

**Town of Plainfield, Vermont
Select Board Meeting Minutes
January 4, 2022**

Approved

Select Board Members Present: Jim Volz, Chair; Tammy Farnham, and Sasha Thayer

Others Present:

Eric Blaisdell, *Times Argus*, in person

via Zoom:

Linda Wells, Town Clerk and Treasurer

Liz Bicknell, Plainfield Co-op Board Member

George Cushing, Delinquent Tax Collector

Paula Emery, Select Board Administrative Assistant

Lucy Blue

John Baker

Ryan Gillard, Recreation Committee

Agenda:

Changes to Agenda

Announcements

Public Comment

Town Clerk/Town Treasurer Report - Linda Wells

 Final budget approval for 2022 Town Meeting

 Approval of warrants

 Approval of minutes

Water/Wastewater Department request for ARPA funds for engineering/planning

Mask Mandate & Covid Protocol

 Goddard College and other businesses, organizations and public meeting spaces

 Ice Skating Rink at Recreation Field - Ryan Gillard

Finalize framework for appointment of committee to assist with recommendations for use of ARPA (American Rescue Plan Act) funds

Other Business

Jim Volz called the meeting to order at 7:05PM.

Changes to Agenda

There were no changes to the agenda.

Announcements

Thayer addressed the recent increase in COVID-19 cases in Vermont and urged people to use caution.

Public Comment

Liz Bicknell, representing the Plainfield Co-op requested information about the process for requesting ARPA funds. Thayer requested that requests be submitted to the Select Board in writing, including the amount requested and specific information about what the funds will be

used for and why they are being requested. Volz clarified that the committee will make recommendations to the Select Board and the Select Board will make final decisions.

Town Clerk/Town Treasurer Report - Linda Wells

Final budget approval for 2022 Town Meeting

- The budget, at \$1,125,475.00, is 8% higher than last year's budget. The Select Board discussed Wells' recommendation of separating her job into two positions (Clerk and Treasurer). The Select Board discussed the budget item for needed Main Street bridge repairs, estimated to be \$400,000 and the need to include funds for a loan payment on the repair costs. Plans for repairs to the Main Street bridge will be taken up at a future Select Board meeting.
- Farnham raised possible reductions in the budget to reduce the increase. The Select Board discussed increases in the Town Hall and Opera House (THOH) and Municipal Building maintenance budgets and how they could be reduced for the coming year to allow funding for the Main Street bridge repair and training of new staff in the Town Clerk's office. The board discussed a reduction in the Town Hall – Opera House budget could be reduced from \$6,000 to \$4,000 to remain consistent with prior years' costs and with the understanding that the repair fund for the Town Hall – Opera House could be used if needed. The board also discussed reducing the Municipal Building maintenance fund from \$10,000 to \$5,000 for this budget year.
- **Thayer moved to approve the budget with the changes made of a reduction of maintenance budget for the Town Hall Opera House of \$2,000 and reduction of Municipal Building maintenance fund of \$5,000 for a total reduction of \$7,000 for a final budget expense amount of \$1,118,475.00. The motion was unanimously approved, reflecting approval of the 2022-2023 budget for Plainfield's 2022 Town Meeting.**

Approval of minutes

- Thayer moved to approve October 19, December 7, and December 21 minutes with changes. Approval was unanimous.

Approval of warrants

- Accounts payable warrant from December 22 and payroll warrants from December 24 and 31 were moved by Thayer and approved unanimously.

Water/Wastewater Department Request for ARPA Funds for Engineering

Thayer requested that the Select Board support the Water and Wastewater Commission's request to move forward with engineering for upcoming projects to make them "shovel ready" so that they can access federal funding. Wells was asked if the Revolving Loan Fund could be used to pay for the engineering. Wells affirmed that it can and that the Water and Wastewater Commission needs to complete a Revolving Loan Fund application. contact her for an application for the Revolving Loan Fund. The Revolving Loan Committee will review the application and the Select Board provides final approval.

