

1 **CHARLOTTE SELECTBOARD MEETING**  
2 **Monday, December 18, 2023**  
3 **Charlotte Town Hall 159 Ferry Road and via teleconference**  
4 **DRAFT**

5 *Draft minutes are subject to correction by the Charlotte Selectboard.*  
6

7 **SELECTBOARD MEMBERS:** *In person:* James Faulkner, Chair; Frank Tenney, Vice Chair;  
8 Kelly Devine; Lewis Mudge (remote & in person); Louise McCarren (remote)  
9

10 **ADMINISTRATION:** Nathaniel Bareham Town Administrators (in person)  
11

12 **OTHERS:**

13 **In person:** Moe Harvey, Lori York, Tanna Kelton, Charles Russell, Margaret Woodruff, Cheryl  
14 Sloan  
15

16 **Remote:** Junior Lewis, Juliann Phelps, Kim Findlay, Lane Morrison, Liberty Darr, Nicole  
17 Conley, Paul Plante, Peggy Sharpe, Scooter MacMillan, Susanna Kahn  
18

19 **AGENDA ITEMS:**  
20

21 James Faulkner called the meeting to order at 6:30 p.m.  
22

23 6:30 PM Adjustments to the Agenda  
24 6:31 PM Approve Warrants to Pay Bills  
25 6:35 PM Approve Selectboard Minutes for November 13, 27, 30 & December 11, 2023,  
26 6:40 PM Public Comment  
27 6:45 PM Continued Presentation of the Preliminary Budget  
28 7:45 PM Discussion of the Town's Health Reimbursement Arrangement  
29 8:00 PM Acknowledgement of Town Manager Petition & Scheduling Meeting Dates  
30 8:10 PM SunCommon Contract Review & Potential Approval  
31 8:20 PM Presentation of the Updated Tree Planting Agreement  
32 8:30 PM Selectboard Updates  
33 8:35 PM Adjournment  
34

35 **Adjustments to the agenda**

36 None.  
37

38 **Approve warrants to pay bills**

39 Warrants were signed.  
40

41 **Approve Selectboard Minutes for November 13, 27, 30 & December 11, 2023**  
42

43 **MOTION** by Kelly Devine, seconded by Frank Tenney, to approve the Charlotte  
44 **Selectboard Meeting Minutes for November 13, 27 & 30 2023. VOTE 4 ayes, 0 nays, 1**  
45 **abstention (Mudge); Motion Carried.**

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**MOTION by James Faulkner, seconded by Louis McCarren, to approve the Charlotte Selectboard Meeting Minutes for December 11, 2023. VOTE 4 ayes, 0 nays, 1 abstention (Devine); Motion Carried.**

**Public comment**

Margaret Woodruff stated that Town Meeting Day is set for the last Saturday of school winter break which might affect attendance with families that are traveling.

Kelly Devine stated this has been discussed.

James Faulkner stated the plan is to continue with the set date at this time.

Tanna Kelton stated that the Town of Charlotte website doesn't have all the meeting packets and old meeting recordings accessible like it did in the past. She went on to state that it should be made available to the public.

The Selectboard all concurred with the importance of this accessibility and will look into the matter.

**Continued Presentation of the Preliminary Budget**

James Faulkner stated that he met with Nathaniel Bareham and Mary Mead and made all the corrections that were found to be needed and highlighted during the presentation of the preliminary budget during last Monday's Selectboard Meeting.

Mary Mead and Nathaniel Bareham gave a continued presentation of the preliminary budget beginning on page 4 in order to review the line items that were highlighted last week and adjusted accordingly.

Mary Mead stated that under the Selectboard category there are no changes except for the HR Consultant line item which was budgeted for \$5,000 but has been decreased to \$2,500.

Mary Mead stated that under the Treasurer category the Audit Expense line item of \$24,000 was verified as the correct contract amount by contacting Sullivan Powers & Company.

Mary Mead stated that under the Elections & Town Meeting category, the Elections line item was decreased to \$400. This is because Nathaniel Bareham contacted the Charlotte Central School who will be providing the sound system for the next Town Meeting at no expense. In the past the town had to hire independent contractors to do the sound system. The \$400 covers those that are working at the Town Meeting.

