23.52 per hour. In Shelburne, officers get \$35, sergeants receive \$40.58, and Chiefs are paid \$126,000 a year. In Rowe officers earn \$26.79 and the Chief is at \$32.
- It is less feasible for officers to supplement their main income with Part time shifts. They are required to go to full-time police academy for 6 months. Departments can't afford to pay salary and the \$6,500 tuition. The state lost 2/3rds of part timers when it was decided to do away with Bridge Academy. As police officers are in high demand, headhunting and poaching is happening. Jay mentioned the offers his officers were getting from other towns.
- Jay would like to pay 2 officers \$60,000. each, with the Chief salary at \$100,000. These numbers are a starting point. Jay believes he will need to propose incremental increases to get the department where they need to be. Sarah will see what those salaries would be with benefits and Jay can present at the next town meeting. Kim felt that the Town is reasonable, and his clear presentation will be impactful in getting the police department funded.
- Currently Charlemont has 4 part time officers and 1 full time Chief. Last year Kyle worked some full time hours (per diem) as the department had the money to do so. Kim asked Jay what the protocol was for raising the amount of hours an employee worked. Jay said the decision can be made within the department. If there is a proposed salary increase, the Select Board should do it. The question being asked of the Chief was in regards to Officer Kyle Sweeney's (internally decided) additional hours, triggering full time pay and benefits and whether that should have been a Town Meeting decision. Wilder Sparks seconded the motion. All in favor.

Administrators Report:

1) Update on South River Road Bridge Construction

The South River Road bridge construction is running behind. A beam needs to be fabricated, and the bridge cannot be used while the bad beam is exposed. They will resume work in the beginning of August

2) Franklin County Housing Rehabilitation Projects Grant Report for quarter ending 06/30/2025

The Board went over the way the program works. There is an income qualification. The loan is forgiven after 15 years. It is designed to keep people from flipping houses. There is \$97,898 in committed funds for projects going on in Charlemont.

3) Update on Town Hall Heat Pumps- installed, need to paint wire molds – discussion on color

The heat pumps are in. As part of the project, white ductwork was installed on the outside of the building which is in stark contrast to the red brick. Sarah proposed painting it a rusty red color to have it blend in with the building a bit more.

Agenda items:

1) Recreation Earmark Funds- Hawlemont Playground Equipment request

- Amber Tulloch spoke about the dilapidated play structure at Hawlemont and asked if the Town could use some of the recreation money to replace it. It's currently the only public park/playground in Charlemont and gets a good amount of use by residents as well. The company that built the younger kids' structure is good and proposed a play structure at \$68,000. It will be within the current footprint. Kim asked if the PTO could do some fundraising to offset the cost. Amber thinks it's possible that she could raise \$10,000., but with all of the funding cuts happening, she is hoping that the town can be supportive.
- Kim would like to make sure that the money isn't earmarked for something else before they answer definitively. Sarah confirmed that they had wanted to do a project at the school as well
- The Board went over what was spent from the recreation grant so far: \$30,000. for the Conway school of design plans for the fairgrounds; Some porta pottie costs. They had wanted to put aside \$400,000 towards the exhibit hall and bathrooms. There is @ \$70,000. remaining. A town Beach had been talked about, as well as buying the Willis Property (no longer for sale.) Wilder thinks it's a great opportunity to support the school without overburdening the tax rate.
- There has been no design work for Hawlemont yet. The tennis court renovation most likely won't need a design. If they do an outdoor classroom, they could bring Conway school into that for a design. Sarah will look into it.
- In addition to the previously mentioned river sign at Hawlemont, Amber suggested a "Packing out trash" sign or installing a trash receptacle. There is already plenty of inappropriate trash that they regularly clean up and she wouldn't like the additional traffic from the river sign exacerbating it.
- Also, if they could look into a doggy bag station near the entrance of the field for those that walk their dogs there, that would be good. Sarah will see if she can get a grant to cover the cost.

2) Approve language for Recreation Tax – language submitted last legislative session

Jared Bellows made a motion to approve the language and sign the letter. Kim Blakeslee seconded the motion. All in favor.

3) Earth Removal Committee annual appointments follow up - re appoint Erwin Reynolds

Jared Bellows made a motion to appoint Erwin Reynolds to the Earth removal Committee. Kim Blakeslee seconded the motion. All in favor.

Approve and Sign:

1) Minutes of July 7, 2025.

Jared Bellows made a motion to approve and sign the Minutes of July 7th. Kim Blakeslee seconded the motion. All in favor.

2) Payroll and Vendor Warrants

Jared Bellows made a motion to approve and sign the Payroll and Vendor. Kim Blakeslee seconded the motion. All in favor.

3) Vacation Request from Assessors Clerk and (**unforeseen) Secretary to Boards' vacation request

Wilder Sparks made a motion to approve the vacation requests. Jared Bellows seconded the motion, all in favor.

Jared Bellows made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 7:33. Wilder Sparks seconded the motion. All in favor

Documents reviewed in meeting

- Agenda for July 21, 2025
- July 7, 2025, Meeting Minutes
- Letter to Sarah Reynolds from Sharon Pleasant, Franklin County Regional Housing and redevelopment Authority dated July 9, 2025 re: Quarterly progress report. 2 pages.
- Email from Carlene Hayden to SelectBoard re: vacation time request, dated July 16, 2025
- Town of Charlemont FY25 End of Year Transfers 6/30/2025
- Letter from Charlemont Select Board to Representative Natalie Blais and Senator Paul Mark re: approval of rec tax language at July 21st SB meeting.