

**Town of Plainfield, Vermont  
Select Board Meeting  
October 19, 2021**

**MINUTES - Approved**

**Present:**

Jim Volz, Select Board Chair  
Tammy Farnham, Select Board  
Sasha Thayer, Select Board  
Linda Wells, Town Clerk and Treasurer  
Ryan Christiansen  
Sarah Pollica  
Eric Blaisdell, Times Argus  
Carla Straight, Emergency Management Coordinator  
Betsy Zeigler  
Lucy Blue  
Melinda Vieux  
Bob Atchinson, Town Energy Coordinator  
Susan Grimaldi  
Bob Fancher  
Yoko Kishishita  
Paula Emery, Select Board Administrative Assistant

**Agenda:**

- Fire House walk through with Greg Light
- Changes to the agenda
- Announcements
- Public Comment
- Town Clerk/Treasurer Report – Linda Wells
  - Approval of warrants
  - Approval of minutes for July 27, August 24, September 7 and 21, October 5
- Report from Road Foreman
- Emergency Management update, including introduction to new Emergency Management Coordinator
- 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
- Concerns about speeding and vehicle noise in town
- Update on Pedestrian Bridge construction
- Update on Brook Road bridge
- Update on 79 Bean Road
- Appointments: Recreation Committee and School Director.

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

## **Fire House Walk Through with Greg Light, Plainfield Fire Chief**

The Select Board (SB) and Carla Straight met with Greg Light to tour the recent improvements made to the fire station.

## **Changes to Agenda**

Volz requested that Olivia LeClerk of Central Vermont Prevention Control be added to a future agenda and that Grace Vinson of Central Vermont Regional Planning Commission (CVRPC) also be added to a future agenda to discuss the Continuity of Operations Plan. **No action was taken.**

## **Announcements**

Thayer announced that the SB continues to receive complaints about speeding in the village and reminded that the Washington County Sheriff's Department is hiring. Contact Sheriff W. Sam Hill for an application.

Thayer announced that the clinic for COVID shots has moved to the Berlin Mall and that they are taking walk-ins.

## **Public Comment**

Chris Ditmeyer requested details on 79 Bean Road, in particular, an explanation of the difference between the terms: 'certified,' 'compliant,' and 'permitted' in relation to conformance to Plainfield's zoning regulations for septic systems. She also requested that Farnham clarify the land owner's compliance with, or violation of, the town's 180-day residence requirement.

Thayer stated that the state has taken over issue of septic and water systems. Farnham concurred, noting that the state provides the definitions that Ditmeyer requested.

Ryan Christiansen and Sarah Pollica reported that they spoke with Ryan McCall from Department of Environmental Control (DEC) enforcement, who explained that he is only responsible for enforcement of septic, but not zoning for septic systems. The person responsible for licensing and certification is Karl Fuller (sp?) at DEC.

Thayer clarified that the state has not taken over town zoning, but that the legislature determined that the state agency would be doing enforcement.

Christiansen countered that McCall told him that Plainfield is still responsible for enforcement of Plainfield's zoning regulations.

Thayer stated that the state has to make the determination of compliance with state water and sewer requirements, not the town.

Christiansen said that the Zoning Administrator and the Development Review Board (DRB) came to the decision that the issues at 79 Bean Road are: connection to the septic system (not compliance, but connection); the number of driveways; connection to the electrical system; and connection to water well, which was drilled recently. Recommends that the SB review the decisions of the DRB and Zoning Administrator and enforce the decisions of the DRB and Zoning Administrator.

Christiansen asked the SB if they would allow public comment when this item comes up on the agenda. Thayer stated that that agenda item will be a report by Farnham and that the

comments made tonight are similar to those made in the past, so the SB has heard what the neighbors of 79 Bean Street have to say. Christiansen noted that there were several emails that got no response and that they were silenced at a previous meeting.

