

Canaan/Stewartstown
Joint Sewer Commissioners
Meeting Minutes
October 13, 2026
Stewartstown Town Office

I. Open Meeting – In Chairman Dillon Begin’s absence, Allen Coats served as chairman pro tem and opened the meeting at 5:30 P.M. Those present included Alfred Buckley and Alan Leigh (Canaan Selectboard), Jimmy Gilbert and Allen Coats (Stewartstown Selectboard), April Busfield, and Zachary Brown. Dillon Begin and Dwayne Covill were absent.

II. Approve Minutes for July 13, 2026 – The July 13, 2026, meeting minutes were distributed and reviewed by commission members before and at the meeting. Al made a motion to approve the minutes, and Alan seconded. Allen requested a parenthetical note explaining that July was the first meeting since Town Meeting because no meeting had been held in April. Chairman Pro Tem Coats asked for further discussion; seeing none, he called for a vote. The motion passed unanimously in the affirmative with the correction noted.

III. Additions or Deletions to the Agenda – No additions or deletions were made to the agenda.

IV. Report on State Inspection – April reported that Jamie Bates of the Vermont Department of Environmental Conservation had completed a four- to five-hour inspection, which went very well. The written report was pending. The only deficiency discussed was missing confined space stickers on the dry vault hatches at the pump stations. Zach had ordered and received the stickers, which April would install when the surfaces were dry. Zach noted how impressive it was for such a thorough inspection to identify so little requiring correction.

V. Operator Report – April reported that Laramie had completed the annual pump station inspections and that all stations serving both towns were in good condition. The sludge sled had been removed from the water, and winter preparations were progressing with the additional help. April reiterated that commissioners were welcome to visit and review operations whenever she was there.

VI. New Hire and Related Business –

a. Rodney Rumrill and Operational Needs – April reported that Rodney Rumrill had been hired at the beginning of September for approximately 24 hours per week, bringing approximately 30 years of experience working for Charlestown. She described him as hardworking and a valuable addition. His duties involved water and sewer operations, with most current work devoted to sewer needs because of work that had accumulated while April was alone. Assignments and hours varied with operational needs, and additional hours could be scheduled for emergencies. April explained that sharing an employee with the highway department had created competing demands; Canaan was pursuing a separate highway employee. Members discussed the State’s concerns about limited staffing and recognized April’s work with the assistance available.

b. Hiring Process and Communication – Allen expressed concern that Stewartstown had not been included before Rodney was hired. He stated that Stewartstown’s participation was required under the agreement and emphasized that his objection concerned the process, not Rodney’s qualifications or continued employment. April stated that an email had been distributed when the previous employee departed. Allen acknowledged missing that communication and apologized, while maintaining that Stewartstown should have participated in the hiring decision.

A lively conversation followed between Al and Allen concerning communication, April’s value and work, and Stewartstown’s lack of involvement in personnel decisions. Al emphasized April’s need for assistance and urged the commission to correct the communication issue and move forward. Allen reiterated his confidence in April while emphasizing adherence to the agreement.

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Alan also supported contacting Stewartstown before future hiring decisions. April explained the difficulty of coordinating shared employees across several boards and suggested periodically bringing the boards together to consider the overall operation.

Zach summarized the central concern as Canaan having hired Rodney to assist April without first including Stewartstown in that decision. He asked whether the process should be changed or followed through joint participation. The discussion concluded with the understanding that Stewartstown would be contacted and involved before future hiring decisions affecting the joint sewer operation. No motion was made to remove Rodney or amend the agreement.

c. Billing, Employee Hours, and Voting Rights – Zach reviewed the unanimously approved July 11, 2023, motion establishing a fixed hourly rate set by Canaan for Brian's treatment plant work, prorated to Stewartstown's 46% share. He explained that this billing approach had continued for subsequent employees, with Stewartstown charged for shared plant work rather than unrelated duties. Allen distinguished between a Canaan employee assigned to the plant as needed and an employee hired specifically for the joint sewer operation.

Allen alleged that some of Brian's hours spent on other duties had previously been charged to Stewartstown because they fell within an agreed allocation of hours rather than reflecting actual plant work. April and Zach explained that they both carefully reviewed time sheets to verify assignments and ensure accurate charges. April stated that Brian's work locations and hours had been documented.

Zach explained that a 20% deduction was applied to the applicable shared salary amounts before calculating Stewartstown's 46% share to account for incidental work outside the shared operation; the statement also reflected corresponding benefit deductions. April explained that Rodney's plant hours varied according to need rather than a guaranteed weekly allocation. Zach clarified that the 46%/54% expense allocation did not determine voting rights; each commissioner had an equal vote. No change to the billing formula was adopted.

d. Commission Chairmanship – The commissioners discussed an error in the chairmanship rotation. They agreed that Dillon would continue as chairman until the April 2027 meeting, when the next election would address alignment with the agreement. No separate formal motion was recorded.

e. Budget Review – Zach reported expenditures of \$223,286.43 against the \$318,094 budget, or 70.20%, and stated that the budget remained on track. The next annual budget would be reviewed in January. No major capital improvements were proposed for inclusion.

f. Outstanding Quarterly Reimbursement – Zach reported that the first- and second-quarter reimbursement bill for \$48,975.47, mailed August 20, remained unpaid. He was not overly concerned and suspected a U.S. Mail delivery issue. Allen agreed to speak with Rita the following day, and Zach had a copy of the bill available for the follow-up.

VII. Adjourn Meeting – Alan made a motion to adjourn, and Jimmy seconded. Chairman Pro Tem Coats asked for further discussion; seeing none, he called for a vote. The motion passed unanimously in the affirmative. The meeting adjourned at 6:05 P.M.