

**Town of Charleston**  
**Selectboard Meeting 12/30/2021**

MINUTES

Attending: Selectpersons Patrick Austin, Peter Moskovites and Larry Young; Highway Foreman Bernie Pepin; Town Clerk & Treasurer Teri Gray; Echo Lake Reclassification Committee Representative Tom Wagner; Sheriff Jennifer Harlow; Resident Samantha Stevens; and Selectboard Clerk Colleen Kellogg.

*THESE MINUTES ARE UNOFFICIAL UNTIL APPROVED AT THE NEXT MEETING.*

The meeting was called to order at 6:01 pm by Patrick Austin, Chair. Ms. Kellogg added the following New Business to the Agenda: (1) A draft request for redetermination of Charleston's COD submitted by the Listers; and (2) Contracts for Short- and Long-Term Disability Insurance Policies must be signed.

Peter Moskovites moved to approve the minutes of the December 9, 2021 meeting as written, seconded by Mr. Young and unanimously approved.

**PUBLIC COMMENT**

Tom Wagner provided an update on the application to reclassify Echo Lake as A1. According to Oliver Pearson, VT DEC Lakes & Ponds, the applications were so strong that they received an administrative bump forward rather than the expected internal review. Three NEK lakes have applied for reclassification to A1—Maidstone, Caspian, and Echo—and information can be viewed on the state website at <https://dec.vermont.gov/watershed/lakes-ponds/reclassification>. DEC is pursuing legislative change to the septic restriction associated with A1 status—no system discharging more than 1000 gallons can be in the watershed—which is the most likely public objection. The committee is waiting for a public comment period to be authorized. Mr. Wagner asked about holding a hybrid public meeting at the Town Office when a date can be set, and the Selectboard agreed to use of the building.

[Sheriff Jennifer Harlow attended at 7:00 pm. the board suspended business for a few minutes while she presented her comments.] Sheriff Harlow proposed a contract with Charleston. She has monitored state police response in town, which includes crashes, DUI, and family disputes—totaling 169 calls in 2020 and 165 in 2021. Her office takes resident complaints, many of which are related to drugs. The department put out speed cards a couple of times in response to speed complaints, but they can't be proactive without a contract. The State Police has resources to be reactive, but her office can do community policing with a contract, and this is more of a deterrent. She suggests 4-6 hours per week to start, which at a \$55.12/hour patrol rate would be \$17,000 for the year. This would mean spending time in town, driving around, being visible, doing traffic enforcement and focusing on known trouble areas. Presence can encourage folks to find another place to go.

Resident Samantha Stevens said she has needed state police assistance with vandalism and stolen property and experienced slow response due to reduced staffing. She sees overdose deaths and unlawful evictions happening in the community, with families not willing to contact law enforcement, and is concerned about the impact on kids. Through the supervisory union, she and the Sheriff are involved in a school-based program to make Sheriff known and accessible to kids. She feels a town contact would further support children by bringing into the community someone that kids believe will support them.

**ROAD REPORT**

Bernie Pepin reports that highway work is going well and the crew has been working on trucks (painting the bodies) and the yard, including cutting back brush and trees and disposing of scrap to make more room for stockpiling sand and crusher run. He'll need to bring in fill next summer to level the area. JA McDonald is getting good material out of the Barton Pit—bailing 1000 CY/day. Based on quality, he suggests the town re-explore an area where Sicard found no gravel. Plowing is going well. He confirmed

that tires on Westmore Rd have been moved back but are still in the right of way. They do not obstruct plowing so the matter can wait until maintenance work is needed in the spring. Mr. Moskovites asked if there is someone proficient to operate the grader if needed. Mr. Pepin said Ted Aldrich has been training and a temp has been hired but his availability is limited—mostly weekends. There was discussion of posting a part-time grader operator position and where to post. Mr. Austin suggests Indeed and Dept of Labor. Ms. Gray & Ms. Kellogg will get a draft posting and posting locations ready for the next meeting. Mr. Young asked about a new piece of equipment, and Mr. Pepin said the used rock rake was purchased last week and he had been in contact with the Chair about it.

Ms. Kellogg has heard from Tyler of East Engineering. He will have a conceptual plan for large culvert replacement on Ten Mile Square Rd in the beginning part of January. Mr. Pepin visited the site with him on December 17<sup>th</sup> and discussed the possibility of a galvanized pipe rather than precast to save cost, and Tyler thinks that will probably work—subject to further study and planning with VTrans. Ms. Kellogg reports that the town is allowed to sell the shoulder retriever loader attachment as long as proceeds are used to purchase a piece of equipment to serve same purpose—per the terms of the grant. Mr. Pepin has found that it can't be used on unmaintained shoulders. Accumulated material and sod must be excavated first. He said there is no urgency to sell it, and it could be useful on maintained areas. Board members agreed that if a buyer comes up, Mr. Pepin should bring that to the board, otherwise it will remain in inventory.

