

Town of Plainfield, Vermont
Select Board Meeting Minutes – Approved
November 23, 2020
Remote-Only Meeting Via Zoom

Electronic Participants: Tammy Farnham (select board member), Jim Volz (select board member), Sasha Thayer (select board member - chair), Linda Wells (town clerk/treasurer), Mike Nolan (road foreman), Jesse Cooper (community member and Planning Commission member), Alice Merrill (community member and Town grant writer), Keith Swann (community member and Friends of the Town Hall-Opera House president), Greg Light (fire chief), Gary Graves (fire department member)

The meeting began at 7:02 pm.

Approval of/changes to agenda:

No changes.

Chris Martin emailed pertaining to a mutual aid proposal, Sasha invited him to join the meeting to discuss further (around 7:25pm)

Announcements:

No announcements.

Public Comment:

No public comment.

Town Clerk/Town Treasurer Report:

Linda stated the November 3rd General Election went really well. She mentioned that mail in ballots were much more time consuming than traditional voting.

Town Meeting:

Town meeting will look a lot differently this coming year and it does not seem feasible to have floor voting, but instead will require ballots. Linda said that she will look into it a little further and consider the various aspects. Formal reports have been received by several entities pertaining to what they desire for a budget and there are more forthcoming. There will be three budget meetings of which entities will propose their budget to the select board so that decisions can be made before January 1. There are typically approximately 100 people that attend for town meeting – Jim indicated that Zoom might be a feasible option. An Australian ballot might be the best option for voting in place of floor voting.

Health insurance for employees will also need to be reviewed and discussed. Sasha proposed to discuss further at the budget meeting on December 3rd.

School Taxes:

57 delinquent notices were mailed out today (average). Linda will be sending out notices every month until February. Any delinquency after that date will be reported to the collector of delinquent taxes.

COVID-19 Protocol:

Linda signified that the State of Vermont is mandating COVID-19 protocols; which includes temperature checks, screening and appropriately following social distancing guidance. Linda detailed that supervisors will be responsible for obtaining records for all employees and delivering to the town clerk's office for filing.

Approval of warrants:

Tammy requested for warrants to be emailed out again.

Warrants will be approved in the next meeting – 4 payroll & 2 accounts payable.

Road Crew Report:

Mike stated that the road crew has plowed once, sanded a few times and have been cleaning out ditches. Tammy enquired about how COVID-19 has impacted the road crew and how to make adjustments to follow the guidance. Mike indicated that much of their time is spent separately, but they will be sure to wear masks. Sasha mentioned that Linda can get some surgical masks to the road crew to wear.

COVID-19 Update:

Sasha encouraged community members to continue to practice social distancing and be contentious of the guidance. There are a large number of testing opportunities, including the Barre Auditorium. The state is encouraging people to not get tested unless they feel they have been exposed or are developing symptoms.

Greg confirmed that the fire department is taking all the appropriate precautions. Greg said that people are coping well with calls involving COVID-19 and wearing full PPE. There is additional sanitization necessary for COVID-19 calls and Greg reported that there have been no reported COVID-19 cases for the Plainfield Fire Department. He also encouraged people to be extremely careful about the people that they are associating with and use common sense.

Firework Permitting:

- The fire department is responsible for issuing firework permits
- Fire work permits are supposed to be requested 15 days in advance

Route 2-Main Street Intersection Remediation Project Update:

Tammy met with the state last Wednesday and they are estimating utilities to be approximately \$1,000,000 – Plainfield's portion will be approximately \$200,000-250,000. Tammy said that she will reach out to the waste water department to help strategize with them to establish how to proceed. In reference to the emergency responders, the fire department will need to go over a list of questions generated by the state to target some concerns. Tammy will look at getting together with Greg & Gary to discuss further.

Pedestrian Bridge Project Update:

Plainfield received the grant funding. The pedestrian bridge project will be further developed in phases to circumvent some of the costs associated with 100% completion to inherently be ripped up during the Route-2 Main Street Project. Tammy is hopeful that the town will be able to get the project back out to bid soon. Alice thanked Tammy for all the time she has committed to the project and the negotiations, Jesse echoed.

