

**Town of Plainfield, Vermont
Select Board Meeting
September 21, 2021**

Approved Minutes

Present in person

Jim Volz, Select Board Chair
Sasha Thayer, Select Board member
Carla Siegle (community member and Chair, Cutler Memorial Library board)
Amanda Ogle (Cutler Memorial Library librarian)
Eric Blaisdell, (Times Argus)

Present via Zoom

Tammy Farnham, Select Board member
Liz Bicknell
Lucy Blue
Jesse Cooper, Planning Commission member
George Cushing, Delinquent Tax Collector
Susan Grimaldi
Cam Kelly-Kinniburgh
Pam Kelly-Kinniburgh
Alice Merrill, grant writer
Rose Paul, Conservation Commission member
Melinda Vieux
Peter Youngbaer, Plainfield Co-op
Betsy Ziegler
Grace Vinson, Central Vermont Regional Planning Commission (CVRPC)

Agenda:

- Changes to Agenda
 - Announcements
 - Public Comment
 - Town Clerk/Town Treasurer Report - Linda Wells
 - Approval of payroll warrants for September 10 and 17
 - Approval of minutes inc. July 27, August 24, September 7 and 13
 - Update on Pedestrian Bridge construction
 - Sale of Old Fire House to Jay Southgate/Southgate Steeples inc. status of building design
 - American Rescue Plan Act Funds Discussion
 - Appointments
 - Other Business
-

Jim Volz called the meeting to order at 7:00PM.

Changes to Agenda

There were no changes to the agenda.

Announcements

Thayer announced that the Wash County Sheriff's department is looking for people. Those interested should contact Washington County Sheriff Sam Hill.

Farnham announced that Plainfield is seeking a school director for the Twinfield School Board.

Public Comment

George Cushing requested that the Select Board (SB) lower the parking spaces for the old hardware store building from seven parking spots to three parking spots. Volz requested that it be added to a future agenda and Farnham suggested it be added to October 19's agenda.

Town Clerk/Town Treasurer Report – Linda Wells

Approval of payroll warrants for September 10 and 17

Wells informed the SB that the September 10 payroll was approved prematurely at the last meeting. **Thayer moved to approve the payroll warrants for September 10 and 17 and the motion was approved unanimously.**

Approval of minutes for July 27, August 24, September 7 and 13

Thayer moved to approve the August 24 and September 13 Select Board meeting minutes. Farnham requested changes to August 24 September 7 minutes. **Thayer moved to approve September 13 minutes. Motion approved unanimously.** Approval of July 27, August 24, and September 7 minutes will be on the October 5 meeting agenda.

Wells stated that there are concerns about air quality in the town offices. Requested that the SB consider using some of the American Rescue Plan Act funding to improve ventilation in the town office building. Volz recommended that the town have the building's air quality assessed and then take it from there.

Update on Pedestrian Bridge Construction

Farnham reported on a meeting with the engineers, including structural engineers. All three engineering companies have reviewed the project. They have determined that they will not remove stones at the lower level, leaving as much of the original wall as they can. They are working on building a stabilizing pad to build the walls onto. There will be less material (backfill) on the Mill Street side, which will save the town money. The project engineers met with the state and the state approved the above changes. Ross Gouin requested a project change report from the engineers so that they can update the financial information.

Farnham stated that the engineers discussed the condition of the bridge with her, noting that it is a town maintained bridge which is in need of repairs, some of which will be completed as a part of the pedestrian bridge project.

The state has audited the traffic control and will work with landowners on removal of vegetation. They have turned the blinking light off, and the road sign near Positive Pie is going to be concreted in because it keeps getting moved.

Thayer expressed appreciation for all of Tammy's efforts on the project. Volz concurred.

Thayer asked when the project will end. Farnham said that the contractor has 90 days of road closure permitted by VTrans and we are roughly 30 days into road closure. The issue with the voids and the structural engineer's vacation caused delays. At this point, the contractors are moving the material by hand because of the age of the rock foundation of the building. They have not asked for an extension of the road closure.

