

CHARLESTOWN SELECTBOARD MEETING

WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 21, 2024 at 6:30 P.M.

CHARLESTOWN COMMUNITY ROOM

Selectboard Present: Jeremy Wood (Chair), William Rescsanski, Nancy Houghton, Shelly Andrus, Trish Patrick

Staff Present: Keith Weed, Highway Department Supervisor

Shawn O'Hearne, Asst. Fire Chief

Patricia Chaffee, Tax Collector/Executive Assistant

Chief Connors, Police Department

Regular Meeting Call to Order

Mr. Wood commenced the meeting at 6:30 pm with the pledge of allegiance.

Recognition of Visitors: David Scott from the NH DOT and the consulting firm of H & H, regarding bridge repair plans for the spring of 2025 were present. A powerpoint presentation as well as packets were presented to the Board and the public. The Route 11 truss bridge going over the Connecticut River into Springfield, VT was discussed at length. The presentation showed the rehab efforts from 1992 and 2015. The 2025 work includes cleaning and painting due to corrosion. The repairs that were specifically listed included: the bottom flange, replacing all batten plates, lattice bars, fastener holes, and bracing members. Repairs to the substructure included: pier nosing, displaced stones, buttress and quad rail repairs. Travel and traffic were then reviewed. Mr. Scott announced that 7,000 vehicles crossed that bridge per day. The plan anticipates a full bridge closure for 34 weeks (about 8 months) from April to November of 2025. He stated that single lane closures would extend the duration as well as the cost. Detours were then reviewed: The DOT proposed that for those travelling north they will need to go south and use exit 6 to get on Route 91. The environmental impacts were then reviewed with the Board and public. The estimated cost will be \$6.26 million for the project. The DOT was looking for input on emergency, mutual aid, school buses, etc... Ms. Andrus expressed rerouting concerns on Route 12; stating that recent construction was never completed, and that the road was in fact sloping. She also expressed concern for extra heavy traffic traveling that road instead of using the bridge. Mr. Wood asked about Sugar River Bridge and the fact that that bridge is presently under construction and that is why the detours are to the south for those traveling north. He also expressed concern about both projects going on simultaneously. Ms. Houghton asked if the water line under the bridge

would be impacted. Mr. Scott stated that the project would not take the water line off. Arthur Lufkin, SAU 60 Transportation Coordinator, asked about bus transportation and stated that these detours will add another 46 miles to their routes every single school day. Angela Johnson asked why there was no discussion about a temporary bridge. She stated that a temporary bridge would not double the cost of gas and time for commuters. Ray Paskerta expressed concern for emergency services and informed the DOT that some medical insurances will only allow their members to go to Springfield Hospital, which requires the use of the bridge. Tom Cobb via Zoom informed the room that he had been at a Rotary meeting in which the Governor was present. At that meeting the Governor stated that there was an abundance amount of money for infrastructure and that the state would be happy to fund all repairs and improvements. He explained to the DOT that costs and time would not only affect the citizens of this town and those travelling in and out of it but also businesses, companies and trucking that comes through the town using that bridge every day. He asked the DOT to reconsider a temporary bridge. Another resident stated he was also present at this meeting and verified that the governor indeed stated that there was plenty of state money to use for infrastructure. Another resident from the public commented on the industry on both sides of the bridge. She said that people making \$15.00 an hour will be spending that \$15 on gas alone with those reroute plans. Mr. Ducharme asked the DOT about the blind spot on Route 5 approaching the bridge. Mr. Scott said he noticed that driving around this evening. Diane Crainich expressed that she would also like a temporary bridge reconsidered. Mr. Wood asked about abutment work on the banks as they seemed to be washed out; are there any plans to shoring them up, he asked. Mr. Scott replied just the displaced stonework will be done. He also expressed concern for the mutual aid that the town has with Springfield. Angela Johnson asked about improvements to a possible pedestrian walkway as the present bridge is too narrow to walk, run or bike with safety. Mr. Scott said that the widening of the bridge was not in the plans. Chief Connors reiterated that ambulances would need to be rerouted to Claremont (Valley Regional Hospital) or Keene (Cheshire Medical Center) and that mutual aid will indeed be an issue. He also informed the DOT that the town of Charlestown is a backup to surrounding towns and vice versa and this also will be affected as it will become a safety issue. He also asked about the possibility for different phases where the bridge could remain open some of the time. Phasing would increase the project to 54 weeks (about 1 year) was the reply from Mr. Scott. Mr. O'Hearne stated that the fire department could adjust their run cards to accommodate. Ms. Andrus stated that this project in addition to all the other projects that have happened in the town of Charlestown in the past five years is a lot to deal with. Mr. Cobb via Zoom announced that the customer base for the town will be lost by at least half therefore causing great detriment to the town. Ms. Bailey stated that business will go down for Charlestown. Terry Spilsbury stated that the town is dependent on the bridge, that there are only three ways in and out. Sales tax free New Hampshire will suffer in business with this bridge closure. And asked why not push the project off until Sugar River Bridge is completed. Mr. Rescsanski asked about other options; were alternative

