

Town of Plainfield
Select Board Meeting
Route 2 Intersection Informational Meeting
September 23, 2019
Approved Minutes

PRESENT: Alexandra Thayer (Select Board Chair), James Volz (Select Board Member), Tammy Farnham (Select Board Member), Keith Swann (Videographer), Cindy Wyckoff (Minutes Recorder), Erin Parizo (Vermont Agency of Transportation), Greg Goyette (Vermont Agency of Transportation), Eric Blaisdell (Times Argus), Bram Towbin (Road Commissioner), Ellen Nolan (Marshfield), Janet Daum (15 School Street), Leon Cookson (15 School Street), Gaye Christiansen (20 School Street), Richard Christiansen (20 School Street), Josh Pitts (303 Brook Road, Water/Wastewater Commission), Bob Fancher (133 Mill Street), Kathy Fancher (133 Mill Street), Paul Angell (155 New Hamburger Road), Lori Baker (Marshfield), Les Snow (Marshfield), Kathy Perry (557 East Hill), Scott Stewart (182 High Street), Tristan MacGregor-Stewart (91 Robert Lane, Water/Wastewater Department), Janet Ancel (Vermont State Representative), Andrew Perchlik (Vermont State Senator), Joseph Cantiello (20 School Street), Tina Manning (557 East Hill Road), Laura Ziegler (132 Main Street), Susan Grimaldi (65 Brook Road), John R. Laurence (Seattle, Washington), Ben Koenig (35 Mill Street), Becky Atchinson (2141 Lower Road), Dawn Fancher (303 Brook Road), Will Colgan (Brook Road), David Diamantis (175 Creamery Street), Annie Coughlin (175 Creamery Street), Laura Ceraso (304 Main Street), Jolie Jonte (78 Main Street), Pam Kelly-Kinniburgh (99 Perkins Road), Cam Kelly-Kinniburgh (99 Perkins Road), Steven Farnham (Farnham Road), Alice Dworkin (53 Main Street), Baylen Slote (53 Main Street), Owen Bradley (64 Mill Street), Michael Billingsley (Hudson Avenue), Adam Krakowski (Main Street), Noella Krakowski (Main Street), Paula Emery (Main Street), Sandy Ross (Brook Road), Gregory Chamberlin (Water/Wastewater Department, Non-resident), Graham Unangst-Rufenacht (Marshfield), Kevin Goslant (Main Street), Karl Bissex (East Hill Road), Alice Merrill (127 Main Street), Juanita Boardman (Marshfield), Bob Atchinson (2141 Lower Road), David Strong (858 East Hill Road), Ed Hutchinson (2053 East Hill Road), and Randall Meyer.

Alexandra Thayer called the meeting to order at 6:04pm.

AGENDA

- Review Agenda
- Community Presentation by Vermont Agency of Transportation of Proposal for Improving the Route 2-Main Street Intersection. Public Comment and Feedback Are Welcome.
- Immediately After the Conclusion of the Route 2-Main Street Intersection Presentation and Public Comment:
 - Catering License Application for Catering at Goddard College, September 28
 - Approval of Cindy Wyckoff as Administrative Assistant for Development Review Board
 - First Reading of Wastewater System Ordinance
- Adjourn

Prior to reviewing the agenda, Thayer introduced Project Manager Erin Parizo and Engineer/Designer Greg Goyette from the Vermont Agency of Transportation.

REVIEW AGENDA

- After a brief review of the agenda, **James Volz made a motion to adopt the agenda as written. The motion was approved.**

COMMUNITY PRESENTATION BY VERMONT AGENCY OF TRANSPORTATION OF PROPOSAL FOR IMPROVING THE ROUTE 2-MAIN STREET INTERSECTION. PUBLIC COMMENT AND FEEDBACK ARE WELCOME.

