

Town of Plainfield, Vermont
Select Board Meeting
May 11, 2020
Approved Minutes

Plainfield Selectboard meeting May 11, 2020 6:30pm via Zoom ID 8780219480

Present: Selectboard members Sasha Thayer, Tammy Farnham, and Jim Volz, Zoom meeting host Baylen Slote, and Clerk Linda Wells.

All other participants to this Zoom meeting will be identified as they are unmuted through the meeting by host Baylen Slote. These included Caledonia Central Supervisory Union Superintendent Mark Tucker, Jenni , Amos Meacham (resident), Carla (resident), Genness Grill (resident), Dawn Fancher (resident), Karen Starr (resident), Dave Strong (resident), Mary Niebling (resident), Deb Stoleroff (resident).

Approval of/changes to Agenda

No changes to the agenda were needed.

Tammy announced that the board will let people speak by raising their hand when it pertains to the item we are speaking to. Other non agenda items will be addressed during public comment.

Concern had been raised about the legitimacy of decisions made at the April 27, 2020 meeting as some people were unable to enter the meeting via Zoom and participate. As a result, the board revisited the decision made on April 27th.

Review/appointments/reappointments

Sasha read the new 2020 appointments to be approved

Approval of the following appointments made on April 27th was moved again at this meeting by Jim Volz and confirmed by unanimous vote of the Select Board:

- to the Conservation Commission, Serena Matt, 1 year
- to the Planning Commission, Will Colgan, 1 year, Baylen Slote, 3 years
- to the Recreation Commission, Dan Gadd, Nick Hooker, Jamie Spector, Ben Youngbaer, 1 year
- to the Revolving Loan Committee, Karl Bissex, Dave Boynton, 1 year
- to the Social Concerns Committee, Judy Cyprian, Gale Falk, March Hale, 1 year
- as Tree warden, Nicko Rubin, 1 year
- as Deputy Registers, R. Brent Whitcomb, Nicholas Whitcomb, 1 year

Approval of the following appointments made on April 27th moved again at this meeting by Tammy Farnham and confirmed by unanimous vote of the Select Board:

- as Central Vermont Regional Planning Commission alternate representative, Paula Emery
- as Central Vermont Solid Waste District representative, Betsy Zeigler

In addition, appointment of Karen Storey as Zoning Administrator for a term of 5 years was moved by Jim Volz and approved by unanimous vote of the Select Board.

Consideration of the appointments made to the Hazard Mitigation Planning Committed was put off until discussion of decisions re that committee on April 27 came up later in the meeting.

Jim Volz suggested waiting until public comment to unmute folks and let them comment at that time.

Review of other decisions made at April 27th meeting

- Board appointments end date and new appointments.
- Confirmation/setting of committee size.
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The following committee/board/commission sizes were approved on April 27: Cemetery Commission, 5, Conservation Commission 7, Development Review Board, 5, Hazard Mitigation, 7, Planning Commission, 5, Recreation Commission, 5, and Social Concerns Committee, 5. After discussion regarding the various committee/board/commission sizes, the board unanimously approved the above sizes for committees/boards/commissions.

Annual date of appointment conclusion.

All appointments end for elected positions end at the next Town Meeting by state law. The board unanimously approved that appointed terms end on March 31st. This allows for one meeting following the annual meeting to make all appointments at the same time.

Hazard Mitigation committee name changed to Hazard Mitigation Planning committee. Amos Meacham is this shift of the mission of the committee. The board explained this is more of a change in their charge for the committee for clarity. It seemed the committee is making policy rather than recommending things to the Selectboard. The committee will have 7 committee members.

The board agreed to leave the committee name at Hazard Mitigation committee and also to not proceed with disbanding the committee as previously approved at the April 27 meeting.

Policy changes made for committees are as follows: committees must stay within their budgets, meet with the Selectboard throughout the year for committee updates, and they need to prepare their annual town report by December 31st.

There was concern as to why two members of the committee were not reappointed.

The committees are based on a one year appointment and the board assigns committee members. No intent to remove people from committees.

We are assigning people to committees as approved by the board. It is good to have rotation on committees with new perspectives on town issues. Bram was not assigned to any committees as the requests he had sent were not received by the board. Sasha had tried to contact him to verify committees that he wanted to be on but did not hear back from him. Clarity was needed and not received. The board thanked the former Hazard Mitigation committee for all of their work and appreciates all the good work they have done.