### **Town Clerk/Treasurer Report – Linda Wells**

Wells announced that School taxes are due on November 10 at 4:00PM sharp. They can be delivered to the town office on or before November 10 at 4:00PM They can be postmarked before 4:00PM on November 10, but Wells cautioned that dropping an envelope off at the Post Office on the due date does not mean that they will be postmarked on the same day. If you are sending a check in the mail on November 10 via USPS, you must take the envelope into the Post Office and have it postmarked by hand. If you drop it off at the Post Office (in a bin) it may not be postmarked the same day and therefore will incur late fees.

- Approval of warrants: **Farnham moved to approve two payroll warrants for October 8 and 15, and an accounts payable warrant for October 5. The motion was approved unanimously.**
- Approval of minutes for July 27, August 24, September 7 and 21, and October 5: **Farnham moved to approve August 24, September 7 and September 21 SB meeting minutes. The motion was approved unanimously.**

### **Road Foreman Report**

Moved down the agenda. SB chose to hear an update on Route 2 intersection from Tammy Farnham and move the Emergency Management Coordinator up in the agenda.

### **Route 2 Intersection Update**

Farnham informed the SB that the state is changing its maintenance agreements and will send new agreements at some point in the near future.

### **Emergency Management Update, Including Introduction to New Emergency Management Coordinator, Carla Straight**

Sasha, in her roll as Plainfield's Emergency Management, introduced Emergency Management Coordinator Carla Straight and described how fortunate Plainfield is to have a person of her experience in this role. Director Carla Straight introduced herself and discussed her qualifications and 12+ year's experience in emergency management. She was thanked and welcomed to Plainfield by SB members. Thayer suggested asking the state to put more water gauges in along the Winooski River, possibly in coordination with Marshfield.

### **Road Foreman Report – Mike Nolan**

The town road crew is finishing ditching and road grading, most of the ditching is done now and they are occupied with hauling gravel to the bad spots. Upcoming tasks are: getting equipment ready for winter; completing the blacktopping of Main Street, Mill Street, East Hill Road, Martin Meadow and Walker Lane before winter; and brush cutting.

The blacktopping of Martin Meadow and Walker Lane has been postponed to November 1.

Thayer asked if the village streets can be prioritized over Martin Meadow and Walker Lane in case the weather prevents the completion of the jobs. Nolan explained that Pike Industries is planning to do this all at once. There was discussion about whether the contractor of the Main

Street job, Bowen Excavation, was arranging for blacktop as part of that job. Nolan said he'd given them Pike's number and thinks Pike will do it when they come on November 1.

Nolan raised concern about the condition and need for sealing of the Main Street bridge, saying that if it isn't covered the salt will get down into the cement. Farnham invited Nolan to join her at a meeting with the Daniels crew and project engineers on Thursday, October 21 at 9:00AM, where they will discuss the bridge and next phases of the project.

Farnham asked about brush cutting and Nolan said that they are waiting for the leaves to fall to do it. Farnham also pointed out that there are dead trees leaning over the roadway on the Upper Road and asked Nolan if he can remove them. Nolan said that they involve telephone lines and he has attempted to contact Consolidated Communications with no results.

Thayer asked how the four-day work week is going. Nolan noted that they were able to complete some jobs in one day, so it worked out alright. He thinks they should move back to a five-day week beginning November 1 due to the shorter days and demands of snow plowing.

Volz noted that Betsy Zeigler thanked Nolan for fixing the very large hole in the Recreation Field parking lot.

Farnham reminded Nolan that they will need to begin working on budget for next year soon.

Nolan's next report will take place at the second SB meeting in November, the 23<sup>rd</sup>.

### **Sale Of Old Fire House to Jay Southgate/Southgate Steeples and Status of Building Design**

Farnham and Southgate met with Ned Swanberg of the Department of Environmental Conservation Watershed Management Division (DECWMD) to clarify the state's position on flood zone. They determined that the bottom floor of the building cannot be used as a residence, which results in a change of plan for Southgate, who will now have to hire an engineer. He is still interested and will contact Farnham once he's met with the engineer. The state now requires that buildings within flood zones allow for the water to flow through the lower level of the building so that there is no restriction of the flow of water. Southgate was still open to the plan and said that the construction might have to wait until Spring.

