

Town of Charlemont
Joint Finance Committee and Select Board Meeting Minutes
March 12th, 2025
Town Hall and via Conference Call

Board Members Present: Rich Filoramo, Ron Smith, Jay Healy, Lynn Hathaway, Amy Wales, Kim Blakeslee
Others present: Dana Johnson, Bob Handsaker, Cheryl Handsaker, Sarah Reynolds, Star Atkeson

Rich Filoramo called the meeting to order at 4:31PM.

APPOINTMENTS:

4:45 Dana Johnson, Ambulance Director, to speak about 2026 department budget

Rich asked Dana to highlight the budget. They had looked at the budget at the previous meeting.

- As of January 1st they are at 45% of call volume of the previous year in January (82 calls this year, 177 last year)
- There are many folks that are on aid, Medicare and Medicaid don't cover costs, there have been a number of calls to The Oxbow.
- More costs are coming, The Automatic cardiac machine is no longer serviced as of 2025. It needs to be replaced for \$25,000. The Board let him know that it would be a Capital Item. They spoke about the machine. Ambulance has had one since 2010.
- Dana is happy with the ambulance. 1800 miles on it now. The well-maintained old one was traded in.
- EMS is losing people, especially in West County, something needs to be done. Charlemont works well with Shelburne and Colrain.
- Vehicle maintenance and Radio maintenance costs are down because they are new.
- Dana will get a capital Planning appointment next Wednesday at 4:00.

5:00 Bob Handsaker, Broadband Committee, to speak about 2026 budget

- Bob covered the positive return on their investment to have a resilient backhaul, they had lost 2 links at one point and the core networks stayed up. They spoke about the digital equity grant for "cyber seniors."
- The Broadband network overall is very good, there is a 70% take rate.
- Last year at Town Meeting the numbers were wrong, they had revoted 2024, not 2025. The accountant said that it will be ok.
- 30% of the town is not signed up, they believe it is the cost. The ACP subsidy went away. The fill cost of a new install is 1,100. If the Town picks up \$500. It would bring that to \$600. They want Whip City to commit. They also thought of increasing the install subsidy by 200, so the out of pocket would be \$400.
- They want to create a subsidy for people who qualify for lifeline to take an extra \$30 off the monthly bill. Lifeline currently has a \$9.25 monthly discount.
- There will need to be a contingency for power grid improvement. Broadband is filing public comment on a DPU request for comments regarding pole attachments. National Grid should put in their project budget the cost of moving municipal attachments.
- Retained earnings is at 428,000 at the end of 2024, on budget this year.
- Kim is in favor of the low-income subsidy.
- In BB budget, the income is not broken down yet. Installation costs are not separated.
- The 500 installation subsidy would be paid back within 8-10 months. They'd like to get it reflected in the budget.

AGENDA ITEMS:

1. Review/ Approve minutes from 2/26/2025

Rich Filoramo made a motion to accept the 2/26 Minutes as written. Ron Smith seconded the motion. All in favor.

2. Administrators Report:

a. New budget numbers

- Electricity budget (from space heater use) will go up @\$2,000.
- The Select Board decided on the Cost-of-Living adjustment of 2.5%
- Property and casualty Insurance (now includes the ambulance and cruiser) will go up \$1500.
- Dog kennel assessment has been lowered again and will increase incrementally instead.

b. Rec tax update

- It has stalled again. The Town meeting vote would need to happen again for refiling. Jay thinks that filing it as a statewide option gives more opportunity for it to get shut down.
- Sarah said the Governor was onboard as per their recent meeting in Conway, and suggested grouping it in with meals and rooms (local options taxes)

**** unforeseen items within the last 48hours and the next meeting:**

- The Fire Engine is in the federal budget, that could be a problem.
- The next FinComm meeting will be after the School Sustainability meeting on the 19th. Lynn and Rich will attend that meeting. After the meeting there will be a presentation of the financials, reflecting the implications of each option. The Board did a brief overview of the different options on the table.

Rich Filoramo motioned to adjourn at 5:45. Lynn Hathaway seconded the Motion. All in favor.

Next meeting to be held on April 9, 2025.

Documents viewed at meeting:

Agenda of 3/12/2025

Minutes of 2/26/2025

Pro forma Operating Budget for Broadband 3/11/2025

Draft FY 2026 Budget Worksheet (003)