There was further discussion about the number of committee members for the committee being set at 7. People had concerns about filling the committee appointments. After discussion, the board chose to leave the committee number at 7 and revisit if there are not enough people to serve. Sasha Thayer has been the select board member appointed to the hazard Mitigation Committee since 2018. She asked Jim Volz or Tammy Farnham if one would be willing to be appointed to that position. Jim was not able to do so and Tammy agreed to serve on the committee. Jim Volz made a motion make the following appointments to the Hazard Mitigation Planning committee:

Tammy Farnham (SB member), Gary Graves, and Dennis Blair, motion passed unanimously.

Announcements

Sasha Thayer shared the advice from the State Emergency Operation Center which suggests that with the state opening businesses, there is more risk of COVID19 transmission. The SEOC recommends that

people keep a list of our close contacts so that in the case of you becoming sick you can easily contact them and alert them of our infection. This would be helpful for contact tracing.

Town Clerk/Treasurer Report & Update

The municipal building is still closed to the public. Linda is still waiting for orders of masks, gloves, and sanitize as well as an order of lexan to replace the glass public window.

Once these items are in place she will be opening to the public slowly. Only one person will be allowed in the office at one time, as only two people are allowed in the space. Everyone will be required to wear masks and gloves to come into the office.

At Sasha's suggestion, Linda agreed that the board would officially open the building.

The Auditors will be allowed in, one at a time, to catch up on bank reconciliations.

The Listers, one at a time, will be allowed in their office to update the grand list and prepare for the end of the year.

Due to the small size of this office, committees will not be able to meet in this building for some time. Suggested the board consider letting committees meet in the lobby of the town hall opera house. If this is granted, the boards need to follow the distancing and other COVID19 requirements and the space will need to be disinfected after each meeting.

The Listers can file an extension with the VT Tax Dept to file the 2020 Grand List. At this time they believe they can get their work done on schedule. Will keep the board updated with any changes.

The electronic payment of taxes and water/wastewater assessments is being set up. The set up involves entering taxpayer bank information on the system to be able to debit payments directly for them. Notices will be sent to taxpayers and users to sign up for this service soon.

Fleet Permit applications: The Fleet permits were not on the agenda. Jim Volz made a motion to amend the agenda to include approval of Fleet permits, the motion was approved unanimously.

Cardinal Logistics Management Corp, Haskins & Associates Concrete LLC, Harrison Redi-Mix Corp, Irving Energy, Kelley View Farm Inc., Darrell Mathews/Mathews Excavating, United Natural Food Inc., and Walker Construction Inc. Jim made a motion to approve the fleet permits and the motion was approved unanimously.

Warrants to be approved: 5/1/2020 payroll, 5/8/2020 payroll, and 5/8/2020 accounts payable. Jim Volz moved to approve the warrants and the motion was approved by unanimous vote.

Road and Bridge Standards: Jim Volz made a motion to approve the Standards and the motion was approved by unanimous vote.

The highway department received a grant from the Better Back Roads Program in the amount of \$16,624.00 for ditching and culvert replacement on the Lower Road, town Highway 41. This project required a 20% match by the town and the has been completed.

The highway department also received grant from CVRPC for funds up to \$8,000 for a culvert project to be completed on the Brook Road this spring season. The required 20% match required can be in-kind work done by the road crew.

Selectboard Minutes Preparer

The Selectboard discussed hiring Erika Farnham to transcribe the Selectboard minutes in the interim until a permanent person can be hired. Jim made motion that she be hired and compensated the same

rate as the former minute preparer. The motion was approved by Jim Volz and Sasha Thayer. Tammy Farnham did not participate in this vote.

Jim Volz made a motion to approve the SB minutes March 30, April 6, May 7, and May 8, 2020, the motion was approved by a unanimous vote.

Community Composting Project – Alice Dworkin

Alice is requesting the town to consider applying for a grant for community composting through the Central VT Solid Waste District (CVSMD).

She has drafted the grant application requesting \$3,980 Build 2 Rat proof bins for the board review. There were concerns about lots of people dropping off compost, long term maintenance, possibility of not having enough volunteers.

Alice responded that this needs to be a community effort.

The plan includes two locations, one bin at the park n ride and the other at the recreation field.

As folks use the compost bins, if there is a lot of volume we can order another “KNOX” bin. The compost must be handled, shoveled every one or two weeks. If not maintained, it gets smelly.

There are some members of the conservation committee that are willing to volunteer. We hope to have more volunteers from the community and or the high school.

The bins have stone pavers on the bottom. It is considered rodent proof and the cost is \$950 each.

Since the maximum grant is \$5,000, the question was raised whether we should order an extra bin through the grant in case we need to expand. Alice was not sure.

The board suggested having signage stating the bins are for Plainfield community members only so as not to have outside community members using the composts.