Thayer asked about the bridge, stating that it passed recent inspections. Farnham said that she was told that the bridge's issue is maintenance, especially underneath. The upper decking is weakening because of the lack of maintenance on the underside of the bridge. Ross Gouin is going to request a new bridge inspection. Farnham said that the Pedestrian Bridge project will result in the repair of that side of the bridge, so it may make sense for the town to pay extra now to fix the other side, because it could save money. The question is whether it makes sense for the town to pay more money now to fix the bridge so that we save money in the future.

Pam Kelly-Kinniburgh thanked Tammy for her efforts and mentioned that the Plainfield People Facebook page says that the lights are bad and she asked whether it's possible to have lights turned off on weekends. Farnham said that the traffic plan was approved by the state and that she thinks that left turns into the village from the east are backing the traffic up on that side of the intersection. She timed it herself and found that was a three-minute delay. She noted that Route 2 has heavy traffic, which causes delays. The bridge is still one way, so the lights can't be turned off because the point of the traffic lights is to allow traffic to pass over the [currently one lane] bridge.

Farnham noted that many people are not slowing down when passing the construction site and that the workers are working under difficult conditions.

Sale of Old Fire House to Jay Southgate/Southgate Steeples

Farnham has been in contact with Southgate. He is concerned about needing an exception from the state for building in the flood zone and has tried to reach them but hasn't gotten a response. Southgate has preliminary designs but needs answers on the flood issue before he can move forward.

American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) Funds

Thayer reported that the town's website has information about the ARPA funds. The amount received to date is \$69,057.97 and the total anticipated allocation to Plainfield is \$377,245. The funds will be in a bank account until we decide what to do with them. There is a reporting requirement for use of the funds, and they have to be spent by December, 2026. The final regulations haven't been set, so we can't make any decisions until they are. Thayer listed the categories that funds can be spent on, details of which can be found at the ARPA website or on the Vermont League of Cities and Towns website. She specifically mentioned the Town Hall and Opera House's lost revenue; improvement of broadband, specifically CV Fiber; and the water and wastewater system, noting they can be used as matching funds in FEMA grants such as the Route 2 Intersection or the Brood Road Bridge projects.

The Select Board opened the floor to public comment on the topic.

Peter Youngbaer, General Manager of the Plainfield Co-op, said that he's done research on improving ventilation for the Plainfield Co-op. From the numbers he's gathered so far, the cost will be \$2,000.00, which is not budgeted in the co-op's funds. The Plainfield Co-op is

requesting an allocation of \$2,000.00 for air purification. He also requested hazard pay reimbursement. The Plainfield Co-op paid an additional \$3.00/hour hazard pay from March – July, 2020, at the rate of roughly \$1,000.00 per week. This is not a specific request, but wants to put it on the table.

There was discussion about hazard pay for town employees as well.

Jesse Cooper reiterated Thayer's suggestion that the Town Hall and Opera House should receive some of the funding to cover lost revenue. He requested information about guidelines and timeline and asked whether initiatives on affordable housing could also be considered.

Thayer added the housing question to a list of questions for Grace Vinson of Central Vermont Regional Planning Commission (CVRPC).

Rose Paul, Plainfield Conservation Commission member, spoke on behalf of the commission's work on the Plainfield Town Forest. They spoke with Mike Nolan about improving the Gonyaw Road's final stretch, which is currently not passable by vehicle. The Conservation Commission would like the town to consider using ARPA funds to improve that portion of Gonyaw Road due to the increase in use of, and impact on, outdoor recreational areas, including the Town Forest.

Pam Kelly-Kinniburgh said that we need another River Run – something commercial for the town to bring people here and asked how the decision will be made about how the money is spent.

Thayer said that the recommendations are to have a process for input from the community but that the answer to the Kelly-Kinniburgh's question isn't clear yet and added the topic to the list of questions for Grace Vinson.

Alice Merrill suggested spending the funds on the sewer and water expenses of the US Route 2 intersection improvement, noting that it would allow the town to improve sewer and water lines that are ageing and need to be replaced.

George Cushing supported spending a lot of the funds on water and sewer, noting that there are a couple of projects that could use the money. He also stated that the funds that we now have should be put into a CD that would make money.

Thayer said that the funds can be put into an interest-bearing account and the interest is the town's money and that the town will look into it further.