Mary Mead stated that the Town Report line item is decreased to \$1,600 for FY25. For FY24 the budget passed with a Town Report line item at \$9,000. Due to the decrease in the number of copies printed, (down to 250), as well as no longer mailing the Town Reports since it is available to view online this current fiscal year, FY24, will have a nice savings. The savings will be roughly \$7,600 since the expense will be more like \$1,400. FY25 is budgeted at \$1,600 in anticipation of increased printing costs.

92

93 Mary Mead stated that under the Planning & Zoning category, the Minute Taker line item was  
94 increased based on actual expense history.

95

96 Nathaniel Bareham stated that the Seminar line item was decreased to \$200 based on actual  
97 expense history.

98

99 Mary Mead stated that under the Assessor category, the Telephone line item was slightly  
100 increased to match the actual monthly expense.

101 Mary Mead stated that the MS Service Contract line item increased to \$750, which is a contract  
102 number.

103

104 Mary Mead stated that under the Employee Benefits category, she recalculated some of the line  
105 items using the payroll for FY24 with no changes. This gave recalculations for line items; Social  
106 Security line item, Retirement line item and MEDI Expense line item. She went on to state that  
107 she added in the new payroll tax of .44% of gross payroll that will take effect in July of 2024 and  
108 based on the current payrolls it will come to \$3,955.

109

110 Mary Mead stated that the figures for the FY25 Health Insurance line items are not able to be  
111 calculated at this time.

112

113 Mary Mead stated that there are no changes to the already discussed Highways category. She  
114 went on to state that the Road Commissioner's budget is the only budget where the unused funds  
115 at the end of the year transfers over to the Highway Reserve Fund. In 2023 \$114,093.52 was  
116 transferred to the Highway Reserve Funds which helped pay for the Town Garage.

117

118 Mary Mead stated that the only change to the Town Lands category is the Village Wastewater  
119 System Maintenance line item since the amount seems to be low based on actual expense noted  
120 at the end of November of this FY24.

121

122 James Faulkner concurred that this needs to be followed up on with the numbers of the next  
123 report on actual expense since there have been changes and in order to budget correctly.

124 Mary Mead stated that Museum Repair line item was unclear since there was question if they  
125 were to add more for their upcoming projects. The windows and the roof repair all will be  
126 funded by the special fund of Improvement and Repair.

127

128 Nathaniel Bareham will call and get that number firmed up this week.

129

130 Mary Mead stated that under the Town Garage category, the Utilities line item will be higher  
131 than \$5,800 based on Junior Lewis' feedback and will require an adjustment. The December bill  
132 will be helpful to decide on an appropriate figure for this line item. The Telecommunications line  
133 item was added at \$2,400 since there is a phone line and internet at the Town Garage. She went  
134 on to state that there is need for a Solar Panel Maintenance line item and figure.

135

136 James Faulkner stated that that number is known and Nathaniel Bareham will get that figure and  
137 enter it into the budget line item.

138

139 Mary Mead stated under the category of Annual Requests the businesses that have requested  
140 donations are all listed and it is up the Selectboard to decide which businesses they want to  
141 donate to.

142

143 Mary Mead stated that the only change to the Town Beach category was the Skating Rink line  
144 item. It is set at the agreed amount of \$550 instead of the original \$1,800.

145

146 Mary Mead stated that under the Conservation Commission category the only change was to the  
147 Education and Outreach line item which was reduced from \$300 to \$0.00 since it is unknown  
148 what that is for specifically.

149

150 Mary Mead stated that under the Town Hall category, the only figure unknown at this time is the  
151 Equipment line item. This sum will be provided by Tech Group and this line item will cover all  
152 computer upgrades for the whole building.

153

154 Nathaniel Bareham stated that he received a memo from Lori York and made changes  
155 accordingly under the Senior Center category, the Technology line item was decreased from  
156 \$3,200 to \$2,500. He went on to state that the Trash line item was reduced to \$600.

157

158 Nathaniel Bareham stated that under the Miscellaneous category there was a point of  
159 clarification on the Charlotte Land Trust line item which is that the \$5,000 is treated as a general  
160 donation. This is for their general operation and to fund studies that they do in conjunction with  
161 other town committees.

