

Town of Charleston
Selectboard Meeting 4/9/2026

MINUTES

THESE MINUTES ARE UNOFFICIAL UNTIL APPROVED AT THE NEXT MEETING.

The meeting was called to order at 6:01 pm by Chair Pat Austin (PA). Also present were Selectpersons Tim Jenness and Terry Rollins (TR); Town Clerk & Treasurer Teri Gray (TG); Road Foreman Wendell Hastings (WH); Planning Commission Chair John Kellogg (JK); and Selectboard Clerk Colleen Kellogg (CK).

TJ moved to approve the March 26, 2026 meeting minutes as written. TR seconded, and the motion was approved. There was no public comment.

Under ROAD REPORT, WH reported:

- Overall, roads are decent shape for this time of year. Board members concurred.
- Dane hill was just graded.
- The cost of Chloride has gone from \$1.06 per gallon last year to \$1.18 due to fuel and tariff costs, although he negotiated the price to \$1.15. The town used about 43,000 gallons last year, which will cost an additional \$5,000 this year. PA said residents are often concerned about dust, but the town may need to be cautious about using chloride. WH explained the maintenance process involves grading, packing the surface with the new roller, spraying chloride, and then spraying water to activate the chloride and harden the surface—preventing dust and retaining “fines” in the gravel to prevent gravel loss.
- The price to finish a paving job at the town office and garage yard is \$154 per ton, compared to \$120 per ton for last year’s work. The town has a grant to pay for part of it; PA asked if there was any time constraint on the grant, but there is not. Board members agreed to hold off on the work. If the price of fuel goes down, paving should also.
- The town currently has about 8,000 cubic yards of gravel stockpiled in the Barton pit—enough to last through a typical summer. The question is whether the board wants to wait until fall before taking further action. At this time, there is no practical way to access additional material without first stripping the site. A price has been obtained for stumping the area, but no contractor has yet been secured to complete the clearing work.
- Last year’s crushing cost was \$6.75 per cubic yard; this year, it is expected to be closer to \$8.75 per cubic yard. PA recommended that the board revisit the issue of gravel crushing at the next meeting, and the other board members agreed.
- No new applications were received for the highway crew job since the previous meeting.

NEW BUSINESS

PA moved to appoint John Kellogg as the town’s representative to the Northeastern Vermont Development Association (NVDA) board. The motion was seconded by TJ and approved.

Planning Commission Chair John Kellogg provided a briefing on Act 181, passed by the Vermont Legislature in June 2024. This legislation represents the largest overhaul of Act 250 to date. The core change moves Act 250 review from a project-based to a location-based system. The stated goals are to accelerate housing and development in designated growth centers while strengthening protection of natural resources in rural areas.

Act 181 creates a full-time Land Use Review Board (LURB) with broad authority to write rules and oversee enforcement. Regional Planning Commissions, including NVDA, and local planning commissions now fall under this board. Town plans are shifting to function as land-use documents instead of a town's vision for its future. Regional Planning Commissions are required to prepare Future Land Use Maps that categorize every acre of land. NVDA has produced a draft map for Charleston that divides land into categories such as Rural General, Rural Conservation, Rural Agriculture, Village, and Hamlet areas.

The most significant element for Charleston is the new three-tier system that will designate all land in the state. Tier 1 areas, mainly larger towns and cities, will see Act 250 largely eliminated to encourage growth. Charleston's villages are not expected to qualify for Tier 1. Most of Charleston will fall into Tier 2 or Tier 3.

In Tier 2 and Tier 3, a new Road Rule will apply: any new road longer than 800 feet, or any combination of roads and driveways on a single property exceeding 2,000 feet, will trigger full Act 250 review. This is expected to add significant cost, time, and complexity for new homes, subdivisions, and small businesses.

Tier 3 areas will face the strictest environmental protections, making development very difficult. The Road Rule and Tier 3 provisions are scheduled to take effect in 2026, though legislation has been proposed to delay them. The final tier boundaries and rules are still being developed and may change.

Mr. Kellogg noted that these changes will likely reduce new taxable development in Charleston, which could increase pressure on property tax rates for existing landowners. Development will be encouraged in Tier 1 growth centers, while rural land becomes harder and more expensive to develop.

Mr. Kellogg first spoke in his official capacity as Chair of the Town Planning Commission, then continued as a private citizen, landowner, and voter. He expressed strong concern that while Act 181 is presented as "smart growth" to encourage housing in designated centers, he views it as an aggressive step toward greater control of privately owned land intended to reach statewide legislated targets of 30% in permanent conservation by 2030 in Vermont and 50% by 2050, established by passage of Act 59 in 2023.

Kellogg noted that a recent statewide inventory showed Vermont has already reached about 27% conserved land, with a heavy concentration in the Northeast Kingdom. He argued that Act 181 is intended to accelerate this by steering development and public resources toward urban and growth centers while imposing new restrictions on rural areas to reduce rural land values and increase pressure on landowners to sell to conservation organizations, many of which are well financed, out of state, and were influences behind both Act 181 and Act 59.

Kellogg recommended that the town complete an approved town plan, which would give Charleston standing in some land-use decisions without requiring zoning at this time. Secondly, the town should actively oppose the new land rules by calling for repeal of 181 and 59, including the Road Rule, Tier 3 designations, and the 30% and 50% conservation targets.

Discussion followed regarding potential impacts on land values, the ability of residents to sell land when needed, and the risk of losing population and community services. PA expressed

support for a strong stance like that taken by the Town of Franklin. TJ stated the board's letter should defend the rights and freedoms of Charleston landowners as vigorously as needed. The Selectboard asked Kellogg to draft a letter for their review demanding repeal of the Road Rule, Tier 3 provisions, and conservation targets. The board will use the letter to communicate with state lawmakers and encourage support for similar action from neighboring towns.

PA moved to reappoint Peggy Stevens as the town's representative to the NEKCV Governing Board. TR seconded the motion, and the motion to appoint was approved. Former alternative representative John Kellogg stepped down, and the town has not identified a replacement. CK will check with Peggy Stevens and make further inquiries.

TG said there is one Charleston property eligible for tax sale under town policy and state law. It has been turned over to the town attorney, and tax sale is scheduled for 10:00 am on May 12th. She asked for a motion from the board to proceed and for one board member to represent the town as required. PA moved to proceed with tax sale on May 12th. The motion was seconded by TJ and approved. TR will attend as the town's agent.

OLD BUSINESS

- TJ moved to adopt updated Town Road and Bridge Standards discussed at the annual meeting with VTrans. The motion was seconded by TR and approved.
- CK reported that the previously discussed draft of the town's Local Emergency Management Plan (LEMP) has been distributed to all EOC participants for review. She recommended adopting at the next meeting to give reviewers ample time to comment. The board agreed to place the matter on the next agenda.

BILLS & ORDERS

Two Selectboard Orders totaling \$18,634.19 and three Road Orders totaling \$22,945.26 were approved and signed by all members.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

- An email was shared about Newport Daily Express' efforts to organize around America 250. They welcome community interest and involvement.
- CK reported that the town received all FEMA reimbursement for Disaster #4720 in 2023, with management costs and state share payments received this week. Documentation is being assembled now to complete the closeout process for Disaster #4810 in 2024.
- TG reported that security cameras were installed this week at the office and garage.

Seeing no other business, TJ moved to adjourn; TR seconded, and the meeting adjourned at 7:14 pm. The next regular meeting will be held at 6:00 pm on April 23, 2026.

Approved this 23rd day of April 2026:

Selectboard, Town of Charleston