

CHARLEMONT SELECTBOARD

MEETING MINUTES

Monday, August 18th, 2025, 6:00 pm

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

Members in attendance: Kim Blakeslee, Jared Bellows, Wilder Sparks,

Others in attendance: Sarah Reynolds, Star Atkeson, Wendell Rheinheimer, Madison Schofield

Jared Bellows called the meeting to order at 6:00 PM.

Appointments:

6PM – Wendell Rheinheimer Re Town owned Avery Brook Road Property (McCloud Property)

- Wendell had spoken to Sarah about buying the land affected by the 3 Town landfill. He'd like to buy the three parcels, including the McCloud Property, @ 15 acres altogether.
- The Selectboard would prepare the proposal for a Town Meeting vote, which includes putting it out for RFP or Auction, anyone could bid on it.
- All 3 parcels have a no water restriction. The deep well is contaminated with a cocktail of toxic chemicals including PFAS leaching out of the capped 3 town landfill. There is also a digging restriction.
- Reinheimer's shallow well is rated for 2 households, and is currently being used by neighbors who will dig a new well by June 2026. Once they are off the well, Wendell can offer use of his water to the McCloud property.
- Wendell would like to know what the digging restrictions are exactly, for septic and building purposes.
- Wilder pointed out that Wendell was in a good position to buy, since he had the option to give the rights to water.
- **Wilder Sparks made a motion to allow Sarah to talk to the attorney. Jared Bellows seconded the motion. All in favor.**

6:15PM- Dana Johnson Re Ambulance Department discussion on staffing, budget, needs

The Selectboard is meeting with all of the departments to assess needs and goals. A series of questions were read by Kim, with answers given by Dana:

1. How much time spent on administrative items yearly? Dana: @ 2-3 hours a day, 7 days a week, 14 hours a week, (around 728 hours a year.)
2. How often is the ambulance inspected and licensed? Dana: every 2 years for both.
3. Who communicates with the billing company Dana: Lynn Hathaway does. Sarah asked about the many instances that bad addresses are given, and what the process is to follow up, is there a report sent back with bad addresses? They wondered if it was a zip code issue. Dana said they use the address given to them. People come from all over, a certain percentage "don't know" their address. Sarah asks what the solution is, she will talk to the billing company about what to do with bad addresses around here. Dana said they send the bill to the residential address.
4. Kim asked if there was someone being trained to take over for when Dana retires. Dana said no one is interested in being trained right now. People don't want to do it. He spoke about the stress of the job, being on call 24/7.
5. Kim asked who the second in command is. Dana said there is not a second in command. He said 3 ambulance services are trying to come up with answers to take care of each other, possibly regionalization of West County.

6. Who helps you do maintenance and repairs? Dana said currently it is low maintenance, he brings the ambulance to Green Garage for Oli Change. An EMT took the stretcher system to Plainville, Mass for repair. Eric Dean helps as well.
7. What is the ambulance staffing level? 10 people are on the books, 5 are active.
8. What are the recruitment ideas? Dana has had a sign hanging up, but says it isn't working. There have been articles in the recorder about rural areas with issues. He hasn't done radio. Kim wonders if there could be money in the budget to offer a stipend to entice a volunteer, possibly with adult classes. Dana said they have been doing that for 20 years. The person needs to pay up front (\$1,200.) to be an EMT once they start responding to calls, they get gradual reimbursement. There need to be enough people so that an EMT can block out time to not be on call. Jared recognized the challenges with recruitment; there is not a lot to offer.
9. How often does the department meet? Ideally once a month, but it's been getting hard for people to make Wednesday nights, a lot of people have other commitments.
10. What equipment does Ambulance need? Dana: we exceed what were required to have.
11. How are the annual inspections going? There won't be inspections in the near future. The truck is new, and the LUCAS is new, they will need a new defibrillator but it's not out of service yet. The manufacturers come to inspect. The stretcher is old but based on the number of service hours it was deemed ok.
What is the status of the regionalization idea, Did he procure funding for the study? Dana is waiting on August for grants. It is on hold. They want to figure out what is best for the area. The "district" is not supported by some fire and ambulance departments. Towns using a municipal agreement works well. The difference being, that if you are not satisfied, after a year, you can get out and take your truck with you. Dana finds that the problem with forming a district through legislation is that you need legislation to get out of it as well. Sarah told Dana that the Efficiency and Regionalization grant is over, the community Compact Funding has been cut.
12. Kim asked how long it would take to regionalize? If grant funding is available, after the study is done, which could take a year or two, Dana thinks it could take about 5 years to convince people to regionalize.
 You can enter a 20-year agreement with other towns.