- Project Manager Erin Parizo began the public informational presentation by reviewing the evolution of the Main Street/Route 2 intersection, noting that she and Engineer/Designer Greg Goyette were present from the Vermont Agency of Transportation (VAOT) to provide a quick update of where the project currently stands as well as hear from residents and commuters in the area regarding any questions, ideas, or concerns. Parizo noted the group effort by those who have been involved with the intersection over the years at both the VAOT and the Town of Plainfield, and began the presentation with photographs of the intersection starting in the late 1800s. Within the past few months, a preferred alternative design plan has been developed that takes into consideration the regional corridor that is Route 2 as well as the historical district through Plainfield, and which balances safety, property impacts, traffic operations, constructability, and cost. VAOT and Plainfield officials recently held stakeholder meetings to learn of any issues and figure out how to mitigate them. Parizo detailed the proposed intersection improvements, including the new pavement areas, removal of the center island, adding a standard traffic signal, lowering the grade of Route 2 by about two feet, a five-foot bike shoulder along Route 2, and a sidewalk to tie into the existing infrastructure. There will be no major impacts to the historical properties in the area. VAOT Engineer/Designer Greg Goyette noted that the pedestrian crossing at Route 2 will also be signalized. Parizo stated that because the surface elevation at the intersection will be dropped by two feet, reconstruction of the entire road from the sub-base up means that all the municipal water and sewer lines, including aerial utility lines, will have to be reconstructed. Road Commissioner Bram Towbin noted that while most projects have a matching amount for which the Town is responsible, this project will be funded at 100%. Reconstruction costs of the municipal utilities will be a Town expense. Resident Steve Farnham questioned why a traffic signal is necessary if the grade of the road and sight lines are improved. Parizo and Goyette responded that the signal lights will make it safer not only for cars, but also for pedestrians. Parizo noted that construction will be the most challenging part of the project, including that Main Street will need to be closed down for the better part of the summer. Details are being worked through in terms of what that means for the Town, for emergency access, and detour traffic management. The presence of ledge in the area may also be a factor that comes into play during construction. Parizo reviewed the project timeframe, stating that given all the restraints involved, the best case scenario puts the construction phase in 2023.
- Sandy Ross asked if the poor visibility on Route 2 to the west when coming out of Main Street will be remediated by the project. Parizo responded that the sight distance will be improved and traffic signals will be designed to address those challenges.
- Michael Billingsley asked about pedestrian access from the lower Village to Route 2 during construction. Thayer noted that the Pedestrian Bridge project will be constructed next year and in

place prior to the onset of the intersection reconstruction. Parizo stated that pedestrian access during construction is important and plans are to provide parking in the municipal lot for people wishing to walk down to the Village. Billingsley asked if provisions will be made to allow emergency vehicles to cross the bridge during the construction period. Parizo responded that it has not yet been determined if that would be possible in this tight of a site. If not, other possibilities will be explored to understand the next best option.

- Ed Hutchinson asked about school buses that need to get through a couple of times a day. Parizo stated that they will be working with the school district and Town officials to find an alternate route. Thayer noted that these and other access issues are important and asked Parizo to be thinking about another meeting.
- Will Colgan asked if there was a way to maximize the amount of work done on the Main Street bridge to reduce the construction window to the shortest amount of time to diminish the period of inconvenience. Parizo stated that bid contracts will include strongly worded language regarding construction deadlines.
- Annie Coughlin asked about ledge in the area. If found, how will it be removed and if its removal would have an impact on the foundations of historic buildings in the area. Parizo responded that they hope to do some advanced coring to understand where the ledge is and evaluate how to deal with it. If blasting is deemed the method to remove the ledge, foundation concerns will be addressed by monitoring pre- and post-blasting to ensure that it is not having a negative impact on the buildings.
- Paula Emery noted her concern about people who live along Route 2 near the intersection once the traffic signals are installed, both in terms of how vehicles stopped at the red lights can look into residents' windows as well as the problem of engine fumes emitting from idling vehicles. Emery asked at what point changes can be made in the project timeframe. Parizo responded that while the basic project concept is what is being presented at this meeting, any concerns will continue to be worked on throughout the next year and a half.
- Leon Cookson, who owns the old Plainfield Inn building, expressed concern regarding plans to lower the grade of Route 2 and how large vehicles would be able to pull into his driveway and unload. He also expressed concern regarding the possibility of his renters not having a place to park. Parizo assured him that as details are worked out regarding anything that is proposed that will have an impact on people's properties, residents such as Cookson will be involved in the planning every step of the way.
- Karl Bissex asked if there was any way to use the Town-owned driveway by the Park and Ride that goes down to the pumping station as a temporary bridge to cross the Winooski River and meet up with Route 2 by the Maplefields convenience store, even if only for emergency vehicles. Parizo explained that from a federal funding and State perspective, this project currently does not include plans to get vehicles in or out of the Village during the time when Main Street is closed off.
- Select Board member Tammy Farnham asked if anyone has evaluated getting rid of the Main Street/Route 2 intersection completely and finding another way to cross the Winooski River from the Village area to Route 2. Parizo explained that the funding for the project is designated to remediate the existing intersection and does not include investigating entirely different locations. She noted, however, that she would raise the issue with management to see if there was any flexibility.

