

**Plainfield Special Selectboard Meeting  
Vermont Agency of Transportation  
Barre City Place, 4th floor, Room 425  
219 North Main St. in Barre  
Friday, March 13, 2020, 8am**

The meeting commenced at about 8:10 am. Present were Ross Gouin of Agency of Transportation Municipal Assistance Program, Selectboard members Sasha Thayer (Chair) and Jim Volz. Selectboard member Tammy Farnham appeared by electronic media and Town Clerk Linda Wells was present via speaker phone. David Strong joined the meeting at about 8:20 am.

**Agenda:**

Pedestrian Bridge Project next steps with Ross Gouin, Agency of Transportation, Municipal Assistance Office - various topics including:

- Budget for Pedestrian Bridge and current status for construction, inspection services, engineering, project management, inc. town match, potential town responsibility
  - Construction bid rejection
  - Alternatives re proceeding
  - Potential options on re-advertisement
  - Grant options / other funding
  - Municipal Project Management Role and Procurement
  - When to execute construction inspection contract
  - implications for timing of project completion (had been anticipated for Summer 2020 construction)
- Other topics as introduced.

Public comment

The motion to revise the agenda to move bid rejection to be the first agenda item was approved unanimously.

**Construction bid rejection**

Selectboard member Jim Volz made a motion to accept the recommendation to reject the bids received, the motion was approved. Unanimously. Bidders will need to be advised of this decision.

**Alternatives to proceed/ Whether to readvertise or not**

Ross Gouin outlined for the Select Board the options available to the Town.

- The first option for the town is to decide whether to cancel the project if there is not enough funding. If the town cancels the project, the town must pay back funds received by the town to VTrans. This would be 100% of the engineering costs and project management which would need to be paid back by the Town to VTrans. The total federal and state portion of work done is currently received is \$118,599.32 at this time.

VTrans administration and time costs are not required to be part of the payback.

- The second option is to move forward somehow. Options are applying for additional grant funds or the Town can delay the project to weigh other options such as a bond vote to go forward with the project.

- Re-advertising the project is another option. If the Town were to re-advertise there will potentially be some revisions to the plans and specifications to help with the bids received. An option would be to adjust the bid documents to make less risk on the contractors such as closing the bridge for a 7-10 day window in which the contractor can come in and get the project completed within the time frame. Another is to include an incentive should the construction contractor finish the project early and be penalized should the project take longer to complete.

- Re the bids received. Ross Gouin stated that the bids received were very high. For example, traffic control included a temporary concrete jersey barrier and one temporary traffic signal on Route 2. Dufresne estimated a \$35,000 cost, but the bids came in at \$75,000 and \$50,000.

Ross also noted that with high traffic volume and adjacent businesses, the bids tend to be inflated. Another factor is that the bridge surface is an unknown until the project progresses. Bridge inspections done by the State of Vermont only do a visual review the underside of the bridges. They do not know the condition of the membrane beneath the paving. As designed, the project may involve the removal and replacement of the bridge membrane. That unknown would likely affect bid amounts.

- The Town could talk with the contractors that did not submit bids and inquire what issues kept them from bidding on this project and what other options there might be from their perspective.

### **Financial implications for the Town**

The Town can only be reimbursed \$100,000 on this project for the design component. The revised budget for design engineering has now reached \$106,400. The Town is responsible for every dollar over the amount of \$100,000 in addition to its 10% match to the \$100,000 design engineering budget. Ross noted that if this project had gone well, the town would not be in this situation.

There was discussion about hiring another consultant to review the plans prepared by the Dufresne engineering firm. Ross stated that not many contractors would be willing to take this project on and review plans from another engineering firm.

Ross indicated that if the town chooses to do the project, a new RFP for design and permitting would need to be done again. Ross stated that the town could possibly have Dufresne review the design again and possibly get the work included in the last invoice we received from Dufresne for engineering costs.

There was discussion that during the engineering process for the pedestrian bridge, the lead engineer was out on leave and the board was not regularly updated about the concerns with the bridge project such as bridge aesthetics, the issues regarding a crosswalk on Route 2, and the inability to plow the walkway due to the narrow width of the earlier plan for a freestanding pedestrian bridge. Ross noted that there were also concerns about the bridge rail location. Ross said that the ROW (right of way) aspects should relating to the earlier design have been discovered earlier as well.

Ross stated that the board needs to decide what is best for the town at this point, weigh the impacts, and determine the next step forward relating to the design and have Dufresne make

any changes the town feels are needed. Once this is done, the Town would put the project out to bid again.

### **Grant funding options**

Ross laid out possible options for funding the Pedestrian Bridge going forward.

- The Town could reapply for more funding through the VTrans Bike Pedestrian Program. The opportunity to apply for more funds will be advertised in late April with applications due in June and award in late August. Plainfield has already had two amendments in 2017 and 2019 to the original 2014 grant, which makes it somewhat less likely that an additional grant would be available through the Vtrans Bike Pedestrian Program. However the “shovel ready” condition of the project might make additional funding through this program available.

- The Town could apply for funding through Transportation Alternatives Program. These grants are available later in the year. The grants are available for kiosks and bike pedestrian paths. The program cap grants at \$375,000.

- Another option for the Town would be for the Town to seek bond approval for the Town for the additional costs of over \$350, 000 due to increased construction costs and engineering costs over \$100,000. This would require the Town to borrow the funds and pay them back over time. The select board members expressed that this is not an option, that weighing other needs, the Town would not have the funds to pay that kind of loan back.

Ross noted that the Town is close to “shovel-ready” within the federal requirements which makes it more likely that additional grant funding could be obtained. However, the grant funding match for such a grants will be 20% and this match cannot come from other Federal funds.

Regarding costs, Ross noted that we are looking at costs for the Municipal Project Manager and for Construction Inspection Services, in addition to the increased construction costs of \$600,000. construction costs.

### **Action needed:**

- Hire a Municipal Project Manager (this is what Pat Travers had done until he left for a new firm on February 14). The town can use the At-the-Ready process available through the Agency of Transportation.

- Re further engineering in order to put the project out to rebid. Ross stated that he expects that Dufresne will not inflate the engineering costs if the Town continues with them going forward.

- Re the construction time frame. The construction period available for this project would be July to December 2020. Some contractors may want to do the work into the next year (2021) with a lower cost to the town. Ross recommends that the Town reframe the bids going out to contractors to do have them do the work done in 7-10 days. The Town may get more construction bids at a reduced costs. Ross suggests the approach would be to work with Dufresne to review and rephrase the bid package to lower the budget. Ross will assist with this process.

### **Execution of the Construction Inspection Services contract.**

VHB was the best choice but all bids were very high. Since it's not clear when actual construction will go forward, he recommends that the Town not proceed with executing a contract for Construction Inspection Services at this time, but the Town can advise VHB of where the Town is with the Pedestrian Bridge Project at this time. All other bids will be rejected

and the Town should inform bidders of this.

**Next steps**

The board will discuss the options before making a final decision. A special select board meeting will be scheduled to address this as the agenda for regular board meetings is already pretty full.

An opportunity for public comment was offered and Dave Strong shared his thoughts about the project going forward.

**Adjournment**

Tammy Farnham moved to adjourn the meeting at 9:35am, Sasha seconded the motion and the motion was approved unanimously.

Submitted by Linda B. Wells  
Town Clerk