

**Town of Plainfield  
Select Board Meeting  
January 13, 2020  
Approved Minutes**

**PRESENT:** James Volz (Select Board Member), Alexandra Thayer (Select Board Chair), Tammy Farnham (Select Board Member), Linda Wells (Town Clerk/Treasurer), Keith Swann (Videographer), Cindy Wyckoff (Minutes Recorder), Alice Merrill (Resident), Lauren Kelley (Resident), Michael Morlan (Resident), Carla Siegle (Resident), Nina Truslow (VHB), Scott Burbank (VHB), Jason Keener (VHB), Bob Atchinson (Resident), Becky Atchinson (Resident), Jesse Cooper (Resident), Alice Dworkin (Resident), Bram Towbin (Road Commissioner), Paula Emery (Resident), Josh Pitts (Water/Wastewater Commission), Susan Grimaldi (Resident), Greg Chamberlin (Water/Wastewater Chief System Operator, Non-Resident), Betsy Ziegler (Resident), and Jon Copans (Climate Economy Model Communities Program/Vermont Council on Rural Development).

**Alexandra Thayer called the meeting to order at 6:32pm.**

**AGENDA**

- Review Agenda
- Public Comment/Announcements
- Town Clerk's Report
  - Approval of Final 2020-2021 Budget for Town Meeting
  - Warrants
- Road Commissioner's Report
- Brook Bridge Alternatives Discussion - VHB Jason Keener, Scott Burbank
- Route 2/Main Street Intersection Update and Discussion
- Report RE: RAMP Project from Jon Copans and Others
  - General
  - Hitching Post
  - Energy Efficiency Grants and Work on Town Hall Opera House
  - Ongoing RAMP Interests and Concerns
- Other Business
- Approval of Minutes of Meetings on 11/7/19, 11/14/19, 11/19/19, 11/25/19, and 12/9/19
- Agenda Items for 1/27/20 Meeting
- Adjourn

**REVIEW AGENDA**

- There were no changes to the agenda.

**PUBLIC COMMENT/ANNOUNCEMENTS**

- Noting that the Route 2/Main Street intersection update was slated for later in the meeting, Thayer requested that attendees reserve any comments on that issue until the item comes up for discussion.

## **TOWN CLERK'S REPORT**

### **- APPROVAL OF FINAL 2020-2021 BUDGET FOR TOWN MEETING**

#### **- WARRANTS**

- Town Clerk/Treasurer Linda Wells presented the Fiscal Year 2020-2021 Town budget for the Select Board's approval.
- Wells presented the final, amended Grand List Errors and Omissions letter from the Listers for Select Board approval. **James Volz made a motion to approve the changes to the Grand List dated 12/18/19 from the Plainfield Board of Listers. The motion was approved.**
- **Tammy Farnham made a motion to approve warrants dated 12/13/19, 12/16/19, 12/17/19, 12/20/19, 12/27/19, 1/3/20, 1/6/20, and 1/10/20. The motion was approved.**
- Wells presented two quotes for installing new snow guards on both sides of the roof of the Town Hall Opera House. Discussion followed Farnham's inquiry of whether the cost should be a budgeted item versus using the Town Hall Opera House reserve fund. The quote from Hutchins Roofing and Sheet Metal Company was \$3,300 for aluminum/\$4,000 for color; the quote from Watershed Roofing was \$13,399.42 for aluminum with an additional \$1,12.73 for color. **Volz made a motion to hire Hutchins Roofing to install snow guards on the Town Hall Opera House in the amount of \$3,300. The motion was approved with Farnham opposed.**
- Volz proposed that the rate of compensation for the minutes taker for the Select Board and the Development Review Board be increased from \$12.50 to \$15 an hour. Due to budget numbers not being readily available, Farnham suggested that the issue be taken up at a special meeting on 1/15/20, along with approval of the Fiscal Year 2020-2021 Town budget.

