

CHARLEMONT SELECTBOARD
MEETING MINUTES
Monday, May 5th, 2025, 6:00 pm
Hawlemont Elementary School, 10 School Street, Charlemont MA

Members in attendance: Kim Blakeslee, Valentine Reid, Jared Bellows

Others in attendance: Sarah Reynolds, Star Atkeson, Scott Randall, Doug Telling, Charlotte Dewey. People in attendance for the pole hearing, see attendance sheet

Valentine Reid called the meeting to order at 6:00 pm.

Appointments:

6:00 PM - In accordance with the provisions of Section 22, Chapter 166, of the Massachusetts General Laws, a public hearing will be held on the Massachusetts Electric Company d/b/a National Grid and Verizon New England, Inc request permission to locate poles, wires, and fixtures including the necessary sustaining and protecting fixtures, along and across the following public ways Avery Brook Road, East Hawley Road, South River Road, River Road, Tinney Road, Burrington Road, Harris Mountain Road

Valentine Reid called the hearing to order at 6PM and read the Hearing Notice. He said meeting was being recorded. Val went over the plan for the hearing. They would close the evidence collecting portion of the hearing and then deliberate without public comment and then vote. As there were two other hearings where people spoke he proposed capping each resident's input time at 2 minutes.

Pat Shea of National Grid went over the pole replacement project. He shared some information about outage data from 2019-2024, as well as talking about the outage in February.

Jonathan Mirin spoke, asking the Board to keep the Charlemont Board of Health's recommendation in mind when voting and stipulate a disability accommodation for Godelieve Richard by using fiber instead of antennae. Wireless is not part of the proposal, but it is the last time the utility will be in front of a board. He is requesting to uphold the right of his wife to live peaceably. He offered to pay the difference in cost of a few hundred yards of fiber vs. 2-4 antennae.

John McLaughlin, Mirin's lawyer, remarked on the response he got from the National Grid lawyer to his own memo saying that the NG lawyer cited cases that were not applicable to this situation. The Town was not overly regulating and taking the place of DPU. He had some other concerns and asked the Select Board to look at the last memo. He asked them to have their attorney look at it.

Mark Reilly the NG Lawyer said that to impose a condition would be outside the Town's Authority. He said they are happy to work with Jonathan Mirin on a solution.

Meredith Wecker spoke in opposition to the Avery Brook Road route for aesthetic reasons and because she also has EMF sensitivity and it will affect her operation of the farm stand at 225 Avery Brook Road. After dealing with her own health, she also believes that everyone needs to minimize their exposure to EMF.

Jacob Rheinheimer is against it for aesthetic purposes as well because of the impending EMF antennae. Their houses are close to the road. They will have to consider whether they want to stay.

Susan Cooperstein, as well, against the project because of aesthetics and EMF, especially as it is next to the Art and Ecology Center, reiterates what Ezekiel Mirin said about his mother Godelieve, at the last hearing, as well, Godelieve works in the community, pays taxes and the health concern is valid.

Eric Dean, talked about the diameter of the poles and the height, and that rate payers get charged when there is an outage. He mentioned that he has the most property along the route.

Star Atkeson said that work is harder to do in the air than on the ground, it's probably cheaper in the long run to bury, there are vulnerable people on Avery Brook Road, and the houses are close to the road. She is a proponent of burying.

Jonathan Mirin read Godelieve's letter: she is trying to send a letter with her attached diagnosis, which is the reason she can't be at the hearing. She would like electric to be installed, the least amount as possible, and shielded and underground. 3 times more power is a big change, Massachusetts should keep some places with low pollution.

Val asked if there were more questions.

Kim asked Jonathan Mirin what he meant about incurring the cost of the fiber whether he meant burying it at the property? He said that he would pay the difference of running fiber versus having antennae, if it meant they could keep living there.

Sarah Reynolds said that the antennae were not part of the proposal and the rules were that you spoke to the merits of the topic at hand. Kim remarked that is was a lot of money. Mirin said that the Board was the last man and woman standing between "us" and the smart grid. Kim said that wasn't what was in front of them. Then, Mirin said, he would ask that it be underground at this location.

Valentine Reid made a motion to close the evidentiary portion of the hearing. Jared Bellows seconded the motion. All in favor.

Valentine spoke about his role as an elected official, to consider impact to all residents. He believes that NG supplied sufficient evidence that it was the best path. Val had researched burying and said that the ledge is everywhere and unpredictable. He spoke about data that NG had provided regarding the benefits to the residents of completing phase 2 of the project. He spoke about a conversation with MLP regarding the pole lease agreement. Spoke about the SB not being able to restrict wireless structures and running the risk of costing the taxpayers legal debt if they overstepped their authority.

He did not find compelling research from the opposing viewpoint. He is in support of the National Grid project as written. He believes that power resiliency across the area is crucial.

Kim said she appreciated hearing everyone's voices, and that she had become select board member to represent all the residents. She has also done research and spoke of her findings, concluding that that level of electromagnetic radiation should not impact the body and that was sourced from the federal government. She wanted to stay focused on what was in front of them. In her vote she is supporting the greater population.

Jared said the poles would barely be larger in diameter than what is there and would only be 5 feet higher, so does not feel there will be a problem with aesthetics. He feels for the residents who are sensitive but is happy to hear that NG is willing to work with them. He feels obligated to go for the greater good.

Valentine Reid made a motion to approve the pole application as written following the public ways Avery Brook Road, East Hawley Road, South River Road, River Road, Tinney Road, Burrington Road, and Harris Mountain Road, as submitted by National Grid. Kim Blakeslee seconded the motion. All in favor.