Thayer reminded Farnham that Greg Light expressed concern that the building's roof will not last another winter, resulting in a liability for the town. She asked Farnham to urge Southgate to take the building down. Farnham replied that Southgate first needs permits, followed by ownership of the building, before he can remove it. She said that Swanberg and Storey both said that the building can come down and suggested that the town front money to Southgate to do this and then include that money in the sale price of the building as a way of getting it done as soon as possible. There was discussion of whether the building can be removed due to its historical nature and location in a historical district.

**The SB decided to put this issue on the next meeting's agenda.**

### **Electric Car Charger, Existing and Possible Additional Charger – Bob Atchinson, Town Energy Coordinator**

Atchinson reported that there have been complaints about the blocked electric vehicle (EV) charger in Mill Street Park. People plan their trips around use of car chargers and often plan to visit local businesses while their car charges. Atchinson outlined the reasons for installing a second EV charger in the village: 1) use has increased every year; 2) when it is down there is no nearby alternative; 3) the second charger could be in the park & ride, which would be good for commuters and overnight stays; 4) the solar array in the park & ride has an empty meter socket and funding for the array was based on supplying an EV charger.

Farnham asked how much it would cost to upgrade the existing charger so that it requires payment for charging. It is currently based on a donation box. She also expressed concern about people leaving their cars there for too many hours, blocking others from using the charger.

Atchinson described Burlington Electric's EV charger system that functions as a parking meter, using a card swipe and website, while the car is charging. He said that it is hard to gauge the situation due to the decrease in traffic during the pandemic. Atchinson suggested moving the donation charger to the Park & Ride and putting a new swipe charger at Mill Street Park.

Thayer asked about Green Mountain Power (GMP) and Atchinson said that he has calls in to all of the power companies. He said that GMP has commercial divisions and have something available for \$45 per month, but they own it and the income it generates, like the street lights.

Farnham said that the donation box is great but questions whether our community can support outsiders coming to use this resource, stating that if we are going to supply the charger we need to have people pay for it.

**Volz asked Atchinson to send a document to the SB detailing his suggestions and to return for the November 16 SB meeting.** Atchinson said that he will send the document soon, as he needs to move quickly for grant writing.

Thayer asked if a second charger could be situated along the cemetery fence in a municipal parking spot instead of the Park & Ride, and suggested that there may be state money available for EV chargers. Farnham requested information about the costs.

### **Concerns about Speeding and Vehicle Noise in Town**

Melinda Vieux requested that the SB consider a speed limit sign because of the increase in vehicular speed passing through the village toward Maple Hill and East Hill. She also noted that many of the speeding vehicles have very loud exhaust systems, which may not be legal. She noted that she's gotten descriptions but cannot get license plate numbers due to the speed of the vehicles. All of the vehicles are recognizable.

Thayer requested that Vieux provide date, time and description of vehicles and she'll send the information on to the Sheriff. Vieux noted that she's logged the timing in the past and determined that it isn't consistent enough to tell the Sheriff when to come.

Farnham suggested moving the electronic sign on the Brook Road to upper Main Street. Thayer agreed and suggested that we need more of them. Vieux suggested that Plainfield consider using yard signs, as is done on College Street in Montpelier. Thayer suggested adding more speed limit signs in the village and town and suggested putting a stop sign at Main and Creamery or in front of the Fire Station.

**The SB decided to ask Mike Nolan to move the digital sign from Brook Road to upper Main Street, signaling traffic headed toward Maple and East Hill roads.**

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

Farnham reported that she is meeting with the engineers and contractor at 9:00AM on Thursday morning (October 21) to look at the bridge and evaluate it. The town received a bill yesterday that was reviewed by VHB and there are some overages on the bill. She plans to set up a meeting to go over the process.

Thayer and Farnham coordinated to write responses to complaints and comments on Front Porch Forum and FaceBook.

