

**Town of Plainfield, Vermont  
Select Board Meeting  
October 5, 2021**

**Minutes - Approved**

**Present:**

Tammy Farnham, Select Board  
Jim Volz, Select Board Chair  
Sasha Thayer, Select Board  
Linda Wells, Town Clerk and Treasurer  
Pam Kelly-Kinniburgh  
George Cushing, Delinquent Tax Collector  
Alice Merrill  
Betsy Ziegler  
Chris Ditmeyer  
Grace Vinson, Central Vermont Regional Planning Commission (CVRPC)  
Melinda Vieux  
Lucy Blue  
Eric Blaisdell, Times Argus  
Karl Bissex  
Mary Trerice  
Ryan Christiansen  
Susan Grimaldi  
Rose Paul  
Karen Storey, Plainfield Zoning Administrator (ZA)  
Adam Hochschild

**Agenda:**

Changes to Agenda  
Announcements  
Public Comment  
Town Clerk/Town Treasurer Report - Linda Wells  
    - Approval of warrants  
    - Approval of minutes inc. July 27, August 24, September 7 and 21  
    - Designation of Select Board members authorized to sign re various issues  
Update on Pedestrian Bridge construction  
Sale of Old Fire House to Jay Southgate/Southgate Steeples inc. status of building design  
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

Appointments - Appointments needed School Director, Conservation Commission, Development Review Board, Lister, Planning Commission  
Update re 79 Bean Road  
Other Business  
Agendas for upcoming meetings:  
Adjourn

**Jim Volz called the meeting to order at 7:03PM.**

### **Changes to Agenda**

Emergency Management Update is moved to the next meeting on October 19.

### **Announcements**

Thayer announced that Washington County Sheriff's Department is seeking applicants for Deputy Sheriff. Contact Sheriff Sam Hill.

There are openings on the Development Review Board, the Planning Commission, the Conservation Commission and the school board. If interested, send a letter to Linda Wells at plainfieldtc@gmail.com or drop it off at the Town Clerk's office on Main Street.

### **Public Comment**

George Cushing reminded the Select Board (SB) that town is still looking for constable and animal control officer and asked why the Brook Road Bridge is on the agenda.

Farnham clarified that the bridge is on the agenda so that we can discuss whether to apply for the grant.

Merrill said that a friend was threatened while walking on the RR bed by a group of young men in trucks at the parking lot at around 6:00PM. Thayer said that the sheriff said that someone on their force moved away and they are short-handed.

Thayer announced that there is a walk-in clinic for COVID shots in Berlin on the Airport Road. There is a sign on the road. Open Monday – Friday 8:00-6:00, Saturday & Sunday 8:00-4:00.

### **Town Clerk/Town Treasurer Report**

#### Approval of Warrants

Three warrants: accounts payable 9/22, payroll 9/24, payroll 9/30. **Thayer moved to approve the warrants and they were approved unanimously.**

#### Approval of Minutes for July 27, August 24, September 7 and September 21

Minutes for July 27, August 24, September 7, and September 21 are not complete and will be taken up at the next meeting.

### Designation of Select Board members authorized to sign various issues

Thayer requested that the SB authorize her to sign paperwork about the gully work behind the Health Center. **SB decided to continue existing practices regarding review, approval and signing of documents.**

Wells requested that the SB determine who is authorized to sign a VTrans Municipal Mitigation Grants and Aid roads grant through Ross Gowan. This is a grant for the highway department for ditching for \$9,400.00. **Farnham moved that the SB authorize Linda to sign the VTrans Municipal Mitigation Grants and Aid program grant on behalf of the SB. The motion was approved unanimously.**

### **Update on Pedestrian Bridge Construction**

Farnham reported that there are no new updates, except that there is a question of whether the sidewalk is edged square or ½” round. Ross Gowan recommended going with the state standard of ½” round edge. This does not involve a change in the contract. There was a cost savings of going with the square. No major updates on the project at this time.

### **Sale of Old Fire House to Jay Southgate/Southgate Steeples**

Farnham reported that Southgate was having difficulty reaching someone at the state to discuss permitting. He eventually was informed that since he’s not changing the footprint of an existing building, state and federal permits are not needed. Farnham is meeting with Plainfield Zoning Administrator, Karen Storey, on October 6 to discuss the zoning. Southgate indicated that he like a letter from the Plainfield Zoning Administrator stating that the property is clear of zoning problems before he moves forward with plans. He also expressed concern about the water/wastewater hookups and the parking. As soon as he gets the go-ahead on permitting from the town he will move forward with the plan.

