

**CHARLESTOWN SELECTBOARD  
WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 21, 2022 AT 6:30 P.M.  
CHARLESTOWN PUBLIC LIBRARY COMMUNITY ROOM**

Selectboard Present: Jeremy Wood (Chair), Nancy Houghton, William Rescsanski, Jeff Lessels (Vice-Chair), Shelly Blouin-Andrus

Staff Present: Jordan Cannon, Recording Secretary  
Kelly Wright, Administrative Assistant  
Keith Weed, Highway/Transfer  
Mark LaFlam, Fire Chief  
Jason West, Building Maintenance/Custodian  
Shawn O'Hearn, Assistant Fire Chief  
Patricia Chaffee, Tax Collector/ Town Clerk

Others Present: Richard Carter, Bob Davis, Sara Davis, Robert Knowles, Robert Raymond, Robert Noll, Jason McMahon

**Call to Order & Pledge of Allegiance**

Mr. Wood called the meeting to order at 6:30 p.m. and led the pledge of allegiance for those in attendance.

Mr. Wood commented that the recognition of public input would wait until after the Committee Reports.

**Committee Reports**

Mr. Wood stated that the Conservation Commission is working on completing a survey. Ms. Houghton stated that ZBA had no meeting this week. Ms. Blouin-Andrus stated site base is working with the administration and the budget committee for the budget season. Ms. Houghton stated that the Finance Committee went over the executive budget and discussed fire department.

Mr. Rescsanski stated he had nothing to report for the Heritage Commission. Mr. Rescsanski stated that Planning approved minor site plan and 3 warrant articles and approved a sign. Ms. Blouin-Andrus stated that the recreation department will have a meeting next week, are planning a winter carnival, are working on getting the ice rink filled, and basketball is underway. Ms. Houghton presented the town hall update. Mr. West stated that the floors are 90% done and there are floor mats coming and they should be here after Christmas. Mr. Lessels made a comment on library's efforts on Monday night with the tree lighting and Christmas party and fire department delivered Santa and there was a bonfire.



45

46 **New Business**

47 Mr. Wood welcomed Scott and Mike Marsh. Mr. Scott Marsh introduced himself and his  
48 brother, Mike Marsh. Mr. Scott Marsh stated that after his analysis the town's properties  
49 are assessed at 70% of what they are selling for. He stated that the value has been  
50 escalating over the past few years. Mr. Scott Marsh stated he is present tonight to  
51 answer questions. Mr. Wood asked what this change does to the town. Mr. Wood asked  
52 if there were other towns with this anomaly. Mr. Scott Marsh stated that Sullivan  
53 County has a 25% change from last year. Mr. Lessels asked if these changes are COVID-  
54 related. Mr. Scott Marsh responded that it is not COVID-related, but a result of the  
55 market. Mr. Mike Marsh stated that the average length on the market dropped to 30  
56 days because the inventory is short. Mr. Wood thanked Mr. Scott Marsh and Mr. Mike  
57 Marsh for coming to the meeting tonight. Ms. Houghton asked if there were special  
58 rates for tiny houses. Mr. Scott Marsh stated that this is something they are looking at  
59 now, but there is not a lot of market data on what they resell for.

60 Mr. Wood then commenced a discussion regarding the fire department budget and  
61 invited Chief LaFlam to present. Mr. Wood reflected that the fire department has  
62 requested \$19 across the board for all employees. Chief LaFlam reflected on the initial  
63 budget, and stated that he would like to present the changes to the present budget.

64 Chief LaFlam identified the increases as: part-time training increase by \$350, computer  
65 support \$2,500-3,000 increase. He stated that their computer keeps shutting down and  
66 they have to psychically reset the computer. He stated that actual computer support is  
67 going up, but not certain how much. He stated that medical expenses increased by  
68 \$1,000. Ms. Houghton asked how the fire department went over on this line item. Chief  
69 LaFlam stated that part of the reason is that the extra supplies came out of that line even  
70 though the funds in fact came out of a special article. He stated that the dues and  
71 subscriptions increased by \$500 because state fire insurance policy went up. He stated  
72 that vehicle repair increased by \$3,500, and radio communications increased \$400  
73 because they did not get the grant they were hoping for. He stated there is an increase of  
74 \$2,000 for SCVA maintenance line. He stated they have to do quarterly testing of air  
75 supply machine. Total budget was \$24,580 increased up 14 1/2% with adding 40% more  
76 calls for EMS line.

