

# Town of Plainfield, Vermont Select Board Meeting Minutes June 21, 2022 - Approved

**Present:** Jim Volz, Select Board Chair; Sasha Thayer, Select Board Member

**Present via Zoom or telephone:** Linda Wells, Town Clerk and Treasurer; Eric Blaisdell, *The Times Argus*; Liz Bicknell, Plainfield Co-op Board Member; Charles Cogbill; Alice Merrill, Plainfield Grant Writer; Michael Bingham, Road Crew; Mike Nolan, Road Foreman; Matt Laggner; Robert Bridges; Keith Swann, Friends of the Plainfield Town Hall and Opera House; Julie Rapczynski, Plainfield Co-op; Betsy Ziegler; Tammy Farnham, Main Street Bridge Project Manager; Susan Grimaldi, Plainfield Historical Society; Paula Emery, Administrative Assistant to the Select Board

## **Agenda:**

- Changes to Agenda Announcements
- Public Comment
- Town Clerk/Treasurer Report
  - Warrants
  - Approval of Minutes
  - Approval of Hiring of Assistant Town Clerk & Treasurer
  - State of Vermont Standard Grant
  - Approval of Plainfield's participation in Agency of Transportation Grants in Aid Program
- Report from Road Foreman - Mike Nolan and Michael Bingham
- Middle Road Update
- Approval of Lister's Request for Town-wide Reappraisal and Preparation of Request for Proposal/Bid for Reappraisal
- Town Hall Opera House Lease Proposal
- Plainfield Co-op Request for Reduced Rental of Opera House
- Response to Complaint from Janet Stewart and Karl Bissex
- Update on Main Street Bridge Repair and Pedestrian Bridge
- Other Business
- Agenda items upcoming Select Board Meetings
- Adjourn

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**Chairman Jim Volz called the meeting to order at 7:02 PM.**

## **Changes to Agenda**

Volz changed the time of the Road Foreman report.

## **Announcements**

Thayer expressed her appreciation for the fairness and integrity and reliability of Plainfield's elections and her hope that Plainfield's election officials will never come under attack as others have in other parts of the country. Volz spoke in agreement and both expressed gratitude for Plainfield's election officials.

Thayer recapped the process for the Road Foreman hiring, stating that no one board member was running the hiring process more than others and that all decisions were unanimous. Volz concurred and stated that he thinks that Tammy Farnham was treated unfairly.

### **Public Comment**

There was no public comment.

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

- Warrants: Thayer moved to approve payroll warrants from June 10 & 17 and the motion carried.
- Approval of Minutes, including March 9, April 19, May 3, May 10 at 7:00AM and 5:00PM, May 25, May 31 and June 7.

Thayer noted a correction of the date in the header of the June 7 minutes and moved to approve all of the above listed minutes as corrected. The motion carried.

- Approval of Hiring of Assistant Town Clerk & Treasurer

Thayer explained the hiring process, stating that the Select Board can appoint an interim Town Clerk and Treasurer once Wells retires. Wells agreed that she can approve the hire of an Assistant Town Clerk and Treasurer without input from the Select Board, but that the Select Board needs to approve the salary. Volz stated that he appreciates that Wells brought the Select Board into the process. He stated that the Select Board will hire her in this meeting and if they are happy with her performance when Wells retires they will appoint her to take Wells' place, but that she will have to run for and be elected to the Town Clerk and Treasurer positions at Town Meeting in March, 2023 if she wants to remain at the job.

***Thayer moved to approve the hiring of Robin Miller as Assistant Town Clerk and Town Treasurer effective July 5, 2022 at the rate of \$24.00/hour and the motion carried.***

### **Standard Grant Amendment/VTrans Grants in Aid Program Grant Approval**

***Thayer moved to approve Plainfield's participation in the Agency of Transportation's Grants in Aid Program and the motion carried.***

***Thayer moved to approve Volz for signing the grant and the motion carried. Must be signed by June 24, 2022.***

***Action on the Standard Grant Amendment, CA0418, Amendment 5 for \$722,000.00, was deferred to the next meeting or a special meeting if necessary.***

### **Report from Road Foreman - Michael Bingham**

Mike Nolan was present by phone, but as his number wasn't recognized he was not called on to give the report. Bingham reported that the Road Crew has been grading and adding gravel to roads, and hauling winter sand. Volz noted that the Cameron Road sign has been removed. Thayer inquired of budget for materials and Bingham stated that they are able to use the coming year's funds for materials and that there will be enough money in the budget.

