

Town of Plainfield, Vermont
Select Board Meeting
March 9, 2020
Draft 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), Eric Blaisdell (Times Argus), Kate Spencer (Resident), Lauren Kelley (Resident), Gary Graves (Resident), Allan Farnham (Resident), David Montgomery (Resident), Bram Towbin (Road Commissioner), Jesse Cooper (Resident), Betsy Ziegler (Resident), Bonnie Waninger (Central Vermont Regional Planning Commission), Rose Paul (Resident), Laura Ziegler (Resident), Karl Bissex (Resident), and Nancy Ellen (Hitching Post).

The Select Board met in executive session prior to the Select Board meeting per 1 VSA § 313. No action was taken.

Alexandra Thayer called the Select Board meeting to order at 7:00pm.

AGENDA

- Review Agenda
- Organizational Meeting
- Public Comment/Announcements
 - Openings and Vacancies
- Town Clerk's Report
 - Election Outcomes
 - Town Meeting
 - Clarification RE: Social Concerns Committee Report Sent to Town Clerk and Published in Town Report
 - Approval of Warrants
- Approval of Town Meeting Minutes: The Record or Minutes of the Annual Town Meeting Must Be Approved and Attested to by any Two of the Following: Moderator, Select Board, or Justices of the Peace. The Clerk Must Request this Approval within Seven Days after each Town Meeting and His or Her Request Must Be Given Prompt Consideration. 24 V.S.A. §1152.
- Road Commissioner's Report
- Hitching Post Program and Consideration of Letter of Support for VTRANS \$500 Grant
- Services Available from Central Vermont Regional Planning Commission, including RE: Route 2/Main Street Intersection Remediation Project - Bonnie Waninger
- Next Steps RE: Route 2/Main Street Intersection Remediation Project
- Next Steps RE: Pedestrian Bridge Project
 - Bids Received vs. Funds Authorized for Construction
 - Town Share for Funds Authorized
 - Alternatives RE: Proceeding
 - Inspection Services Engineer Selection Recommendation
 - Whether to Proceed with Inspection Services Engineer Contract Prior to Decision RE: Construction

- Budget for Inspection Services Engineer from Various Grants
- Financial Implications for Town if Bids for Inspection Services Engineer Exceed Budgeted Amount
- Implications for Timing of Project Completion (Had Been Anticipated for Summer 2020)
- Agenda Items for 3/23 Meeting
 - Recreation Committee Recreation Field Proposal
 - Appointments
 - Hazard Mitigation Plan Update and Local Emergency Operations Plan Due May 1
- Adjourn

REVIEW AGENDA

- **Tammy Farnham made a motion to add five minutes to the Hitching Post discussion. The motion was approved.**

ORGANIZATIONAL MEETING

- Thayer stated that during the organizational meeting, a new chair of the Select Board is elected and the rules of procedures are adopted. **James Volz made a motion that Thayer be chair. The motion was approved.** Thayer noted that the rules of procedures need to be adopted every year. **Volz made a motion to adopt the rules of procedures. The motion was approved.** Thayer read aloud the newly adopted rules of procedures.

PUBLIC COMMENT/ANNOUNCEMENTS

- OPENINGS AND VACANCIES

- Lauren Kelley noted that there was discussion at Town Meeting of the rat problem being caused by composting and asked who she should talk to about the possibility of installing some kind of digester that would generate power. Farnham suggested contacting both Town Health Officer Baylen Slote and Energy Coordinator Bob Atchinson. Thayer stated that Kelley should let her know if she would like the item to be added to the agenda of an upcoming Select Board meeting.
- Bram Towbin reported that members of the Friends of the Winooski had contacted him regarding the fact that they had missed the deadline for submitting a funding request to the Social Concerns Committee and that when they heard that organizations that also missed the deadline were funded, were very upset.
- Thayer noted that she will be attending a White House Coronavirus Briefing Call for Local and State Leaders.
- Thayer read aloud a number of vacancies on Town boards and committees, noting that they will be dealt with at the 3/23/20 Select Board meeting.

