

Plainfield Special Select Board Meeting & Budget Meeting
January 7, 2021
Approved Minutes

Present were: Select Board Members Tammy Farnham, Sasha Thayer (Chair) and Jim Volz, and Town Clerk-Treasurer Linda Wells.

The meeting commenced at 9:01 AM

Approval of/changes to agenda - None.

Public Comment - None.

Presentation of budget per decisions made by Select Board Linda Wells stated that she'd made needed additions to the budget figures previously approved, including the current ambulance service amount of \$53,624, the employees' numbers as well as the health insurance, fringe, and FICA. Linda had not been able to check relating to the line painting line item whether the painting was supposed to last more than a year in which case, as Tammy noted, that \$5000 line item could be removed. Linda stated that the Town has a 3-year contract for ambulance service and this is last year (2021-2022) in that contract, so the Town will need to contact the ambulance service ahead of time, perhaps this Fall, to prepare for the 2022-2023 budget. Linda confirmed that the contract with the ambulance service is on a fiscal year, not a calendar year, basis.

Relating to how the 2021-2022 budget figures came out, Linda stated that the Highway Department budget is a 1.7% increase; the select board budget is a 1.9% increase and the Social Concerns budget has increased which is of concern to Linda in that we're trying to cut the budget this year. Linda noted that the employees are getting a 1.1% pay increase and we're cutting elsewhere in the budget where we can, so she doesn't think it would be right to add new social concerns and notes that some organizations have increased their request for the 2021-2022 year and the budget increase for social concerns is almost \$3000. There was discussion of the \$600 added to the Social Concerns line item for Washington County Mental Health which Linda explained was level funding for Washington County Mental Health. Linda noted that new organizations like the Red Cross for \$100 and the Winooski Conservation District, \$200; Vermont Center for Independent Living added \$50, Diversion added \$50; Good Samaritan Haven for \$500 is a new one; People's Health and Wellness is increased \$250; Our House went up \$100. Sasha had reached out to Gail Falk of the Social Concerns Committee to ask them to review their recommendations again with an eye to level funding. Gail was willing to do so, but hadn't yet gotten back to Sasha. Sasha stated that in 2019 the Social Concerns line was \$14,886 and Jim noted that we dropped from there and are now just about at the same amount for 2019. However, because an additional amount was added at Town Meeting, the Social Concerns budget last year was \$14,261. Linda noted that last year we added \$1000 for the Onion River Food Shelf, \$100 added to Our House, and added Circle for \$525, to the proposed increase for Social Concerns is \$1300 rather than nearly \$3000. The Select Board decided to reach out to the Social Concerns Committee to ask them to reallocate to level fund at the amount of \$14,261 and to get back to the board by Monday, January 11, 2021.

Discussion of proposed budget, including any modifications Linda reported that there's an \$11,000 increase for the Highway Department. Tammy mentioned that there could be a reduction the Highway Department budget if the \$5000 line item for line-painting can be removed. Linda will check into that further. Tammy suggested that an amount for 2% increases for employee pay be put into the budget to provide the opportunity to assess whether there pay increases would be warranted. After much discussion, the Board agreed to add a Personnel Contingency Fund line item in the amount of 2% of 2021-2022 salary amount for the Highway Department and the Select Board budgets and associated FICA, unemployment insurance, etc. Linda will bring that figure to the regular Select Board meeting on January 11.

Jim reminded the Board that he'd come up with as possible language for a Town Meeting Warning relating to the Pedestrian Bridge Project and Linda had as well. Neither Tammy nor Sasha had had the opportunity to look at that language before the January 11 Select Board Meeting. The needed amounts to complete such a warning article won't be available until after the bids for the Pedestrian Bridge Project are opened on January 22nd. The Board will be able to plug those numbers in after the bids are received. There was further discussion about the time frame required

There was also discussion about the possibility of delaying the date for Town Meeting, but since there has not yet been legislation passed to authorize that, no decision was made. However, we can arrive at a weather report relating to postponement of our 2021 Town Meeting. Linda also reminded the Board that the warning has to be decided by January 25 if Town Meeting will happen in March. Sasha reported that legislators responded to her queries that the earliest date that the legislation may be approved is January 16 and it may not be until January 19. Jim indicated that at this point we need to proceed as though Town Meeting will be in March until we decide otherwise. Sasha also indicated that she'd thought of asking the School Board chair Patrick Healy come briefly to our January 11 select board meeting to give our board a bit of background about why the school board is proposing postponing Town Meeting to April.

Approve 2021-2022 budget for Town Meeting Because of unsettled matters relating to the budget discussed above, the Select Board didn't take a vote on approving the 2021-2022 proposed budget.

Adjourn: Jim moved to adjourn the meeting and the motion passed unanimously. The meeting adjourned at 9:58 AM.

Minutes prepared by Sasha Thayer.