

**Town of Plainfield, Vermont
Select Board Meeting
November 16, 2021
MINUTES-Approved**

Present:

Jim Volz, Select Board Chair
Sasha Thayer, Select Board
Tammy Farnham, Select Board
Eric Blaisdell, Times Argus
Linda Wells, Town Clerk and Treasurer
Mike Nolan, Road Foreman
Charlie Cogbill
Bob Atchinson, Town Energy Coordinator
Paula Emery, Select Board minutes

Agenda:

Changes to Agenda
Announcements
Public Comment
Town Clerk/Town Treasurer Report - Linda Wells
- Approval of warrants
- Approval of minutes inc. July 27, October 5, and October 19
Report from Road Foreman
Pedestrian Bridge update - Tammy Farnham
Sale of Old Fire House to Jay Southgate/Southgate Steeples inc. status of building design
Written update from Energy Coordinator Bob Atchinson re charging stations
Plan for obtaining information for review of parking spaces in front of former hydroponics store authorized by Select Board and possible reduction of number of parking spaces
Continuity of Operations planning needs
Budget meeting scheduling and planning
- Dates and times for meetings
- Linda's needs re budget finalization
Regional Emergency Management Committee appointment correction
The Health Center gully remediation project
- easement
- Operation and Maintenance Agreement per Operation and Maintenance Plan
- designation of Select Board member to sign necessary documents
Appointments including Recreation Committee and School Director - Appointments needed School Director, Conservation Commission, Planning Commission
Other Business
Adjourn

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

Changes to Agenda

Volz requested that the Budget Meeting item be moved up to follow the Town Clerk's Report so that Linda can be present for the discussion, and that Jay Southgate's request to approve the installation of fence be added to the Sale of Old Fire House.

Announcements

The Select Board (SB) received a letter from an attorney about the Bean Road property. Volz suggested the topic be added to a future agenda.

Thayer, speaking as the Emergency Management Director, asked people to pay attention to news and announcements about the coronavirus pandemic, and that they get tested if they feel ill. She also noted that there is a shortage of help with contact tracing, so if people test positive for the virus, they should tell their close contacts rather than wait for the state to do contact tracing.

Public Comment

There was no public comment.

Town Clerk/Town Treasurer Report - Linda Wells

Linda began by informing the SB that school tax collection went very well. Delinquent taxes are \$49,126.24. They will send notices and charge 1% interest on unpaid school taxes for three months and then turn over unpaid bills to George Cushing, Delinquent Tax Collector.

SB members inquired about the use of auto-pay and Wells said that the numbers are still low. She will advertise the service again.

Approval of warrants

- Wells requested approval of payroll warrants from October 22 and 29; November 5 and 12.
Farnham moved to approve the payroll warrants, and they were approved unanimously.
- Wells requested approval of accounts payable warrants for October 25 and November 1.
Farnham moved to approve the accounts payable warrants, which approved unanimously.

Budget Meeting Scheduling and Planning

Wells requested that all budgets be completed by December 25th this year. She further requested that budget discussions be scheduled during non-SB meeting times so that budgets can be completed on time. Volz asked Wells to suggest a date and Wells suggested November 23.

The first budget meeting was scheduled for November 23 from 5:00-7:00PM, with Wells in attendance. This meeting will be for a basic overview and planning.

Three more budget meetings were scheduled for:

- **December 2 from 7:00 – 10:00AM with Mike Nolan.**
- **December 9 from 3:00 – 6:00PM.**
- **December 14 from 5:00 – 8:00PM.**

Volz will send an email to committee chairs inviting them to the meetings and requesting that they bring their budget requests.

Wells noted that there is damage to the gable at the front of the Town Hall building. She contacted Dave Strong and Keith Swann of the Friends of the Town Hall and Opera House.

