

Plainfield Select Board Meeting
April 26 2021
Minutes - approved

Electronic Participants: Select Board members Tammy Farnham, Sasha Thayer, and Jim Volz (chair), Linda Wells (Town Clerk & Treasurer), Michael Birnbaum (CV Fiber representative and community member) Charlie Cogbill (community member), George Cushing (community member), Bob Fancher (community member), Susan Grimaldi (Historical Society board member and community member), Jeremy Matt (CV Fiber representative and community member) Alice Merrill (community member and town grant writer), Ruben Ramirez (community member), George Springston (community member), Laurie Veach (community member), Melinda Vieux (community member), Betsy Zeigler (community member), and Eric Blaisdell, Times Argus reporter.

The meeting commenced at 7:02 PM

Announcements: Sasha made a reminder that the Select Board is looking for an administrative assistant and that the job description can be found on the Town website on the home page. Jim also stated the the Town is looking for a maintenance person to take the place of what David Strong had been doing. All these job descriptions are available on the website home page in the paragraph about “Looking for work?”

Approval of/changes to agenda: The following changes were made to the agenda:

- Fleet permits were added at the end of the Town Clerk/Treasurer report
- CV Fiber update was added in conjunction with the Appointments section of the meeting

Organizational meeting continued from April 12

Approval of Select Board meeting rules of procedure - Tammy stated that she’d reviewed the rules of procedure and that she’s comfortable with those. **Sasha moved for approval of the Select Board Rules of Procedure and the motion passed unanimously.**

Alice Merrill suggested that the Rules of Procedure be available before meetings and be read at the beginning of each meeting. Sasha mentioned that somewhere in the Rules of Procedure it says that they will be read at the start of the meeting. Jim suggested that they be on the website and Sasha said that the updated Rules of Procedure just approved would be posted shortly. Tammy also suggested that a link to the Rules of Procedure be included in agendas. Sasha said that can easily be done.

Should meeting night be changed from Monday nights to Wednesday nights? Tammy appreciated the proposed regular meeting dates change; Jim Volz stated that the proposed change is fine with him; the proposed change is alright for Town Clerk/Treasurer Linda Wells. **Sasha moved that the Select Board meetings be changed to the first and the third Wednesdays of each month with a starting time of 7 pm and the motion passed unanimously.** The change to this meeting schedule will start immediately with the next Select Board meeting being on May 5.

Town Clerk/Town Treasurer Report - Linda Wells:

Re-roofing municipal building: Linda said she’s having some issues trying to get another quote, that she has one quote from Kenny Randall, and she’s been working with another contractor. She has checked with five or six other firms, only two have responded; one firm couldn’t do it and the other firm says they are getting her a bid. Ken Randall

Approval of warrants: Linda asked for approval of payroll warrants from April 16 and 23, and a payables warrant dated April 14. **Tammy moved to approve these warrants and the motion passed unanimously.**

Approval of fleet permits: Fleet/overweight permits had been requested for Kelley-View Farm, Inc. of Newport, Vermont and Black Rock Coal, Inc. of East Montpelier, Vermont. Sasha moved to approve these overweight fleet permits and the motion passed unanimously.

Appointments: Consideration of appointments of Plainfield delegates to CV Fiber was moved to the portion of the meeting providing an update from CV Fiber. **The following appointments were approved by the Select Board on motion made by Sasha and approved unanimously:**

Town Health Officer: Baylen Sky

E-911 Coordinator: Sandy Ross

Recreation Committee: Dan Gadd, Nick Hooker, Michael Morlan, Jamie Spector, and Ben Youngbaer

Water/Wastewater Commission: Tim Phillips

Sasha will contact the other person who is interested in serving on the Rec Committee and ask that she submit an application.

Regarding the open Road Commissioner position, Sasha mentioned that she'd heard from the town clerks in Marshfield and Danville that they don't have a road commissioner.