- Adam Krakowski expressed caution regarding closing down the bridge, noting that he works in Queechee and construction on the Queechee covered bridge added four-and-a-half miles in response time for emergency vehicles as well as creating a hardship for businesses in the area. Parizo responded that they have been trying to understand how that impact can be mitigated as much as possible, but sometimes it comes down to the fact that construction has to happen for the safety and longevity of the infrastructure.
- Pam Kelly noted that the plans seemed like overkill and wondered why placing a signal light at the intersection would not be a solution. Parizo responded that several designs looked at just putting in a signal, but that there were a lot of functionality issues related to that plan. Goyette added that many issues come into play in coordinating the traffic signals in the existing intersection configuration; for example, a red light on Route 2 for vehicles wishing to use the bypass in front of the old hardware store to get to the Village would cause traffic delays and vehicles to spill back on Route 2.
- Graham Unangst-Rufenacht expressed his appreciation for the work people have put into the issue, but noted that in terms of scales of disturbance, there were solutions that could be employed that would not come with all the concerns associated with the proposed plan. Parizo responded that various simpler improvement options were explored, but each came with its own set of benefits and challenges.
- Owen Bradley stated his appreciation for the work that all the public servants involved have put into the planning of the project to help make the Town better and more acceptable.
- Paula Emery asked how VAOT goes about integrating the issue of climate change into its planning of these large projects given Vermont's goal of becoming carbon neutral by 2050. Parizo noted that VAOT does a lot of thinking and talking about investing in that sort of future by implementing plans such as improving signal technology and designing roundabouts that keep vehicles moving.
- Josh Pitts noted that in previous plans for the intersection, there was parking available in the space in front of the old hardware store for loading and unloading capabilities and wondered by that is no longer included in the current plan. Parizo responded that that building has one of the largest impacts in that sense. The space is currently designated as green space because of the ground slope, but VAOT is working with the owner and tenants to try to understand how to mitigate the situation so that the building can maintain its economic viability.
- Jesse Cooper, noting that the intersection bisects the upper and lower Village, asked if anyone was advocating for the bigger picture esthetics of what it will feel like to drive through it and draw people down to the businesses in the lower Village, resulting in a longer-term gain. Parizo stated that an appealing Village gateway is something that VAOT can work on with the Town, but because safety and transportation are VAOT's prime concern, the Town would need to secure other funding for additional work that addresses esthetics.
- Thayer, noting that Select Board member James Volz has been involved in the transportation part of the Plainfield/Marshfield RAMP project, asked Volz to address this project in terms of those current discussions. Volz responded that he had nothing to add in that respect, however, the currently proposed design would visually open up the area from Route 2 leading down to the lower Village and make it more inviting. Parizo agreed.
- Joseph Contiello identified himself as the current tenant in the old hardware store, noting that the current plan for the intersection would put him out of business because there is no way for tractor trailers to deliver large items to his store. Having recently purchased a home in Plainfield, Contiello

asked if there was any money available for impacted business owners. Parizo responded that this is the first pass and VAOT and the Town needs to figure out what to do about impacts on businesses and suggested that Contiello talk with property owner Rich Christiansen, who will be in discussions with VAOT in terms of how to resolve these issues. Contiello added that, looking at the current plan, he does not believe that there will be a single business left in the Village.

