

**Town of Plainfield, Vermont
Select Board Meeting Minutes
September 20, 2022**

Present: Sasha Thayer, Select Board member; Paula Emery, Administrative Assistant to the Select Board

Present via Zoom or telephone: Jim Volz, Select Board Chair; Linda Wells, Town Clerk and Treasurer; Pam Kelly-Kinniburgh; Eric Blaisdell, *The Times Argus*; Betsy Zeigler; George Cushing; Charles Cogbill; Alice Merrill, Town Grant Writer; Keith Swann, Friends of the Town Hall and Opera House; Yoko Kishishita; Jason Keener, VHB Engineering; Dawn Fancher; Kathy and Bob Fancher; Michael Bingham; Melinda Vieux; Rose Paul; George Springsten

Agenda:

Public Comment

Town Clerk/Town Treasurer Report

- Transition
- Approval of Warrants
- Approval of Minutes

Road Foreman Report

- Status of Various Bridges In Town and Needed Maintenance Or Replacement

Old Home Days Update - Jamie Spector

Update On Main Street Bridge Repair and Pedestrian Bridge Project

- Schedule
- Plans to Assist With Challenges During Construction for Town Departments and for Businesses
- 2022 Plainfield Fall Foliage Trail
- Financial Support for Town Departments and Town Businesses
- What You Can Do to Help

Brook Road Bridge Replacement

- Hazard Mitigation Grant Program Application Deadline September 29, 2022 - Status
- Further Consideration of:
 - Fiscal Implications of Reduced Match and Increased Cost
 - Cost Estimates Including Right-of-Way Acquisition
 - Consideration of ARPA Funds for Town Match
 - Potential Effect of Brook Road Bridge Replacement On Downstream Bridges
 - Should the Project Be Put to Vote By the Town?

CV Fiber - Request for Execution of MOU and Commitment of ARPA Funds

Other Business

Agenda Items for Upcoming Select Board Meetings

- October 4, 2022
- October 18, 2022

Adjourn

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

Changes to Agenda

Thayer requested a date change for the October 4 meeting. This item was added to the agenda at the end of the meeting.

Ky Walker for the Old Fire House and other related matters was added to the agenda at the end of the Town Clerk Report after Approval of Minutes. **The changes were unanimously approved.**

Announcements

There are only two Select Board members at this time. Interested parties are urged to contact Linda Wells, Town Clerk and submit a letter of interest and resume. There is also an opening on the Planning Commission, a letter of interest and resume should be sent to Linda Wells, Town Clerk.

Thayer urged people to contact herself or Jim Volz if interested in assisting village businesses during bridge closure.

Public Comment: There was no public comment.

Town Clerk/Town Treasurer Report

Wells reported that the town needs to advertise for someone to do winter sidewalk maintenance. **Volz moved to approve the request for proposals for winter sidewalk maintenance and the motion carried.** Thayer requested that this be underway before the next Select Board meeting.

Approval of Warrants

Thayer moved to approve payroll warrants from August 19, 26, and September 2, 9, and 16. The motion carried.

Thayer moved to approve accounts payable warrants for August 22, 25 and September 13, and the motion carried.

Approval of Minutes

Thayer moved to approve Select Board meeting minutes from August 25 and September 6. The motion carried.

Wells asked about the amount due to Ky Walker for removal of the Old Fire Station, noting a \$300.00 discrepancy in May's minutes related to payment for asbestos removal. Volz urged approval of the contract as it currently stands. Wells noted that the May contract amount approved was for \$6750.00, and the current contract is increased to \$7050.00. The asbestos removal amount is \$9500.00. The increase is related Walker's acting as a contractor to arrange asbestos removal. **Thayer moved to approve the contract with Ky Walker for taking down the Old Firehouse Building with Thayer authorized to sign the contract. The motion carried.**

Thayer noted that there is a grant of approximately \$4,000.00 for asbestos removal, so the town will not bear the entire cost of asbestos removal.

George Cushing questioned why the building wasn't sold to the two prior potential buyers. Thayer stated that Jay Southgate is still potentially interested in purchasing the building for the cost of its removal, minus the asbestos. Emery noted that the other potential buyer, the current owner of the Hardware Store wanted to tear it down and use the spot for parking.

Road Foreman Report

Michael Bingham, Road Foreman, reported on the status of bridges in town and noted the lack of print copies of state bridge reports post 2009 in the Town Garage office. He was able to find them online and identified two bridges that need attention sooner than later:

- Bridge #22, Cameron Road and Brook Road – one wing wall is completely gone and has been rebuilt with old stone. The wing wall holding the Cameron Road side is about ready to fall into the water, which could cause the Cameron Road to wash out. The Road Crew's shed and equipment are on the Cameron Road, so this is a high priority repair.
- Bridge #25, at 2.5 miles up the road, near Phillip Lee's old log house and near Peaceful Way Road. This bridge has a gap between the abutment and two wing walls, which stabilize the side of the road has an 8" gap on both sides. The state noted that both walls will collapse within the next two years, and that movement in the bridge is increasing. Collapse of the wing walls will result in obstruction of the brook.

