

Town of Plainfield, Vermont
Special Select Board Meeting
October 13, 2020
Remote-Only Meeting Via Zoom

Electronic Participants: Tammy Farnham (Select Board Member), Jim Volz (Select Board Member). Sasha Thayer (Select Board Chair), Linda Wells (Town Clerk/Treasurer), Mike Nolan (Road Foreman), Tristian MacGregor-Stewart (Water/Waste Water Department), Greg Light (Fire Chief), Erin Parizo (VTRANS), Leon Cookson (Community Member and Inn Owner), Bob & Becky Atchison (Community Members), Peter Youngbaer (Community Member and Plainfield COOP Manager), Genese Grill (Community Member), Alice Merrill (Community Member and Town Grant Writer)

Meeting started 7:00pm

Approval of/changes to agenda

No changes.

Public Comment:

Leon expressed concern for the future of the Inn after the construction, as it does not make accessibility for larger vehicles feasible. Tammy reminded community members that the plans are only 30% complete. Tammy said that she would encourage folks to become involved in the remaining 70% of planning. Jim added that after choosing the Major or the Minor project that these kinds of details would need to be sorted out. Tammy requested that community members stay open-minded, as the intent of the project is to improve not hinder, and the state will be looking for lots of input from community members to help troubleshoot some of these concerns before starting the desired project (Major or Minor). Tammy said that the town is committed to helping community members be heard.

Route 2 Intersection Remediation Project:

Tammy indicated that the town is looking to make a decision on Major vs. Minor. A survey was sent out to all community members (1100 surveys), approximately 220 responses were received. The survey results were assessed on October 7th by the select board members and today's meeting is to discuss the take-away, receive final feedback and endorse one project or another.

Fire & Rescue Ideas/Thoughts pertaining to the Project:

Greg Light said that he would be in favor of the Major project, but he indicated that emergency vehicles must be able to cross the bridge as a result of all of the unknowns. He said that the town of Plainfield has a responsibility to maintain the safety of the town. If the bridge is not able to be accessible to the fire & rescue crew then Greg said that the project could not take place. Greg indicated that we could not rely on other towns to follow-up on all of the Plainfield calls. Tammy indicated that the road will be dug down 7 to 10 feet. Greg indicated he doesn't know how that will work not to have and the select board can make a decision with good conscience.

Erin Parizo indicated that an agreement would be put in place after making a decision whether it be Major, Minor or no project. The content of the agreement includes commitment for the town

to maintain, and a financial commitment to support the project moving forward. If she decides to discontinue the project after proceeding there would be financial implications, which would likely be a certain percentage. The agreement is still in the works. Erin expressed that these costs would not be a reimbursement for the costs that have already accrued, it would just be for the costs to proceed.

Alice Merrill included that she hopes that the select board would discuss with VTRANS with the emergency response issue we have with this project. Erin included that there would be opportunity to work through these safety concerns, but she was uncertain whether it would happen before or after the signing of the agreement. Jim requested to sequence the planning to address this concern first after choosing a project (Major vs. Minor)

Peter Youngbaer included that he wanted to second the closure of the bridge, as the economic impact of closing the bridge is huge, especially for the Plainfield COOP.

Water & Wastewater Ideas/Thoughts pertaining to the Project:

Tristian MacGregor-Stewart (expressed his concern for the financial impacts and if water/sewer will be maintained throughout the project. Erin added that the project intends for functionality or disconnect for only short amounts of time. The financial impact will be forthcoming, as the testing results are still pending.

Town Road Crew Ideas/Thoughts pertaining to the Project:

Mike expressed concern for hauling material from Bickford's (on RT 2), but an alternative route could be used if needed. Erin estimated 3 months of seeking an alternate route. Mike confirmed much of his hauling takes place in the spring and fall.

Sasha brought up the concern for lessening the speed limit in the village as a result of the project. Erin stated that a study could be done, but unless cars currently travel at a lesser speed the speed limit will not likely be reduced.

Alice added that the project could be lessened to 6-weeks if night work is completed, which was verified by Erin. The minor project would not shut down the bridge at all.