CV-Fiber update - Jeremy Matt and Michael Birnbaum

Jeremy and Michael explained the proposed change for Jeremy to be the delegate and Michael to be the alternate delegate. In addition to Jeremy being very qualified, the reason for doing so is that because Michael is in the broadband business and will be bidding on and have the strong possibility of having a contract with CV Fiber, thus there may be the appearance of conflict of interest and they don't want to put either Plainfield or CV Fiber in jeopardy because of that. Michael reminded the board that when he was appointed, he assured the board that he would rec use himself if there appeared to be any possibility of conflict of interest and that's gone well. Thus, if Michael is the alternate instead of the delegate, he'd still be able to participate in discussions, but would be unlikely to vote because of Jeremy serving as secretary and his regular attendance. Jeremy stated that Michael has been wholeheartedly supportive of CV Fiber, is a good advocate for the town, and has a lot of knowledge which is helpful to CV Fiber and, at the same time, acknowledged this conflict of interest may be a concern. He stated that he supports Michael serving as an alternate. **Sasha moved that Jeremy Matt be appointed as delegate to CV Fiber and Michael Birnbaum be appointed as alternate delegate and the motion passed unanimously.**

Michael explained that CVFiber is working on developing developing projects in all of its 20 towns, with 99% fiber to the premise, but the order of development is a closely kept secret at this time because it's a highly competitive business and don't want another outfit to slip in and upset CVFiber plans. There are two projects which are apt to happen this year, one in conjunction with Washington Electric Coop and another once CVFiber gets Both of these cover about 3 towns. At this time, the state is awash in money because of the Federal Cares Act and American Rescue Plan act and proposed Infrastructure bill. Each of these is throwing hundreds of millions of dollars at the problem. CVFiber is expecting a lot of development to happen beginning next year. Michael explained that his company, Kingdom Fiber, which is separate from CVFiber, participated in an auction and won support over a 10-year period of about \$7.5 million dollars to serve 36 towns in the Northeast Kingdom and Central Vermont and one of the towns included was Plainfield, so they are going to be subsidized to build fiber to the home in Plainfield, probably in conjunction with Washington Electric Coop and CVFiber. Washington Electric Coop is planning on to every one of its distribution poles, so that it could improve its own infrastructure and with enough capacity in the cables to also provide with the idea of leasing these lines to CVFiber. That means that instead of the high capital expenditure will have low yearly lease costs and will be able to build a lot more and a lot faster.

Michael described it as an extraordinary in our effort that Washington Electric wants to participate. Jeremy added that any grants that CV Fiber gets, from state and Federal sources, it could be that they begin building quite quickly. Jim said this was good news to hear, and Sasha added that as someone with internet fading in and out, this sounds wonderful. Tammy stated that she thinks partnering ing up with Washington Electric is great.

Jeremy also inquired about letters of appointment being sent out. Sasha said that she thinks she has the format because Jeremy Hanson her this last year. Jim asked if Sash could draft that and she said she could. Jeremy said can be sent to him and to Jeremy Hanson. Tammy moved that Sasha sign the CVFiber appointment form and the motion passed unanimously.

Select Board Minute Taker position: Jim stated that the Select Board is seeking a minute taker. Tammy also mentioned that the maintenance position being a contract position and that them getting insurance being costly was brought up at the last meeting. She asked if the Board could change this to an employee position. Town Treasurer Linda Wells said that could be done, and that it might result in a slight increase in workers compensation insurance costs. **Tammy moves to make the maintenance position to an employee position and the motion passed unanimously.**

Status of Brook Rd bridge replacement George Springson filled in for Alice Merrill who had to leave the meeting for another obligation. He discussed the tentative schedule Alice Merrill had put together to keep this project moving, the first item being that in the Summer of 2021 that Select Board determines that there is someone to work on the FEMA application - something that Alice is willing to do. Sasha suggested taking this up at the next meeting because she feels we need to have a pretty vibrant discussion because the FEMA grant would cover 75% with the result that the cost to the town would be in the hundreds of thousands of dollars. Tammy suggested that this may also be a project that we create a committee to determine whether this is a project that the town wants to proceed with, and considering the costs. George pointed out that the tentative schedule also includes going to the Town to get approval for bonding. The decision was to put off discussion of this for the next meeting. Tammy stated that she feels that we need to figure out the funding and how this will fit in our budget in the light of ongoing expenses for the Town,

Route 2-Main Street Intersection Remediation project update - Tammy Farnham.

