

**Town of Charleston
Selectboard Meeting 11/13/2025**

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: Selectpersons Tim Jenness (TJ) and Terry Rollins (TR); Resident Linda Studer (LM); Road Foreman Wendell Hastings (WH); Town Clerk & Treasurer Teri Gray (TG); Newport Ambulance Service Director Jeff Johansen (JJ); Newport Mayor Rick Ufford-Chase (RU); and Selectboard Clerk Colleen Kellogg (CK). NEKCV Representative Karen Kotecki (KK) joined remotely.

The Chair added the following item under New Business: Proposals from David White Trucking for 2026 pavement sweeping and roadside mowing.

TJ made a motion to approve the October 21st meeting minutes as written. The motion was seconded by TR and approved with no discussion.

The Chair invited Jeff Johansen to present Newport Ambulance Service's (NAS) 2026 budget, which is up 3% overall due to increases in workers' comp, wages, and related costs. Charleston's contract will rise roughly \$2,400 to \$66,074.58, including Newport PD dispatching. Town assessments are based on the prior year's call volume: Charleston had 98 calls in 2024 and already 105 in 2025. The 2026 contracts are in the mail and will be before the board soon.

NAS is also evaluating a rebuild of the Morgan station. Although COVID funds supported earlier renovations, the building has persistent issues—water in the basement, faulty wiring, and a sinking foundation—and likely needs replacement. The plan is to double the bay size to fit two ambulances if needed. NAS continues to pursue fundraising opportunities.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Newport Mayor Rick Ufford-Chase is updating neighboring communities on current city initiatives in his dual role as Mayor and Director of Newport Downtown Development (NDD). He said the city now has a strong council and recently secured four loans to address municipal finance shortfalls caused by past errors, including stagnant water/sewer rates and overstated revenues from double-counted state homestead payments from late-filers.

He emphasized that a healthy Newport Downtown benefits the whole region and believes revitalization is achievable. He encouraged residents and officials to visit DiscoverNewportVT.com to review plans for new housing, a hotel, a possible recreation center, and expanded commercial and retail space. He said density and mixed income housing are key to a walkable city.

Upcoming needs include replacing a clay sewer main and building a below-grade parking garage in 'the hole', with street-level development above. NDD is looking to St. Albans' TIF-driven redevelopment as a model. TIF could work for Newport, but its strict 10-year project window means development plans and partners must be lined up before applying. He asked everyone to support the effort by visiting the website, watching a video, and completing the survey.

Karen Kotecki, doing permit work for NEKCV, presented a proposal to place conduit-encased cable within the road ROW along the east side of Camp Winape Rd, outside the traveled way. It will be buried at least 4 feet deep per town requirements, with 3–4 handholds (about 2×3 ft) spaced every 500 feet for splicing and repairs. This is part of NEKCV's planned buildout.

Asked whether local properties are signed up, she said they don't know yet, but the project must reach unserved or underserved homes and typically avoids areas with existing service. NEKCV has secured an easement for a hub at Dane Hill Rd and VT 105. Work on Camp Winape would occur in spring.

Attendees agreed KK will schedule an on-site meeting with the construction manager and WH. WH will report back to the board, which will decide if further discussion is needed. PA said the plan seems fine as long as installation isn't vulnerable to damage during road maintenance.

Linda Studer presented a \$550 bill to repair a roadside planter at White Birch Lodge on East Echo Lake Rd, which she says was damaged by a town plow while she was away in February. She asked the town to consider submitting the claim to insurance. She has installed stakes to protect the bed. Board members asked for the exact location and why the issue was raised so long after the incident, noting it's now difficult to determine what happened or who is responsible. PA asked the Foreman to measure the ROW (25 feet from centerline); if the planter or stakes are within it, they must be moved. The Town cannot allow obstacles in the ROW and is addressing issues throughout town.

NEW BUSINESS

- Board members reviewed estimates from David White Trucking for roadside mowing and pavement sweeping in 2026. The mowing price is the same as 2025, and pavement sweeping will increase to include newly paved areas at the town office and garage. PA moved to accept both proposals. The motion was seconded by TR and approved.