TOWN CLERK'S REPORT

- ELECTION OUTCOMES

- TOWN MEETING

- CLARIFICATION RE: SOCIAL CONCERNS COMMITTEE REPORT SENT TO TOWN CLERK AND PUBLISHED IN TOWN REPORT

- APPROVAL OF WARRANTS

- Regarding the issue discussed at Town Meeting regarding information being changed from what was submitted by committees for the Town Report, specifically the Cutler Memorial Library and the Social Concerns Committee, Town Clerk/Treasurer Linda Wells stated that she has emails going back three or four years showing that changes made to the Cutler Library's reports were discussed with the Library. Wells also noted communication between the Auditors, who are in charge of the Town

Report, and the Library's treasurer every year to make sure the numbers are accurate. Wells stated that the communication process is similar with the Social Concerns Committee, noting that the report she received was what the Social Concerns Committee member had sent. Thayer added that the Select Board recently heard from the Social Concerns Committee that what was published in the Town Report was, in fact, what had been submitted by the Social Concerns Committee. Discussion followed, including getting the Town Report out to the public earlier and creating a policy restricting the number of pages each individual report in the Town Report contains to reduce printing costs. It was decided that Wells would put together a recommendation on page limits for the Select Board to consider at its 3/23/20 meeting.

- **Farham made a motion to approve warrants of 2/26/20, 2/28/20, and 3/6/20. The motion was approved.**
- **Volz made a motion to approve the following fleet permit requests:**
 - **Scott Brown Trucking;**
 - **Camp Precast Concrete Products;**
 - **Chevalier Drilling Company, Inc.;**
 - **Gillespie Fuels & Propane;**
 - **L. Bellevance Land Works and Plowing;**
 - **N.A. Manosh Corporation;**
 - **New England Quality Service;**
 - **Structural Wood Corporation; and**
 - **Trono Oil and Gas, Inc.**

The motion was approved.

- Wells presented a reimbursement request for VHB Engineering's work on the Brook Road Bridge project. **Farnham made a motion to approve Thayer signing the Flood Mitigation reimbursement form for \$15,488.81 relating to the services from VHB Engineering. The motion was approved.**
- Wells presented for the Select Board's review amended minutes from the Select Board's special meeting of 2/19/20. Town Grant Administrator Alice Merrill had recommended following VTRANS's protocol for wording motions for the bidding process for the Pedestrian Bridge project.
- Thayer noted a correspondence from Paula Ackel, who was withdrawing from the Cemetery Commission. Thayer noted the good work done by members of the Cemetery Commission.
- Thayer reported that election results and Town Meeting minutes are posted on the Town website.
- Wells noted the sad passing of Bob Barasch, who is the father of long-time Plainfield Town Moderator Charlie Barasch. There is a cemetery service on 3/11/20 at the Green Mountain Cemetery in Montpelier. Wells will post the time on Front Porch Forum.

APPROVAL OF TOWN MEETING MINUTES: THE RECORD OR MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL TOWN MEETING MUST BE APPROVED AND ATTESTED TO BY ANY TWO OF THE FOLLOWING: MODERATOR, SELECT BOARD OR JUSTICES OF THE PEACE. THE CLERK MUST REQUEST THIS APPROVAL WITHIN SEVEN DAYS AFTER EACH TOWN MEETING AND HIS OR HER REQUEST MUST BE GIVEN PROMPT CONSIDERATION. 24 V.S.A.§1152.

- **Farnham made a motion to put the approval of Town Meeting minutes on the 3/23/20 Select Board meeting agenda. The motion was approved.**

ROAD COMMISSIONER'S REPORT

- Noting that it is mud season, Road Commissioner Bram Towbin stated that those expecting truck deliveries should contact Road Foreman Mike Nolan at the Town Garage at 454-7166. There have

been a number of minor issues with trucks driving inappropriately; these issues are now under control.