## **ROAD COMMISSIONER'S REPORT**

- Road Commissioner Bram Towbin presented a map with circles around the stop bars and crosswalks that need to be repainted. The contractor estimated a rough amount of \$8,600, noting that the painting should last three-to-five years. The contractor will schedule the work once the contract is signed. Towbin noted that the contractor does not see a problem with splitting the cost between the current fiscal year and the upcoming 2020/2021 fiscal year starting in July. Resident Bob Atchinson asked that a stop sign be considered going out of the Village towards East Hill near the Fire House on Main Street where there is currently only a stop sign coming down into the Village at that location. Given the meeting's full agenda, Thayer asked that Atchinson make that proposal at a future meeting. Susan Grimaldi asked about painting the crosswalk in front of the Town Hall Opera House, to which Towbin responded that work on Route 2 is the responsibility of the State. Thayer encouraged residents to contact the State regarding the needed crosswalk work on Route 2.

## **BROOK BRIDGE ALTERNATIVES DISCUSSION - VHB JASON KEENER, SCOTT BURBANK**

- Jason Keener, Scott Burbank, and Nina Truslow were present from VHB, an engineering firm that was tasked with designing alternatives to replacing the bridge on Brook Road. Keener used a Powerpoint presentation to illustrate the project's goals and objectives, and described four separate alternatives, each with two foundational options, for a 36-foot span across the Great Brook to replace the existing bridge. Keener noted that VHB's recommendation was the first alternative, a precast/prestressed concrete slab, with the piles foundational option, at a cost of \$1,320,000. Discussion ensued, including the expected increase in the number and intensity of weather events going forward; the idea of removing the bridge entirely without replacing it; the amount of the Town's match funding for the project; and the possibility of replacing the existing bridge with a pedestrian bridge. In terms of procuring grant funding, Town Grant Administrator Alice Merrill noted that she has been advised by people in the funding community not to apply for grants in

January, but rather wait for grant opportunities from FEMA that will be coming up in the next year; this will also give the Town the time to digest the information that has been presented. Volz noted what appeared to be incorrect numbers in VHB's report on page 9. Burbank stated that VHB will send a corrected version to the Select Board. Thayer will add the issue to the agenda of the Select Board meeting at the end of January or beginning of February 2020.

## **ROUTE 2/MAIN STREET INTERSECTION UPDATE AND DISCUSSION**

- Thayer noted that there would not be a representative present from the Vermont Agency of Transportation (VAOT), but that the Select Board still wanted to give people an opportunity to be heard on the issue. People can also contact Select Board members.
- Alice Merrill asked about the status of the project. Thayer provided a review of the proposed project going back to 2016, noting that the history actually goes back much further. She noted the limited resources that the Town has to explore funding options for work associated with the project that would not be covered by the State. Water/Wastewater Chief System Operator Greg Chamberlin stated that the sewer lines running beneath Route 2 at the intersection were installed between 1962 and 1968 and the water lines at that location were put in between 1972 and 1973; left undisturbed, both should have an additional life of approximately 20 years. Volz noted that while the project will be paid for 100% by the State and federal governments, costs pertaining to project impacts, such as those related to the water and sewer systems, will need to be borne by the Water/Wastewater system rate payers with the possibility that those costs would need to be spread out across the Town's taxpayers. Volz added that, at this juncture, there are other areas of the system that the Water/Wastewater Department would focus on before having to move forward with replacing the underground pipes at the intersection.
- Carla Siegle asked if installing a traffic light at the intersection would address the safety issues. Thayer explained the State's plan for how the intersection would be reconfigured, which includes a traffic light, but also lowers the road bed to improve sight lines.
- Susan Grimaldi asked how the financing happened when the water/sewer lines were originally installed under the road. Water/Wastewater Chief System Operator Greg Chamberlin responded that he was not sure, but believed that part of the cost was grant funded. Thayer added that people who wanted to be hooked up to the system when it was first built had to pay a sum of money to be connected.
- Paula Emery asked about the status of authorizing an advisory committee that would propose ideas and get a little deeper into funding opportunities and report back to the Select Board. Thayer responded that the proposal by VAOT is what is available with not a lot of room for negotiation and that the public needs to let the Select Board know whether it should go forward with the project. The Select is still wrestling with what the focus and purpose of an advisory committee would be.
- Bram Towbin noted that this intersection poses probably the greatest engineering challenge of any of the many intersection-fixes along Route 2, thus there is reticence at VAOT to face the problem. VAOT is looking at it only because of pressure from the Town to do something. Towbin noted how poorly VAOT has communicated with the Town, and that at a meeting in 2015, VAOT considered the intersection to be safe. Towbin stated that the State replaced the guardrail around the turn with a new guardrail that obstructs the view even more. He noted that local pressure during the East Montpelier bridge project caused VAOT to change its mind regarding shutting down Route 2 for weeks during that construction.
- Carla Siegle noted that her question was why VAOT cannot just install a traffic light at the intersection. Towbin responded that there are a lot of in-points at the intersection with required setbacks. Thayer added that VAOT will not just install a traffic light without reconfiguring the

