

CHARLEMONT SELECTBOARD

MEETING MINUTES

Monday, February 9th, 2026, ~~6:00~~ pm 5:30 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, Christopher Curtis, Andrew Petite Mange and Melanie Glynn

**Appointments:** 5:30 pm- Christopher Curtis, Andrew Petite Mange and Melanie Glynn Re: Wild and Scenic Designation effects on project reviews for waterway structures (bridges, culverts etc.)

- Christopher Curtis appeared before the Board regarding the proposed Wild and Scenic designation for portions of the Deerfield River in Charlemont. He noted that he had presented the study on August 4 2025 and had returned with Andrew (National Park Service) and Melanie (Westfield River Wild & Scenic Committee) to address technical questions previously raised. He reported that meetings have been completed with ten other communities, all of which have endorsed the designation, and that the intent is to seek unanimous support prior to submission to Congress.
- Sarah Reynolds, Town Administrator, had provided them with a list of 27 bridges (pending and completed). Of those, 10 are currently in design or construction, and three are located within the proposed designation area: Route 8A over the Deerfield River, Chickley Road, and Zoar Road over Pelham Brook. It was noted that these projects are reconstructions of existing structures, not new crossings, and impacts to the river are expected to be minimal.
- Wilder asked whether Section 7 review would apply during an emergency. The response was that emergency work would not be delayed. If FEMA funding were involved, Section 7 review would not create a barrier. The review is incorporated within existing Army Corps of Engineers Section 404 permitting and focuses on maintaining river flow, protecting habitat, and preserving the natural and historic setting. Projects typically proceed with standard conditions such as native revegetation and avoidance of invasive species.
- Wilder asked whether the existing Route 8A bridge, if built today, would raise concerns. The response was no. The abutments are not being moved, and current state stream crossing standards already require larger openings to improve biological and hydraulic function. Wild and Scenic review does not alter those standards.
- Wilder asked whether Wild and Scenic standards are more stringent than state standards. The response was that in some cases natural and bioengineered stabilization methods are encouraged over hard armoring, which can provide longer-term value. Examples from Windsor and Savoy were discussed. In one Windsor project, a bank stabilization effort failed due to construction execution; the Wild and Scenic program assisted in correcting the issue. In Savoy, three bridge replacements over 30 feet proceeded without impacts from Section 7 review.
- Wilder asked whether Section 7 review affects grant writing or delays projects. The response was that early coordination with the Park Service is encouraged to integrate river considerations during initial design. This may require communication but does not typically delay permitting once applications are complete and can in some cases streamline Army Corps review.

- Wilder asked whether designation increases project costs. The response was that there may be modest additional costs for enhanced native plantings or natural materials; however, grant funds are often available to offset those costs. The Wild and Scenic Act dates to 1968 and has not changed.
- It was explained that the program currently receives approximately \$210,000 annually to distribute among the ten designated communities. Towns may apply for management and infrastructure grants, including early engineering and permitting assistance. Funding levels vary by community and project readiness. Each town appoints a representative to the Wild and Scenic Committee; organizations may provide input but do not vote.
- Wilder asked whether funding could be reduced while regulatory requirements remain. The response was that Congress determines funding levels. While funding has historically remained steady or increased, it could be reduced; Section 7 requirements would still apply.
- Christopher Curtis emphasized that only three bridges in Charlemont fall within the proposed designation area and all are reconstructions. He noted the potential benefit of access to annual grant funds and requested the Board's endorsement prior to submission to Congress.
- At the Board's request, the presenters agreed to provide follow-up information regarding any average added costs associated with Section 7 review, including examples from Windsor. They will submit additional information in the coming weeks.

#### **Administrators Report:**

##### 1) Electrical Aggregation Meeting discussion on rates and amendment for signature

The Board reviewed required rate adjustments due to ISO day-ahead market volatility and periodic spike events (e.g., extreme weather).

It was explained that prior cost assumptions are no longer sufficient, and a rate adjustment is necessary to avoid a program shortfall. Even with the increase, the aggregation rate remains lower than current basic service rates from National Grid and Eversource. Updated information has been posted on the electrical aggregation website. They say will revisit the rate in the summer.

Wilder Sparks asked whether residents may opt out and whether they may re-enter the program. It was confirmed that customers may opt in.

**Wilder Sparks moved to approve and sign the electrical aggregation contract amendment. Jared Bellows seconded the motion. All in favor.**

##### 2) Massachusetts Emergency Management course March 12 in Deerfield Ma on Incident Command Systems for Executives and Senior Officials

The course is intended to provide senior officials with an overview of the emergency coordination and disaster response structure.

It was noted that the training is beneficial, particularly for understanding procedures during emergency incidents. Jared said he has participated in prior ICS trainings and found them informative. The session is scheduled from 8:30 a.m. to 11:30 a.m.

