

Town of Plainfield, Vermont
Special Select Board Meeting
May 28, 2020
Remote-Only Meeting Via Zoom
Approved Minutes

Present electronically: Select Board Members Sasha Thayer, Jim Volz & Tammy Farnham

Other Electronic Participants: Linda Wells (Town Clerk), Eric Blaisdell (Times Argus), Jeremy Matt (Zoom Meeting Coordinator)

Sasha Thayer called the meeting to order at 7:02pm.

Jim introduced Jeremy Matt as the Zoom Meeting Coordinator as he volunteered to host the Zoom meetings to eliminate the “waiting room” function for select board meetings. Jim requested participants to rename themselves on Zoom to reflect their first and last name for the accuracy of meeting minutes. An emphasis was added on the rules of procedure for hosting electronic meetings (the Zoom meeting procedure can be found on the SB page). Jim requested for participants to use the comment or “raise hand” functionality in Zoom to weigh in on conversation for Jeremy to unmute. Jim urged community members to reach out to a Select Board member via email if they wanted to discuss anything in-depth, as the meetings only allow 10 minutes of public comment. The select board members emails are: selectboard8@gmail.com (Tammy), selectboard11@gmail.com (Sasha) and selectboard19@gmail.com (Jim).

Review Agenda:

Sasha requested to add a “letter of support” for CV Fiber to be added to the agenda.

Sasha moved to add CV Fiber to agenda after public comment. This motion was confirmed by Tammy Farnham, Jim Volz & Sasha Thayer of the Select Board.

Public Comment:

There was no public comment brought forth by the community.

Letter of Support:

Matt described the letter of support for CV Fiber to show the Town of Plainfield’s support toward the mission of CV Fiber to provide high speed internet to all members of the town. COVID-19 has emphasized the importance of the delivery of high-speed internet in rural towns. There would be no financial obligation to signing the letter, the purpose of the letter is solely to show support of the grant from the Northern Borders Commission. This project would increase accessibility to high speed internet, and further develop infrastructure.

Jim moved to approve Sasha to send out the letter of support to CV Fiber. This motion was confirmed by Tammy Farnham, Jim Volz & Sasha Thayer of the Select Board.

Pedestrian Bridge Project:

Tammy called Ross Gouin (Agency of Transportation for the State of Vermont), who is kindly helping us with the bridge project. In 2014 the bridge project was started. The Town of Plainfield has received federal and state grants to help with the design and construction of the pedestrian bridge. Plainfield took out a grant in 2014 for \$393,000 with 90% funding from the state/federal with the town contributing an additional 10%. In 2016 and 2017, an additional grant was received, amounts were 80% /20%. The grants total \$589,200, and the town is expected to contribute \$78,540 in order to make the project happen. The funding amount breakdown is: \$475,604 (federal funding) & \$35,056 (state funding). The pedestrian bridge project was put out for bid in February. The bids came in extremely high, one was \$800,000 and another \$900,000. The numbers do not include additional costs such as engineering which was approximately \$100,000 and another \$60,000 for inspections

The way that the grant is written states that the money is only provided by the state/federal if the bridge is installed. Otherwise the town is expected to provide \$100,000 for the money used for engineering. Tammy suggested for reevaluation to see if we can reduce costs. A grant extension is needed, as the bridge construction was intended to start in spring 2020. Tammy requested for a formal motion to ask for extension. If we do not extend the project it would be seen as an “abandoned project” and jeopardize the loss of the money for funding and/or require payment of the money already used. Tammy stated there is no additional cost for the extension.

Next step: sign the extension, try to navigate some of the solutions, work on cutting costs, establish project manager, and request for Alice to look for grants.

It was initially decided that one lane of the bridge must remain open, as detours around the bridge are significantly longer. However, this made the project more complex and timely, reevaluating the closure of the bridge might reduce the cost of the project. More funding is needed, as such, searching for more grants would help come to overcome the additional 200 – 300k needed for the project, Tammy stated most grants are 80/20%. A second opinion/new engineer might be worth considering to see if we could get a different design, however, this would cost an additional \$100,000.

The initial project manager (Pat Travers) got done, so there is not currently a project manager. Ross Gouin of the Agency of Transportation is willing to work with one select board member to help out to understand the logistics. A project manager would typically manage all of the aspects of this project.

Eric Blaisdell asked about the Town of Plainfield putting out the bids again given that the economy is different than it was in February.

Tammy stated that Ross suggested to putting the bids back out in October. But, it is a difficult project, and there are many aspects that will not be lessened by the economy.

Tammy suggested to move forward with asking Alice to look for additional grants.

Tammy agreed to continue to be the point person for the bridge project, however, at some point a project manager might be needed in order for the project to run smoothly.

Tammy moved to file the request for an extension for the pedestrian bridge grant. This motion was confirmed by Tammy Farnham, Jim Volz and Sasha Thayer of the Select Board.

Loader Purchase:

Tammy contacted John Deere and Komatsu for a better understanding of pros/cons of each machine.

John Deere: Servicing is out of Williston; however, their service representative is out of Barre, and they will only charge from Barre to Plainfield instead of from Williston. The machine is a 2019, there is a price reduction for that (\$7,000 savings). The warrantee is 5-year's bumper-to-bumper or 2,000hrs (including idle time), does not include general maintenance. There is a monitoring system which alerts if there is an issue, this will hopefully limit emergency calls when the machine isn't working which will reduce costs. Tammy was able to talk the dealer down \$1,000 dollars, and give a refund of \$1,200 (for the estimate for the current fixing loader). Trade in: 41,000 John Deere (could negotiate further).

Komatsu: Hydrostatic transmission, better traction, variable speeds, and self-braking. The machine uses less fuel and qualifies for emissions standards. There is a monitoring system which alerts if there is an issue for the life of the machine, at no cost, this would allow for the road crew to be more proactive on repair. Servicing is in E. Montpelier, parts can be received within a day (there is not a lot of inventory in E. Montpelier). The warrantee is 5-year's bumper-to-bumper or 2,000hrs, of which 3-years will include regular maintenance. The dealer stated that they would re-evaluate the estimate and trade in value as the initial offer has expired from January. Trade in: \$60,000 Komatsu.

The 2019 John Deere machine is currently on hold for the Town on Plainfield, but we might jeopardize losing it if we don't make a final decision soon. The actual figures will be evaluated once the offer comes back from Komatsu. Linda indicated there is approximately \$84,000 in the equipment fund, as such borrowing interest rates will need to be evaluated. Plainfield currently has loans for a firetruck and town truck (\$52,000 remaining). Current interest rates will determine how much of the equipment fund we want to exhaust. Linda stated anything longer than a 5-year loan will need to be brought to vote by the town.

Tammy is going to meet with the Plainfield road crew to discuss further. The topic will be further discussed at the executor meeting on Tuesday (June 2). Linda was asked to look at funding options and financing for the loader.

Jim moved to adjourn 8:09, this motion was confirmed by Tammy Farnham, Jim Volz & Sasha Thayer of the Select Board.