162

163 Kelly Devine received confirmation that under the category, Senior Center the Volunteer  
164 Coordinator line item will be budgeted for.

165

166 Mary Mead stated that under the category, Debt Service the Solar Panel Bond line item was  
167 added at \$31,194.00.

168

169 James Faulkner received confirmation that under the category, Miscellaneous the Traffic  
170 Calming line item was reduced from \$11,600 to \$0.

171

172 Mary Mead stated that once the budget numbers are finalized the category, Transfer to Reserve  
173 Fund line item numbers will be looked at and adjusted accordingly.

174

175 Mary Mead reviewed the town of Charlotte budget Revenues and discussion was had on the line  
176 items that showed change. Mary Mead stated that the Retained Education Tax line item is  
177 \$31,000 and set by the state of Vermont.

178

179 The Delinquent Tax Interest line item is \$8,000 which is a decrease from \$15,000 in FY23 but  
180 the town hasn't experienced a very high delinquent tax list. The only way the Delinquent Tax  
181 Interest and Delinquent Tax Penalty numbers go up is if there were to be a tax sale which is not  
182 expected to happen. Mary Mead stated that Delinquent Tax Income is not budgeted for since it is  
183 tax revenue.

184 The Thompson's Point Rent line item shows an increase. There was a reappraisal of the land  
185 which revealed a 35% increase in the total land value. This along with the fair market value and  
186 the estimated nonresidential tax rate for FY25 increased the Thompson's Point Rent line item by  
187 \$151,000 being set at \$967,000.

188 The Current Use line item is increased at \$88,887. This is given by the state because of loss of  
189 money for properties that are in Current Use.

190 Mary Mead stated that the Pilot Payment line item is \$12,575. This is a payment in lieu of taxes  
191 from the state for state owned buildings and land. The state advised the town to estimate at the  
192 same as FY24.

193 Land Use Change Tax is a line item that isn't budgeted for since it's variable and not possible to  
194 estimate.

195 Mary Mead stated that Railroad Tax line item is always \$600.

196 Under the Town Clerk Revenue category, the Recordings line item is decreased to an estimated  
197 \$45,000 due to the interest rate increase and FY23 revenue. She went on to state that the town  
198 gets very little revenue for line items; Dog Licenses (\$4.00 each), Hunting & Fishing Licenses  
199 (\$1.50 each), Marriage Licenses (\$15.00 each) and Green Mountain Passport. Marriage License  
200 revenue increased from \$10.00 to \$15.00 for FY25. Total Revenue for the Town Clerk category  
201 is \$54,420 and is roughly the same amount received for FY23.  
202

203 Nathaniel Bareham stated that under the Planning and Zoning Revenue category the line item  
204 Building Permits is decreased to \$25,000 since a decrease has been noted since FY23.

205 The Septic applications line item is at \$0.00 since the state is taking this over so this is a loss of  
206 \$26,000 in revenue. However, it's important to note that with the expense of this process no  
207 longer in the budget expenses it ends up being a savings to the town of \$16,000.

208 The DRB line item is at \$15,000 which is a decrease of \$6,000 since they haven't been getting as  
209 many applicants coming through.

210 James Faulkner and Kelly Devine concurred that the total Planning and Zoning revenue comes to  
211 an estimated \$52,800 for FY25 which is a substantial decrease from FY24 of \$97,050. It comes  
212 to decrease in revenue of \$44,250.  
213

214 Mary Mead stated that there's little change with the Senior Center Revenue category. They  
215 receive revenue for their programs and building rental. She went on to state the Senior Center  
216 Miscellaneous line item is at \$3,500.

217 Lori York stated that the Senior Center received a \$3,000 grant from Shelburne this year and will  
218 likely receive \$3,000 next fiscal year as well. This is not a yearly guarantee. The Miscellaneous  
219 line item is from fundraising and miscellaneous donations.  
220

221 Mary Mead stated that the Highways-State Aid line item is estimated at \$215,000 since the state  
222 recommended budgeting for the same as this current year to date revenue.

223 Court Fines line item is at \$10,000 and is a big increase with the contract with the Chittenden  
224 Sheriff Department compared to the past contract with the State Police Department.