Bingham noted that other bridges need repair but can wait a bit longer – allowing time to apply for grants.

Thayer suggested that replacement of the bridge on Brook Road in the village (#21) could be delayed in order to prioritize bridges 22 and 25. Bingham stated that the reports indicate that that bridge is in fairly good shape but that it doesn't have the capacity to pass flood debris. Volz noted that there are homes alongside #21, which make it more dangerous.

Bingham noted that if the wing walls on #22 and #25 fall they, too, will restrict capacity to move water and debris.

Thayer requested an assessment from Bingham, who said that bridges 22 and 25 are higher priority because they will close the Brook Road. Volz restated that those two bridges will not flood homes. Discussion continued about whether the upper bridges should replace the village bridge in priority, with Volz restating that the grant for the village bridge is nearly complete and that the grant can't be applied to other bridges.

Bingham urged people to search for "bridge reports for Vermont" on a search engine, which will direct to the Agency of Transportation. The most recent reports are from last August.

Bingham said that road grading is the crew's next priority, but that Bickford's is out of gravel and they are having to drive to Websterville, which takes much longer in travel time.

Old Home Days Update

Thayer reported that the Fire Department's Chicken BBQ was wonderful, conversations were great, the parade was wonderful, and in general, people seemed glad to get out. She's received a request from the Fire Department to hold a street dance again next year. She

requested that anyone interested in Old Home Day come forward and volunteer for the Old Home Day events or the Old Home Day Variety Show or Street Dance.

Update On Main Street Bridge Repair and Pedestrian Bridge Project

Volz read from a September 20 email from Tammy Farnham to Select Board members Volz and Thayer prior to Farnham's arrival at the meeting:

Daniels has created a draft of the traffic control plan and sent it to their engineer on Monday 9–19, to draw up and stamp the plans. Once the plans have been received and approved, the additional signs that are needed, will be order. They will be install as soon as they are made.

They are currently working on the revised estimate (almost done), which then will be reviewed by VHB and VTrans before coming to the town. We are not intending to hold up the project for the new change order as the project is being reduced, due to closing of the bridge.

Daniels was able to get the hydro blaster lined up to start work around the begin of October. This is great news because this should reduce time to removal the bridge deck by about a week or so.

Farnham had no new information to add to the above. Thayer noted that the Montpelier Post Office has requested a date of bridge closure as soon as possible and said that they may not be able to deliver mail on a daily basis. Farnham said that there is no confirmed date at this time.

Volz requested that a warning about bridge closure be posted on the town website, social media, the *Times Argus*, and at public official posting boards and through reaching out to local businesses, including The Health Center and Goddard College.

Volz said that for planning purposes people should assume that it will close some time in the first week of October. Farnham will notify the town as soon as she hears from them about their actual start date. She requested that the town place the road signs that they used for the previous bridge repair job along Route 2 and other town roads.

Eric Blaisdell requested contracts for the asbestos removal and the meeting turned again toward the Old Firehouse. There was discussion of how to organize trash removal during the building's take down. Thayer noted that the town will need to rent a dumpster.

Thayer read from an email from Cat Klarich, Chair of the Plainfield Co-op Board of Directors, stated that *Seven Days* is planning to do a follow-up on the bridge closure and that she also spoke with Steven Pappas, who said that the *Times Argus* welcomes information from the town for their Talk of the Town section.

Financial Support for Town Departments and Town Businesses - What You Can Do to Help

Thayer reported on conversations with board members of the Plainfield Co-op and management of Positive Pie. Both businesses have some plans in place, but the issue is to get people to patronize those businesses. Thayer reported reaching out to the general manager of Hunger Mountain Co-op for support for the Plainfield Co-op. She also spoke with manager of Buffalo Mountain Co-op.

Cushing was asked how this will impact his business. He noted that he doesn't need ARPA funding for his business and that he thinks that if townspeople pitch in, the co-op and Positive Pie will survive. He is on the ARPA Committee and he does not think that the ARPA funds are applicable to this situation. The money is supposed to be used to benefit the most people in the town. Farnham noted that the ARPA funds are intended to help towns to leverage grants. She urged the co-op to get people to come into the building by advertising about what they have in the store.

Cushing reported that the ARPA Committee will hold its first meeting on Friday, September 23. Members are Cushing, Jane Bradley, and Arien Toubaday (sp?). People interested in joining this committee are urged to contact Cushing, the Select Board or the Town Clerk's office.

Thayer noted that ARPA funding was meant to help businesses to stay afloat during and after the coronavirus epidemic.