### **Pedestrian Bridge**

Pam Kelly-Kinniburgh requested that Tammy Farnham post an explanation about the traffic lights for the pedestrian bridge on the Plainfield People Facebook page in order to clear up the current confusion and upset. Farnham said that she’d be willing to do it, but doesn’t do social media. She requested Thayer’s assistance and Thayer agreed, stating that the information is already posted on the town’s website. Volz suggested that people contact VTrans with complaints and reminded those present that the lighting is outside of the SB’s control. Farnham stated the state and contractor developed the traffic plan and it cannot be changed. The issue is that people are running the red lights which is very unsafe for people crossing over the bridge with the traffic light.

### **Electric car charger, existing and possible additional charger**

Volz noted that Bob Atchinson is not available today so the electric car charger has to be moved to another meeting.

**Emergency Management Update**, including introduction to new Emergency Management Coordinator was also moved to a future agenda.

## **Brook Road Bridge project**

Alice Merrill stated that this item is not on tonight's agenda for discussion of the options for the project; rather, it's about whether the SB wants to apply for the grant for the project. Stephanie Smith recommended that we apply through Building Resilient Infrastructure and Communities (BRIC) which is a FEMA program. She also recommended another FEMA program, the Hazard Mitigation Grant Program (HMGP), in which FEMA money is awarded to the state and then the competition for funds is within the state. The deadlines are the same.

Merrill restated the timeline:

- Start application now, finish in December, submit in January.
- Discuss and vote on the project at Town Meeting in March.
- If the town votes no, we would pull the grant; if the town votes yes, the decision on the grant will be made in December, 2022.

Merrill said that if the town wants to apply for the grant they will need to write a "local match commitment letter" with the addition of a contingency measure to pull the application if the town votes no on the project. She said that she is not sure what the repercussions would be if the town decides not to apply during this round and said that there is money in that pool and is a good year to apply for infrastructure funds. She also noted that putting the project off will probably result in changes to the budget and the possibility of paying to have the design updated when the town does decide to replace the bridge.

The grant will be a 75/25 split. She noted the possibility of federal infrastructure money coming.

Thayer asked Grace Vinson of CVRPC to clarify whether the town can pull the application if the vote is no.

Thayer noted that the town's share will be \$310,000-311,000.00, spread over 20 years. Merrill said that that figure is not accurate because that figure is just construction cost. There will be additional engineering, project management, and right-of-way costs. The management costs are partially covered by FEMA. Resident engineer cost would not be covered. The additional costs would be roughly \$38,000. This would bring the cost to roughly \$350,000, paid over 20 years, with interest.

Thayer said that she would like to know what the actual cost will be. Volz noted that it will be paid over many years and Farnham clarified that the vote would be to bond, which assumes that there's interest. She requested that we not look at the interest at this point.

Vinson stated that she didn't see a place for a contingency language in the match commitment letter, but the letter will be submitted with the application and doesn't bind the town to anything. Vinson and Merrill have confirmed this with Stephanie Smith: the application can be rescinded if the bond vote fails. Vinson will follow up with Smith tomorrow about the language.

Merrill urged the SB to let the town voters decide, stating that if the vote fails we should move swiftly to notify FEMA, and that March is plenty of time. She does not see a problem with the timeline she is proposing, given her conversations with Smith and Vinson.

Volz requested information about the two programs. Merrill restated that the BRIC program is a national pool and the HMGP grant is a state pool, so it was recommended that she apply for the HMGP grant. She restated that she needs to know whether she is to start writing the grant or

not soon. She agreed that transparency is important and stated that the exact figures will become more clear as she begins the grant writing process.

Farnham noted that if the funds aren't encumbered we could save money by hiring someone locally. She noted that there may be costs associated with purchasing rights of way for construction and requested that we consider the affordability of project costs alongside the costs of the Route 2 intersection project. She asked whether we are putting the Brook Road Bridge ahead of the Route 2 intersection and stated that if the SB is going to move forward with a project the SB needs to be behind it.

Volz stated that if we don't apply we won't know if we get the grant. We know that the issues with the bridge do cause damage to the town and to people in the town, while the Route 2 intersection has not harmed anyone. If we don't apply we won't get it, but if we apply for it the option will remain open.

Merrill urged the SB to find out when the Route 2 project will start and whether we can use American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds for it. She urged the SB to meet with Stephanie Smith to hear from her directly and to figure out the timelines and move forward well informed.