77 Chief Connors asked the Selectboard to replace the computer because it would be better  
78 if both departments could use the same equipment and software and suggested the  
79 possibility of capital outlay. He stated that the computer is locking up and is not good on  
80 that server. Chief Connors stated that this is an item the fire department needs now. Mr.  
81 Wood stated that the Selectboard does not mind if this is moved to Capital Outlay, and  
82 Chief LaFlam acknowledged that he would do so. Mr. Lessels stated to not lose track of  
83 the statements. Chief LaFlam stated that they are attempting to see if they can get Reeds  
84 to agree to a contract so they can get a better deal on maintenance for fire trucks. The  
85 Selectboard discussed the possibility of getting a contract to do maintenance on fire  
86 trucks. Mr. Wood advised Chief LaFlam and Ms. Wright to contact S.G. Reed to see if  
87 they can get a contractual agreement.



88 Discussions then transitioned to the payroll line item of the fire department 2023  
89 budget. Mr. Wood asked that with the \$19 an hour across the board, what the incentive  
90 is. Mr. Wood stated that he personally could see Fire Fighter II at \$19 an hour, but less  
91 for Fire Fighter I. Mr. Wood reflected on Chief LaFlam's previous advocacy of \$19 an  
92 hour. Mr. Wood stated that the fire department has support from the town. Mr. Wood  
93 stated that the fire department could place this request in a warrant article. Chief  
94 LaFlam stated that the line item is increasing by \$13,500. Ms. Blouin-Andrus then  
95 stated that Chief LaFlam's initial presentation had this increase of \$13,500. Chief  
96 LaFlam stated the present budget for salary contains a \$2 per hour raise over what his  
97 staff are making now.

98 Robert Knowles, resident of Charlestown asked why is it that some municipal fire  
99 departments can't be paid for calls, Mr. Wood stated that they can't do half and half and  
100 they are paid per call. Mr. Rescsanski reviewed the budget with Chief LaFlam for  
101 clarification on the average number of calls and this is only on the minimum hour per  
102 call. Chief LaFlam stated that it would stay at 1 hour minimum.

103 Mr. Lessels reflected that the fire department's total of \$62,000 increase reflects the  
104 increases he is discussing. Mr. Lessels asked if the stipend line item changed, to which  
105 Chief LaFlam responded that it did not. Ms. Houghton stated that those who got an  
106 increase in stipend last year should get a smaller increase so that other fire personnel  
107 can be brought up. Mr. Rescsanski asked how the pay rate gets figured in. Mr. Wood  
108 stated that the officers have a stipend and if they are in the office they are getting  
109 stipend and when they go out on calls they are getting the hourly pay. Ms. Blouin-  
110 Andrus stated she has not run the figures that Chief LaFlam based his increases on  
111 everyone getting a \$2 raise and the top 3 officers getting more. She stated that all the  
112 fire fighters except for those without stipends get a \$3 raise, with the individuals getting  
113 stipends will get a \$1.5-2.5 raise since they got an increase in their stipends last year.  
114 Chief LaFlam stated that if they did this then some of his fire fighters would make more  
115 than a lieutenant.

116 Mr. Lessels motioned to accept the budget as presented with \$2 dollar raise per fire  
117 fighter, \$3 for captain, \$5 for assistant chief, and \$10 for chief. Ms. Blouin-Andrus  
118 seconded the motion. Mr. Wood asked when it comes to medics, does this include them  
119 or is it something separate. Chief LaFlam stated that the proposed budget includes EMS  
120 and fire fighters. Robert Raymond of the fire department stated that with this budget we  
121 are keeping the rescue and it's no longer a consideration because the voters already  
122 voted. Mr. Lessels stated that this is topic we are going to discuss. He stated that the  
123 voters did not approve an EMS. Mr. Raymond asked what the allocation was from last  
124 year. Roll Call: Ms. Blouin-Andrus (yes), Mr. Wood (yes), Mr. Lessels (yes) Ms.  
125 Houghton (no), Mr. Rescsanski (no).

126 Mr. Lessels stated he would like to discuss the letter from the fire department.

127 Mr. Wood called recess to the meeting at 7:30 p.m.

128 The meeting reconvened at 7:39 p.m.

129 Mr. West was called to present. Ms. Blouin-Andrus stated the \$16,500 for cemetery  
130 maintenance and repair includes the roof and this should be moved to capital outlay.



131 There were no questions for Mr. West, and Ms. Blouin-Andrus advised him he would  
132 have to go before the Finance Committee.