Mask Mandate & Covid Protocol

The Select Board discussed that masking can reduce the transmission of COVID=19 and that the Legislature has authorized towns to make a local rule for a mask mandate and that various towns have made such a mask mandate including East Montpelier and Montpelier. Farnham's frustration with the town-by-town approach versus a statewide mask mandate is shared by the Select Board.

Farnham observed that in a recent trip to Williston which has a mask mandate, everyone was masked, indicating that a mask mandate can work. Comments received from members of the public during the meeting were supportive of such a mandate.

It was also noted that the Select Board had received a request from the Goddard College student council for a mask mandate and that Goddard's marketing director had emailed the Select Board advising that Goddard will comply with whatever the Select Board orders.

Thayer had prepared a draft mask mandate and sign based on the mask mandates approved by East Montpelier and Montpelier. There was discussion relating to current recommendations to use N95 or KN95 masks for the best level of protection, followed by surgical masks and that cloth coverings have been found to provide little protection against COVID=19 transmission. There was agreement by the Select Board for the approval of a mask mandate with a few changes, including changing the name to Town of Plainfield, Vermont, Covid 19 Rule Wearing of Masks Required and also correction of typos noted.

Thayer moved to approve the *Town of Plainfield, Vermont Covid 19 Rule – Wearing of Face Covering Required* and attached sign. Approval was unanimous. Volz then moved to amend the approval to reflect the change from Face Covering to Mask and approval of was unanimous.

Consideration of Ryan Gillard's earlier request for approval of setting up an ice rink on the recreation field was also under this agenda item. There was discussion about the risks of COVID transmission through close contact during use of the ice rink and that the Select Board doesn't have authority to impose a mask mandate for outdoor activities. Ryan Gillard agreed to post signage recommending social distancing and masking while using the ice rink, should the ice rink be installed this year, and questioned why this is requested from town if not posted in other areas of the Recreation Field. Volz suggested separating the installation of the ice rink decision from Covid 19 signage discussion.

Farnham moved to approve the Recreation Committee's request to set up the ice skating rink and the motion was approved unanimously.

In further discussion, the Select Board discussed posting signage regarding masking and social distancing in various areas of the town where people congregate including the Rec Field, Mill Street park and the Park and Ride lot. There was agreement among the Select Board that this would be a good approach, rather than doing so only at the Rec Field. Thayer will follow up to obtain signage for posting in outdoor public places in town

Finalize Framework for Appointment of Committee to Assist with Recommendations for Use of ARPA (American Rescue Plan Act) Funds

The Select Board created a list of questions for inclusion in an application for appointment to an ARPA committee. Thayer will email the questions to Select Board members with a one paragraph description of the purpose and goals of the committee.

Other Business

Cushing requested a status update of the parking at the former Hardware store and suggested that the issue be resolved before the new owner rents the space. Farnham will send the owner's correct email address to Volz, who will resend the email notifying the land owner that he needs to submit evidence of ownership of parking spaces to the Select Board at a future meeting.

The Select Board discussed the agenda and timing for their January 5 Executive Session.

Farnham moved to adjourn at 9:05 and the motion carried.

Agenda items for January 5, 2022 Special Select Board Meeting with Executive Session

- Prepare for possible employee interview(s)
- Potential employee interview(s)
- Possible hiring decision re Highay Equipment Operator (job posting found at https://www.plainfieldvt.us/upload/8/1/0/6/81063668/plainfield_vt_heavy_equipment_operator_opening.pdf)

Agenda items for January 11, 2022 Special Select Board Meeting from 5-6 PM

S-pecial Select Board Meeting to discuss Continuity of Operations planning including broad municipal planning and planning for upcoming retirements, with assistance of Grace Vinson (CV Regional Planning Commission)

Agenda Items for January 18, 2022 Select Board Meeting

- Updates on Main Street Bridge repairs, Pedestrian Bridge and Rte 2-Main Street projects

Agenda items for February 1, 2022 Select Board Meeting

- Presentation re Central Vermont Prevention Coalition purpose and services - Olivia LeClerc

Respectfully submitted by Paula Emery.