

**Town of Charleston
Selectboard Meeting 8/28/2025**

MINUTES

THESE MINUTES ARE UNOFFICIAL UNTIL APPROVED AT THE NEXT MEETING.

The meeting was called to order at 6:00 pm by Patrick Austin, Chair. Also attending: Selectperson Tim Jenness (TJ); Road Foreman Wendell Hastings (WH); Animal Control Officer Sarah Jenness; Resident Tom Wagner; Will Marlier, OCNRCD; and Selectboard Clerk Colleen Kellogg (CK).

The Chair added the following items to the agenda: Update on the town's grader grant and discussion of a grader purchase; statute re: plowing of Class 3 roads with safety issues; and celebration of the 200th Anniversary of Charleston's renaming. Discussion of Westover Rd will need to be tabled.

A motion to approve the August 14th meeting minutes was made by TJ and seconded by PA. The minutes were approved as written with no discussion. There was no public comment.

NEW BUSINESS

- Will Marlier of Orleans Country Natural Resources Conservation District (OCNRCD) serves as the Echo-Seymour Lakes Watershed Action Plan (LWAP) Watershed Action Coordinator to help landowners and towns follow through on Plan projects. He was present to bring attention to MWA designs for road improvements on West Echo Lake Rd and answer questions about the project, which will benefit the lake and shore-up infrastructure for future storms. Designs also involve work on private property, and he is working with four willing landowners. Since the proposal includes a lot of work, PA asked about top priorities. Marlier said upsizing culverts appropriately would be more urgent than ditching; relative priority will depend on how far undersized each culvert is. Discussion included: project Area 3 around Bennett Farm Rd where a 12" culvert should be upsized to a 30" and where the town upgraded culverts during storm repairs; somewhat contradictory requirements of the state-supported LWAP versus the state Municipal Roads General Permit; possible financial resources for such a project; and the town's need to address townwide roads while not focusing disproportionately on one area. WH said the town plans to apply for Better Roads grant assistance for a project on Mill Street and plans to ditch on West Echo Lake Rd next year. Tom Wagner suggested there may be assistance beyond municipal roads grants to implement the state-supported LWAP. Marlier asked for the goodwill of the town and to work with the town to identify funding. He is also happy to help the town strategize about drainage concerns in other areas of town and consider LWAP projects in the context of other town priorities, like those mentioned by PA: Town Farm Rd and the Westmore Mountain area where storm run-off drains to the Clyde River. PA said the board appreciates the report and recommendations and will consider the matter at budget time.
- Regarding a request from Orleans/Essex VNA & Hospice to place a \$3,000 appropriation request on the 2026 Town Meeting warning (the same amount approved in 2025), PA made a motion to place it on the 2026 Town Meeting warning, seconded by TJ and approved.

OLD BUSINES

- Sarah Jenness presented the Town of Derby's Domestic Animal Ordinance and recommended that the Selectboard adopt the same ordinance with increased fines for Disturbing the Peace, Running-at-Large, and Damage to Property. The ordinance language is verbatim from a state model so does not need further legal review, and revised fines are within limits allowed by statute. SJ said she is set up to issue Judicial Bureau tickets, so enforcement is covered. PA emphasized that any reputable farm would not be affected by the ordinance, but it will help the town deal with chronic nuisance situations that currently have no recourse. PA asked for a motion to adopt the ordinance as presented, which mirrors Derby's but with certain fines increased. The motion was made by TJ, seconded by PA, and approved as written. The ordinance will take effect in 60 days. A copy of the Ordinance will accompany the minutes, and CK will proceed with public notification.
- Discussion of a letter to landowners regarding a gate on Westover Rd was tabled while the board collects more information about the matter.
- PA supports commissioning a survey of the town's Barton gravel pit with property lines blazed. One neighbor has a survey, another is asserting right-of-way, and a survey would put the town in the best position to use of the gravel. TJ agreed the board should move forward on a survey. Board members asked the clerk to notify all invited surveyors to include blazing of property lines in the scope of work and have proposals for review at the next meeting.
- Vermont Diesel Emissions Reduction Grant Program notified the town of a \$9,000 grant increase, bringing total assistance to approximately \$47,345. PA said the current grader trade-in value is \$65,000. Because grant acceptance requires making the grader inoperable, he suggests declining the grant and proceeding with purchase. Board members reviewed equipment loan and reserve fund information from the Treasurer and the cost of an optional roller attachment. Board members and Foreman discussed the advantages of the roller, including the ability to pack gravel on hills immediately after grading and an offset feature that packs the sides of ditches. TJ made a motion to purchase the grader, which was seconded by PA. Adding specific terms to the purchase, PA asked for a motion to purchase the grader with roller attachment, making a \$100,000 downpayment and financing the remainder for 5 years. The motion was made by TJ, seconded by PA, and approved. PA saw the newest crewmember in the grader that day and commended the Foreman on good cross-training.
- PA made a motion to decline the diesel emission reduction grant, which was seconded by TJ and approved. CK will prepare the decline letter for signature at the next meeting.
- The board was made aware of statute permitting a town to determine whether a Class 3 road should be plowed during winter based on safety considerations for the traveling public and municipal employees. The town has several short, one-house roads in town without adequate turnaround for a plow truck. PA asked if VLCT could provide legal guidance about standards for turnarounds and how the town might use this statute to negotiate road/turnaround improvements with landowners or cease plowing. CK will reach out to the league to begin the conversation and will update the board.
- School staff plan to celebrate the 200th anniversary of the town's renaming in November and offered to help with a history write-up for the town report if the board would like that. Board members will plan to include an anniversary write-up in the town report and welcome the help. The Town Clerk's office will keep in touch with the school to make this happen.

Three Selectboard Orders totaling \$37,303.29 and three Road Orders totaling \$37,303.29 were approved and signed by all members.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

- September 11th Planning Commission Meeting will begin at 5:00 pm to accommodate a town plan-related presentation by NVDA.
- Vermont Property Valuation and Review approved the town's proposal to conduct a statistical reappraisal for 2026 to satisfy the state's reappraisal order. This requires site visits to only a sampling of properties and will be less costly for the town.
- CK reported that the town recently received \$51,376 in FEMA reimbursement for disaster 4810 and is now waiting for the final project reimbursement of \$270,371.
- PA said the board should start to discuss replacement of the 2017 pickup truck, and plan for replacement of the Excavator.

Seeing no other business, TJ made a motion to adjourn, with a second by PA, and the meeting adjourned at 7:32 pm. The next regular meeting will be held Thursday, September 11, 2025, at 6:00 pm.

Approved this 11th day of September 2025:

Selectboard, Town of Charleston