133 Mr. Lessels called Chief LaFlam forward again. Mr. Lessels stated he had a line of  
134 questioning and a couple statements to make. Mr. Lessels stated he found the letter  
135 from the fire department addressed to the Selectboard on Monday. He stated that he did  
136 not see his signature on this letter. First thing he wanted to say is that he heard this  
137 letter was on Facebook. He stated he brought the letter to the Finance Committee on  
138 Monday so the they would have an idea of what is going on. He stated the first thing he  
139 wanted to point out, the Selectboard has had revised almost all of town policies. He  
140 stated that Ms. Dezan has presented this to all town employees. He stated one of the  
141 more recent policies is a social media policy. He stated that he does not go on Facebook  
142 himself, but he will say that in consulting with attorneys that this is in serious violation  
143 of the policy they can take serious action. Chief LaFlam stated that the letter was not  
144 even thought of until accusations from the Selectboard that implied the fire department  
145 was doing something very wrong, and they are trained for emergencies and accusations  
146 were made both sides. Mr. Lessels stated to forget that and he does not personally recall  
147 that because it should be disregarded because the letter is a violation of the social media  
148 policy. Mr. Lessels stated he does not know how the Selectboard feels about it because it  
149 puts them in a bind because we are not exercising our responsibility in not responding  
150 to a violation of social media policy. He stated that the town has consulted legal in  
151 regards to this policy. He stated that secondly before we had this talk of rescue or EMS  
152 the fire department did what when they responded to a call. Chief LaFlam stated that  
153 the fire department would respond. Mr. Lessels stated that if the fire department  
154 responds to a call, you have to be a member of the fire department.

155 Mr. Joey Carter stated that what is different now is we have access to equipment in  
156 house so that they do not have to wait for Golden Cross, also the rescue is a way to  
157 structure it so that 8 people don't show up and they know they have equal response and  
158 react to who is coming and the app shows a fluctuation. Mr. Lessels stated that given  
159 tonight's acceptance of the budget as the chief has presented, we are not talking about  
160 more money to EMS because it is already in the budget.

161 Anthony Giordano stated the fire department played a role in closing the ambulance  
162 down and you can't tell me otherwise. He stated you guys mentioned you created a new  
163 policy regarding social policy and that it is "serious". In the neglect or negligence, and  
164 asked what it is. Mr. Lessels stated that the social media policy is new. Mr. Lessels stated  
165 he brings it up because it is a serious violation of the policy. Mr. Lessels stated he found  
166 out that the people who signed it were unaware of the social media policy.

167 Mr. Lessels stated that the difference is the letter is on fire department letterhead and it  
168 is not an individual suggestion. Mr. Rescsanski stated he would like to know if Chief  
169 LaFlam supports the letter. Chief LaFlam stated he supports whats behind it. Mr.  
170 Rescsanski stated that the letter is reprehensible. Mr. Rescsanski stated the Selectboard  
171 does not micro-manage the police or the highway. Mr. Rescsanski stated the Selectboard  
172 has the right to do that and we have clear expectations.

173 Mr. Giordano stated they have to stop speaking about the ambulance. Mr. Lessels stated  
174 that this is it, but that they do not have to take any more input from the public. Mr.



175 Lessels stated that speaking for himself that Chief LaFlam has internal things to work  
176 out and that the Selectboard looks to you just like they look to any other department  
177 head, we do have the right.

178 There was a disruptive exchange with a member of the public. Mr. Wood stated to the  
179 individual that no further comment could be made. Mr. Rescsanski, Mr. Carter, and  
180 another member of the public had a repeated exchange concerning the response. Mr.  
181 O'Hearn stated that they have offered the Selectboard to come to the fire department  
182 and look at the books and Mr. Lessels is the only one who has showed up. Mr. Wood  
183 stated that we are between keeping the tax rate down at the same time provide for them  
184 as much as we can and we are trying to find an even ground. He stated we still have to  
185 go through the process. He stated at the end of the day we are looking out for everyone  
186 and trying to keep them safe. He stated that when we ask these questions it helps them  
187 explain to the public about the town expenses.

188 The meeting let for recess at 8:33 p.m.

189 The meeting reconvened at 8:44 p.m.

190 Mr. Wood invited Ms. Vigneau to present the recreation budget. He asked her if she met  
191 with the Finance Committee and verified that there was an understanding of the change  
192 to the pool director line. Ms. Blouin-Andrus stated that her understanding that the pool  
193 director line would come out and the recreation department and pool director would be  
194 the same. Ms. Davis stated that for the position there would be two different positions,  
195 and that it was not presented to the Finance Committee in that way. Mr. Wood stated  
196 that in recent years the recreation director did both. Mr. Richard Carter asked what the  
197 hours of these two positions and do they overlap. He stated that taking two titles and  
198 merging them together, if you are merging the titles shouldn't there be a pay increase.  
199 Ms. Blouin-Andrus stated that this is why the recreation director's pay increased. Ms.  
200 Chaffee stated that the Finance Committee does not have time to see the recreation  
201 department again, as they only have one more meeting before they meet with the  
202 Selectboard.

