

Town of Plainfield, Vermont Select Board Meeting Minutes June 7, 2022 - Approved

Present: Tammy Farnham, Select Board member; Sasha Thayer, Select Board member; Paula Emery, Administrative Assistant to the Select Board; Matt Laggner

Present via Zoom or telephone: Jim Volz, Select Board Chair; Linda Wells, Town Clerk and Treasurer; Eric Blaisdell, *The Times Argus*; Bob and Kathy Fancher; Jamie Spector, Recreation Committee; Charles Cogbill; Betsy Zeigler; Robert Bridges; Christian Meyer, Central Vermont Regional Planning Commission; Ki Walker

Agenda:

- Executive session pursuant to 3 VSA 313 to discuss personnel and hiring
- Commencement of regular select board meeting
- Changes to Agenda
- Announcements
- Public comment
- Town Clerk/Town Treasurer Report - Linda Wells
 - Update on filling current and upcoming open positions inc. setting dates for interview(s) for Assistant Town Clerk/Assistant Town Treasurer candidate(s) who can be appointed Town Clerk and/or Town Treasurer until elections at March 2023 Town Meeting
 - Update on Municipal Building space logistics and clean out needed
 - Approval of Special Event Permit for a beer tasting at Barre Country Club, June 17, 2022 from 10 am to 4 pm: permit applicant is Lawson's Finest Liquids, LLC of Waitsfield, VT
 - Approval of warrants
 - Approval of minutes
- Road maintenance concern/complaint
- Old Fire House including asbestos removal contract approval and updates on schedule for building removal and Southgate purchase
- OK for easements to allow access to property of adjacent landowner and to The Health Center for inspection and maintenance of the settling pond portion of the gully remediation project on the Health Center property
- Recreation Committee summer program grant update
- Plainfield Coop request for reduced rental fee for November event
- Update on Main Street bridge problems and repairs, bridge closure decision, and funding options
- Update re Pedestrian Bridge construction
- Consideration of returning to all-remote Select Board meetings as allowed by Act 78 Emergency Management inc. approval of 2022 LEMP (Local Emergency Management Plan) & allocation of Emergency Management office
- Other business
- Agenda items for upcoming meetings
- Adjourn

Chairman Volz called the public portion of the meeting to order at 7:03 PM.

Changes to Agenda There were no changes to the agenda.

Announcements

Thayer announced that local coronavirus numbers are up again.

Public Comment

Paula Emery stated that there is a wrecked Volvo in the Mill Street Lot that's been there for months and cautioned about sending the wrong message. Linda Wells said that she has spoken to the owner and his insurance company. She will call them again.

Town Clerk/Town Treasurer Report

Update on Filling Current and Upcoming Open Positions

Wells requested that the Select Board begin candidate interviews soon.

Update on Municipal Building Space Logistics and Clean Out Needed

Wells requested that the first floor room in the rear of the building be cleaned out because the space may be needed in the future for Town Office work.

Allocation of Emergency Management Office Space was moved to this portion of the agenda.

Thayer moved that the Select Board allow Emergency Management to use the small room off of the meeting room [on the second floor] for Emergency Management purposes. Farnham requested clarification about the purpose of the room and Thayer stated that they will store files, printers, maps, supplies, and hold meetings. Farnham further clarified that she wants to make sure that there will not be an expectation that all committees in town will have their own space. **The motion carried unanimously.**

Approval of Special Event Permit for a Beer Tasting at Barre Country Club

Thayer moved to permit a special event at the Barre Country Club on June 17, 2022 by Lawson's Finest Liquids, LLC, of Waitsfield, Vermont. The motion carried unanimously. Carol Smith will sign the permit.

Approval of Warrants

Farnham moved to approve accounts payable warrants from May 26 and June 1, and payroll warrants from May 27 and June 3. The motion carried unanimously.

Approval of Minutes

Thayer provided additional language for minutes from the May 25 meeting. The changes are provided below in bulleted list form:

- **Thayer moved that, based on additional information that the Select Board received, they will not proceed with one applicant and authorize Jim Volz to communicate this to that applicant. The motion carried unanimously.**

- **Thayer moved to authorize Jim Volz to contact the other applicant and offer the position effective July 1, 2022. The Select Board will have another special meeting to finalize hiring after hearing back from the applicant. The motion passed unanimously.**

- Farnham moved to adjourn the meeting, the motion carried unanimously, and the meeting adjourned at 9:20PM.