Agenda items:

1) Vocational School Tuition Budget line for FY 26 – Acceptance of Charlemont Residents to Franklin Tech and Smith Vocational for School Year 2025-2026 requires an increase to the budget line.

There are three more students that are going to Tech. Charlemont needs to budget for 3 Special Ed spots which are \$25,730 each. (Whether the students require Special Ed or not is unknown) This will be an increase of \$77,190 to the budget line.

Votech has not responded to the town with a cost for the town to become a member town yet. It will not be in time for Town Meeting.

Valentine Reid made a motion to recommend the Finance Committee fund Votech at the level to match the cost of 3 additional Special Ed Students. Jared Bellows seconded the Motion. All in favor.

2) Contract renewal for Franklin Regional Council of Governments Building, Gas and Electric Inspection Services review and approval.

Sarah had talked to Kim about Board of Health and the enforcement piece, Linda Dunlavy had called Sarah knowing that the town was looking into the possibility of doing it themselves. It started a good discussion regarding follow-through. Val asked when the contract renewal was due and said he'd like to ask the Planning Board their opinion on the Zoning Enforcement piece.

3) Nominate Inspector of animals for 2025-2026 term

It was confirmed that Erwin Reynolds had resigned from his position as animal inspector, verbally, to Jared.

Rob Lingle will continue. Jared Bellows made a motion to nominate Rob Lingle. Valentine Reid seconded the motion. All in favor.

4) One day liquor license application for American Whitewater River Fest, August 2nd at Berkshire East

Valentine Reid made a motion to accept and approve the one-day liquor license. Kim Blakeslee seconded the motion. All in favor.

5) Right of First Refusal for 0 Legate Hill Road Map 12 Lot 1, 22.52 acres belonging to Dean Rankin

The Board spoke about scenarios in which the town would do such a thing as try and make money from stumpage fees. As of now though, **Valentine Reid made a motion to exercise our right of first refusal by declining to purchase 0 Legate Hill. Jared Bellows seconded the motion. All in favor.**

6) Letter of Support request for Deerfield River Wild and Scenic Grant

Ashley Sparks and others sent in a sample letter of support for a second phase of the Deerfield River Wild and Scenic Grant and asked the Select Board for support. Everyone is in support. **Valentine Reid made a motion to sign the letter, as provided to the Select Board, to the Department of Environmental Affairs. Kim Blakeslee seconded the motion. All in favor.**

Approve and Sign:

1) Minutes of April 7th and April 22, 2025

Val and Kim wanted changes to be made to the minutes of April 7th. Star will make the changes and bring back to the next meeting for approval.

Valentine Reid made a motion to approve and sign the minutes of April 22nd, 2025, Kim Blakeslee seconded the motion. All in favor.

2) Payroll and Vendor Warrants

These will be signed at the next meeting.

7:30 PM - Board Of Health RE: Appoint Scott Randall to the Board of Health

The Select Board met Scott Randall and went over his credentials. Everyone was impressed with Scott Randall. They spoke a bit about the work of BOH, whether there were specific roles for each member. Doug said that there are not, though one may act as liaison to certain other committees, like the Abandoned and Derelict Housing committee.

Kim Blakeslee made a motion to welcome Scott Randall to the Board of Health for the remainder of the term. Valentine Reid seconded the motion. All in favor.

7: 40 PM – Charlotte Dewey RE: Grant for Sprinkler System for the Charlemont Inn

Charlotte talked about the grant she was applying for, for the Inn. The Board went over the topic of whether their support of the grant application had any bearing on the legal case with the Inn. It does not, the grant would go with the property. It will be for fire suppression and an elevator.

Valentine Reid made a motion to approve and sign the grant letter for the Charlemont Inn as written. Jared Bellows seconded the motion. All in favor.

Valentine Reid motioned to adjourn at 7:45. Jared Bellows seconded the motion. All in favor.

Documents reviewed in meeting

- Agenda of May 5, 2025
- Letter from National Grid dated April 21, 2025, re: Follow up to April 14 meeting regarding the restoration improvements following February 16 to 20,2025 1019W1 outage. Signed Shaun T. Vacher
- Letter dated April 21,2025 form National Grid to The Select Board re: Petition of Massachusetts Electric Company to Locate Poles and Wires for 19W1 Electrical Distribution Line. Signed Joanne DeRose
- Letter Dated April 9, 2025, to Charlemont Select Board re: Petition of Massachusetts Electric Company to Locate Poles and Wires for 19W1 Electrical Distribution Line signed Mark R. Reilly
- Letter from Bob Dean, FRCOG dated April 25, 2025, to Select Board Members, re: FCCIP Contract renewal
- email from Ashley Sparks dated April 30, 2025 to SelectBoard and Town Administrator re: Wild and Scenic Deerfield River, attachment: Sample Letter of support for Woodlands Partnership Grant
- email from Christopher Curtis to Town Administrator (and other TAs) dated April 20, 2025, re: Deerfield River Wild and Scenic River Update, attachment: Sample Letter of support for Woodlands Partnership Grant
- April 22, 2024 SelectBoard Meeting Minutes

- Letter to the Underutilized Properties Program from the SelectBoard dated May 5th, 2025, re: letter of support for the Charlemont Inn for fire suppression installation and ADA systems installation.
- Special Alcohol (One Day) License dated April 27, 2025, American Whitewater River Fest (Aug 2)
- Letter and documentation from Dean Rankin re: Land Located at 0 Legate Hill dated April 28, 2025, Berkshire East.