225 Mary Mead stated that the Reappraisal Fund Transfer line item will be a discussion after the  
226 budget is finished. This is generally used to counterbalance any Assessors expenses. This  
227 current FY24 \$50,000 was in there for the town wide reappraisal.

228 The Agricultural Leases line item is made up of the Park lease, the 9 acre piece of land across  
229 from the Park and the Thompson Point Agricultural lease and comes to \$4,344.

230 Mary Mead stated that the Town Garage Rent line item is \$6,000 with a monthly rental fee of  
231 \$500/month to Junior Lewis. She went on to state that the Interest Income line item is estimated  
232 at \$60,000 due to not knowing where interest rates are going to be.

233  
234 James Faulkner commended Mary Mead for making the change in banks for the town which  
235 provided this great savings in the Interest Income line item.

236  
237 Mary Mead went on to state that the Miscellaneous line item is at \$1,200 and is made up of  
238 liquor licenses, car registration, cannabis permit fees.

239  
240 The Charge Point Reimbursement line item is \$1,200 and is credit that is received from the EV  
241 charging station.

242  
243 Mary Mead stated that the Village Wastewater Fees line item is at \$1,442. She went on to state  
244 that she's not sure why it is set at the same amount as FY24 since there is so much variability  
245 dependent on the number of those that connect to the town wastewater system as well as the  
246 entity that does so.

247  
248 James Faulkner stated that further information will be gathered to help determine the best  
249 estimate for the Village Wastewater Fees line item. This will be clarified by looking at the  
250 report.

251  
252 James Faulkner stated that the individual town committees will all have an opportunity at the  
253 next Selectboard meetings to come in and present to support their budgets. The budget needs to  
254 be finalized by the last week in January so there is some time remaining to accomplish this.

255  
256 **MOTION by Kelly Devine, seconded by James Faulkner, to take a five minute recess.**  
257 **VOTE: 5 ayes, 0 nays; Motion Carried.**

258  
259 Lewis Mudge joined the meeting in person.

260  
261 **MOTION by Kelly Devine, seconded by James Faulkner, to reconvene the Selectboard**  
262 **meeting. VOTE: 5 ayes, 0 nays; Motion Carried.**

263  
264 **Discussion of the Town's Health Reimbursement Arrangement**

265 James Faulkner stated that a memo was just submitted to the Selectboard by Kelly Devine  
266 regarding the Town's Health Reimbursement Arrangement. This memo will be made available  
267 to the town residents and a thorough discussion will take place at the next meeting so that the  
268 town residents can have an opportunity to read through it.

269  
270 Kelly Devine received confirmation from Nathaniel Bareham that all eligible employees that  
271 want to enroll have enrolled into the healthcare benefit.

272  
273 Kelly Devine reviewed her memo and stated that no changes have been made to the healthcare  
274 benefit and at this point in time. The total cost the first half of the FY24 is around \$68,000 for  
275 the town's healthcare premium contribution. The second half of FY24 is estimated to come to

276 \$86,613.42 with the new BCBS of VT healthcare premium rates, one new employee added to the  
277 benefits roster, and with some employees changing their enrollment.

278  
279 Kelly Devine received confirmation that the sum of \$67,867.26 was corrected by Mary Mead  
280 and is actually \$69,810.00 for the total spent for the town's healthcare premiums contribution for  
281 the first half of FY24. Kelly Devine went on to state that the total estimated cost for FY24 health  
282 insurance premiums contribution is below the budgeted amount for FY24 which is \$168,000 but  
283 the goal of a \$20,000 savings has not been met. The savings is just over \$9,000.

284  
285 Kelly Devine gave an overview of the monthly cost to employees for Healthcare Premiums  
286 benefits. She stated that for a single plan the cost to an employee is \$79.16 all the way up to  
287 \$222.45 for a Family Plan per month. This represents, on average, 0.03% of employee salaries in  
288 healthcare premiums costs. She went on to state that some employees pay more, some pay less  
289 and some pay nothing by selecting a Bronze Plan. The HRA budget for FY24 is \$65,000 and  
290 currently \$14,000 is estimated to have been paid out. The Employee Compensation Working  
291 Group did an estimate of the average cost over a ten year period, which came to \$50,000. In a  
292 worst case scenario, the town could be liable for almost \$100,000 worth of payments. Last year  
293 the expense was very close to that number but appears to be an anomaly.

