HOUSE DOCKET, NO. 5024 FILED ON: 8/11/2025

HOUSE . . . . . No. 4482

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

PRESENTED BY:

Natalie M. Blais and Paul W. Mark

To the Honorable Senate and House of Representatives of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts in General Court assembled:

The undersigned legislators and/or citizens respectfully petition for the adoption of the accompanying bill:

An Act establishing a regional fire district and department for the towns of Charlemont and Rowe.

PETITION OF:

NAME:	DISTRICT/ADDRESS:	DATE ADDED:
Natalie M. Blais	*1st Franklin*	*8/11/2025*
Paul W. Mark	*Berkshire, Hampden, Franklin and Hampshire*	*8/11/2025*

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By Representative Blais of Deerfield and Senator Mark, a joint petition (subject to Joint Rule 12) of Natalie M. Blais and Paul W. Mark for legislation to establish a regional fire district and department for the towns of Charlemont and Rowe. Municipalities and Regional Government.

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

In the One Hundred and Ninety-Fourth General Court
(2025-2026)

An Act establishing a regional fire district and department for the towns of Charlemont and Rowe.

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives in General Court assembled, and by the authority of the same, as follows:

SECTION 1. The residents of the towns of Charlemont and Rowe, in the county of Franklin, within the boundaries of said towns and qualified to vote in town affairs in their respective towns, may establish a fire department for said territory or district, the officers of which shall have charge of, and be responsible for, all the engines, apparatus and buildings for the extinguishment of fires within said district, in the same manner as the fire departments and the employees or volunteers of said departments are responsible.

SECTION 2. The first meeting of said district after the effective date of this act shall be called by a joint notice from the select boards of Charlemont and Rowe, stating the date, time and place for said district meeting. At the first meeting, the voters of said district shall elect by ballot a moderator. At said meeting, the voters shall further elect by ballot a prudential committee to consist of five persons to hold office, two until the expiration of three years, two until the expiration of two years and one until the expiration of one year from the next

succeeding annual meeting, to constitute a board of fire commissioners, and at each annual meeting thereafter one such commissioner shall be elected by ballot for the term of three years. All the authority granted to said district by this act and not otherwise specifically provided for shall be vested in said prudential committee, who shall be subject however to such instructions, rules and regulations as said district may impose by its vote. A majority of said commissioners shall constitute a quorum for the transaction of business. Any vacancy occurring in said board from any cause may be filled for the remainder of the unexpired term by said district at any legal meeting called for the purpose. Officers of the district shall be sworn into office by the moderator or a justice of the peace. Assessors, treasurer, collector, and a fire chief will be appointed by the prudential committee

SECTION 3. Said district shall raise by taxation annually a sum sufficient to pay the current annual expenses of operating the firefighting operations, equipment, buildings and personnel of the district, as well as the interest accruing on any bonds, notes or certificates of debt issued by said district, together with such payments on the principal as may be required under the provisions of this act. The assessors chosen as aforesaid shall assess and apportion all and singular such sums of money voted to be raised by said district for the maintenance of said fire department, and in making such assessments shall observe and conform to the requirements of law obligatory upon assessors of towns; and they shall have all the power authority conferred upon town assessors. The list of taxes made by the assessors as aforesaid shall be committed to the collector of said district, for collecting the same; and the said collector shall observe all the rules and regulations, and have all the authority conferred by law upon collectors of taxes for towns, and said collector shall pay over all moneys so collected to the treasurer, who shall hold the same subject to the order of the prudential committee. The district shall have the same legal

authority for collection of taxes as that held by municipalities, including but not limited to takings pursuant to chapter 60 of the General Laws or other statutory provision.

SECTION 4. For the purpose of paying the necessary expenses and liabilities incurred under this act, the district may, in addition to any other authority to borrow under the General Laws, borrow from time to time such sums as may be necessary, and may issue bonds or notes therefor. Each authorized issue shall constitute a separate loan, and such loans shall be payable in not more than 30 years from their dates. Indebtedness incurred under this act shall be subject to the provisions of chapter forty-four of the Massachusetts General Laws pertaining to such districts.

SECTION 5. The district may, by a vote of qualified voter residents of the district at any duly called district meeting, vote to increase the service area of the district into specific areas of any abutting town. Such areas shall be delineated by a sufficient metes and bounds or other description to establish the boundary of the district. Inhabitants of any such new areas of the district, registered to vote in their town of residence, shall be subject to all benefits and responsibilities of this act, including but not limited to liabilities for district taxation and indebtedness as set forth in this act.

SECTION 6. All the provisions of this act and all the provisions of any and every act passed subsequent to the said general act, and relating to the same subject, not inconsistent with the foregoing provisions, shall be binding upon the inhabitants of said district; and the chief engineer and the assistant engineers shall possess the same power and authority as are therein delegated, and they, together with all of the other members of said fire department, shall be entitled to the same privileges and immunities.

SECTION 7. The district shall be subject to all General Laws applicable to districts, unless said statutes are inconsistent with the provisions of this act.

SECTION 8. The inhabitants of said district, so long as they shall maintain a sufficient fire department therein for the reasonable protection of the inhabitants and property within said limits from fire, shall be exempt from taxation in the respective towns to which they belong, for the maintenance and support of other fire departments in said towns.

SECTION 9. This act shall take effect upon its passage.