

Town of Charleston
Selectboard Meeting 10/28/2021

MINUTES

Attending: Selectpersons Patrick Austin and Larry Young; Foreman Bernie Pepin; Town Clerk & Treasurer Teri Gray; Planning Chair John Kellogg; and Asst. Clerk & Treasurer Colleen Kellogg.

THESE MINUTES ARE UNOFFICIAL UNTIL APPROVED AT THE NEXT MEETING.

The meeting was called to order at 6:00 pm by Patrick Austin, Chair. There were no agenda changes.

Larry Young moved to approve the minutes of the October 14, 2021 meeting as written, seconded by Mr. Austin and unanimously approved.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Appearing in his capacity as Charleston's representative to the NEK Communications Union District, John Kellogg answered Selectboard questions: For households served by Comcast or Consolidated, the NEKCUD will not compete with either, but if a household is underserved by these, that household can be winnowed into the NEKCUD network. There will be a tiered structure rather than one price per household. Different levels at different prices allows them to offer a less expensive option.

The NEKCUD group is now designing the project plan, including every place it will go to. Not all households will be included as funding is tied to electric service, except in special cases of extra priority (e.g., school children). The project has rough data from the state and utilities about utilities/services at each household, and towns are helping to correct errors with local knowledge.

The plan includes three main "spines" of the network, one of which goes right through Charleston. This means something will happen in town early in the build. A pressing point is where to site 27 cabinets (boosting stations) along the route. If Charleston could site one in town, he feels it could strengthen the town's position in the plan and help bring the benefits to Charleston earlier. They are looking for locations for a pad-mounted cabinet with access to backup power. He asks the Selectboard to consider hosting one on the town office property—invest in the pad and backup power (to also serve the town facilities) and the NEKCUD would install and own the guts. He is not asking for a commitment tonight, but is hoping to let the NEKCUD know that the board has a generally favorable reaction to the concept.

The group will provide a rough estimate of the pad and generator cost. One option is the town pays for the sitework and installation; the second option is for NEKCUD to pay for it and the town just hosts. Broadband projects are eligible uses of ARPA funds if the town chooses. If the power goes out, the NEKCUD would reimburse the town for the backup power during the outage. Teri Gray said backup power for elections would be especially beneficial. Ms. Kellogg said that backup power also increases the usefulness of the office as an emergency warming shelter and command center. Board members were concerned about investing funds in something that may collapse or not well serve many residents. Mr. Kellogg is not looking for vote but only a generally positive reaction.

Mr. Austin said he is not opposed to hosting one as he sees potential benefit for the town and surrounding communities but is unsure about committing town funds. Mr. Young said he doesn't use a computer and so doesn't feel comfortable taking a position. Board members agreed that Mr. Kellogg could let the NEKCUD know that the board was interested but could not vote to commit without more cost info and certainty of the benefits to townspeople.

Tyler Scelza will be logging a property next to the town gravel pit in Barton and has asked to use an area of the pit for a log landing this winter. He carries liability insurance. Mr. Pepin doesn't see a problem, as long as he cleans up afterward. Mr. Young raised concerns about town liability if injury occurs. Board members are willing to consider the request as long as Mr. Scelza can provide a legal document absolving

the town of liability for anything that occurs, and which meets the approval of PACIF Insurance Loss Control specialists. Ms. Kellogg will ask Mr. Scelza to submit this document to the town for review.

ROAD REPORT

- Mr. Pepin said the crew has been stockpiling gravel and grading. Roads are in pretty good shape.
- He has spent \$15,246 on stay-mat and would like to purchase an additional \$15,000 worth to complete Dane Hill and Ford Hill and have some stockpiled for next year. The bottom line can handle the expense since the crushing budget will be underspent in 2021. Mr. Young asked about the possibility of using ARPA funds for stay-mat. Board members agreed to the purchase of an additional \$15,000 in stay-mat.
- Mr. Pepin said that the digging project in the Barton Pit is going well, and Mr. Austin moved up this discussion from Old Business. There was discussion of how much to crush and the payment schedule, as McDonald prefers payment after all work is complete. Mr. Austin favors crushing 20,000 yards but would like to see 2021 work billed and paid in 2021. Mr. Austin moved to have J.A. McDonald bail and crush 20,000 yards of gravel at \$7/yard, seconded by Mr. Young and unanimously approved.
- David White, who provides pavement sweeping to the town, has driven the town and estimates he could mow three cuts for \$12-13,000. Board members plan to bid out the service.

OLD BUSINESS

- Representatives from HR Intelligence had to leave the meeting before a discussion could take place. Ms. Kellogg will gather officials' questions thus far with the aim of having answers and more information ready for the next meeting.
- Mr. Pepin said the garage heaters have been installed and are waiting for propane. Mr. Austin said that Fred's Energy estimates the system will use 2000-2500 gallons per year and can offer a 2-year contract price of \$2.17/gallon, about \$5400 annually. He will call Bourne's for comparison, and if it's in the ballpark he will go ahead with propane service so the heaters can be used. He does not intend to commit to a 2-year contract but will work with the school to see if the two locations could be bundled for next year to get a better price.
- Jesse Currie is on schedule to do the insulation and roofing work. The Chair asked that a discussion of how to market and sell the town's firewood be placed on the next agenda.
- Board members agreed to reschedule the December 23rd meeting to December 30th, with a primary focus on budget.

NEW BUSINESS

- The Town is working with VTrans to prepare an engineering grant for replacement of a large culvert on Ten Mile Square Rd, and engineer estimates are needed. Three companies were recommended as good fits for the project. Mr. Austin moved to have Ms. Kellogg reach out the three engineers to request estimates on behalf of the Town, seconded by Mr. Young and approved unanimously.
- By the agreement of both board members, personnel evaluations were delayed until the November 11th meeting when all three members can participate.

Three Selectboard orders totaling \$12,904.33 and Four Highway orders totaling \$91,196.87 were approved unanimously and signed by both members.

ANNOUNCEMENTS & INFORMATION

- No BCA meeting has been called as yet.

The meeting was adjourned at 7:30 pm. The next meeting will be held Thursday, November 11, 2021 at 6:00 pm.

Approved this 11th day of November 2021:

Selectboard, Town of Charleston