solutions explored at all, and can we have a new bridge built instead. Mr. Scott replied that that was not culturally possible that a new bridge or a wider bridge would need to go through a 10-year planning board process with the regional planning commission (Upper Valley Regional.) Alyssa Bascom asked if it was possible to use multiple crews to shorten the project length. Mr. Scott replied that they cannot get enough contractors to commit to the 34 weeks (about 8 months) never mind multiple contracts. She also emphasized the emergency and safety concerns aspect. Mr. Garland announced that he was from the Upper Valley Regional Commission and was there to take notes for them that he will bring back to the commission. Ms. Houghton asked if the repairs could be separated from the painting to reduce the time. Mr. Scott replied that the repairs and the painting will be going on simultaneously. Jerry Maslan stated that bids will commit to the dates and the length of the project so that should not be a concern. It was asked if Tom Cobb could get those meeting minutes to Ms. Chaffee and suggested that the DOT call the governor's office for those minutes. The Board and public were informed that the DOT will follow up with Ms. Chaffe on this project and the matters that are concerning the public.

Mr. Wood called for a recess at 7:35 pm. Public meeting reconvened at 7:50pm.

Removal update on 150 Weatherby Road: Savannah and Kyle Perham submitted a report to the Board on their seven months of cleaning of this property. They asked the Board for a new deed to reflect the new condition of the property.

Mr. Rescsanski motioned for a corrected deed for 150 Weatherby Road. The motion was seconded by Ms. Houghton. Roll call: Mr. Wood (yes), Mr. Rescsanski (yes), Ms. Houghton (yes), Ms. Patrick (yes), Ms. Andrus (yes). Motion passed.

Committee Reports:

Heritage—Ms. Patrick-nothing to report.

Planning—Mr. Rescsanski-the next meeting was cancelled. Revisions are forthcoming on the subdivision regulations.

Recreation—Ms. Patrick-Ice rink needs replacement. Rotary donations bought new helmets. Basketball has ended. Baseball and softball sign-ups will begin in two weeks. Patch Park clean-up day is April 20th. The next meeting is March 19th. The kayak rental program is still in the works.

CAA—Ms. Andrus-nothing to report until after the election.

Conservation—Mr. Wood-Pre-trail openings were discussed at the last meeting.

Town Hall—Ms. Houghton-Mr. West is working on frosting the windows. There is still theft going on at the food shelf and so they are trying to rekey everything. They continue to work on funding ideas. Ms. Houghton asked if Mr. West could put in brighter light bulbs.

Finance—Ms. Houghton-nothing to report.

Community Power Committee—Mr. Rescsanski-meetings will resume after the elections.

Solid Waste—Recycle club came to present to the board at the last meeting. The next meeting is at the hut. They will be moving into payroll discussions in the near future. Signage and outreach will continue after mud season.

Executive Asst. Report: Transfer station packet was given to the Board. Ms. Dezan will have a report for the March 6th meeting. Ms. Chaffee would like to look at more software for the town. And she also reported that she now has access to the temporary website; send on your updates and edits. She noted that there is no supplemental warrant in the packet. Ms. Chaffee informed the Board that Mr. Hassett will return in April. She announced that there is a business breakfast on March 13th and the Board is invited. There is a Rotary candidate on March 7 at 6:30pm at the Town Hall. Included in the packet is the new video recording policy to be reviewed by the Board and adopted on March 6th.

Mr. Rescsanski motioned to sign the prohibition of cameras, seconded by Ms. Patrick. Roll call: Mr. Wood (yes), Mr. Rescsanski (yes), Ms. Houghton (yes), Ms. Patrick (yes), Ms. Andrus (yes). Motion passed. Ms. Andrus asked for the new policy to be run by Primax.