### **Update on Brook Road Bridge**

Volz has contacted the neighbors to the bridge to set up a meeting with the SB and an engineer. Thayer noted that the grant ended earlier this year so the town would have to pay the engineer. Volz noted that there is a time frame for grant writing, referring to an email from Alice Merrill.

Thayer, referring to Merrill's email, said that she was shocked at the prices of construction, project management, and engineering and that she is uncomfortable with filing a grant application without the complete budget because the SB doesn't have enough information.

Volz reminded that Merrill's email states that this is something that would go to the town at Town Meeting Day and the grant request can be withdrawn without penalty.

Farnham noted that there are unknown costs to the Route 2 project and the Pedestrian Bridge project, stating also that once the Route 2 project goes to bid it will become a fixed cost. She suggested that the SB wait to take on the Brook Road bridge replacement until after getting a fixed cost on Route 2.

Volz asked Farnham and Thayer to declare whether they would like Merrill to move forward with the grant writing. They each cited reasons for declining. **The SB decided not to move forward with the Brook Road bridge replacement project.**

### **Update on 79 Bean Road**

Farnham reported that she met with Karen Storey to review the town's zoning and identify what needs to happen in order for the lot to be permitted. She also encouraged the landowner to hire an engineer because the lot has a very small area that can be built on. Farnham stated that the landowner is working with Ryan McCall from the state who is helping her to get into compliance for a building permit, which hinges upon qualification for a septic system. Farnham also explained the relationship between water well drilling, house siting, and septic systems as they relate to state oversight.

Farnham said that nothing in the town's zoning says that the landowner can't drill a well or hook up to electricity and that the landowner has hooked up to electricity.

Thayer read **Section 3.19 Recreational Vehicles** of the Plainfield Zoning Ordinance:

A person may park one recreational vehicle or other temporary shelter (e.g., tent, tipi, yurt), on a residential or undeveloped lot subject to the following provisions:

1. It complies with required setbacks for the district in which it is located; and
2. It is not occupied for dwelling purposes for more than 180 days within any one-year period; and
3. It is not hooked up to a water system, septic system or other utilities, except in accordance with all state wastewater regulations; and
4. Written documentation shall be provided that any sewage generated by a camper or other temporary shelter shall be disposed of in accordance with all applicable local and state regulations.

There was discussion about zoning in regard to purpose and use of RVs. Thayer suggested adding permitting requirements to the town zoning, which is being revised and updated at this time.

Farnham stated that the landowner is clear on the 180-day requirement now, that she may not have been clear on it until recently, and that she (the landowner) believes she is compliant with septic regulations.

Ryan Christiansen stated that the lot is not grandfathered. The previous SB worked to clean up the lot. He explained that a previous SB worked hard to clean up the property several years ago and that there are emails printed and filed with a lawyer. Plainfield's zoning prevented anyone from buying the property because it can't be used for the current use, which is that someone is living on the property. He would like this to be reflected in the minutes. He has sent this in an email.

Volz asked Christiansen to put this into writing and stated that he's getting the best answer he's going to get at this time.

### **Appointments: Recreation Committee and School Director**

Ryan Gaillard would like to join the Recreation Committee, but the committee is full. Jamie Spector, the committee chair, confirmed that Nick Hooker is willing to step down from the committee. The question is whether the committee can be enlarged to accommodate Gaillard. **Thayer offered to discuss the appointments with Spector and report back at the next meeting.**

### **Other Business**

There was brief discussion committee appointments. No action was taken. Discussion about scheduling Central Vermont Prevention Control presentation, Emergency Management, and Continuity of Operations Plan took place. **Thayer moved to be appointed to be the SB representative to the Regional Emergency Management Committee. The motion was approved unanimously.**

**Farnham moved to close the meeting and the motion was approved unanimously. The meeting was adjourned at 9:24PM.**

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### **Agenda for November 2 Select Board Meeting**

- Appointments to Recreation Committee and other committees as necessary.
- Review of parking spaces in front of former hydroponics store authorized by Select Board and possible reduction in number of parking spaces
- Continuity of Operations Plan
- Old Fire House