

Town of Charlemont
Joint Finance Committee and Select Board Meeting Minutes
May 13th, 2026, 4:00 p.m.
Town Hall and via Conference Call

Board Members Present: Lynn Hathaway, Amy Wales, Jay Healy, Kim Blakeslee, Wilder Sparks, Ron Smith, Rich Filoramo

Others present: Sarah Reynolds, Star Atkeson

Amy Wales called the meeting to order at 4:00 pm

- 1) Review/ Approve minutes from April 29, 2026
Minutes are not ready, will be put on next agenda.

- 2) Capital article recommendations

Article 7 Assessor's Software

Amy Wales made a motion to use Free Cash to fund Article 7, APO software. Ron Smith seconded the motion. All in favor.

Article 8 Highway Truck

Amy Wales made a motion to use Free Cash to fund Article 8 Highway Truck, (including extended warrantee). Lynn Hathaway seconded the motion. All in favor.

Article 9 \$6,500 Town cemetery maintenance.

Amy Wales made a motion to use Free Cash to fund Article 9 Cemetery maintenance. Rich Filoramo seconded the motion. All in favor.

Article 10 40,000 bridge repairs expense fund. **Ron Smith made a motion to fund the \$40,000. bridge repair with Free Cash. Rich Filoramo seconded the motion. All in favor.**

Article 11, 40,000 for Highway infrastructure repair. **Ron Smith made a motion to fund the \$40,000. HWY infrastructure with Free Cash. Rich Filoramo seconded the motion. All in favor.**

Article 12 \$5,000. Town Hall Bathroom Remodel. **Ron Smith made a motion to fund the \$5,000. bathroom remodel using Free Cash. Lynn Hathaway seconded the motion. All in favor.**

Article 13, About starting a department equipment stabilization fund. The Board decided to recommend using current stabilization fund. **Amy Wales made a motion to pass on article 13. Rich Filoramo seconded the motion. All in favor.**

Articles 14, 15 and 16 will not be voted on until the Committee knows how Town Meeting votes.

- The Board would like to put the remaining \$64,000. in stabilization.
- Jay brought up concerns about sustainability of covering expenses with Free Cash.
- Others countered that they have been steadily feeding stabilization and haven't drawn on it yet because of the Free Cash availability. Free Cash must be spent by June 30.

- They spoke about the Capital Planning Committee's role in deciding what department items get brought before Town Meeting. Nothing frivolous is brought to TM.
- Wondering what other Towns do to create capital plans that extend out over years. HWY has a hard time predicting future costs. Advice was given to add 2 or 3% for inflation; also DOR can help with calculating anticipated costs.

3) Police budget recommendation vote

Sarah sent Amy the FRCOG wage and salary study. Amy calculated the average salary from the surrounding towns that are comparable, the Board emphasized Colrain as the most comparable.

Police will explain their ask on Town Meeting floor. There is question about whether there are 40 hours of administrative work for a chief. The Board strongly suggests that the SB draw up a contract with the Police Chief Stipulating a set number of patrol hours. Although the exact number of complaints about not seeing the police chief on patrol is unknown, there is a lot of buzz about it around town.

Amy wants to reconsider the earlier vote with the wage for police Chief set at \$85,000.

Kim went over her meetings with Chief Pelletier again. Just because there are other departments that are underpaid, does not have bearing on the legitimacy of a department head coming to the table and making his department's needs be known. She believes it was for the good of the Town, not just the department. He was turned down last year; this is the second year in a row he has spoken up.

They spoke about the other departments. HWY is low.

Finance Committee would like the SB to research the wage issue by next Town meeting.

Amy pointed out that it is standard practice is to negotiate a wage.

Lynn would like to bring up idea of regional police chief again.

Amy Wales made a motion to recommend the police salary be \$82,552.51 and that the Full-time officer be at \$55,465.95. Rich Filoramo seconded the motion. All in favor.

- This number does not include FICA or retirement or health insurance.
- Rich strongly suggests SB require police, including chief, to patrol. Direct him, include job description, draw up a contract that stipulates so many hours of paperwork and a set number of patrol hours. Select Board is in charge of the police. Some thought the Chief should have had a formal conversation with the Select Board prior to making himself full time last year.
- It was said that the Police Chief needs to sign in when on duty, he is not covered by insurance if he is not signed in. Dispatch will keep a copy of his ledger. Kim said she had suggested the police chief sign in and out, using control, for transparency, but he was opposed to the idea. He needs to prove there are 40 hours of administrative work.

School budget recommendation vote

Rich Filoramo made a motion to recommend the assessment request from Hawlemont. Ron Smith seconded the motion. All in favor.

The Board brainstormed solutions for the school problem. A few members agree that using Mohawk as one of two elementary facilities could work.

4) Free cash amount

The town was \$77,000 overdrawn on the warrant side; when that is resolved, the remaining Free Cash money is \$344,000

- \$12,766 not reimbursed during COVID, will hit against tax rates. FEMA threw out some things.
- Ambulance is coming up short, other providers are taking the calls. Not enough revenue to pay for itself. Conversation for later.

Amy Wales made a motion to adjourn at 5:07 PM, Ron Smith seconded the motion. All in favor.

Documents viewed at meeting:

Agenda of 5/13/2026

Minutes of 4/29/2026

Final budget

2026 Town Meeting Warrant