Keith Swann of the Friends of the Town Hall and Opera House stated that the group met last night and discussed staging an event to benefit the co-op, possibly at the Recreation Field.

Rose Paul, Treasurer of the Plainfield Co-op, reported that an analysis of the impact of the bridge being closed to one lane revealed that the co-op lost \$21,600.00 per month when the bridge was closed to one lane last year. Former Treasurer, Giordano Checci, did an analysis in 2019 to prepare for the closure of the bridge for the reconstruction of the intersection, which revealed that if the co-op closes during bridge closure it will lose \$108,000.00 per month, and that if it remains open during bridge closure it will lose \$50,000.00 per month – in 2019 figures.

She reported that co-op staff have been proactive and have arranged to have some deliveries dropped at Hunger Mountain Co-op and that there is a possibility of using some of the empty rooms upstairs in the town office if necessary.

Brook Road Bridge Replacement

Alice Merrill stated that the grant deadline is September 29. She needs assistance with a line item for the Right-of-Way acquisition legal fees so that she can include it in the project costs. Volz stated that three of the four neighbors are agreeable to working something out with the town that will not be too costly. Merrill noted that the cost is in drawing up the legal documents. She needs a letter of support from the Select Board stating where the town will get the funding to cover its 10% share of the \$1,690,000.00, or \$169,000.00. She noted that management costs are 100% covered, up to 5% of project costs. Her timeline is that

construction will happen in August, 2025 and we are unlikely to know whether we got the grant for roughly one year.

Merrill suggested that the Select Board meet with Stephanie Smith to discuss the grant. She also suggested that the Select Board hold a special meeting to get information about the bridge project and noted that turning this grant down puts the town at risk for jeopardizing future funding.

There was discussion about finding a new town attorney.

There was discussion about the impact of repair of the Brook Road village bridge will have on the Mill Street bridge in the village. Jason Keener stated that the Mill Street bridge is not as high a priority because the bridge has a higher capacity to pass water through it and the water approaches it straight-on.

George Springston stated that the Mill Street bridge was considered in relation to this project but that the Brook Road bridge was considered a priority because it is undersized due to the width and curve of the river at that point. He added that the Great Brook approaches the Mill Street bridge on a straight path and that the best solution would be to replace both bridges, but if only one can be replaced it should be the one on the Brook Road. He noted that if the Brook Road bridge is removed the town will have only one way to cross the Great Brook in the village, and that bridge is very old and in need of repairs. If it is closed for repairs after the Brook Road bridge is removed there will be no way to cross the Great Brook in the village.

Tammy Farnham spoke in favor of going forward with the bridge replacement, noting that the work has been ongoing for a long time. She said that there were multiple meetings prior to the coronavirus pandemic to choose bridge design and the town decided to go forward with the bridge. At the time there was a 25% match. She urged the town to be respectful of the work that's been done and to take advantage of the opportunity and to seek out funding for the other bridges.

Thayer spoke about dealing with the Cameron Road bridge soon and considering it an urgent matter, suggesting contacting Christian Meyer of the Central Vermont Regional Planning Commission.

Merrill said she will keep moving forward on the grant and urged the Select Board to hold a public meeting.

Volz proposed meeting with Stephanie Smith and Alice Merrill to discuss bridge funding on October 6 at 10:00AM. Thayer agreed. Merrill offered to send Select Board questions about bridge prioritization to Roy Schiff. Thayer offered to send questions to Jason Keener.

CV Fiber - Request for Execution of MOU and Commitment of ARPA Funds Other Business

Thayer read from an email from the director of CV Fiber listing town contributions and noted that CV Fiber has a grant that will equally match town allocations, with the entirety of the funds spent in that town. CV Fiber is an independent municipal entity, so funding can't come from tax dollars. Funding can come from ARPA or fundraising.

Plainfield has missed this funding deadline, which is now extended. Volz suggested reaching out to the League of Cities and Towns and the Regional Planning Commission for information on how to proceed.

Alice Merrill, town grant writer, urged the town to allocate some funding.

Thayer noted that support for CV Fiber was approved at a Town Meeting.

Volz moved to allocate \$30,000 of Plainfield's ARPA funds to CV Fiber contingent on that being matched by the Vermont Community Broadband Board and that total amount of Plainfield's contribution and the Vermont Community Broadband Board match being spent to improve broadband access in Plainfield. The motion passed unanimously.

Agenda Items for Upcoming Select Board Meetings October 4, 2022

- **Thayer requested that the meeting be moved to Thursday, October 6.** Volz agreed to move the meeting.
- Update on Main Street bridge repair
- Brook Road bridge update
- Opportunities for additional funding for bridge repair and other projects

Thayer moved to adjourn the meeting at 9:37PM and the motion carried.

Respectfully submitted by Paula Emery.