- Rich Christiansen, who owns the property that Contiello rents, stated that he does not get the sense that VAOT took him seriously a month ago when he noted that there has to be parking available in front of the building. Parizo agreed that the current plan has not been updated with respect to that, but assured impacted property owners that VAOT will work through the issues with them.
- Chief System Operator of the Water/Wastewater Department Gregory Chamberlin expressed concern over the fact that all the water/wastewater lines come from one side of the Village to the other at the construction site, and people cannot go without water for a week or a day. Chamberlin added that he thinks that, in terms of the parking issue in front of the old hardware store, the area should be made a green space designated for parking. Parizo noted that the area has a 25% slope therefore in order to consider any kind of parking there, some kind of retaining wall with a flat space needs to be created. There is the additional issue of how the intersection would function regarding how cars would come in and out. Parizo stated that VAOT will note Chamberlin's concept, but feels it has already considered that option. Regarding the 25% slope from Route 2 down to the old hardware store building, Thayer pointed out the danger that may be posed if a vehicle was to go off the road and down into the building.
- Alice Dworkin asked if undue weight was being placed on the historic nature of the buildings in the area in terms of preserving them. Parizo responded that with federal funds being used, there is the historic preservation process and the permitting process that needs to be taken into account. VAOT needs to show the impact on historic building and how the impacts are being mitigated, which then needs to be reviewed by federal authorities in Washington, D.C. This adds to the project's timeline.
- Michael Billingsley noted that in the current design, the capacity to make a left hand turn off Route 2 coming from the direction of Marshfield is diminished and queried if is there a possibility of making it three lanes. This would allow for better traffic flow and the possibility of closing one of the lanes to offload a tractor trailer on either side of the street. Parizo stated that there are ways to see if the volume of traffic would warrant a left-turn lane. The design is already impacting the old Plainfield Inn building, but VAOT will take a look at that option.
- David Strong noted that when he was on the Select Board, the most asked question from the public was "What are you going to do about the intersection?" Now there is finally public discussion about what can be done about it. Some of the issues will be determined later on after studies on the ledge are completed and how long the construction phase of the project will take is determined. Strong stated that it might be time to put the idea of a bypass bridge into the Master Plan and get it on the Central Vermont Regional Planning Commission's radar. He thanked Parizo for all the work she has put into the project over the last four years.
- In terms of replacing the water/wastewater lines at the intersection, the cost for which will not be funded as part of the project, Josh Pitts asked if the Select Board was going to present that cost to the Town. He stated that system user fees cannot themselves bear the cost of the replacement, and if the Town as a whole cannot fund it, that is a game stopper. Parizo noted that with any State project that impacts structures within the State right-of-way, the burden is on the community inside the State right-of-way to relocate and figure out how to pay for it. Thayer noted that the current

Select Board is aware of the fact that the users of the system would be responsible for the cost of replacing the water/wastewater infrastructure disrupted as part of the project, and finds it concerning. No one as yet has addressed whether there is other available funding to help replace this infrastructure. Select Board member Volz noted the need to discuss the best way to deal with whether the cost should be presented to the Town as a whole. He added that a loan to be paid over many years is also a possibility, to which Josh Pitts replied that no more debt can be incurred.

- Road Commissioner Bram Towbin stated there have been many major Route 2 VAOT projects—Montpelier, two in East Montpelier, and Danville—and noted that the intersection in Plainfield poses particular challenges because of the impacts on building owners. Many people who call him do not travel that intersection during a great part of the year because of sight issues. The new guardrail is more dangerous than the old one, and if nothing is done, there is going to be a tragic situation there.
- Randall Meyer suggested several detour ideas during construction, including reverting the old railroad bed temporarily and creating a footbridge by the Plainfield Co-op. Parizo noted that what the State and VAOT can offer is signing a detour or looking closer at the impact of the detour and working toward a bypass mitigation grant, which would be a lump sum of money that would go toward, but not completely cover, detour improvement. Thayer raised the point that during bridge reconstruction in East Montpelier, a temporary bridge was built. Ed Hutchinson noted that the detour location being discussed is in Marshfield.
- Ben Koenig noted the existence of the RAMP project, which is looking at various aspects of community life, concern about emissions from traffic backing up on Route 2, and the impact for businesses resulting from closing off the Village during construction.
- Jim Volz asked if the traffic signal would remain green if not triggered by a car coming up from the Village or at the pedestrian crosswalk, to which Parizo responded affirmatively.
- David Strong noted the presence of State Representative Janet Ancel and State Senator Andy Perchlik. Strong stated that there will be a pedestrian-activated crosswalk opposite the Town Hall Opera House installed hopefully by the end of next year, which could possibly be used instead of the proposed crosswalk in the design. He asked Parizo to speak about what options there might be if no parking is available for the old hardware store and might the building be purchased by the State and sold back to the Town. Parizo responded that viable parking options need to be understood and that she does not have an answer at this point.
- Jesse Cooper asked about the possibility of moving the old Plainfield Inn back. Parizo noted that that option had been considered, but the cost versus the benefits made it unworkable.
- Susan Grimaldi asked how deep the water and sewer pipes were buried in the area. Greg Chamberlin responded that they were at a depth of five feet.
- State Senator Andy Perchlik, who sits on the Transportation Committee in the Vermont State Legislature, noted that this is really a Town project and if the Town does not want to do it, VAOT will not do it. Perchlik asked how the Route 2 paving project, slated for around the same time as this project, would be impacted. Parizo stated that the State wants to run both projects concurrently rather than through multiple summers.
- Tristan MacGregor-Stewart from the Water/Wastewater Department asked if the intersection project and replacement of the water/sewer lines would be done at the same time or at different times. Parizo responded that VAOT can work with the Town in terms of putting out a contract for both the intersection construction and water/sewer line replacement, although funding would come

from different sources. In terms of water shut-off for many water/wastewater system users, Parizo noted that the construction schedule can possibly be track-phased where the new infrastructure is ready to go in place at the same time that the old infrastructure is removed.

