

**Town of Charleston
Selectboard Meeting 7/24/2025**

MINUTES

THESE MINUTES ARE UNOFFICIAL UNTIL APPROVED AT THE NEXT MEETING.

The meeting was called to order at 6:02 pm by Patrick Austin, Chair. Also attending: Selectpersons Terry Rollins (TR) and Tim Jenness; Road Foreman Wendell Hastings (WH); Town Clerk & Treasurer Teri Gray; ACO Sarah Jenness; Chronicle Reporter Matthew Wilson; and Selectboard Clerk Colleen Kellogg (CK).

The Chair added the following items to the agenda under New Business: a letter to a Mill St. property owner requesting that items be moved from the right-of-way prior to a 2026 ditching project.

A motion to approve the July 10th meeting minutes was made by TJ and seconded by TR. The minutes were approved as written with no discussion.

PUBLIC COMMENT

After gathering livestock ordinance details from area towns and attending a VLCT training on ordinance adoption, Animal Control Officer Sarah Jenness recommends that the Selectboard adopt an ordinance to deal with repeat nuisance livestock that are neglected or causing damage. This has been done in Coventry and Derby, and she is convinced of the need based on her work as well as conversations with area animal control officers. It would be a separate ordinance from the existing dog ordinance, and language provided by the state can be used verbatim. State law protects property owners from damage and animals from mistreatment, but the law cannot be enforced without an ordinance. SJ continues to research fine options and language around property damage to make sure it best serves townspeople. The ordinance would also give the ACO authority to impound an animal. PA agreed this was important and recalled a situation in which SJ delivered daily water to a neglected animal over a lengthy period because there was no legal authority to remove the animal. Importantly, SJ said she would approach enforcement the same way she does the dog ordinance—starting with a warning and using the ordinance when needed to address repeat offenders. Asked by the Chair if they supported ordinance development, all board members agreed to proceed. They also agreed on the need for a thoughtful fee structure to make the ordinance impactful. PA asked SJ to provide a draft of the ordinance she recommends so the board can review and discuss it at the next meeting. SJ said she will prepare a draft and be ready to submit the ordinance for legal review by VLCT municipal assistance attorneys before final adoption.

ROAD REPORT

WH said the crew has been ditching Dane Hill Rd because ditches are full at that end of town. This will help going forward. Two feet of material was excavated to get the ditches down far enough to make culverts functional. With the Foreman on a tight schedule, board members proceeded with Old Business that needed his input.

OLD BUSINESS

- PA said he looked at Tripp Hill Tripp Rd and doesn't think it needs anything right now. The road is stable, and anything but stone would wash away. He sees more need on Town Farm Rd, where there are quite a few properties including the town forest. The town might consider installing culverts where water bars now exist. He asked the board to look at what's needed on all Class 4 roads to evaluate how best to spend the limited budget, and to consider budgeting for specific Class 4 projects in the future to get ahead of more serious problems.

- After reviewing an email regarding the possibility of increased grant funding under the Vermont Diesel Emissions Reduction program, board members agreed to wait for new developments before proceeding with or declining the grader grant.
- PA also looked at Mill St., which needs work to meet Class 3 standards. Wires are also low across the road. WH said he looked at the road that day with Eric Pope of VTrans to discuss solutions. WH plans to apply for a Better Roads grant for next year to ditch, restore a crown, upsize the culvert, and install larger riprap. He will need one homeowner to move a vehicle and other stored items from the right-of-way, and CK has provided a letter for board approval. After reviewing the property owner letter and agreeing that the April deadline to remove items was fair, TJ made a motion to approve and send the letter, seconded by TR and approved unanimously.
- Board members met with WH at the town's gravel pit in Barton, and they see 10-20 years of gravel there without major work. PA would like to survey the property and obtain elevation maps of the area to help work the pit strategically. CK reached out to surveyors and heard from one so far. Board members approved of Hastings' current work to mix gravel from different areas.
- PA said the board met on Dane Hill Rd with Consolidated and Comcast. The response from both was to proceed with ditching, and to let them know what day, so they can be ready to respond to any service issues. WH said he was ready to start tomorrow, so PA will communicate with them. PA also noted that a culvert at the bottom of Crawford Hill Rd has been upsized twice but still does not handle the water from spring run-off. WH said he could request a hydraulic study from VTrans.

NEW BUSINESS

- Based on Charleston's state-determined education rate and the town budget passed at Town Meeting; TG calculated the following property tax rates for Selectboard approval: \$2.3021 Homestead and \$2.4256 Non-Homestead. She said the overall tax rate went down a little. For a house valued at \$100,000, taxes will be about \$133 less for homestead properties and just under \$80 for non-homestead. Asked how the town reappraisal will affect this, TG said property update work has begun and will be complete next summer for the 2026 Grand List. PA move to approve a Homestead tax rate of 2.3021 and Non-Homestead Tax Rate of 2.4256. The motion was seconded by TR and approved unanimously.
- TG provided a Q2 Revenue and Expenditure report for board review. She sees things as on-target with no concerns to report, and she welcomed questions. Board members agreed that the roads are in good shape within budget.
- A letter regarding Mill St. was approved earlier.

Two Selectboard Orders totaling \$13,407.22 and three Road Orders totaling \$32,792.96 were approved and signed by all members.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Seeing no other business, TJ made a motion to adjourn, with a seconded by TR, and the meeting adjourned at 6:43 pm. The next regular meeting will be held Thursday, August 14th, 2025, at 6:00 pm.

Approved this 14th day of August 2025:

Selectboard, Town of Charleston