The board will discuss more details and concerns once the grant has been awarded.

Jim Volz made a motion to approve the proposal for the grant from WMD Municipal Services Program Grant for food Scrap, the motion was approved unanimously.

The board designated Sasha to sign the grant for the Selectboard.

Mark Tucker of Caledonia County Supervisory Union CCSU

Mark reported the budget issues on Plainfield as a result of the COVID 19.

There is much concern by the schools and the state legislators. The status of the education fund is concerning. The cost of schools is 1.3 billion dollars. 2/3 property taxes and 1/3 consumption taxes which consisting of 100% sales tax, 1/3 sales, 1/3 rooms and meals, and 1/3 purchase and use tax. In FY20 the 37 million surplus went down to a 90 million deficit.

The school taxes are required to be paid in full regardless of whether the town collects or not.

The budget passed at town meeting resulted in a ½ cent increase in one town 1/2 cent decrease in the other town. We had a good budget. Mark is not sure how the legislature is going to close the education fund gap.

Impact of the COVID pandemic on the education fund is unknown at this time.

There is a 2 trillion dollar Cares Act, but a lot of money went to people that did not need it. The funds that may be received will not close the deficit.

Stabilization funds is directed to school districts, but Mark has no idea how much will come to our district.

The legislature has not decided what they are going to do. Education fund deficit has come down.

Budget for next year is up as much as 2 million dollars.

One plan is to fund the schools the same amount as we received this year which will be difficult to operate fully. The town should communicate with the VT League of Cities and Towns going forward.

Recovery in the economy will be difficult.

Status of Main Street Pedestrian Bridge project and next steps

An extension of the grant application is needed. The town needs to give Ross Gouin the authority to work with Dufresne on a new plan and budget process. Dufresne has agreed to do this at no cost to the town. Tammy agreed to be the SB contact person with Dufresne and continue working with Andrea. Sasha approved having Ross Gouin of VTRANS prepare a request for an extension of the grant. We need to get this done, at the same time be sure we get reimbursement on grant funds. The project needs to be redesigned to keep the costs down. The match has increased to 20% town share. If we do not move forward we will have to pay back the funds expended to date on this project in the amount on \$100,000.00.

Jim Volz made a motion to have the grant extension submitted, the motion was approved unanimously.

Brook Road Bridge replacement alternatives

VHB met with the town with three proposals for the engineering of the Brook Road bridge project. Due to COVID 19, the town was unable to hold a town meeting to review the proposals and discuss at a town forum. The board will contact VHB and determine if they are prepared to hold a meeting via Zoom or other ability. Sasha will contact them.

Bob Atchinson suggested sending bid information for the Main St Pedestrian Bridge project to VHB.

Agenda items for May 25th meeting

Meeting filming, VHB contact for future plans, Loader purchase, Health Center Gully Stabilization and Stormwater Mitigation, and update on Route 2 Main Street intersection.

Presentation of citizen petition- Jenny Bee

Tammy made a motion that Jim chair the meeting for this portion of the meeting, motion was approved unanimously.

Jenny Bee presented two petitions calling for Sasha's immediate removal resignation.

Jenny Bee expressed thanks to the work of the Hazard Mitigation committee.

She questioned why Sasha had disbanded the committee, banned community members from entering the Zoom meeting on April 2th Selectboard meeting, moving public comment to the end of the agenda, and lack of transparency.

Public Comment

The following community members shared their concerns with the board Chair

Amos Meacham: concerns with conflict and concerns on different levels and aspects

Carla Hancock: concerned about the disbanding of the HM committee, health of the town

Genness Grill: concerned about the removal of HM members

Dawn Fancher: lost faith in the Chair, ending videotaping on meetings without notice

Karen Starr: sidestepping issues, removal of the HM members, mistrust, reflect on comments

Dave Strong: driving people away from town service, specifically the HM members,

Mary Niebling: concern with communication style, and leadership, recommend another member be appointed chair of the board

Deb Stoleroff: chair should step back and let other member serve as Chair, reflect on community comments

Sasha: reminded folks that she does not make decisions on her own and they are decided by the board as a whole. No ban was made on anyone to be on any committee. She has worked on projects with the former Hazard Mitigation committee and worked well with them. Her efforts may have been wrong, but

has tried to share information with all. She encourages community members to call her about their concerns.

The board gave a big thank you to Baylen for hosting Zoom.

Jim Volz made a motion to adjourn the meeting calling a roll call vote; Sasha, Tammy, and Jim approved the motion unanimously.

Meeting adjourned at 9:55pm

Jim Volz commented the Town had an election in March and Sasha was elected a board member.

Linda B. Wells
Clerk