- Alice Merrill asked for confirmation that VAOT moves ahead on projects mainly under the umbrella of safety first with everything else following. Parizo responded that in this particular project, creating a safe intersection is the first consideration.
- Graham Unangst-Rufenacht agreed with Bram Towbin about the danger at the guardrails for vehicles as well as pedestrians. He noted that if the temporary bridge in East Montpelier was funded by the State, there is a chance the State would fund one for the intersection project. Randall Meyer stated that a bypass might be possible by Goddard Flats, crossing the Winooski River from Littlewood Farm. Parizo noted the difference in programming the East Montpelier bridge project and the proposed Plainfield intersection project, which might be why funding for the temporary bridge in the former was available.
- Thayer stated that the reason why the accident statistics are not so bad at the intersection is because people are afraid to go through the intersection or just do not go through it at all.
- Laura Ziegler mentioned getting hit as a pedestrian at the intersection in 2000, stating it might have also involved a tractor trailer and child in a car if things had gone a little differently. Parizo stated that she understands the issues involved and the need to make the intersection much safer, which is why VAOT is here today.
- Thayer thanked everyone for attending the meeting, noted appreciation for Parizo and Goyette for their presence, and encouraged people to contact the Select Board if there is anything else they would like to share.
- Parizo stated that within the next few weeks, she would like to schedule another meeting between the State and the Town to figure out how to factor in all of tonight's conversation to make sure everyone is on the same page. Parizo invited anyone to get in contact with her at erin.parizo@vermont.gov or by calling 802-279-1709.

The public information portion of the meeting concluded, and Thayer called the Select Board meeting to order at 8:05

PUBLIC COMMENT: BOB ATCHINSON

- Plainfield Energy Coordinator Bob Atchinson wanted to make the Select Board aware that, as part of the RAMP process, there is an energy grant of \$4,000 through Efficiency Vermont that would include Twinfield Union School. There is also a grant opportunity for nonprofit weatherization. The Town Hall Opera House is a nonprofit, and there will be a walk-through at the building tomorrow at 9am and then a second walk-through at the Plainfield Co-op at 10am. Thayer mentioned that the Cutler Library is also a nonprofit. Thayer asked Atchinson to follow up with this information in an email to the Select Board.

CATERING LICENSE APPLICATION FOR CATERING AT GODDARD COLLEGE, SEPTEMBER 28

- Prior to approving the catering permit request, Tammy Farnham noted that last year there was a similar request for a catering permit that required the Select Board to call an emergency meeting. She suggested having a conversation with Goddard College regarding being clear with whomever is renting out event space that there is a timeframe for getting approval for catering permits.

Farnham offered to contact Goddard College and have that conversation. **James Volz made a motion to approve a catering permit for 1013 LLC DBA as MOAGS for a music event at Goddard College on 9/28/19 from 6-12pm. The motion was approved.**

APPROVAL OF CINDY WYCKOFF AS ADMINISTRATIVE ASSISTANT FOR DEVELOPMENT REVIEW BOARD

- Thayer noted the request from the Development Review Board to hire Cindy Wyckoff as Administrative Assistant. **Farnham made a motion to approve hiring Cindy Wyckoff as Administrative Assistant to the Development Review Board to record DRB meeting minutes at a rate of \$12.50 per hour. The motion was approved.**

FIRST READING OF WASTEWATER SYSTEM ORDINANCE

- A brief discussion centered on Select Board review of the Wastewater System Ordinance and the date of the current draft. Josh Pitts was present from the Water/Wastewater Commission and it was decided that the ordinance would be considered at the next Select Board meeting.

NEXT SELECT BOARD MEETING

- Because the next scheduled meeting of the Select Board meeting would fall on a legal holiday, **Volz made a motion to change the date of the next Select Board meeting from 10/14/19 to 10/15/19 at 7:00pm. The motion was approved.**

ADJOURN

- **Volz made a motion to adjourn at 8:25pm. The motion was approved.**

Respectfully submitted by Cindy Wyckoff