Thayer moved to approve the May 25 minutes with the above additions. Farnham amended the motion to include “as stated,” and the motion carried unanimously.

Additional minutes will be reviewed at a future meeting.

Update on Main Street Bridge Problems, Repairs, Closure Decision and Funding Options

Farnham reported that she received information from Fire Chief Greg Light on the cost of staffing an East Montpelier ambulance 24 hours per day, seven days per week in the village while the bridge is closed. At \$80.00 per hour, the total cost for one month is \$57,000.00. The cost of renting a fire truck to be stationed on the North side of Route 2 will be \$11,000.00. The grand total for one-month of emergency response services is \$68,000.00.

Farnham provided these figures to Ross Gowan of VTrans for review for inclusion in the grant. Gowan replied that they are willing to look at helping to support the emergency response services in town and do not accept the cost of \$68,000.00. Farnham outlined her request to VTrans for the Select Board. She also attempted to reach Gowan for further clarification but had not received a reply at the time of this report.

Volz inquired about the financial advantage of closing the bridge over keeping one lane open. Farnham and Thayer clarified as follows:

- It will cost less in grant money if closed entirely
- Closing entirely better in terms of membrane repair and concrete integrity
- Faster overall repair time
- It will cost more to keep the bridge open than to close it & hire emergency response
- If they can't get emergency response funding into the grant it will cost the town more to close for one month and provide emergency services, because the town is paying a percentage of the total cost
- VTrans is not on board with the cost of \$68,000.00 for one month of emergency response services, noting that the town will be getting better services than it currently has.

Farnham offered to speak with VTrans again to present the town's position on Emergency Services, to get further clarification from Ross Gowan, and report back to the Select Board.

Recreation Committee Summer Program Grant Update

Jamie Spector of the Recreation Committee stated that they received a grant from the Vermont After School Program. The Recreation Committee will use the funding to purchase supplies and host activities in the Recreation Field in July and August. Beginning in July they will hold a soccer game and potluck every other Friday through August. There will be a skateboarding clinic and an art workshop. Funds will be used to purchase supplies for the Recreation Field as well as Old Home Day.

Spector requested permission to allow the participants in the art workshop to paint parts of the skate park and the cement blocks at the edge of the parking lot. There was discussion about whether the Select Board needs to approve the design for art on municipal property and how to

message the project to avoid graffiti. **Spector offered to attend the August 16 Select Board meeting with design ideas for approval.**

Spector said that the Recreation Committee will purchase a bouncy house, several pop-up tents, and some lawn games to save money in rental fees. She will circulate a spreadsheet about Old Home Days soon.

Spector alerted the Select Board to the fact that mowing costs consume 80% of the Recreation Committee budget for maintenance, repairs and equipment. The Recreation Committee is looking for quotes and discussing how to reduce the costs.

Farnham recommended that the Recreation Committee contact the Road Crew about painting the fence at the edge of the parking lot, as they've done it in the past.

Spector asked about a Town Maintenance Person and Thayer emphasized that the town needs one desperately. Interested parties should contact Linda Wells.

Old Fire House Asbestos Removal Contract Approval & Updates

Ki Walker reported that Midstate Asbestos pushed the job back one month after the Select Board approved it, so he switched some of his jobs in order to be available in mid-September when Midstate is available.

Volz stated that there is no need for the Select Board to re-approve the contract if the price remains the same.

Walker will contact Midstate to make arrangements and finalize the date, and will work with Linda Wells and cc all emails to the Select Board.

Easements for Gully Remediation Project

Thayer requested clarification from Christian Meyer about the easement. Christian Meyer of the Central Vermont Regional Planning Commission (CVRPC) stated that there are different easements with the Health Center and Mathews Farm. **Thayer moved to advise Christian Meyer that the Select Board has reviewed the easements from Jonathan Mathew and Northeast Washington County Community Health, Inc. and are okay with the May 25 version sent by Meyer. The motion carried unanimously.** Meyer noted that the project is out to bid and they are doing site visits. They hope it will begin this summer.

Update on Pedestrian Bridge Construction

Farnham stated that there is no new information to update.

Return to All Remote Meetings

Farnham moved that Plainfield return to remote meetings for committees, boards and commissions, as allowed by [Act 78](#). Act 78 expires on January 15, 2023 and Plainfield can end remote only meetings before that date. The motion carried unanimously.