Bingham said that he's been mentoring with Mike Nolan for five years and feels good about moving into the Road Foreman position. He is in the process of hiring a new Road Crew member.

### **Update on Middle Road**

Bingham stated that he spoke with Michelle Redman, District 6 Manager, and was told that there are grants for the sort of work that would be required to fix the situation on the Middle Road. He was informed that the grant applications are due in April, the maximum amount is \$200,000.00 and that the grants are competitive. Bingham will forward the grant application to the Select Board as soon as he receives it.

Wells stated that she applied for the same grant funds for the East Hill Culvert and didn't receive funding for it. She urged Bingham to put the projects in priority order for upcoming grant applications.

Bingham noted the Road Crew is going to begin street cleaning in the coming week and that he has posted information about parking on Front Porch Forum and the Plainfield People facebook group. He has also placed printed notices on the streets around the village.

### **Approval of Lister's Request to Proceed with Town-Wide Reappraisal and Preparation of Request for Proposal and Bid for Reappraisal**

Town Listers made a written request that the Select Board authorize them to proceed with preparation of a request for proposal and bid for reappraisal. With the recent increase in property values there is a discrepancy between the market value and the Grand List. Properties are selling for much more than their listed sale price. Town the Listers recommend a full reappraisal in order to bring values in line with taxes. They are requesting approval from the Select Board to proceed with the town-wide reappraisal and then prepare a request for proposal or bid for reappraisal and seek out a firm that they will hire to do the work. ***Thayer moved to approve a letter from the Town Listers seeking proposals for reappraisal that will be signed by Jim Volz. The motion carried.***

### **Main Street Bridge Repair and Completion of Pedestrian Bridge Timing Update**

Thayer stated that she received a call from the Fire Chief, Greg Light, about the funding for emergency services on each side of Route 2 when/if the bridge is closed for repair. Daniels Co. would like to begin work in early July. Liz Bicknell, Board member of the Plainfield Co-op stated that a review of sales data from previous years indicates that the co-op will lose roughly \$100,000.00 per month due to inability of delivery trucks to access the co-op. The co-op's General Manager does not feel confident that large vendors will be willing to take long detours to get to such a small store. The co-op could face a total closure while the bridge is closed. Bicknell asked if the town of Plainfield is willing to provide funds to reimburse the co-op in part or in whole.

Volz stated that the other alternative is keep one lane of the bridge open. Thayer stated that they were advised by the engineers that repairing the bridge with one lane open means that the membrane would be replaced in two halves, compromising its integrity. The concrete work will also have less integrity if done in halves.

Volz stated that, while it is true that the work will not last as long if done in halves, the bridge has been determined to be sound, so its replacement is not a high priority for the state. He recommended that, on balance, keeping one lane open is the best option for the town, even though it is not optimal.

***Volz moved to go forward with the Main Street bridge repair and completion of the Pedestrian Bridge by going with the one lane option. This motion was tabled until Tammy Farnham, Project Manager, is present later in the meeting.***

### **Trash and Dog Feces**

Volz stated that people are using the dog poop collection containers but there is no one to empty the containers. Thayer stated that the town should have a “carry-in, carry-out” policy in all public places. She added that the person who does the mowing has complained of the danger of encountering glass bottles while mowing and proposed to add a “no glass containers” clause to the signs. ***Thayer moved that, going forward, Plainfield cease providing trash and dog feces removal in both the Mill Street and Recreation Field parks, and that the town provide notice of this which includes “glass containers and bottles are not permitted in the Mill Street and Recreation Field parks.” The motion carried.***

There was discussion about advertising the Town Maintenance position, which now does not require personal insurance. Thayer stated that the job description will be revised and re-posted.

### **Town Hall Opera House Lease Proposal from the Friends of the Plainfield TH- OH**

Keith Swann, Friends of the Town Hall and Opera House, was present to represent the interest of the group, stating that they would like to enter into a lease agreement with the town for use of the Town Hall Opera House. He reviewed some of the terms of their proposed lease agreement. He suggested that the Select Board sit down with the Friends group to work out an agreement over the coming six months.