Carla Siegle and Amanda Ogle, Cutler Memorial Library board chair and librarian, spoke about making the library more accessible by widening the parking lot because COVID has increased use of the library and they don't have adequate parking. They also discussed renovating the building's disused garage to make it an accessible outdoor events gathering space during the pandemic.

Betsy Ziegler requested that the town continue to support the improvement projects by using the funds for the water and wastewater lines in the Route 2 intersection project. She would also

like to see some funding go to improving the Recreation Field and improving accessibility by repairing the big pothole in the parking lot.

Jesse Cooper, Plainfield Planning Commission member, suggested that the SB get a report from the Water and Wastewater Commission to learn about what they could do with the ARPA funds.

Vinson elaborated on the following topics:

- Hazard Pay – Essential workers are eligible. This includes town employees but could also include others, with emphasis on “could,” and clarified that it would have to be for a period of time outside of the time period when they received other ARPA funds.
- Affordable Housing – Affordable Housing is not one of the four main uses, but she is getting a lot of questions about it. The final rules haven’t come out yet, so she can’t provide a definite answer on this topic.
- Recreational Areas – Increased use of parks and recreation facilities and the damage to them due to the pandemic qualifies. It isn’t clear whether improving access to the areas qualifies, but she will look into it.
- Cutler Memorial Library – Vinson urged that people think about how each project relates to COVID because the funds have to meet eligibility requirements. She can research how widening the parking lot would be connected to impact from COVID.
- Decision-making Process for ARPA Fund Distribution – The municipality has the decision-making authority, so members of the select board are the authorized representatives of the municipality.

- Farnham asked Vinson to share ideas that other towns are considering:
- Marshfield is considering adding a porch to the library to accommodate increase use of the library and allow for social distancing
- Water/Wastewater projects are being considered by many communities. These projects need to be aligned to two EPA programs, the Clean Water Service Revolving Fund and the Drinking Water Service Revolving Fund, which exist at both the federal and state level.
- Stormwater – also needs to align to the above EPA programs.
- Broadband
- Lost revenue

Thayer encouraged people to contact the Select Board members with ideas and thoughts about what might qualify via email to all three of them: Volz, selectboard19@gmail.com; Farnham, selectboard8@gmail.com; Thayer, selectboard23@gmail.com.

Farnham said that the Twin Valley Senior Center requested a heat pump and would like help with that. Thayer said that there are places all over the country that are co-locating daycares with senior centers and asked if this is something that we can consider.

Farnham brought up the need for a committee to research and evaluate options due to the amount of research that will be required. She’d like the committee to evaluate options, survey the town, and make recommendations.

Thayer said that the CVRPC and the Vermont League of Cities and Towns (VLCT) are providing clarity that might make research in that direction unnecessary. She also expressed concern about lack of objectivity of potential committee members.

Volz thinks it is a good idea and is something that SB should think about. He requested public input on the committee idea from the community via email.

Farnham noted the need for research on regulations and that a SB meeting is not the place to gather that information. She stated that she wants the committee members who are there to objectively evaluate the ideas, rather than to advance specific projects.

Volz said that the committee has to have a clear charge and scope of authority.

Appointments

There were no appointments made, but mention was made of need for members for the Conservation Commission, Planning Commission, and Development Review Board. There is an open seat on the Twinfield School Board. Those interested should contact Linda Wells, Plainfield Town Clerk.

Thayer announced that she appointed Carla Straight as Emergency Management Coordinator for Plainfield and that Carla brings years of experience having served as Emergency Management Coordinator in the Valley for over ten years and also having done evaluation of table top exercises.

Other Business

There was no other business and the **meeting was adjourned at 9:04PM.**

Respectfully submitted by Paula Emery.

Agenda items for October 5, 2021 Select Board Meeting

- Electric car charger, existing and possible additional charger, inc. hearing from Energy Coordinator Bob Atchinson
- Emergency Management update, including introduction to new Emergency Management Coordinator
- Brook Road Bridge project
 - review of options for project
 - review of possible funding sources including FEMA and, possibly, Federal infrastructure bill now pending
 - issue of town approval
 - issue of filing application with FEMA for funding for project and when to do so

Agenda items for October 19, 2021 Select Board Meeting

Report from Road Foreman

Executive session re possible litigation Adjourn after return from Executive Session

Parking spaces in front of former Hardware Store.