203 Mr. Wood found consensus among the Selectboard to take \$1,000 off swim team guard.  
204 Ms. Blouin-Andrus stated that until they get a ballpark figure they can't get a warrant  
205 article together.

206 Mr. Wood then commenced a discussion on warrant articles. Mr. Wood reviewed  
207 Warrant article #1 which would give a \$500 tax credit to veterans it would expand to  
208 include those who have not been discharged from active service. Ms. Wright stated that  
209 these two new warrant articles is to include veterans that are in active duty. Mr. Wood  
210 then reviewed the second warrant article that stated that if they do not expand it goes  
211 down to \$50. Mr. Wood stated he does not understand the warrant articles. Mr. Lessels  
212 also stated that he did not understand the warrant article either. Ms. Chaffee asked how  
213 many people does this warrant actually benefit. Mr. Wood stated that the present  
214 Veteran's tax is better than the two warrant articles under discussion.

215 Mr. Wood stated that a contingency fund was for grants. Mr. Rescsanski stated he would  
216 be in favor of the warrant article. Mr. Wood stated that the contingency fund would be  
217 taken off the warrant, and \$10,000 would be added to the capital outlay.



218 The warrant establishment of fees. Ms. Chaffee stated that the public voted no, but if the  
219 warrant article doesn't pass then the Selectboard can do nothing with fees. Ms. Chaffee  
220 stated that the Selectboard are the water commissioners so that if this warrant doesn't  
221 pass.

222 The warrant to replace a culvert on Acworth Road. Mr. Wood stated to leave this one.

223 The warrant to build masonry repair work for Silsby Library. This is a special warrant  
224 article. Ms. Wright stated that part of the money will be encumbered from the library  
225 budget.

226 Warrant for the one-ton. To take off as a warrant article and place it in capital outlay.

227 Mr. Wood asked if any funds should be place in perambulation. Mr. Rescsanski stated  
228 yes. The consensus of the board was to add \$5,000 to a capital outlay fund.

229 Mr. Wood stated that an email was sent to highlight stalking awareness month from  
230 Turning Point. No Selectboard member was opposed to this.

231

### 232 **Old Business**

233 Ms. Wright stated that all budgets have been discussed. The Selectboard found  
234 consensus to discuss the budget on the next scheduled meeting.

235

### 236 **Minutes of Previous Meetings**

237 Ms. Blouin-Andrus motioned to accept the minutes of 12.14.2021 Regular Meeting,  
238 12.14.2021 NP #1 (Legal), 12.14.2021 NP #2 (Compensation), and 12.14.2021 NP #3  
239 (Legal). Ms. Houghton seconded the motion. Roll Call: Ms. Blouin-Andrus (yes), Mr.  
240 Wood (yes), Mr. Lessels (yes) Ms. Houghton (yes), Mr. Rescsanski (yes). The motion  
241 passed.

242

### 243 **Consent Agenda**

244 Ms. Blouin-Andrus motioned to accept the consent agenda minus the TAN paperwork.  
245 Ms. Houghton seconded the motion. Roll Call: Ms. Blouin-Andrus (yes), Mr. Wood  
246 (yes), Mr. Lessels (yes) Ms. Houghton (yes), Mr. Rescsanski (yes). The motion passed.

247

### 248 **Other Business**


249 Ms. Blouin-Andrus motioned to accept the TAN in the amount of \$2,000,000  
250 12.14.2022. Ms. Houghton seconded the motion. Roll Call: Ms. Blouin-Andrus (yes),  
251 Mr. Wood (yes), Mr. Lessels (yes) Ms. Houghton (yes), Mr. Rescsanski (yes). The  
252 motion passed.

253 Ms. Houghton asked what the status of time cards. Ms. Wright stated she has not had  
254 an update from Ms. Dezan.


Ms. Blouin-Andrus motioned to adjourn the meeting at 9:38 p.m. Ms. Houghton seconded the motion. Roll Call: Ms. Blouin-Andrus (yes), Mr. Wood (yes), Mr. Lessels (yes) Ms. Houghton (yes), Mr. Rescsanski (yes).


Respectfully Submitted,  
Jordan Cannon, Recording Secretary

  
William Rescsanski

  
Shelly Blouin-Andrus

  
Nancy Houghton

  
Jeff Lessels

  
Jeremy Wood

(Note: these are unapproved meeting minutes. Any corrections will be made at the next Selectboard meeting on December 28, 2022)