- Towbin noted that the Road Crew is now considering equipment from Volvo for the new loader, the cost of which is competitive with similar equipment from John Deere and Komatsu; Catapillar's cost has not come down at all. Towbin agreed that location and responsiveness of each company is important. Towbin will forward bid materials and comparative numbers, and the Road Crew will likely come before the Select Board to relate any individual preferences.
- Allan Farnham asked what percentage of cars have slowed down since the Town spent a lot of money on speed radar signs. Towbin responded that people who live in the Village and on its outskirts have expressed their pleasure with the results, but he has no hard data. Farnham expressed his frustration with taxes going up every year. Towbin noted that although Town taxes have gone up, much of that is due to the school budget and rising medical insurance costs, adding that there was much deliberation regarding the problem of speeding, with three major solutions proposed: enforcement, speed bumps, and signs. Enforcement and the use of some speed bumps was tried, however, people seemed favorably inclined to the speed signs. Harvey Hill resident Kate Spencer stated that the lighted-up speed signs have definitely checked her speed. Farnham asked why a lot of work that used to be done by the Road Crew is now being hired out and noted that there are trees hanging over the roads that are posing a danger. Thayer recommended that Farnham make a list of the issues that he is concerned about to be addressed at an upcoming Select Board meeting, to which Farnham agreed.

SERVICES AVAILABLE FROM CENTRAL VERMONT REGIONAL PLANNING COMMISSION, INCLUDING RE: ROUTE 2/MAIN STREET INTERSECTION REMEDIATION PROJECT - BONNIE WANINGER

- Bonnie Waninger was present from the Central Vermont Regional Planning Commission (CVRPC) to apprise the Town on services available through CVRPC relating to the Route 2/Main Street Intersection project. Waninger outlined the planning and public outreach services available to member towns made possible by leveraging other monies from dues paid to CVRPC by those towns. Waninger noted both short- and long-term needs that CVRPC can offer and provided some examples for each. Specifically for the Route 2/Main Street intersection, she noted that an area where CVRPC can assist in the short term is how VTRANS moves projects through its process. Given the issues associated with the project, the question would be where in the process those issues should be addressed. CVRPC can help with such longer-term issues as geotechnical drilling or finding a new location for a second bridge by helping find experts to figure out how to write a request for proposals and identify available grants. Waninger enumerated the overall services that regional planning commissions provide to communities. Tammy Farnham noted that the Select Board has discussed holding a forum for residents to weigh in on the design of the intersection itself without focusing on the implementation obstacles of that design. In response to a question from Volz regarding what needs to be done to take the next step, Waninger stated it would be talking with someone from CVRPC that would help organize and figure out the scope of the meeting; identifying someone from CVRPC to serve as a facilitator would be a separate category of support. Waninger estimated that about a month's lead time prior to the date of the forum would be needed for planning. Farnham agreed to follow up with Waninger. Bram Towbin made a statement that included: the need for the Town to provide VTRANS with conditional support to gain a better understanding of the facts before the Town gives final project approval or disapproval; the need for VTRANS to provide a traffic management plan before town-wide discussions take place; the fact that the bulk of excavation costs for replacing the water/sewer system will be borne by the State; and that doing nothing will forfeit the millions of dollars slated for the project to remediate a very dangerous situation. Farnham stated that the issue has continually come back to the fact that the

Town needs first to commit to the design before moving forward with discussing the obstacles to the design. It was determined that an evening meeting would be preferable to provide for the most attendance and that Farnham and Waninger will come up with a date for the forum and Farnham will report that date back to the Select Board. Discussion continued with questions and various viewpoints raised regarding the Town's response regarding the design to VAOT; how to gauge the community's opinion on a design at the forum; the need to find out from VAOT what the timeframe for getting feedback on the design is; and the need to present the complex design to the community clearly.