Minutes of previous meeting: Mr. Rescsanski made a motion to accept the minutes of: February 14, 2024 Workshop, and non-public #1, motion was seconded by Ms. Patrick. Roll Call: Ms. Andrus (yes), Ms. Houghton (yes), Ms. Patrick (yes), and Mr. Wood (yes), and Mr. Rescsanski (yes). Motion passed.

Consent Agenda-Financial administration/payroll and purchase orders/manifests and warrants /abatements (Abatement for NH Elec Coop), appointments, permits, licenses, contracts and Resolution: Mr. Rescsanski made a motion to accept, motion was seconded by Ms. Houghton. Roll Call: Ms. Andrus (yes), Ms. Houghton (yes), Ms. Patrick (yes), Mr. Rescsanski (yes), and Mr. Wood (yes). Motion passed.

Ms. Houghton motioned to enter non-public session at 8:17 p.m., seconded by Mr. Rescsanski. Roll call: Mr. Wood (yes), Mr. Rescsanski (yes), Ms. Houghton (yes), Ms. Patrick (yes), Ms. Andrus (yes).

Meeting reconvened at 8:25pm.

Mr. Rescsanski motioned the hiring of the said employee for the full-time role of dispatcher to the police department. This was seconded by Ms. Patrick. Roll call: Mr. Rescsanski (yes), Ms. Houghton (yes), Ms. Patrick (yes), Ms. Andrus (yes).

Ms. Houghton motioned to return to non-public session #2 at 8:27 p.m., seconded by Mr. Rescsanski. Roll call: Mr. Wood (yes), Mr. Rescsanski (yes), Ms. Houghton (yes), Ms. Patrick (yes), Ms. Andrus (yes).

Meeting reconvened at 9:00pm.

Ms. Patrick made a to adjourn at 9:01pm motion was seconded by Ms. Andrus. Roll Call: Ms. Andrus (yes), Ms. Houghton (yes), Ms. Patrick (yes), Mr. Rescsanski (yes), and Mr. Wood (yes).

Respectfully Submitted,

Ellissa Griffin

Jeremy Wood



Trish Patrick



Nancy Houghton



William Rescsanski



Shelly Andrus

(Note: These are unapproved meeting minutes. Any corrections will be made at the next Selectboard meeting on February 28, 2024)

Charlestown Selectboard Minutes

Non-Public Meeting Minutes #1

RSA 91-A: 3 II (c-Reputation)

February 21, 2024 @ 6:30 p.m.

Community Room

Selectboard present: Jeremy Wood (Chair), William Rescsanski, Trish Patrick, Nancy Houghton, and Shelly Andrus

Chief Connors informed the Board of an upcoming public statement of a 20-year-old resident who was indicted for negligent homicide from a recent motorcycle accident in Charlestown.

He also discussed the hiring of a new full-time dispatch employee for the police department.

Ms. Houghton motioned to exit non-public session #1 at 8:25 p.m., seconded by Ms. Patrick. Roll call: Mr. Rescsanski (yes), Ms. Houghton (yes), Ms. Patrick (yes), Ms. Andrus (yes).

Respectfully Submitted, Ellissa Griffin

Jeremy Wood



Trish Patrick



Shelly Andrus



Nancy Houghton



William Rescsanski

Ms. Houghton motioned to return to non-public session #2 at 8:27 p.m., seconded by Mr. Rescsanski. Roll call: Mr. Wood (yes), Mr. Rescsanski (yes), Ms. Houghton (yes), Ms. Patrick (yes), Ms. Andrus (yes).

Charlestown Selectboard Minutes

Non-Public Meeting Minutes #2

RSA 91-A: 3 II (c-Reputation)

February 21, 2024 @ 6:30 p.m.

Community Room

Selectboard present: Jeremy Wood (Chair), William Rescsanski, Trish Patrick, Nancy Houghton, Shelly Andrus

The Board discussed employment issues within the Fire Department.

Mr. Rescsanski motioned to exit non-public session #2 at 9:00 p.m., seconded by Mr. Wood. Roll call: Mr. Wood (yes), Mr. Rescsanski (yes), Ms. Houghton (yes), Ms. Patrick (yes), Ms. Andrus (yes).

Respectfully Submitted, Ellissa Griffin

Jeremy Wood


Trish Patrick


Shelly Andrus


Nancy Houghton


William Rescsanski

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