

Town of Charleston
Selectboard Meeting 10/24/2024

MINUTES

THESE MINUTES ARE UNOFFICIAL UNTIL APPROVED AT THE NEXT MEETING.

The meeting was called to order at 6:00 pm by Peter Moskovites, Chair. Attending: Selectpersons Peter Moskovites (PM), Tim Jenness (TJ), and Terry Rollins (TR); Road Foreman Wendell Hastings (WH); Town Clerk & Treasurer Teri Gray; Residents Tom Wagner, Peggy Stevens, and Karl Koenigsbauer also representing Echo Lake Protective Association; Memphremagog Watershed Association and LWAP representative Patrick Hurley; and Selectboard Clerk Colleen Kellogg (CK).

PM made a motion to approve the minutes of the October 12, 2024 meeting as written, second by TJ, and the minutes were approved as written.

There was no Public Comment. Seeing no objections, the Chair moved the LWAP presentation to the top of the meeting. Patrick Hurley of Memphremagog Watershed Association (MWA) has been working with Orleans County Conservation Resources District (OCNRCD) on a Lake Watershed Action Plan (LWAP) for Echo and Seymour Lakes, performing field assessments and prioritizing projects—from driveway culverts to vegetative buffer restoration and even one dam. The budget includes designs for 3 projects—two on Seymour and one on Echo—and one road from each lake. He presented projects sketches to improve flood resiliency for several areas of West Echo Lake Rd, incorporating 2023 state LiDAR elevation data, surveys of ditches, culverts, and slopes to accurately measure the area that drains to each culvert pipe. Many stream crossing culverts are perched, and they hope to reduce vertical drops to reduce erosion and provide fish passage. Increased culvert size allows natural stream channel width and keeps culverts from overtopping. Costs are based on previous VTrans work, vendor pricing, and culvert store rates, and could be less if work is performed by the town. This is a design template for the town. It may not be possible to bring all areas into line, and the work need not be done immediately, but when the town is ready, MWA will be around for reference and support going forward.

WH discussed culverts that were already upsized after flooding and an area where he would like to “pull” road shoulders but is concerned about landowner buy-in. Asked if anything should be looked at immediately, Mr. Hurley said there is an alder swamp at the bottom that has received a lot of sediment, and there is landowner activity to ditch the wetland that they would like to see ended. They have already worked with Elaine Carpenter to stabilize a stream bank next to her camp; it was noted this area saw significant road flooding in July.

Patrick Hurley said all driveway culverts along that stretch of West Echo Lake Rd need to be 24 in, and the Board and residents discussed how property owners can work with the town to replace driveway culverts in the town ROW. PM said that in cases where the town is improving a section of road and a driveway culvert must be replaced, the town has performed installation work and homeowners buy the culvert. The highway department does not have the capacity to offer this service across the board. Recent flooding has shown many driveway culverts are too small or missing altogether, and the town will need to standardize policy on whose responsibility it is to bring these up to standards and make a townwide plan to prevent road damage. There are also cases where a single property has more driveway accesses than can be maintained. Hurley suggests multiple homeowners on West Echo Lake Rd could hire a single contractor to install driveway culverts and split the bill to save overall cost.

Moving forward, Tom Wagner said the lake association would like to work with the town to identify resources to fund the work. WH said the town sees the area as priority, which is why so many culverts have been upsized to prevent future washouts. Tom Wagner said the LakeWise program he works with involves control of stormwater and erosion. ELPA President Karl Koenigsbauer said that, at their meeting in July, members expressed much appreciation for the town's work to benefit the lake, and he is happy to hear from the town about LWAP projects and any other road priorities. He would be happy to drive around the lake roads with Wendell Hastings to get familiar with maintenance issues. Patrick Hurley said it is a work in progress, and his organization has been doing flood consulting in the area. Ideally, a floodplain has spots to direct water, but in this area, most of those spots have houses on them. As resources like grants come up, he will work in good faith will all concerned. PM confirmed that LWAP partners have town support to work on this effort.

On another topic, Hurley said he is talking with towns along the Clyde River about support for Wild and Scenic designation—a partner program with the National Parks. He is gauging local interest and looking for local representatives to sit on a discussion board. The program does not involve park service acquisition, and no local rules would be changed. It develops a long-term stewardship plan and opens federal support for bridges and stream crossing from the National Parks and Army Corps of Engineers. The Chair asked that the board continue to receive notice of these conversations and will continue to think about who to refer.

