

Town of Charleston
Selectboard Meeting 12/12/2024

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); Resident Alan Davis; Road Foreman Wendell Hastings (WH); Town Clerk & Treasurer Teri Gray (TG); board Clerk Colleen Kellogg (CK), and Ed Barber, Newport Daily Express.

Under additional agenda items, PM added to the agenda under new business: letter from Linda Studer about road drainage at her property, a request from Jane Bingham about starting a boat greeter program on Pensioner Pond, and a request from ACO Sarah Jenness to adopt a livestock ordinance. With no objections, Executive Session business was moved to later in the meeting.

TJ made a motion to accept the minutes of the November 14, 2024 meeting as written, seconded by TR, and approved.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Alan Davis was present for discussion of his access culvert request. PM said the board members held a site visit, and one culvert was replaced with a temporary until the town hears back about a size study. Davis asked about a second access just beyond the Maxwell driveway that is used to cross a hay field onto his hay field. PM said constant use tears up the access and blocks the culvert; in June 2020 it was blocked and washed out the road. PM reviewed aloud content of a draft response letter from the board to Mr. Davis based on the site visit. Davis said he plans to start using the access again, asked the town policy about culverts on class 4 roads, and referred to court documents. PM said the town controls access to town roads, and he is not sure what the next step is for Davis if the board decision does not give him what he wants. Davis said TR told him he could put a culvert in, but TR corrected him. TR said he did not think the town could stop Davis. Davis asked where he could put a culvert that works because the other access doesn't go across the stream. PM asked Davis to please wait for the board's letter and take time to fully digest the info. Then he and the board can take the winter to work out details since the culvert will not be in use this winter.

ROAD REPORT

- WH said the crew is doing a lot of plowing. The new truck body will be put on around January 1st. The school bus has had a hard time on Crawford Hill Rd, but he sees the bus tires are worn. TR has not found Crawford to be slippery.
- People are parking in and obstructing plow truck turnarounds on several dead-end roads with few homes, including Griffin Ln, Willis Rd, Bingham Rd, and Mt. Bess, and TJ visited sites with WH. The board might need to look at downgrading these roads—some are basically a driveway. On Willis Rd, they risk getting a truck stuck, and TJ suggests turning around at the 'dead end' sign. On Bingham Road, the landowner placed stakes where the crew pushes snow. The road is narrow, and WH plows it himself to avoid putting a crew member at risk. The landowner at the end of Mt. Bess Rd took down their gate cable but placed a pallet of building materials in the ROW. TJ suggests action should be taken this winter. All objects and turnarounds are in the town ROW. Board members reviewed letters to landowners about keeping turnaround areas clear. Board members questioned whether the letters were firm enough but approved them as a first step. On Willis Rd, all agreed the truck will turn further down if the items are not moved.
- WH said he learned at a FEMA meeting this week that mitigation assistance is available to prevent future damage in damaged areas—like a concrete headwall at the 4' culvert to be

installed near Devaney on Hudson Rd and sta-mat to prevent future washouts on Hinton Hill Rd and West Echo Lake Rd.

- Before next year's paving project, a culvert on Durgin Rd needs to be changed.
- WH met with a landowner on Chilafoux Rd who wants to put in a driveway on the flat between Gay Hill Rd and Dane Hill Rd. He told them the culvert must be 18" x 20' and to keep the driveway lower than the road. The board approved the installation, and CK will inform the landowner.

OLD BUSINESS

- Contracts with David White for 2025 mowing and sweeping jobs awarded at the previous meeting were signed by the board.
- Following a November vote to reaffirm support for a petition to prohibit wake sports on Echo Lake, board members signed a support letter to be submitted to ANR for the public hearing.
- Regarding the Town of Brighton's request for assistance from Charleston for a damaged bridge on Ten Mile Square Rd, TR spoke with a Selectboard member who told him Brighton was looking for funds toward repair or a loan, but Charleston would need to send something to the Chair/full board. WH said if Brighton needs sand—not gravel—or trucking help, it would be in Charleston's interest to help with equipment and material, and a response letter could convey this. TR will follow up with the Selectboard Chair as a next step.
- A draft letter of support for North Country Hospital was presented. PM thinks the deadline for getting a letter to Brian Smith has passed, but he will contact Smith.
- Budget discussion was moved to the end of the meeting.