intersection and that because it will be constructed using federal money, the project needs to meet federal specifications. Thayer also stated that the State has expressed that it has a declining amount of money to meet its funding match for federal projects. She noted that the State has not changed its position beyond what it heard at the 9/23/19 Select Board/Route 2 Intersection informational meeting.

- Susan Grimaldi asked what the State has decided to do about Gaye and Rich Christiansen's building that currently houses the hydroponic business. Thayer, Volz, and Towbin responded that the State would not purchase the property, but if purchased by the Town or privately, about two years would be added to the construction process because of the historical review process. Volz thought that the State had proposed the possibility of leaving one lane open on the Main Street bridge; Thayer responded that that was not an option.
- Alice Merrill asked what the State's intention was regarding the Christiansen property. Thayer stated that, from notes from a 9/2/15 meeting, the State was aware of the parking issues and proposed to shut down access entirely to the business at Christiansen property.
- Susan Grimaldi asked what the process would be going forward. Volz noted that while the Select Board could notify the State that it was acceptable to move forward based upon its 30% design plan, the question remains whether the Town's residents are satisfied with that approach. It was noted that there have not been any fatalities at the intersection, likely because people are extremely careful because of the danger it poses. Laura Ziegler, however, was hit by a vehicle years ago when crossing Route 2.
- Bob Atchinson noted the rapid rate of construction following Tropical Storm Irene, where bridges were rebuilt in weeks, adding that the State has the resources to complete construction much more quickly than the three-month construction window being proposed.
- Josh Pitts from the Water/Wastewater Commission wanted to make sure that the public was aware that this is not a zero-cost project to the Town and that there is no budget for the water/wastewater work that would need to be done.
- Water/Wastewater Chief System Operator Greg Chamberlin added that 60% of the population of the Town is fed by the water line that comes up at the intersection and that that population will be without water potentially for 30 days, which will also affect fire suppression efforts. Chamberlin proposed solving the issue by building a bridge across the Winooski River by the School Street Apartments on Route 2. A redundant eight-inch line could also be put across the Winooski without interrupting water service to the community. Volz and Thayer responded that the State will not pay for a bridge. Chamberlin stated that if the Town could demonstrate to the State the need for safety and present the bridge idea as a viable option, the State might change its plan. Volz explained the State's position that this project involves federal money thus the State cannot do anything in a different location with federal money.
- Paula Emery agreed that the State has made it very clear that it would not do anything outside of what it was proposing, but what is being discussed is finding the funding to accommodate other project impacts.
- Harvey Hill resident Lauren Kelley related how dangerous it is turning onto Route 2 from Harvey Hill and noted that building a bridge further down will not solve the safety issue at the intersection.
- Because VAOT has stated that it does not have anything different from how it has already laid out the current plan, Thayer asked for ideas regarding what work the Town needs to do to figure out how to address the intersection.
- Alice Merrill noted that the area where Chamberlin has proposed building a bridge likely cuts through her yard, and also affects the Fire Department, cemetery, Co-op, and would enter onto Main Street in a high-pedestrian area of the Village. Merrill suggested looking at the area by the

Lucky Day Farm that crosses over to the Park and Ride. Thayer responded that there are water wells that serve the Town in that area, and it would not be possible to put in a bridge there because it would contaminate the aquifer.