Leon Cookson expressed concern for his foundation and the porch structure of his building. Erin stated that everything will be fixed "in-kind" as the building will be supported for the duration of the project and the building will be left in the same or better condition.

Sasha emphasized that these projects have been extremely difficult to sort through, and it makes it especially difficult as the bridge is the only access into the town of Plainfield.

Jim indicates that the project is not a result of accidents, it is more so to improve the attractiveness of the town. Jim indicated that at this point we should not do nothing, we should choose either the major or minor project.

Tammy expressed that she has lived in Plainfield her entire life and each time she has discussed this she has a new take-away. She said that she hears concern for safety, and that it is only a

matter of time before there is a more serious accident in that intersection. She hears that there will be an economic impact, including for her family's business. There is lots of opportunity to support our communities during this time. Tammy reported that of the 220 surveys received, most voted in favor of the Major project, with understanding the implications of the project.

Sasha expressed that she feels that we are not listening to the implications of our towns people (the COOP, Fire & Rescue, etc.) Sasha stated that she is uncomfortable moving forward with the major project without addressing the concerns of Fire & Rescue and essential elements of our community. Sasha thinks that they are being asked to make a decision too soon. She re-emphasized looking at the speed-limit to reduce the speed in town. Tammy expressed that there are definitely elements that need to be evaluated, but it seems like the intent to move forward is suddenly being halted. Sasha said that we need to listen to the Fire & Rescue and COOP, as their position has not changed.

Peter Youngbaer filled out the survey as a member of the community, not as the manager of the COOP – and chose the “Major” project. Peter suggested to look at the longer-range problem of only having one access into Plainfield.

Genese Grill indicated that in other circumstances the state has paid for a solution for fire & rescue. Genese is interested in the weight of the survey in making the final decision. Sasha added that a lot of people were in favor of the major project, but only if fire & rescue were addressed.

Becky Atchinson indicated that if we have to go with the Major plan that she is concerned with the businesses in town (Positive Pie & COOP). Peter Youngbaer indicated that he receives approximately 45 deliveries each week and their routes vary. He stated that when the project approaches they will need to reach out to each vendor to establish a course of action. A shuttle drop is not feasible for beer/wine deliveries. Tammy suggested to reach out to our resources (i.e.: Danville & East Montpelier) who have gone through similar major projects. Sasha stated that we haven't taken the time to do this research to address their concerns. Tammy expressed that she did not want to take the time to do this without endorsing a project – the major project takes commitment. Jim mentioned that VTRANS is waiting for us to make a decision. Erin iterated that they are not looking to impose, and understands the concerns. Tammy reminded that if the Major project is chosen that the pedestrian bridge could be merged with the project to lessen some of the costs.

Bob Atchinson believes that the structure of the bridge is strong and doing well. VTRANS goes out of their way to make it feasible to seek alternative routes, i.e. John Fowler Rd/Maple Hill. VTRANS understands safety and will consider how to manage some of these concerns.

Tammy iterated that we have presented the options to the town, requested their involvement, and 220 people participated in the survey, and we need to respond to the majority opinion. Tammy suggested to choose a project and move forward to work out the logistics. Sasha said that she would propose taking some more time to see what potential fixes there are for some of their concerns. Sasha proposed looking into each of these concerns within the next 4 months. Alice suggested to make a decision tonight. Tammy restated that several months ago we chose to proceed with doing the foundation-work of this project, we have received input from the town,

and she believes it is now time to move forward with a project (Major or Minor) and start looking at the other 70% of the project.

Tammy moved to endorse the Major improvement project.

Jim inquired about the status of the pedestrian bridge project and if the town intends to proceed. The state has agreed to tailor the project to the route 2 intersection project they proceed with and to get bids, and get it to the voters to make the final decision.

Jim and Tammy voted in favor of the Major improvement project, and Sasha voted no.

Tammy noted that there are 20 people that agreed to be on various committees for this project, and she appreciated their willingness to be involved.

Erin agreed that this is a good faith effort, whether its EMS, the intersection or a community members property. She emphasized her willingness to support the community for the entire duration of the project.

Adjournment:

Tammy moved to adjourn at 9:10 pm, with unanimous approval of all select board members.