Strong told her that Jay Southgate can repair and paint it for \$900 - \$1,500. **Thayer** suggested getting it done immediately and **moved to approve going forward with repair to the gable end of the Town Hall and to authorize Linda Wells to contact Jay Southgate to make arrangements to complete the repair as soon as possible. The motion was approved unanimously.**

Wells noted that Mary Niebling expressed interest in joining the Development Review Board. Wells also has a candidate for School Director, but received an email from the Superintendent saying that he hasn't received any materials about applicants. Wells requested guidance and was asked to re-send all School Director applications to the SB. She suggested postponing the decision to the next meeting and will also contact the other person who expressed interest in that position to determine where their application is.

Volz said that he has contacted Ryan Gillard about joining the Recreation Committee and requested a letter of interest and resume and hasn't heard back from him yet.

Thayer reached out to Nick Hooper, who is stepping down from the Recreation Committee.

Approval of minutes inc. July 27, October 5, and October 19

Thayer requested that the October 19 minutes be amended to contain more information about the new Emergency Management Chair, Carla Straight. She will add this material.

Chris Ditmeyer's name was omitted from the list of those present at the October 19 meeting. Emery will add her name.

Farnham moved to approve October 5 minutes. The motion was approved unanimously.

Report from Road Foreman, Mike Nolan

Nolan provided an overview of recent activities:

- they are getting equipment ready for winter
- had some last-minute culverts to clean out
- the blacktop is finished but they need to do shoulder work at the edges of the blacktop in Martin Meadow and Walker Lane
- the blacktop on Main Street is finished
- manholes on Brook Road and East Hill Road were patched

Nolan was asked if he can attend the December 2 budget meeting and he agreed – unless it's snowing.

Farnham asked Nolan about the schedule and Nolan reported that they are back on the eight-hour per day schedule as of November 1.

Nolan stated that he is concerned about the curbing at the round area in front of the fire hydrant. The original curbing was laid sideways so that large vehicles can make that turn without cutting their tires. Farnham explained that the upright curbing is necessary because of a VTrans rule that states that pedestrian and vehicle traffic cannot be mixed – trucks cannot come up onto sidewalks or crosswalks when they make a turn. The corner of the intersection is now a standing curb and the remainder of the curb is laying down. Farnham stated that she met with the state and they cannot change it because of the danger to pedestrians. Fire trucks will be

able to drive up onto the round area to access the hydrant there because they will drive straight over the curb. The danger Nolan is speaking of is to vehicles that hit the curb with the sidewalls of their tires.

Nolan stated that he would have liked to be more involved in the planning of the pedestrian bridge.

Nolan reported that he was able to get the telephone company to remove the trees that were threatening to fall on the Upper Road.

Nolan said that something needs to be done with the surface of the bridge soon.

Pedestrian Bridge Update – Tammy Farnham

Farnham reported that she and Nolan met with the Daniels Company, who told them that the top (surface) of the bridge is not in good shape. She forwarded an email from Daniels Company to SB members that states that about 50% of the four feet that Daniels is required to replace is not in good shape. The contractor took Nolan and Farnham underneath the bridge and showed them sections that are eroding, which indicates that patching done this fall will not hold.

Mike Nolan expressed concern that rainwater is leaning through the holes in the surface of the bridge and into the structure of the bridge. Farnham explained that they were told that there is a membrane inside the structure that is designed to form a seal between the surface material and the structure of the bridge. The membrane on the Main Street bridge is leaking. They believe that it was improperly installed. Nolan stated that the membrane was installed 10 – 15 years ago.

Farnham requested an estimate from Daniels Co. to resurface the entire bridge and asked if the SB should ask Alice Merrill to look for funding for bridge repair.

Thayer reminded all that VTrans inspected and approved the bridge prior to beginning the Pedestrian Bridge Project and did not warn the town of the possible failure of the bridge surface. She also noted that federal infrastructure funding is unclear at this time and concluded that she thinks it makes sense to fix it.

Farnham said that the Pedestrian Bridge Project may make repairing our bridge more cost effective, stating that we may be able to use leftover funds for the bridge repair. The Pedestrian Bridge Project fixes the outside support beam and four feet of the bridge on the downstream side. However, additional funds will be needed for patching, although patching will not fix what is really wrong with the bridge. She noted that the other (upstream) side of the bridge is in bad shape, including drainage holes that are causing erosion in the bridge's supports. She suggested that the SB start putting money aside in the budget for bridge repairs, as they are inevitable in the future.