#### OLD BUSINESS

- Insulation has been blown-in the Highway Garage ceiling. Once roofing tin comes in, the vendor will remove chimney, replace tin, and fix ridge cap. Door seals will also be replaced as needed. Currie has billed for work in 2021 as requested and will have another day of work in 2022. After using the propane heaters for a while, the Foreman feels that one thermostat in the middle of the two heaters would create better balance—one heater currently runs more than the other. Mr. Austin will contact Tardif. Carried over from the previous meeting, Mr. Pepin did not know the current value of the Town's wood splitter, and the matter was tabled.
- The 2022 Contract with Newport Ambulance Service was signed by the Chair.
- A written proposal for the bailing and crushing work current underway by JA McDonald totaling \$140,000 was reviewed. The 2021 down payment will be discussed with the budget later in the meeting.
- Regarding earlier requests to use the Town's Barton gravel pit for a log landing, the Chair confirmed that no further information has been submitted to the town, and therefore no one has received permission to do so.
- Board members reviewed an updated draft of the Personnel Policies, which includes language changes recommended by the VLCT HR Specialist. Mr. Moskovites moved to accept the changes, seconded by Mr. Austin and approved. Updated policies will be provided to employees next week.
- The VLCT HR Specialist offers a complete policies review at no charge. Previously, she had reviewed only sections related to leave and disability, and the Town Clerk feels this will help the Town ensure the policies are up-to-date with current law. Mr. Austin moved to have VLCT do a complete review of personnel policies, seconded by Mr. Moskovites and approved.

[Business was suspended briefly for Public Comment discussion with Sheriff Harlow as detailed above.]

- Board members reviewed a report of 2021 revenue and expenditures. Remaining highway funds total \$91,596.12, including \$30,000 unspent crushing funds, and the board must decide the amount of a 2021 payment toward bailing and crushing work. Mr. Moskovites moved to make an initial payment of \$30,000 in 2021, seconded by Mr. Austin. Mr. Moskovites suggests asking voters to apply the remaining surplus of just over \$61,000 to the road equipment fund. He also suggests putting some of the 2022 budgeted crushing funds toward the remaining \$110,000 and financing the rest at low interest to keep the annual expense level. The \$30,000 initial payment was approved.

- Board members discussed a proposed 2022 budget and discussed various line items:
  - Mr. Austin moved to approve a 3% hourly wage increase for the Town Clerk & Treasurer, seconded by Mr. Moskovites and approved.
  - Mr. Moskovites moved to increase the health insurance premium contribution for the Asst. Clerk from 50% to 75% of the Silver Standard, seconded by Mr. Austin and approved.
  - With discussion of the Hired Services, Mr. Pepin clarified that the Town will go with David White for mowing services in 2022.

#### NEW BUSINESS

- VT Dept. of Taxes notified Charleston that the Town's CLA is 90.82%, and the COD is 10.84%. The Listers have determined that the state's sales study includes invalid sales, and they have drafted an appeal letter for Selectboard signature. Mr. Moskovites moved to approve, sign and send the appeal letter, seconded by Mr. Austin and approved.
- Contracts with National Insurance Services for short-term and long-term disability insurance through Madison National Life—approved at an earlier meeting—were signed by the Chair and Town Clerk and will be submitted.
- Mr. Austin moved to place appropriation requests from Orleans County Citizens Advocacy (\$500) and Island Pond Library (\$700) on the 2022 Town Meeting Warning, seconded by Mr. Moskovites. Both organizations received support at the same level in 2021. Approved by vote.
- Ms. Kellogg said she and Ms. Gray are still finalizing lost revenue calculations and hope to have a final figure on unrestricted ARPA funds in the coming weeks. Discussion of funds an allocation plan was tabled until that information can be finalized.
- There was no further discussion about the Sheriff proposal.

Four Selectboard orders totaling \$19,639.60 and six Highway orders totaling \$25,774.54 were approved unanimously and signed by all members.

#### ANNOUNCEMENTS & INFORMATION

- Orleans County Meeting January 17<sup>th</sup> at 8:00 via Zoom.

Seeing no other business, Mr. Moskovites moved to adjourn the meeting seconded by Mr. Austin and the meeting was adjourned at 8:05 pm. The next meeting will be held Thursday, January 13, 2022 at 6:00 pm.

Approved this 13<sup>th</sup> day of January 2022:

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Selectboard, Town of Charleston