294  
295 Kelly Devine gave recommendations of; getting industry recommended advice, completing an  
296 employee anonymous survey of what is most valuable to them in terms of benefits, making  
297 adjustments with the assistance of the Town Clerk for more clarity with costs and liability, and  
298 having the Town Administrator generate a savings plan for 2025 to achieve up to \$40,000 in  
299 savings with the assistance of two Selectboard members. This \$40,000 savings would equate to  
300 \$20,000 in savings for FY24 and another \$20,000 in savings for FY25. Kelly Devine went on to  
301 state that the plan for the \$40,000 savings should be presented to the Selectboard no later than  
302 May 31, 2024, and finalized no later than June 30, 2025, in order to give employees plenty of  
303 time to make informed decisions regarding their healthcare benefits.

304  
305 Mary Mead stated that she would like a motion made by the Selectboard tonight stating that there  
306 will be no changes to employee healthcare benefits for the calendar year 2024.

307  
308 Discussion was had regarding the projected timeline for personnel policy changes regarding  
309 healthcare benefits.

310  
311 Kelly Devine stated that the changes to the personnel policy would go into effect on January 01,  
312 2025, as it relates to the healthcare premium and the HRA.

313  
314 James Faulkner and Frank Tenney concurred with this.

315  
316 Lewis Mudge stated that allowing for the town to be liable for \$108,000 for the HRAs in a worst  
317 case scenario is irresponsible. The money needs to be accounted for somewhere.

318 Discussion was had regarding a solution to this town liability. Solutions such as capping the  
319 HRA or having the fund be a revolving fund were discussed.

320

321 Kelly Devine stated that in the plan to be made for January 01, 2025, there is room for the  
322 employees to contribute more money toward their healthcare benefit. She went on to state that  
323 this has been a very sensitive topic. The goal is to have a plan made so that employees have  
324 advanced noticed and can make an informed decision on their 2025 healthcare plans during the  
325 enrollment period fall of 2024.

326

327 Kelly Devine stated that it is of utmost importance to move forward with the recommendations  
328 made to make changes to the town employee healthcare benefits in order to find resolution for  
329 this town liability. She went on to state that Mary Mead stated that the town budget for FY25 is  
330 at an estimated 20% increase, the school budget is at an estimated 20% increase and most  
331 residents have had their property appraisals increased.

332

333 Kim Findlay asked if the \$10,000 savings that wasn't accomplished by the ECWG would be  
334 pushed to next year? She went on to state that the capping of the HRA could happen as well as  
335 roll over to the next year vs one or the other.

336

337 Kelly Devine stated that planning of that sort for the town employee benefits plan will all be  
338 appropriate during the process to find savings. The Selectboard is going to have to figure out  
339 where the \$10,000 can be found. The hopes are that the trend on the HRA will continue since  
340 that would allow for a savings.

341

342 Margaret Woodruff received confirmation that the average cost of the employees' salaries  
343 toward healthcare premiums was based on the 11 employees' salaries that are signed up for  
344 benefits.

345

346 Moe Harvey stated that the total of the town employees' salaries are \$880,000 currently and  
347 there are a total of 27 employees to the town and 11 are signed up for benefits.

348

349 Discussion was had regarding the clarification that when an employee chooses the Bronze plan  
350 they are saving the town money and since the deductible goes up for the employee on the Bronze  
351 plan the employee is paying more there.

352

353 Kelly Devine stated that the memo she presented this evening will be included with the meeting  
354 packet and will also be available to all on the town website.

355 Margaret Woodruff received clarification emphatically by both Kelly Devine and James  
356 Faulkner that age of an employee is by no means a benefit determination.

357

### 358 **Acknowledgement of Town Manager Petition & Scheduling Meeting Dates**

359 James Faulkner stated that a private group submitted a petition to have a town government in the  
360 form of a Town Manager and it's the Selectboard's responsibility to schedule a vote.

361 Kelly Devine received confirmation that this vote will be done by Australian ballot on election  
362 day, March 05, 2024.

363

364 Lane Morrison stated that the potential hearing dates are January 16, 2024, and January 30, 2024.

365 James Faulkner read the entirety of the language of the petition out loud. He went on to state  
366 that the hearings need to be scheduled and that's all this agenda item is for at this point in time.