Brook Road bridge replacement project update:

Sasha indicated that information is needed by January 6th on whether the town wants to commit to the project (also needed from VHB). The deadline for the FEMA grant will be the end of January 30th or 31st. Sasha indicated that Stephanie Smith (EM/FEMA) & Grace Vinson (CVRPC) expressed willingness to come to the select board meeting on December 3rd to answer questions and give a likely time frame and give additional information. VHB hopes to have plans at 75% completion by December 4th and 95% complete by December 24th. Alice stated that she believes that timeline is feasible.

Planning for budget preparation:

Budget meetings will occur on the following dates:

December 3rd 8-11am

December 8th 4-7pm

December 16th 4-7pm

The webmaster budget (\$4,500), annual report and job description will be needed. Plainfield purchasing still needs to be discussed to evaluate if the contracts should be put out to bid. Tammy expressed making it transparent for townspeople to understand upcoming contracts as it allows for comparison/bidding. Tammy mentioned the importance of having a true contract for vendors as it outlines the expectation from both parties, and modify as necessary. Sasha mentioned having 1 person/vendor for plowing (sidewalks), mowing and maintenance items. Concerns pertaining to flagging were brought forth by Mike, as no one on the road crew is properly certified (certification happens every 3 years). Mike indicated that even if they were certified they could not do it legally (with 2 flaggers), as there are only 3 members of the crew. It might be worth looking into hiring flaggers for more extensive projects requiring more hands. Tammy mentioned the possibility of partnering with Marshfield for some of these things. Sasha stated that she would reach out to Chris Martin to see if he could attend an upcoming meeting.

Updated Town Plan:

The Town Plan was received by the Select Board on November 18th. Sasha outlined the statute pertaining to the requirements of a hearing regarding the Town Plan. Sasha indicated that the hearing should be scheduled for the middle of March. Jim suggested to schedule a time for the hearing at a later time. Picking a date for the Town Plan hearing will be added to the January 25th Select Board meeting.

Meeting Minute Approval:

SB meeting: 11/9/2020 (with inherently being changed to thus)

Executive Session: 11/12/2020 - Jim raised concern for not stating what the executive session was pertaining to.

Executive Session: 11/17/2020

Jim moved to approve the 11/9/2020 and 11/17/2020 meeting minutes with the change Sasha suggested, with a unanimous approval of the Select Board.

COVID-19 update & issues re re-opening the TH/OH for various uses:

No new information on the lighting upgrade.

Keith sent out information as a reference to the expenses incurred as well as “in kind” things such as time, starting on July 1st. Income is down significantly as a result of not being able to host performances due to COVID-19. Tammy emphasized the importance of outlining services that the Friends of the Opera house provide for the Town of Plainfield, i.e.: website, grant writing services, consulting/project oversight, etc. She indicated that changing the contract to 6 months instead of 12 months might make more sense given the circumstances of COVID-19. Jim indicated that what they have done in the past is sufficient, and the COVID should not change contracting. Sasha accentuated entities such as the Friends of the Opera House are not eligible for COVID-19 funding. Sasha and Jim agreed that COVID-19 was an unpredicted and the town should continue to support the Friends of the Opera House as the proposal is not significant.

Jim reminded that the Opera House makes the town of Plainfield more vibrant and that a 6-month contract undermines the Friends of the Opera House viability moving forward. Keith indicated that it might make more sense to doing a 6-month contract as the Opera House may not be able to reopen for another 6 months. This will be further discussed at a budget meeting.

Upcoming Meetings:

November 12th:
Executive Session

November 17th (4:30-6pm):
Town Contracts

Items for November 23, 2020 Select Board Meeting:

- Route 2-Main Street Intersection Remediation project
- Pedestrian Bridge Project
- Brook Road Bridge Project (with Stephanie & Grace)
- Budget meeting schedule
- Upcoming contracts
- Updated Town Plan
- Grant for lighting upgrade for Town Hall/Opera House

December 3rd:

**Budget Meeting
Health Insurance for Town Employees
Brook Road Bridge Project
Warrants

December 14th:

Social Concerns Committee
Meeting Minute Approval (11-12-2020)
Chris Martin (?) Marshfield Mutual Aid

December 28th:

No Select Board meeting due to Christmas

January 25th:

Establish date for Town Plan hearing

Adjourn:

Jim moved to adjourn at 8:59pm, with a unanimous approval of the Select Board.