***Swann requested that the Select Board extend the current contract through the end of the year. This will be taken up at the July 5 meeting.***

### **Plainfield Co-op Request for Reduced Rental of Opera House for November Meeting**

Julie Rapczynski, Plainfield Co-op Marketing Committee Member, requested use of the Town Hall Opera House for the co-op’s annual membership meeting and 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary event and requested a waiver of the rental fee due to the co-op’s current suboptimal financial position.

***Volz moved to grant the Plainfield Co-op’s request for free rental of the Opera House for a meeting on November 11 in the evening. The motion carried.***

### **Project Manager for Pedestrian Bridge Update**

Tammy Farnham stated that she will continue to do the Project Manager job and will work with the state to complete the project. Farnham stated that she is only assigned to the Pedestrian Bridge Project and not the Main Street Bridge Project, though the change order applies to the Main Street Bridge from the Pedestrian Bridge project.

Volz informed Farnham that the Select Board decided to keep the bridge open to one lane earlier in this meeting. Farnham explained that the current status of the project is that VTrans denied financial assistance for for Emergency Services and offered to subsidize costs of assistance for coverage from East Montpelier, but won’t pay for rental of fire truck or ambulance in the village. She noted that the one-lane bridge will also slow the traffic for Emergency Services and that the sidewalk will be the traffic lane during construction. Due to the fact that the road in front of the old Hardware Store will be closed, traffic headed east on Route 2 will be

detoured toward the Post Office for a turn around. In a test drive done by members of the Fire Department, the detours caused a 5-10 minute delay for Emergency Services.

Farnham stated that Daniels Co. is waiting for a decision from the town so that they can do the change order. Thayer stated that the bridge repair can't wait until the Route 2 Intersection Project because the bridge's membrane is compromised to the extent that the damage needs to be repaired. Farnham further clarified that this project addresses the surface of the bridge, not the underside and supports. The state recognized that the surface needs to be repaired and assisted the town with location of funding in order to address the issue as soon as possible. The state is going to work with the town to facilitate it being completed as quickly as possible. One lane closure is predicted to last three months, whereas complete closure of the bridge is expected to last one month. Farnham asked Bicknell, the Plainfield Co-op board representative, if it would be possible to create a shuttle system for deliveries from the closed bridge at the Hardware Store to the co-op via hand trucks or carts. Bicknell stated that it is unlikely that the co-op's large delivery companies will be willing to move boxes from the bridge to the store using hand trucks and carts. Farnham offered to meet with the co-op to discuss ways that the town can help.

Volz suggested that Select Board hold a Special Meeting to look at the financing and the impact of each option on the town. ***The Special Meeting will take place on Thursday, June 23 at 5:30PM.*** Thayer will notify businesses and Emergency Services. Farnham will bring financial information.

#### **Response to Complaint from Janet Stewart and Karl Bissex**

Janet Stewart and Karl Bissex wrote the Select Board to complain that a sign hung over a driveway on the Brook Road owned by Paul and Jackie Boardman at 135 Brook Road has language that is very visible that is inappropriate for children, who have to pass by the house. Thayer reported that she measured the road to determine whether the sign is in the right-of-way and it is not. Volz stated that the use of profanity on the sign cannot be addressed by the town because it is on private property.

As to whether the sign itself is in compliance with the town's Zoning Ordinance, Thayer read the Zoning Regulations, Subsection 12 and determined that the sign in question is potentially in violation of the size regulations. ***Thayer will contact Karen Storey, Zoning Administrator.***

#### **Other Business**

Liz Bicknell inquired about the additional parking spaces for the Plainfield Co-op that were discussed at a previous meeting. Farnham recalled that the decision was that some parking spots would be shared but that the co-op would pay for the new signs and that the co-op was to contact Linda Wells directly in order to proceed with the change.

#### **Agenda Items for Upcoming Select Board Meetings**

- July 5, 2022
- Emergency Management - Approval of LEMP
- Town Hall Opera House Contract Extension

**Adjourn** Thayer moved to adjourn the meeting at 9:01PM and the motion carried.

*Respectfully submitted by Paula Emery.*