ROAD REPORT

- PA reported that the board, acting as Road Commissioners, met with landowners on several short Class 3 roads to plan plow access and shared the results with the Foreman.
Bingham Rd: The truck will go straight and leave the snow; the town will add stone to stabilize the turnaround, and residents will keep it clear.
Griffin Rd: Residents agreed to keep cars out of the turnaround, though cars were there during the recent storm—likely due to the unexpected snowfall. The road's endpoint is unclear so the 0.08-mile length will need measuring.
Pond View Rd: The truck will pull right, dump snow, and back/turn at the house; owners agreed not to park there.
Smith Farm Rd: Residents agreed to the turnaround spot and are moving equipment.
Willis Rd: The owner was told plowing can continue only if the area in front of the garage is kept clear. WH said nothing had been moved yet, forcing the driver onto the lawn. PA said if it happens again, plowing will stop short until the area is cleared.
Bennett Farm Rd: The board is waiting to hear back on an acceptable option; landowners' request to have the plow lifted has caused trucks to get stuck.
- WH said plow trucks are ready, and it's been snowing.
- WH said he wants to purchase a 40' used Conex for \$4000. All tires will be stored there, and he will relocate the racks from the back shed so chainsaws and other items currently stored on the floor can be safely stowed. This will free up the back shed to store the excavator under cover. The Treasurer confirmed that funds are available, so the board agreed to the purchase.
- PA said the highway department has been contacted by residents who are concerned about downed trees in Mad Brook, which are likely to take out the bridge in heavy rains. The bridge had to be replaced after tropical storm Irene. WH contacted state authorities and was told that the town cannot touch anything in brook. Board members agreed they want these trees removed to protect infrastructure and asked WH to get back to state and tell them so.
- WH said the grader wing has come in, but not the roller, which will delay the work to install both. He could use the attachments now and will stay on the dealer.

OLD BUSINESS

- Board members approved and signed a letter to ELPA officers asking for help identifying road drainage issues.
- CK reported that a request for engineering estimates was sent to a handful of firms to handle engineering and bids for a large culvert on Hinton Hill Rd. Based on what is received, the board will choose a firm and price to carry forward on a VTrans engineering grant for 2026. A structures construction grant would follow in 2027.
- CK reported that the Local Hazard Mitigation Plan (LHMP) kickoff email went out to the planning team to confirm the team and present the hazards to be profiled as discussed at the last board meeting. The next step will be to distribute a draft of the first couple of sections. This will likely happen before the next Selectboard meeting, and there will continue to be updates and discussions at upcoming board meetings.

PA moved to enter executive session to discuss personnel matters, and the motion was seconded by TJ. Executive Session began at 7:03 pm and ended at 7:50 pm with the following action:

- PA moved to give Mark Fauteux a \$1 per hour raise to take effect next pay period. The motion was seconded by TJ and approved.
- PA moved to give Wendell Hastings a \$1 per hour raise to take effect next pay period. The motion was seconded by TJ and approved.
- PA moved to give Colleen Kellogg a \$1 per hour raise to take effect next pay period. The motion was seconded by TJ and approved.
- PA moved to increase health insurance coverage for all eligible employees from silver level to BCBSVT Gold Standard Plan effective January 1st. The motion was seconded by TR and approved.

Six Selectboard Orders totaling \$1,272,631.85 and four Road Orders totaling \$55,901.57 were approved and signed by all members.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

- PA encouraged board members and community to attend a November 20th “Charleston to Navy” event at Charleston Elementary, celebrate town history and the 200th anniversary of its renaming. RSVP to Corrinne Moulton is requested by November 18th.
- Property Owners will attend the December 11th meeting to discuss stormwater run-off at 1687 East Echo Lake Rd. Selectboard members visited the site last week in preparation.

Seeing no other business, TJ made a motion to adjourn, which was seconded by TR, and the meeting adjourned at 7:53 pm. The next regular meeting will be held on December 11, 2025 at 6:00 pm.

Approved this 11th day of December 2025:

Selectboard, Town of Charleston