ROAD REPORT/ROAD BUSINESS

- WH said the 2025 Mack was picked up Friday, driven to HP Fairfield in Concord, NH to install the body, and should be complete at the end of December or first part of January. PM asked if the board needed to discuss financing. TG said the Town paid for the Mack with funds available and the board can revisit the financing possibility as the year ends and the body payment comes due.
- Town was notified by VTrans this week that the abutment of Bridge 19 over Mud Brook on Westmore Rd is compromised by scour after the July storm, and the void should be filled with concrete before winter. The concrete is estimated at \$9-10,000, and additional excavation work will be needed to divert water. WH said contractors are ready and willing, but he must wait to hear from the state river engineer to approve dewatering and working in the stream.
- WH said Simpson DirtWorx finished crushing 5,000 CY without having to bail any. This leaves the town with about 8,000 CY in the pit and in good shape going into next summer. Based on test holes, he thinks there is 4-5,000 CY more available without bailing.
- WH said rear suspension on Truck 1 was totally worn and replaced last Friday. Another body piston has also been ordered for it. The Parts & Repairs line item will likely be overbudget.

OLD BUSINESS

- LWAP Designs for West Echo were discussed earlier.
- PM said Jon Mills is now working with ELPA to deal with erosion on his property, so progress is being made there, but the board must reply to other landowners. He would like to have more information with which to do that, so the matter was tabled until the next meeting and a list will be ready.
- PM said the board received requests from Brian Smith and Linda Studer to comment on North Country Hospital report recommendations. He has drafted some possible language but would like other board members to consider the best course. No action was taken, but the matter will be revisited.
- The Town was notified that the Hazard Mitigation Grant Program was oversubscribed and only certain projects prioritized, but there will be another round of grants following recent disasters. CK will ask for more detail on the status of the town's project to floodproof the

yard and office building. Meanwhile, WH completed a sketch of the work and paving dimensions so the town can obtain pricing.

- WH asked if he can seek road paving prices for next year. PM said his guidance from VTrans is that the work cannot start before July 1st of next year, but the town can put out the work to contractors late fall or winter. Board members agreed that Hastings should proceed.

NEW BUSINESS

- VEC requests approval of a Town Road ROW Occupancy form to allow utility burial alongside and under Morgan-Charleston Rd. WH and TJ participated in a site visit and the work meets town burial depth requirements. TJ moved to approve the request, with a second by PM. The request was approved and signed by all board members.
- Grant Applications for the Better Roads program are due December 27th. WH suggests a project to install a new cross-culvert on Ten Mile Square Rd just below Calhoun Rd. After a previous drainage project on Calhoun Rd, he had hoped that a wooded area near the corner would be large enough to sink water, but this has not borne out. A culvert is needed to get water across the Ten. With the Brighton bridge impassable into next year, this will be a good time to perform the work with little interruption. Selectboard members approved the suggested project. CK will reach out to the program about a site visit.
- GreenUp Vermont requests a \$50 appropriation be placed on the 2025 Town Meeting Warning—the same level of support approved in 2024. The motion was made by TR, seconded by TJ, and approved.
- CK said she took part in the town's FEMA "Kick-off" call for disaster #4810, and she is waiting for the next step when a FEMA Program Delivery Manager is assigned. With input from WH about the minor level of damage, board members agreed to not seek assistance for the late July storm—4826.
- A year-to-date budget update was reviewed. PM said that with so many line items continuing to change, the board can focus on final budget decisions starting in November, and the matter was tabled until the next meeting.
- Regarding crew personnel reviews, TR said it is important to conduct 90-day reviews as discussed with new hires. CK will provide evaluation forms to the Foreman and he will have reviews ready for the November 14th meeting.
- Discussion of rescheduling the December 26th. The matter will be revisited next month.
- Regarding 2025 budget considerations, CK said the website will need to meet new federal accessibility requirements in 2027 so any revision should wait and work toward that end. WH asked the board to keep in mind grader replacement at around \$400,000 in the next couple of years, to possibly include a roller at additional \$40,000. The existing grader has done well since it was fixed, although John Deere is troubleshooting a turntable issue after shimming work. TG said final payments on two equipment loans will be made in 2025, so that could be a good time to seek new financing and a first payment in 2026. Regarding repaving needs not eligible for highway grants, WH said Twin Bridges Rd from 105 to the bridge could use repaving, and he would also like to see new pavement on Center School Rd from the existing pavement to the bridge. Board members agreed there is no harm in asking for prices when he is already talking with contractors. A discussion of a fill-in driver was tabled until the next meeting.
- TJ said a catch pole is needed for the Animal Control officer, after an incident when two residents were bitten trying to contain a frightened dog. Board members agreed to reimburse the ACO for this expense.

Two Selectboard Orders totaling \$19,456.93 and four Road Orders totaling \$201,334.29 were approved unanimously and signed by all members.

ANNOUNCEMENTS & INFORMATION

- 2025 Property Taxes are due by 5:00 pm on October 25th.
- The General Election is November 5th and the polls will be open 10a to 7p for anyone who wished to vote in person or return a ballot. Voters should bring the ballot that was mailed to them.
- Brighton will hold a hearing on November 18th to hear comments on a proposed repeal of zoning regulations.

Seeing no other business, PM made for a motion to adjourn. The motion was made by TR, approved, and the meeting adjourned at 7:42 pm. The next regular meeting will be held Thursday, November 14th, 2024, at 6:00 pm.

Approved this 14th day of November 2024:

Selectboard, Town of Charleston