Volz clarified that VTrans indicated that the bridge was structurally sound enough to hang the bridge onto. They were not asked to assess the bridge in general.

Farnham said that Daniels showed her pictures from the beginning of the project that showed deterioration of the bridge from then (August) to now.

Nolan stated that he wants to see the surface patched until the repair job can be completed. He is concerned that the holes are letting water get into the bridge and that when the Road Crew salts the bridge it will further erode the steel and the cement inside. Patching that the Road Crew did earlier this summer did not hold.

Farnham said that this is because the membrane is defective, but that the temperature has to be 50 degrees in order to do repairs to surface materials. Nolan said that they (Daniels Co.) can do cold patch with a compactor to get it through the winter. He expressed concern that Daniels may need to close the bridge to do the repairs.

Farnham moved to authorize Alice Merrill to look for grants to re-do the surface of the bridge. The motion was approved unanimously.

Farnham said that the contractor is asking about a Change Order to cover the construction of stairs in the rear of the building adjacent to the bridge. They have created two entries, though they were contracted to do one. Ross [REDACTED] said that the town can do it either way. Farnham recommends that the SB authorize a Change Order, noting that either way it is an overage. The Change Order changes the project budget and accurately reflects the overage in the budget. The cost will be the same – and it is an overage.

Farnham moved to allow Daniels Construction to create a Change Order for the back entrance to the building. Volz and Farnham approved, Thayer abstained.

Farnham also stated that the 90-day limit on the one lane traffic over the bridge ends on November 30. She has not heard that they'll need to go into December. The work can continue past November 30, but Daniels Co. will have to open the bridge to two lane traffic.

Update from Energy Coordinator, Bob Atchinson, about Charging Stations

This item was moved up on the agenda because Atchinson was present in the meeting and Southgate was not. Atchinson presented information about his research on charging stations prior to the meeting in a letter to the SB.

Volz requested that they discuss Atchinson's Green Mountain Power (GMP) option. Atchinson replied stating that GMP is not returning his calls but that they have a plan for free charging at night and .60 per kwh during peak hours, which he said is very high. He contacted Flow, which has a pole or pedestal mounted charger. It requires wifi access and costs \$150.00 per year. It can be accessed via cellphone app for payment and may take a chargepoint card. How the town chooses to manage this sort of system is yet to be determined.

Atchinson will follow through with GMP and Juicebox to get more information. He will send more information to the SB via email. He requested a special meeting of the SB in order to offer his suggestions. **He was asked to come to the December 7 SB meeting.**

Atchinson requested that the SB to begin considering locations for a second electric vehicle charger.

Atchinson also spoke about the Main Street bridge, noting that he worked at VTrans and wanted to reiterate what Nolan said about the penetration of water and salt into the surface of the concrete. The salt and water will cause the iron rebar to flake, which will expand the cracks. He

suggested the use of hydraulic cement and that the SB bring VTrans into the discussion right away. The bridge inspections need to be pointed out to VTrans. He suggested that the SB ask them what can be done, should be done, and whether there are funds for the repairs.

Thayer thanked Atchinson for his work.

Sale of Old Fire House to Jay Southgate/Southgate Steeples

Farnham reported that she doesn't think Southgate has designs yet. He is still working on zoning with Karen Storey. Volz said that he thinks that Southgate is working with Storey and Ned Swanberg from the state so that he can take the building down before the end of the year.

Farnham stated that Southgate is interested in being hired to take the building down if he can't get permits quickly enough.

Thayer stated that if the town wants to take the building down it's a bigger problem than a private owner taking it down because of the historical nature of the building.

Volz requested that the SB act on Southgate's request for use of a 6' steel fence to keep people off of the property.

Farnham has been in touch with the owner of the old Hardware Store next door, who is questioning the number of parking spots and who has suggested that the Old Fire Station is actually on his property. Thayer stated that he will have to show why he thinks that – the research of this is on him and meanwhile, his tenants should not be parking at the Old Fire Station.