Wilder would like to attend and will confirm his availability. A flyer is available, and anyone having difficulty registering should reach out to Sarah.

3) Report on Charlemont Housing Rehabilitation Revolving Fund from the Franklin County Regional Housing and Redevelopment Authority

The fund balance began and ended the reporting period at \$7,288, as no applications were received and no funds were expended. There are currently no households on the waitlist. It was noted that the program remains available should residents apply and that sufficient funds are on hand to support eligible rehabilitation proposals.

4) Budget Summary from Rural Director on Governor's proposed Budget.

The Board reviewed a budget summary from the Rural Director regarding the Governor's proposed budget. The Board may provide feedback and express support or concerns during an upcoming listening session.

**Liaison Reports:**

1) School Assessment Calculation email from Ken Rocke and William Lataille

It was reported that a recent 2D8T multi-town meeting with Select Boards and Finance Committees resulted in few substantive changes, and the overall process will be delayed by one year. A proposal by Martha Thurber to allow 2D8T action without unanimous town approval was rejected. Many questions and concerns were raised including who would accept a school building on behalf of the two towns, as no unified Charlemont-Hawley body currently exists.

The Board discussed correspondence from Ken Rocke and William Lataille regarding school assessment calculations.

Mr. Rocke asserted that Charlemont was mis-assessed by the Mohawk Trail Regional School District and could be owed approximately \$90,000 based on a five-year rolling calculation. He offered to assist in reviewing the figures. Kim inquired about his interest; it was noted he is a local education advocate. Wilder Sparks suggested inviting Mr. Rocke to present to the Board, and members agreed to extend an invitation. Additional correspondence between Mr. Rocke and Mr. Lataille was noted.

**Agenda items (Discussion/Vote):**

1) Request For Proposals (RFP) for Fairgrounds Bathrooms

The Board discussed releasing a Request for Proposals (RFP) for improvements to the Fairgrounds bathrooms, to be funded through the recreation grant. It was noted that restroom upgrades have been identified as a priority by residents. Mike Hayden had found state park restroom plans to use for the proposal

Kim did not see the previously discussed gender neutral bathrooms on the plan. Sarah said the layout was flexible. The Board brainstormed possible configurations including a family bathroom and agreed on two stalls per gender and two designated gender-neutral bathrooms.

**Jared Bellows made a motion to issue the RFP for the Fairgrounds bathroom project. Kim Blakeslee seconded the motion. All in favor.**

2) RFP for Fairgrounds Parking

The Board also discussed issuing an RFP for Fairgrounds parking lot improvements, noting that if proposals exceed available funding, the project need not proceed.

**Jared Bellows made a motion to issue the RFP for the parking area. Kim Blakeslee seconded the motion. All in favor.**

**Approve and Sign:**

1) Minutes of January 26, 2026

**Jared Bellows made a motion to approve the Minutes of January 26 as written. Kim Blakeslee seconded the motion. All in favor.**

2) Payroll and Vendor Warrants

**Jared Bellows made a motion to approve the payroll and vendor warrants. Kim Blakeslee seconded the motion. All in favor.**

**Jared Bellows made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 6:49 PM Wilder Sparks seconded the motion. All in favor.**

Documents reviewed in meeting

- Agenda of February 9<sup>th</sup>, 2026
- Minutes of January 26, 2026
- Request for Proposals (4 pages) for stand-alone, handicap-accessible bathrooms at the Charlemont Fairgrounds, including comfort station rehabilitation plans and Mohawk Trail State Forest camping area plans (2 pages).
- Request for Proposals (4 pages) for parking lot and driveway improvements at the Charlemont Fairgrounds.
- Email correspondence from Christopher Curtis to Sarah Reynolds dated September 25, 2025, through December 18, 2025, regarding a Select Board meeting on the Deerfield River (6 pages).
- Letter from Nathan Moreau, Massachusetts Emergency Management Agency, to Franklin County municipal officials regarding ICS-402 (ICS Overview for Executives and Senior Officials) course offering, including flyer (with picture of Mayor Menino!)
- Letter from Sharon Pleasant, Franklin County Regional Housing and Redevelopment Authority, dated January 2026, regarding the annual report for the Charlemont Housing Rehabilitation Revolving Loan Fund for the period January 1, 2025 through December 31, 2025.
- Summary of the Governor's FY2027 Budget (HB2).
- ISO-NE Day-Ahead Ancillary Services Market (DASI/DAAS) materials, including two charts (5 pages).
- Email correspondence among Martha Thurber, Ken Rocke, William Lattaille, and Sheryl Stanton (cc: Heath and Charlemont Select Boards), dated January 30 through February 5, 2026, regarding FY26 local enrollment and assessment calculations (11 pages).