Tammy reported that she met with the State this past Wednesday and has been meeting with Greg Light and Gary Graves regarding what will be needed for the Fire Department and the Fast Squad. Tammy met with the State and presented the town's needs. The proposal is for East Montpelier to have an ambulance at the fire station 24/7 with East Montpelier providing the ambulance and the State covering the staffing costs and that the State is very open to doing this. The other item was providing a fire truck on the Rte 2 side. The State seemed open to this, and the discussions went well.

The State also informed Tammy that they found ledge based on their drilling, but nothing that is overwhelming to the State. Tammy said that the State didn't have any information for the water yet, that the State is expecting to set up a meeting for the Water/Sewer people, possibly Greg Chamberlin and possibly Water/Sewer commission members as well.

Tammy also said that the State has mentioned a couple of different time for the Town to sign a contract which will include the provision that if down the road, the Town chooses not to continue, there will be a cost to the Town. She expects that the State will want this contract soon, possibly next month (May). Tammy noted that once the Town has signed that contract, from then on, if the Town decides to not go forward with the project, the Town will be responsible to reimburse the State for project costs.

Jim asked about there being a point at where we'll be presenting this to the Town and having another opportunity to brief the Town before moving forward. Tammy said we'd already asked the citizens in our meetings at the end of last Summer, and have already decided to go forward. Tammy said this is a very standard contract the State does and that the State is hoping to have this contract signed within the month.

Sasha also asked about whether there had been a discussion about the Barre Ambulance Service providing service to the south side of the town during construction. Tammy said that the Fire Department has considered this and done time trials for responses, and what was proposed is what the Fire Department put together.

Jim asked about what period of town we would need this coverage. Tammy explained that if the town authorizes night work this would shorten the time from twelve weeks. Sasha said that she thinks that having night work is a splendid idea and asked Tammy if she had any suggestions about how to get feedback from the citizens about this. Tammy suggested that this might be another time where we put together a citizen committee and also consider using a survey, like we did before. She also wondered whether there is a way to put something on the website to gather information or letting people sign up for committees. She'd also like us to gather emails to let people know when various construction is coming up.

Speed signs near Rte 2 / Hollister Hill Intersection - email from Rich Phillips about dangerous intersection
Sasha mentioned the email received from Rich Phillips about the Hollister Hill intersection which is in Marshfield. Jim clarified that the concern is when does the speed limit drop down coming from Marshfield direction, because of the speed limit and the curve before the Hollister Hill, it's a dangerous intersection. She sent some suggestions to folks in Marshfield suggesting that Marshfield be very specific about what they are asking for. Sasha said in the course of talking with people from Danville, she learned that they had flashing speed signs on Rte 2.

Jim mentioned that Rich Phillips actual request was that Marshfield was going to ask for a change of speed limit on Rte 2 and asked for support from Plainfield. Tammy confirmed that the process that Sasha had spoken of for changing the speed limit is the same, with the state's approach being that they don't reduce speed limits on State roads unless people are already driving below the posted speed limit. Sasha will begin drafting a letter of support, short and to the point and send it around to Select Board members.

Approval of minutes including for January 5, 11 and March 22 - Sasha said that the January 5 minutes are not yet complete, but the January 11 minutes need approval. The March 22 minutes were discussed as Sasha had requested changes to the minutes at the last meeting and had provided the Board with her proposed changes to the section immediately following *VHB Engineering firm for resident engineer services during construction*. This section is titled *Followup on query re Town Meeting articles relating to Australian balloting for future town meetings*. Tammy noted that the changes Sasha proposed are very detailed, a word by word statement of what occurred. Sasha explained that this was an important topic and that information was provided regarding the outcome of voting on the two Australian ballot articles and that Charlie Cogbill had complained about the minutes being vague. **Sasha moved for the approval of the March 22 minutes as amended and the motion passed unanimously. Sasha moved for the approval of the January 11 minutes and the motion passed unanimously. It was agreed that the April 12 minutes will be taken up at the next Select Board meeting. Tammy moved for the approval of the April 24 minutes and the motion passed unanimously.**