Volz moved to permit installation of a six-foot steel wire fence with a sign on it saying "Keep Out – Town of Plainfield". Thayer cautioned that the town zoning should be consulted about fence height. The motion was amended by adding: as long as it is consistent with zoning. The motion was approved unanimously.

Emery notified the SB that the owner of the Hardware Store building has his tenant's trash bins located on the public sidewalk. Farnham also noted that the tenants are parking in areas that are restricted due to the bridge project.

Thayer volunteered to put no-parking notices on the vehicles.

Plan for Obtaining Information for Review of Parking Spaces in Front of Former Hydroponics Store Authorized by Select Board and Possible Reduction of Number of Parking Spaces

Thayer stated that the new owner of the old Hardware Store building believes that he has eight parking spots. **Thayer suggested asking him to send his information about parking.**

She will also ask Linda Wells about the history of parking in that area and offered to look at land records. Select board meeting minutes may also need to be consulted. She offered to ask Alice Merrill. **Farnham suggested that she talk with George Cushing, former town constable.**

Farnham suggested that the SB look into traffic and parking in town, saying that if we want to improve our town, parking is huge. She also suggested that **zoning applications include a question about the number and location of parking spaces**.

Thayer noted that there are parameters that relate to parking and suggested that the zoning permit application be modified. Emery suggested asking Will Colgan, the Planning Commission Chair, to come to a SB meeting to discuss the topic.

Continuity of Operations Planning (COOP)

Thayer stated that part of the COOP is to meet informally with other towns. She suggested the need to think about the immanent retirements of: Greg Chamberlin, Water and Wastewater; Mike Nolan, Road Foreman; and Linda Wells, Town Clerk and Treasurer. This is a major part of COOP. The transitions should be considered as a part of that, including whether the Town Clerk should become a hired, rather than elected, position.

Farnham recommended a special meeting to discuss the COOP, potentially bringing people in from other towns to look at the pros and cons of hiring vs. electing the Town Clerk.

The SB decided to hold a special meeting on January 11 from 5:00-7:00PM to discuss the COOP.

Regional Emergency Management Committee Appointment Correction

Moved to the next meeting.

The Health Center Gully Remediation Project

Thayer reported that the town has been asked to prepare an easement, the costs of which will be covered by the state. Thayer offered to take the information to Jim Jamele, Esq. **The SB will review this at the next meeting. Thayer will send materials via email to SB members.**

Appointments: Recreation Committee, Conservation Commission, Planning Commission, and School Director

SB hasn't heard from Ryan Gillard or from the candidates for School Director. **The appointments were moved to the next meeting.**

Other Business

The SB will hold an executive session at 6:30PM on December 7 to discuss possible litigation about the property on the Bean Road.

Farnham noted that she hasn't received information from the state about the **Route 2 intersection and recommended that it be added to SB meeting agendas beginning in January.**

Farnham also stated that she's been watching webinars about ARPA funding and renewed her request for a committee. She suggested putting a notice on the town website and making phone calls in order to recruit a wide variety of committee members.

She also announced that there is ARPA money available through the state for failing septic systems. This is now a grant program, rather than a loan program.

Thayer suggested asking townspeople for proposals for use of ARPA funding.

Emery stated that Thayer's concerns about conflict of interest can be addressed through use of a conflict of interest statement and signature.

Farnham inquired about the use of ARPA funding for the Route 2 Intersection.

Volz moved to adjourn the meeting and the motion was approved unanimously at 9:00PM.

Respectfully submitted by Paula Emery.

Agenda items for December 7, 2021 Select Board Meeting

- Review of parking spaces in front of former hydroponics store authorized by Select Board and possible reduction
- Meeting with town committees
- Health center gully remediation project
- Executive session re litigation
- Appointments – school director, DRB, rec committee
- Appointment for emergency management (regional)
- Return to Rt. 2 intersection (for January)
- ARPA funding for failing septic systems through the state of VT

Agenda items for December 21, 2021 Select Board Meeting

Report from Road Foreman