- Betsy Ziegler noted the difficulties the project presents, but stated that the future of the Town depends upon making the intersection safer, more pedestrian friendly, and welcoming as an entranceway to the Village. Despite the complications, she believes the Town will get through them and to a better place.
- Jesse Cooper noted that many of the same issues being discussed tonight were raised at the 9/23/19 informational meeting on the intersection. As a next step, he asked if a comprehensive list might be created of issues that VAOT is not interested in adequately addressing so that the broader community can review the information and research can begin to find opportunities to deal with them.
- Agreeing with the above point, Alice Merrill asked if the Fire Department has talked with neighboring fire departments regarding responding to emergency issues on the Route 2 side of the Village during the construction phase. Towbin replied that he has discussed that possibility with Fire Chief Greg Light, who was not very receptive to it. Towbin also noted that what VAOT states as its limits should not be taken to heart; that with the right political pressure, VAOT would be much more accommodating and not expect the Town to solve all of these issues. He added if there are people in the Town interested in pursuing different ideas, the Select Board should tap into that energy. Thayer stated the need to be thoughtful about how to apply pressure in order to persuade our legislative representatives to follow up on the issues. Farnham noted that the Select Board should think about what the focus of an advisory committee would be, and Volz asked that if the Select Board decides to authorize an advisory committee, anyone interested in serving on it should get in contact. Thayer also asked community members to submit their ideas on what the committee's focus should be.
- Bob Atchinson noted that this project would not have been on the books had a meeting at VAOT and the Select Board on 6/24/14 not occurred. In terms of right-of-way issues, he cautioned against being too casual about removing various buildings to accommodate the project, and include Green Mountain Power in discussions, which may absorb some of the cost in order to protect its equipment during construction.
- Thayer stated that VAOT will be told that the Town is working on how to best approach the issues. Volz reminded that Select Board members can be contacted by clicking on their names on the Select Board page of the Town website.

#### **REPORT RE: RAMP PROJECT FROM JON COPANS AND OTHERS**

##### **- GENERAL**

##### **- HITCHING POST**

##### **- ENERGY EFFICIENCY GRANTS AND WORK ON TOWN HALL OPERA HOUSE**

##### **- ONGOING RAMP INTERESTS AND CONCERNS**

- Jon Copans was present from the Vermont Council on Rural Development's Climate Economy Model Communities Program to provide an update on the Revitalizing All Marshfield and Plainfield (RAMP) project. He reviewed the progress that the two communities have made in the year since the project began through its four task forces that focus on: 1) energy; 2) transportation; 3) food and farm; and 4) both village centers and the Route 2 corridor. Copans noted some of the program's activities, including energy upgrades and efficiencies in public buildings as well as upcoming free energy walk-throughs at private residences; setting up "Hitching Posts" to connect people looking for rides; and identifying farmers and buyers in the two communities. Noting that VAOT will be

repaving Route 2 in 2022, Copans encouraged communicating to the agency some of the things Plainfield would like to see along this corridor.

**APPROVAL OF MINUTES OF MEETINGS ON 11/7/19, 11/14/19, 11/19/19, 11/25/19, AND 12/9/19**

- Approval of the above dated Select Board meeting minutes was tabled until the special meeting on 1/15/20.

**OTHER BUSINESS**

- Bob Atchinson requested that the Select Board, or the Town of Plainfield, or a combination of both declare a climate emergency at Town Meeting. Thayer asked Atchinson to come up with a proposal and get it to the Select Board as soon as possible.

**ADJOURN**

- **Volz made a motion to adjourn at 8:53pm. The motion was approved.**

Respectfully submitted by Cindy Wyckoff