7Pm – Thorne Palmer RE 180 RTE 8A North (Dupree Property), Clean up status with Conservation Commission

Thorne gave the history of The Conservation Commission working with Brian Dupree. He has gotten 100 or more cars out. He had been ahead of schedule but fell behind during the winter months, then mud season, vacation, and then the price of steel and scrap went down. He has asked for an extension. His class II license is based on whether he cooperates with the Conservation Commissions enforcement order. Thorne said that at this point it's not the license that is motivating Dupree, he wants to clean it up for the future of his family. Thorne said he is removing the cars from the resource area and harvesting for parts. And that it will be out of the ConComms hands once they are out of the resource area. Kim thinks they should give him an extension for the amount of time that progress was stalled, to stay on track with the initial expectation.

Wilder Sparks made a motion to extend the deadline for 6 months. Jared Bellows seconded the motion. All in favor.

Administrators Report:

- 1) Discussion on Recreation Earmark Money Projects and Grants/project monies continued from last meeting.

There are no updates on bathrooms and parking, prices are holding. Wilder said he talked to Amber about how BSE funded their playground and heard that Bill LaTaille recommended not doing it the same way, as it created administrative work for them. Amber will clarify, they will bring it back.

- 2) Municipal Vulnerability Plan Update – Vendor Selection complete, upcoming meetings.
Dodson and Flinker was chosen to do the MVP plan, they recently did the Charlemont Master Plan are are experienced with MVPs. They'd like to assemble a group of residents; it would be good to have vulnerable populations participate. Dennis Annear and Thorne Palmer are working on it.
- 3) Budget Software Grant, sample of report from the grant system for comments.
There is a grant to buy Budget software would make the towns budget easier to understand for boards and residents. The Finance Committee is onboard. It is a subscription, but you can pay for parts, it's not that expensive. You can make custom reports and there are many ways of showing the data. Wilder is interested in seeing the back end of the system.

Agenda items:

- 1) Charlemont Digital Equity Funding Agreement for Digital Equity Grant review and approve. The Board went over what the funding will cover: expanded library hours for training and purchase of Chromebooks, tablets and furniture.
Jared Bellows made a motion to Approve the funding agreement for the digital equity grant. Kim Blakeslee seconded the motion. All in favor.
- 2) Request for Letter of Support for the Northern Tier Passenger Rail Project.
Beth Giannini from FRCOG sent over a sample letter in support of the northern Tier Rail project. Sarah added a sentence to the letter, that it would help "Charlemont thrive economically."
Wilder Sparks made a motion to sign the letter. Jared Bellows seconded the motion. All in favor.
- 3) Community Solar Electrical aggregation program for Low Income Residents – Program details from Colonial Power discuss participation Sarah went over the history of this initiative. She asked the attorney. There was a question about the contract length-- 10 years instead of the typical three. Wilder is happy to look into it with Sarah.
- 4) Deerfield River Wild and Scenic follow up, answers to questions asked at August 4th meeting
There are no answers yet. Christopher Curtis said he was working on it. Wilder is concerned that language was presented to Towns about federal oversight that was not voted on in the Wild and Scenic River committee. He has misgivings about it.

Approve and Sign:

- 1) Minutes of August 4, 2025.
Wilder Sparks made a motion to accept the minutes as written. Kim Blakeslee seconded the motion. All in favor.
- 2) Payroll and Vendor Warrants
Jared Bellows made a motion to approve and sign payroll and vendor warrants. Kim Blakeslee seconded the motion. All in favor.
- 3) Gill Engineering Construction Phase Agreement for Legate Hill Bridge.
Jared Bellows made a motion to approve and sign the Construction Phase Agreement for Legate Hill Bridge. Wilder Sparks seconded the motion. All in favor.

****4) Sec to Boards Vacation request**

Jared Bellows made a motion to grant the vacation. Kim Blakeslee seconded the motion. All in favor.

Jared Bellows made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 7:56. Kim Blakeslee seconded the motion. All in favor.

Documents reviewed in meeting

- Agenda for August 18, 2025
- Aug 4, 2025, Meeting Minutes
- Amendment 1 to Agreement 22762 Between Massachusetts Technology Collaborative and Town of Charlemont. 17 pages
- Recreational Infrastructure Earmark breakdown
- Email from Beth Giannini to Sarah Reynolds and other Towns' administrators Dated August 6, 2025, re: Letter of Support for the Next Step of the Northern Tier Passenger Rail Project. Sample letter attached.
- Letter from Selectboard to Sean Duffy, Secretary of Transportation, re: support for Northern Tier Passenger Rail, dated August 18, 2025
- 2 Master Administrative services agreements for smart municipal aggregation master memorandum of understanding between Charlemont and NG OS 9 Solar LLC, 10 pages and 33 pages
- Letter to Sarah Reynolds from Gill Engineering dated July 29, 2025, re: Fee proposal for Engineering services. 3 pages. Exhibit A terms and conditions, Exhibit B cost proposal.