Approval of annual update of Local Emergency Operations Plan - Sasha, Emergency Management Director
Sasha explained that the Local Emergency Operations Plan has to be updated annually and that there were few changes. In the Vulnerable Populations section Dawna McClarren's daycare had been removed as it is no longer running and in the Other resources section Lloyd Farnham's Farnham Excavating had been added with a listing of a number of pieces of equipment that could be available in the event of an emergency. Tammy noted that Farnham Excavating listed should be Kevin Farnham Excavating and Sasha said she would make that change. **Sasha moved that the 2021 Local Emergency Operations Plan be approved and the motion passed unanimously.**

Public Comments

George asked about the Select Board approving contracts like lawn mowing services. Jim said we've taken them up in the past when Linda reminds us they have come due. George said that his son has been doing mowing 6 to 7 years, hasn't raised his rates, does a great job. George says that lawn mowing season has started and people who do this work need to plan out their services. It was agreed that this would be put on the agenda for next time.

Future of the old fire station - the prior two agenda items were moved up so that this agenda item would be taken up at the time scheduled on the agenda,

Susan Grimaldi, a member of the Historical Society board, reviewed that the Historical Society on behalf of the Town applied for the Burns grant which was not approved. Susan got in touch with them and learned that reason we didn't get the grant and who did get it. There were projects in bigger places where the grant was seen as supporting economic activity that received grants. She also learned that it was felt that the Town hadn't given enough care to the building, the use of the building as a museum was too specific and localized and that historical museums aren't a bit draw. Susan said they did make some suggestions, including that it might be

better for the town to rent the building, however Susan noted that it's not in good enough shape to be occupied now. Susan suggested that if the Town can't put in the money for the basic upkeep and repairs, perhaps the Town should consider selling the building with an agreement that it would be preserved. Susan mentioned that the person who bought the building next to it with the hydroponic store is interested in buying the building. Susan said that right now she sees the building as a liability as there is asbestos in the attic. She mentioned that a claim had been put in for asbestos removal and Zololight was going to pay 60% of the cost (around \$4200) with the town paying the remainder and that the cost may have gone up now. Susan said the building is getting worse and worse with problems with the back wall having problems, but if the town sells it cheap enough then the building could be fixed up for use for a variety of purposes.

Susan expressed her support for the building remaining. She noted that the building is considered very stable overall, but the back wall and roof are the concern right now. Bob Fancher shared that he and Dan Gadd showed the building today to the gentleman who bought the old hardware store [hydroponic store] and that he liked the building, and is interested in purchasing it, was looking at what it would take to renovate it, which in Bob's view would be substantial at this time. Bob stated that he'd also mentioned the possibility of using the space for parking, depending on the cost of renovation. Bob said that the structural timbers to the back wall are now pretty much rotten out.

Jim said if he's interested, he'd support talking with him. Strong support for keeping the old Fire House as an historic building was expressed by Melina Vieux, Betsy Zeigler, Melinda stated that she's disappointed in the lack of interest on the part of the town and lack of fund-raising. Rubin Ramirez who is purchasing the hydroponic store was present at the meeting and expressed strong support for keeping the building and an interest in buying it at a low price with the intent to preserve it as it is and at being part of the agreement.

Sasha suggested putting this on the agenda for the next Select Board meeting and Mr. Ramirez said he could do that. Sasha also suggested that if Mr. Ramirez had any suggestions to put in writing before the meeting, that would be helpful.

Sasha reflected on how complex this is in that the Select Board has been struggling with this year is the budget and what the resources are; the Board has been asking various entities to reduce their budget request. Even in this meeting in talking about the Brook Road bridge project and what the resources are, Sasha noted that it's very complex, so when she is hearing that there is an individual who is interested in the building, it may be that there is a resource that we'd been unaware of. Jim stated that he shares this concern and stated that if we could find a buyer who would agree that the building would be preserved that might be a win-win for the town.

Other business - there was no other business.

Upcoming Select Board meetings including:

May 5, 2021

- Under Town Clerk/Treasurer report, re-roofing of the municipal building
- Minutes, approval of April 22 minutes and January 5 minutes
- Brook Road bridge
- Future of old Fire House.

Adjourn Tammy moved that the meeting adjourn and the motion passed unanimously at 8:48 PM.