NEW BUSINESS

- Barton Village Inc. will have heavy equipment on Great Falls Rd in the spring to remove large tanks. WH informed Denis Fortin that work cannot be done during mud season, and they will be responsible for culvert damage.
- VEC requests board approval of a ROW Request to install power under Ten Mile Square Rd for #1691. Installation will be in conduit and meet burial depth requirements. All board members agreed and signed the document.
- TG asked the board to set the Late Homestead Penalty for 2025. Except during COVID when tax deadlines were extended, the town has applied a 3% penalty as allowed by law. TG recommends keeping it at 3% due to the extra costs of revising property tax bills and fact that late filings can keep the town from collecting the correct amount of taxes. TJ moved to set the Late Homestead Filing Penalty at 3% for 2025, seconded by TR and approved.
- Requests to place appropriations on the 2025 Town Meeting warning were received from the following organizations that received the same support in 2024: Northeast Kingdom Human Services \$1074, Pope Memorial Frontier Animal Shelter \$500, VSO Symphony Kids \$100, Umbrella \$700, Orleans County Citizens Advocacy \$500, Charleston Historical Society \$500, and Island Pond Library \$700. With no objections, all requests will be placed on the warning.

PM called for Executive Session to discuss personnel evaluations and open paving bids to maintain bid confidentiality until the board confirms that bids are comparable and the job can be awarded. Executive Session began at 6:50 pm and ended at 7:38 pm. No action was taken on personnel. The bids for paving Durgin Rd and Church Hill Rd were as follows: J. Hutchins: \$140,432 and Pike Industries \$141,600. PM made a motion to award the job to Pike Industries. The motion was seconded by TJ and approved unanimously. WH will notify Pike, and CK will draft the contract.

NEW BUSINESS (Cont'd)

- A response letter to Alan Davis was reviewed. Regarding Davis' culvert request, PM made a motion to close the unused, nonfunctioning access, seconded by TJ and unanimously approved. The letter was signed and will be mailed.
- A letter was received from Linda Studer reopening her request for the town to address the impact of stormwater from East Echo Lake Rd on her property. Drainage work on her property has been postponed until spring. Since the matter required no action tonight, PM asked board members to review the letter and the matter was tabled until January 9th.
- PM said resident Jane Bingham asked the board's feeling about her getting a grant to have a part time boat greeter at Pensioner Pond, like they have at Echo Lake, to prevent invasives like milfoil. Board members questioned the boater volume Pensioner Pond. As a first step, PM will refer Bingham to people involved with the Echo Lake effort.
- Animal Control Officer Sarah Jenness submitted sample language for a livestock ordinance she hopes the board will consider, giving her more tools to deal with situations like untended/nuisance goats on Crawford Hill Rd. PM asked board members to read the document before the next meeting, and the matter was tabled.

Four Selectboard Orders totaling \$17,309.51 and six Road Orders totaling \$38,069.45 were approved unanimously and signed by all members.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

- The December 26th regular meeting has been cancelled. PM said the board can consider scheduling an additional January meeting if needed.
- The Orleans County Meeting to present the budget will be December 16th at 8:00 am.

BUDGET

- TG and CK presented a year-to-date budget report. WH asked the board to consider a \$20,000 purchase of 100 loads of sta-mat to be hauled to the gravel pit and mixed with gravel. This mixture has held up well on Westmore Rd. It packs better into the road, he sees fewer potholes, and it cuts down on grader time and cost. This amount would mix with gravel to make 200 truckloads. TJ agrees that it works well. TR endorsed the savings on grader, man hours and fuel. TR made a motion to approve the purchase and lock in the price, seconded by TJ and approved.
- WH said that the town has picked up quite a few discarded tires from the roadside. Options for disposal are \$6 for a car tire and \$20 for a big truck tire. Board members asked WH to store them in the pit until disposal makes sense.
- TG and CK presented what is known about 2025 budget needs. Regarding crushing, WH would like to crush another 5,000 CY this spring. He estimates there is 7,000 CY in the pit, and mixing with sta-mat will stretch this further.
- The board is gathering wage and benefit information from area towns. PM tabled a final board action on wage adjustments.

Seeing no other business, PM asked for a motion to adjourn. The motion was made by TJ, seconded by TR, and the meeting adjourned at 8:20 pm. The next regular meeting will be held Thursday, January 9, 2025, at 6:00 pm.

Approved this 9th day of January 2025:

Selectboard, Town of Charleston