HITCHING POST PROGRAM AND CONSIDERATION OF LETTER OF SUPPORT FOR VTRANS \$500 GRANT

- Farnham asked if consideration has been given to a point raised at Town Meeting that public transportation ridership is down, and how the Hitching Post idea might further reduce those numbers. Nancy Ellen, who along with Phoenix Mitchell brought the Hitching Post proposal to the Select Board at the last meeting, responded that a lot of people who are not served by the bus would be served by the Hitching Post, that there are plenty of people who might not feel comfortable with the Hitching Post idea and just take the bus, and that the Hitching Post would provide more flexibility than the bus schedule cannot address. Volz noted that the Hitching Post would involve people who are currently driving on the road now, and they are trying to coordinate with one another so they can take fewer cars. Thayer noted that maybe the Select Board can do a better job of encouraging people to take the bus. Laura Ziegler agreed that the hours that buses run are very limited. Farnham asked if the Town promotes hitchhiking, which can pose a risk, does it create a liability issue for the Town. Ellen responded that the Town is not officially promoting the Hitching Post, but just stating that the Town is okay with it. Thayer agreed that the Town would not be liable. Farnham raised a third issue, stating that the location in the Village that is slated for the Hitching Post site is near to a school bus stop, noting that it should be separate from it, possibly on Route 2. Ellen responded that the concept is for it to be in the heart of the community to be able to share rides with neighbors. Thayer proposed removing the location portion of the Hitching Post from the Select Board's letter of support before submitting it to allow time for further discussion on the location as well as to research the experience other towns have had with currently operating Hitching Posts. **Volz made a motion to strike the following sentence from the letter: "The site being proposed for the Hitching Post installation is on the corner of Mill and Main Streets at the bump-out by the Grace Methodist Church," and otherwise approve the letter. The motion was approved.** Thayer will add the Hitching Post to the agenda of the 3/23/20 Select Board meeting.

NEXT STEPS RE: PEDESTRIAN BRIDGE PROJECT

- **BIDS RECEIVED VS. FUNDS AUTHORIZED FOR CONSTRUCTION**
- **TOWN SHARE FOR FUNDS AUTHORIZED**
- **ALTERNATIVES RE: PROCEEDING**
- **INSPECTION SERVICES ENGINEER SELECTION RECOMMENDATION**
- **WHETHER TO PROCEED WITH INSPECTION SERVICES ENGINEER CONTRACT PRIOR TO DECISION RE: CONSTRUCTION**
- **BUDGET FOR INSPECTION SERVICES ENGINEER FROM VARIOUS GRANTS**
- **FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS FOR TOWN IF BIDS FOR INSPECTION SERVICES ENGINEER EXCEED BUDGETED AMOUNT**
- **IMPLICATIONS FOR TIMING OF PROJECT COMPLETION (HAD BEEN ANTICIPATED FOR SUMMER 2020)**

- Thayer reported that the bids on the Pedestrian Bridge project came in well over the amount available for construction. There is approximately \$350,000 for construction and one bid came in at

more than \$700,000 and the other more than \$900,000. VTRANS will not approve either bid. The motion to formally reject the two bids will be made on 3/12/20. There are also issues with the budget for engineering costs and the already-expended budget for the project manager with the need for a new person in that position. The Select Board will be meeting with VTRANS project manager Ross Gouin on 3/12/20 at the VAOT office in Barre. In addition, the bids for inspection services for the project also came in over budget, but by a small amount. Project construction, which was scheduled for this summer, will not go forward as planned. Karl Bissex, who is joining the committee to review bids, asked if the over-budget numbers include the foundation work on either side of the river or just the structure itself. Thayer responded that the design is completely different than what it was when there was talk about foundation work. Bissex will be Skyped in to the meeting on 3/12/20.

AGENDA ITEMS FOR 3/23 MEETING

- RECREATION COMMITTEE RECREATION FIELD PROPOSAL

- APPOINTMENTS

- HAZARD MITIGATION PLAN UPDATE AND LOCAL EMERGENCY OPERATIONS PLAN DUE MAY 1

- Thayer added discussion on the Hitching Post, the Town Report framework, approval of Town meeting minutes, and approval of Select Board meeting minutes.

ADJOURN

- **Volz made a motion to adjourn at 9:07pm. The motion was approved.**

Respectfully submitted by Cindy Wyckoff