

Town of Charleston
Selectboard Meeting 12/09/2025

MINUTES

THESE MINUTES ARE UNOFFICIAL UNTIL APPROVED AT THE NEXT MEETING.

The meeting was called to order at 6:04 pm by Chair Patrick Austin (PA). Also present were Selectpersons Tim Jenness (TJ) and Terry Rollins (TR); Al and Darcy Brouillette; ELPA Co-president Karl Koenigsbauer; Road Foreman Wendell Hastings (WH); Town Clerk & Treasurer Teri Gray (TG); and Selectboard Clerk Colleen Kellogg (CK).

The Chair added under New Business that the next meeting will be January 8, 2026. TJ moved to approve the November 13, 2025 minutes as written. The motion was seconded by TR and approved.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Al and Darcy Brouillette own a camp on East Echo Lake Rd and experience road drainage problems; water runs under the camp and deposits gravel onto their lawn. They met recently with Will Marlier and Patrick Hurley of MWA about how to remediate, and possible solutions include a sluiceway, a stone curb, or sloping the road to the opposite side, which seems like the best solution if possible. He knows crowning is the common practice.

PA reported that the board conducted a site visit and observed that uphill properties have roadside berms that keep stormwater on the road. VTrans technicians advise dispersing water off the road quickly, and caution against pitching the road to one side. Board members agreed that the Brouillettes receive more than their share of water, and the most cost-effective fix will be to remove berms so the road sheds water to all properties. VTrans will visit the site for further recommendations. The highway department will follow up next spring.

OLD BUSINESS

With board agreement, PA invited Karl Koenigsbauer to speak.

- Karl Koenigsbauer acknowledged receipt of the Selectboard's letter to ELPA and confirmed the association's willingness to work with the town on stormwater mitigation around the lake. He will discuss communication and priorities with ELPA members at their January board meeting. PA emphasized the town's obligation to meet state highway standards. Tom Wagner hopes to assist at LakeWise/LWAP representative.
- The Chair signed the 2026 Newport Ambulance Service contract discussed at the previous meeting.
- WH has not yet heard from NEKCV regarding underground plans on Camp Winape Rd, so the matter was tabled.
- A planter at Linda Studer's property, which she claims was damaged by a town plow last February, was measured at 14 feet from the center of road and confirmed to be within the town ROW. PA stated the town cannot reimburse damage to objects in the ROW. Asked if the planter is in the way of maintenance, WH replied that it is. PA recommended sending a certified letter informing her that the town cannot pay for her repairs and requiring that the planter be removed within 30 days. If it is not removed, she can be liable for any damage to town equipment. TR offered the motion, which was seconded by TJ and approved. The clerk will write and send the letter per Selectboard instructions. PA reminded townspeople that objects cannot be placed in the highway ROW—25 feet from the center of the road.
- WH reported on plow turnaround locations: there is still a camper at Willis Rd so the truck must back up to the doors or the lawn; a pickup is still parked on Griffin Rd, so the truck skips it and goes back after the pickup leaves. PA said he talked with a neighboring homeowner who is okay with backing up at his property, but a site meeting will be needed to get

approval about where the town puts snow. There were no issues with Bingham Rd, and the crew is still picking up the plow on Bennett Farm Rd.

- PA moved to enter Executive Session to discuss legal advice, and the motion was seconded by TJ. Executive Session began at 6:43 pm and ended at 7:01 pm with no action taken.
- Continuing his Road Report, WH said plows and wings have been in use. A broken chain this week meant sanding did not get done quite as well, and there were some complaints. PA reminded motorists to drive according to the road conditions. WH emphasized that the crew times winter maintenance for morning and afternoon school bus transport.
- Engineering proposals for Hinton Hill Rd culvert replacement were reviewed. PA moved to award the job to Ruggles Engineering. TR seconded the motion, which passed unanimously. The clerk will notify VTrans for the engineering grant application.
- CK reported on progress updating the Local Hazard Mitigation Plan (LHMP). Draft Sections 1 and 2 have been distributed to the planning team for review and comment by January 5th, and the draft is available on the Planning Commission page of the town website for public review (charlestonvt.org). Community Surveys have been reviewed and summarized; resident concerns are integrated into the draft. Next steps will be to update the status of mitigation actions from the previous plan and propose mitigation actions for the 2026 plan. The planning team should receive this for review before the next board meeting. There were no comments or questions posed, but comments and questions can be directed to CK at any time.

NEW BUSINESS

- PA moved to allow USDA to use land for rabies mitigation, including roadkill collection. The motion was seconded by TJ and approved.
- A letter of request for a \$200 budget allocation from Vermont Association of Conservation Districts was passed over.
- PA moved to place appropriation requests on the 2026 Town Meeting, which represent the same level of support received by these organizations in 2025: Orleans County Citizens Advocacy (dba ConnectABILITIES) \$500; Echo Lake Protective Association \$1000; Northeast Kingdom Human Services \$1074; Northeast Kingdom Council on Aging \$600; Vermont Symphony Orchestra \$100; Umbrella \$700; Charleston Historical Society \$1000; NorthWoods Stewardship Center \$800. The motion was seconded by TJ and approved.
- TG reviewed 2025 revenues and expenses to date. TG noted that the \$100,000 grader downpayment was paid from checking and has not yet been reimbursed from the Equipment Reserve Fund. TG asked the board to consider rescinding the transfer. PA moved to not transfer \$100,000 from the equipment reserve fund to pay for the grader. The motion was seconded by TJ and approved.
- For 2026 budget planning, the Clerk & Treasurer's Office will share budget numbers with the board so they can discuss it at their first January meeting. PA asked if the working spreadsheet could be displayed at the meeting, and the Clerk will aim to set this up.
- PA moved to enter Executive Session to review employee wages. The motion was seconded by TJ. Executive Session began at 7:24 pm and ended at 7:40 pm with the following action:
 - PA moved to increase the Delinquent Tax Collector/Town Clerk hourly rate to \$35, seconded by TJ and approved.
 - PA moved to increase the Auditors' hourly rate to \$16, seconded by TJ and approved.
 - PA moved to increase the Road Commissioners' stipend to \$2000 each, seconded by TJ and approved.

Two Selectboard Orders totaling \$43,725.46 and four Road Orders totaling \$38,489.84 were approved and signed by all members.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

- Charleston Girl Scout Troop will conduct a flag ceremony and serve lunch at the 2026 Town Meeting.
- Annual Letter from VT Commissioner of Taxes forecasts an “unacceptable” 12% average statewide property tax increase next year.

Seeing no other business, TJ made a motion to adjourn, which was seconded by TR, and the meeting adjourned at 7:42 pm. The next regular meeting will be held on January 8, 2026 at 6:00 pm.

Approved this 8th day of January 2026:

Selectboard, Town of Charleston