367

368 Charles Russell stated that there is a requirement that the hearing dates be within ten days of  
369 each other. He went on to state that the notice to the public must be provided in at least two  
370 public places between 30 to 40 days prior to the hearings.

371

372 Discussion was had regarding the Vermont State Statute requirements. All concurred that the  
373 hearings could take place on Monday January 22, 2024, and January 30, 2024.

374 Lane Morrison inquired if the committee that submitted the petition could give a presentation at  
375 the hearings.

376

377 Kelly Devine stated that advocating or campaigning isn't allowed by any means but the  
378 committee would be able to answer questions at the will of Selectboard's Chair.

379

380 **MOTION by Kelly Devine, seconded by Lewis Mudge, to hold a public hearing on**  
381 **Monday, January 22, 2024, and an additional hearing on Tuesday, January 30, 2024,**  
382 **regarding a petition of the legal voters of Charlotte to put forth a ballot item relative to**  
383 **Charter change Article 1 Section 3 regarding a Town Manager Road Commissioner at a**  
384 **time of 6:30pm on both dates. The Selectboard shall adhere to all of the required**  
385 **notifications in Section 2641 of Title 17 of Vermont State Statutes. VOTE: 5 ayes, 0 nays;**  
386 **Motion Carried.**

387

388 James Faulkner stated that in the Charlotte News the Selectboard was misrepresented within an  
389 article in favor of a Town Manager written by one of the members of the private committee that  
390 presented the petition for a Town Manager. He went on to state and clarify that the issue is the  
391 article was printed in a fashion that made it appear as if the article came from the Selectboard.  
392 The Selectboard has been very clear all along that they aren't in favor of a Town Manager but  
393 the way this article was printed implies that they are in favor of such.

394

395 All members of the Selectboard concurred that this is a very unfortunate error on the part of the  
396 Charlotte News.

397

398 Lewis Mudge asked Scooter MacMillan if a correction could be printed.

399

400 Scooter MacMillan apologized profusely on behalf of the Charlotte News and stated that he is  
401 more than willing to print a correction and acknowledged that it was an editing error on the part  
402 of Charlotte News.

403

404 Lewis Mudge will draft a statement for Front Porch Forum as well regarding this correction.

405

#### 406 **SunCommon Contract Review & Potential Approval**

407 James Faulkner stated that the Selectboard has had opportunity to review the SunCommon  
408 contract and at this time the Selectboard can take a vote on approving this contract.

409

410 Conversation was had regarding some concerns and doubts by Louise McCarren and Lewis  
411 Mudge. Both Louise McCarren and Lewis Mudge stated that they were still in favor of the  
412 contract despite their concerns.

413

414 **MOTION by Frank Tenney, seconded by Kelly Devine, to accept the solar equipment**  
415 **purchase and installation agreement from SunCommon as presented. VOTE: 5 ayes, 0**  
416 **nays; Motion Carried.**

417

#### 418 **Presentation of the Updated Tree Planting Agreement**

419 James Faulkner stated that tonight there is a new tree planting agreement that has been written by  
420 the town attorney in order to protect the town. The original agreement didn't include language  
421 that would protect the town as necessary. This will be voted on at the next Selectboard meeting.

422

#### 423 **Selectboard Updates**

424 Lewis Mudge stated that he has had residents ask the status of the radar signs.

425

426 James Faulkner stated that on July 01, 2023, the radar signs were ordered and plans were made  
427 for Junior Lewis to install the signs on Greenbush Rd once the committee provided the  
428 documents necessary for the specific location for the signs to be installed. He went on to state  
429 that the committee has been contacted several times and they still haven't provided the  
430 information as to the location of the radar signs as well as the approval needed by the adjacent  
431 property owners since there is light pollution from the blinking lights.

432

#### 433 **Adjournment**

434

435 **MOTION by Kelly Devine, seconded by Frank Tenney, to adjourn. VOTE: 5 ayes, 0 nays;**  
436 **Motion Carried.**

437

438 The meeting was adjourned at 8:46 p.m.

439

440 Minutes respectfully submitted by Brooke Milo, Minute Taker. Edits by Nathaniel Bareham.