Road Maintenance Concern/Complaint

Volz read a letter from Rob Bridges of Middle Road about the increasing height of the road surface, which is causing access and drainage issues on his property. Matt Laggner, Bridges' son-in-law, who took ownership of the property recently, stated that every spring the road gets

re-graded and the surface gets higher and higher. Presently, the road surface is higher than the driveway and the barn floor. Laggner reported that they are unable to get out of their driveway in the winter due to the steep grade, and that they are experiencing runoff of water and gravel onto their property.

Laggner and Bridges requested that the town consider some options for addressing and improving the situation.

Road Foreman Mike Nolan stated that the job of lowering the road would involve regrading all the way to Lloyd Farnham's driveway, dropping the surface by three feet, and then laying a new base, stating that it would be quite the project. He said that it is possible to get a grant through the state and that he has attempted to contact someone at the state level about this but his calls were not returned.

There was extensive discussion. Farnham suggested that the Select Board consider putting money into the budget for issues like this one.

Bridges requested that Nolan pass on his grant contact information before he retires so that the next Road Foreman has that information.

Farnham suggested that the Select Board continue to brainstorm, not put the issue aside, keep it up front on the agenda, continue to research grants and options for different materials in that section or a new base. Consider this the beginning to the conversation. Nolan noted that there is a new administrator at District 6 and it might be helpful to have someone from the Select Board contact her, as she has not returned his calls.

Thayer requested a list of trouble spots and time frames from Nolan and Bingham prior to Nolan's retirement.

Volz concluded by stating that the Select Board will hear back about grant situation and other options at the next Road Foreman report. Farnham requested that the topic be rescheduled for a future meeting and that the Select Board let Laggner and Bridges know when to come to the next meeting for the report.

Plainfield Co-op Request for Reduced Rental Fee for November Event

This item was moved to the next meeting.

Other Business

George Cushing asked if ARPA Committee will be on the agenda and was informed that the Select Board needs to meet with them. There is training and outreach that must be completed that could be done by the Select Board or could be assigned to the committee. **Cushing requested that he be put in contact with the others on the committee.** Farnham stated that the committee members should inquire about previous requests for ARPA funding at Select Board meetings, and that they begin reviewing the Vermont League of Cities and Towns website resources. She noted that funding can be leveraged. **Thayer will send updated information to ARPA committee members.**

Date for Interviewing Town Clerk Candidates

This item was not taken up before the close of the meeting.

Other Business

Farnham referred to the hiring process for the Road Foreman, stating that she requested that it be on this meeting's agenda, but it wasn't. She noted that Volz had reviewed the Select Board's Road Foreman hiring process in the previous meeting and that emailed requests for clarification of the process to all members of the Select Board by members of the community went unanswered. She stated that all hiring decisions were made by the entire board and not by her alone. Volz and Thayer reiterated and confirmed that all decisions were made by the entire board and that Farnham graciously offered to deal with the Indeed postings.

Farnham restated that there was a long hiring process and that Mike Nolan was included in it. She said that the Select Board chose not to include him in the interview process for reasons of objectivity. She further stated that there was no conflict of interest and that she did not solicit anyone to apply. All of the recruitment was done on Indeed.

Farnham stated that, after much consideration and in light of attacks on her self, her family, and her family business, she has decided that she will resign from the Select Board. **Farnham submitted her formal resignation from the Select Board, effective immediately.** She added that she hopes that the community realizes that Select Board members are spending thousands of volunteer hours and are working to do things for the best of the community. She hopes that people stop and realize that their public comments and attacks affect others who are trying to do good for the community. She closed by stating that the key to being on a Select Board is to be open minded, and that listening, hearing, and trying to understand and evaluate information can change someone's mind. She also noted that Select Board members cannot respond to inquiries about matters discussed in Executive Session.

Agenda Items for Upcoming Meetings

June 21, 2022 Agenda Items

- Response to complaint from Janet Stewart and Karl Bissex
- Report from Road Foreman
- Middle Road update
- Plainfield Co-op request for reduced fee for meeting in November
- LEMP approval
- ARPA Committee
- Town Clerk Interview Schedule

Adjourn

The meeting was abruptly terminated on Zoom with no official adjournment time.

Respectfully submitted by Paula Emery.