Thayer reminded the SB they were expected to sign off on a VTrans commitment letter for the Route 2 project in September.

Thayer asked Merrill how much it will cost to complete the grant application for the Brook Road Bridge project. Merrill said she can't predict exactly and estimated a couple thousand dollars. Vinson added that she is available to help Merrill with the grant application. She has done a BRIC application. It isn't simple, but a lot of the information can be cut and pasted in, the budget being the trickiest part. The grant deadline is early December.

Cushing said that there isn't enough information to and urged the SB get all of the figures together before moving forward.

Susan Grimaldi said that the people most affected by the damage are those who will have to sell some right of way property to the town for the project. As those homeowners will benefit directly from replacing the bridge, she doesn't think the town should expect a struggle with the rights of way.

Farnham asked whether Volz would be willing to contact the property owners. Volz agreed to talk with the landowners and requested their names. Farnham suggested a special meeting and Volz agreed. Merrill stated that the engineering plans have this information in them and pointed out that completion of the application requires that information about the finances be gathered as well.

Thayer said that she is not in support of agreeing to move forward with the grant application before information on costs is gathered. Farnham asked why we would spend the money on gathering that information. Merrill again urged the SB move forward so that she has adequate time to write the grant. Smith vets the grant and would like to have it by mid-December, so she thinks the SB should "get on it." Thayer stated that she is not willing to spend funds on grant writing before we have the information and that she wants to talk to the property owners first. She thinks that Merrill should start working on the grant. Farnham questioned why the town would spend money on the grant writing before we know if we're going to move on it, noting that we have two other large projects on deck.

Merrill requested the SB move on it so that we don't put pressure on Smith at the end of the timeline and again urged that the SB contact Stephanie Smith to set up a special meeting with her and landowners to get more firm information about the budget.

Volz stated that Step 1 of the plan is for him to contact landowners about easements and set up a special meeting with them. **Volz will contact the landowners to see if they can meet Oct 12, 14, 15 at 7PM.** Step 2 is to have another meeting to decide on priorities for all of the big projects.

Merrill suggested that there be an in-person forum with a chart on the wall, discussion and thorough information that is presented clearly, both verbally and visually. She suggested using a process for decision-making that is clear and well-planned. **SB chose to use Zoom for this process.**

### **Appointments**

**Seth Mullendore applied for the Development Review Board (DRB) and Volz moved to approve. Approved unanimously.**

There are still openings on the DRB, School Board, Conservation Commission and Planning Commission. Those interested should contact Linda Wells, the Town Clerk.

### **Update on Bean Road Property**

Farnham stated that she has been in touch with the state (Department of Environmental Conservation Enforcement) several times and has made them aware that the property owner is drilling a well. They indicated that she can drill a well because it is a part of the wastewater permit. They have been out to the property and clarified that the septic has not failed and that the current septic was certified and now has to be recertified because it was disconnected for more than four years.

Farnham has met with the landowner in person and verified that she is working with the DEC, who said that they are aware of the situation. The DEC employee verified that they have been working with landowner and that she is aware of what needs to be done. The DEC employee also stated that, while the landowner is out of compliance, she is not on their priority list. It is not an environmental concern because she doesn't currently have sewerage surfacing.

Farnham stated that the landowner is aware of the 180-day requirement and intends to move back to the property for 180 days. The landowner has questions that Farnham couldn't answer, so Farnham is meeting with Karen Storey, Plainfield Zoning Administrator, to clarify questions about flood zone and building size.

Karen Storey said that the state does not have an environmental concern with the current septic system. She is meeting with Tammy to discuss flood zone, size of the house, and setbacks.

Ditmeyer and Hochschild requested to speak, but **Thayer moved to close discussion and the motion was approved unanimously.**

Volz closed discussion. **Farnham requested that this be added to the next meeting so that she can provide an update and present new information.**

Volz asked if the certified letter was sent. Farnham stated that she did not send the letter because she was able to meet with the landowner in person.

**Thayer moved to adjourn at 8:37 and the motion was approved unanimously.**

### **Other Business**

There was no other business.

### **Agenda for October 19, 2021 Select Board Meeting**

- Report from Road Foreman
- Review of parking spaces in front of former hydroponics store authorized by Select Board and possible reduction in number of parking spaces
- Sale of Old Fire House to Jay Southgate/Southgate Steeples inc. status of building design
- 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
- Update on 79 Bean Road