

Plainfield Select Board Meeting
January 11, 2021
Minutes - approved

Present in the Zoom meeting were: Select board members Tammy Farnham, Sasha Thayer (chair). and Jim Volz. Also present were Bobbi Brimblecomb (Marshfield Town Clerk). Patrick Healy, (CCSU/Twinfield School Board chair), Alice Merrill (resident and Town grant writer), David Strong (resident & Friends of the Town Hall-Opera House), and Betsy Zeigler (resident and Town representative to CV Solid Waste Management District).

Approval of/changes to agenda: None were made.

Announcements: Sasha presented an update on COVID-19 and asked that all continue to use recommended precautions including wearing a mask, social distancing, and not going out if feeling sick.

Proposal to delay 2021 Town Meeting to April or May:

Patrick Healy shared why a delay in the 2021 town meeting is being proposed and Bobbi Brimblecomb shared what Marshfield has been considering relating to Town Meeting. Both are supporting the idea of Town Meeting being held in April, rather than March. As part of that, Marshfield is considering mailing ballots to all on the checklist. Plainfield Town Clerk Linda Wells stated that she is in favor of moving Town Meeting to April. She also stated that she is not in favor of sending ballots to everyone as what she had experienced at the general election was ballots coming back, having to all ballots returned as underdeliverable, and having to send our absentee ballots to those who requested them but had not received a ballot,

Feedback that the Select Board received regarding moving the 2021 Annual Meeting to April or March was not negative.

Also discussed was that townsperson Gary Grave had emailed the Select Board asking that it add articles to the 2021 Town Meeting warning to use Australian ballot. He made the request that the 2021 Town Meeting warning include articles that would have budget articles decided by Australian ballot and have public questions decided by Australian ballot. His email stated his view that the in-person town meeting isn't representative of the town in that most can't attend town meeting and many are uncomfortable in attending because of the public shaming that if they do not agree with a certain group or factions opinions. The Select Board didn't make a decision on this request and deferred it to a later meeting.

At the conclusion of the discussion relating to Town Meeting, **Jim Volz moved that the Plainfield Town Meeting be moved from March to April contingent on the Marshfield Select Board and the Twinfield School Board to also do that and contingent upon the Legislature authorizing us to do that and to a date that is agreed to by the Marshfield Select Board and the Twinfield School Board. The motion passed unanimously.**

Before Patrick Healy and Bobbi Brimblecomb left the meeting, Sasha Thayer confirmed that the Select Board would be joining the Marshfield Select Board/CCSU meeting the following day (January 12) at 7:30 PM. School Board chair Patrick Healy suggested that there probably should be a meeting together once a year in any case. Sasha supported that idea.

Sasha proposed taking up issue of adding additional articles to the Town Meeting warning to a future meeting and would also want to put on the agenda the issue of mailing ballots out to everyone and suggested doing that

at the January 25 meeting. There was further discussion about Linda needing to know how to proceed (re mailing ballots to everyone on the checklist) and discussing this further at the meeting the next day. Linda reminded the Board that the town meeting warning needs to be completed by January 25, but perhaps a decision could be made at the meeting with Marshfield. Sasha expressed the opinion that the legislation allowing the postponement of Town Meeting will pass and since the Board had already made the decision to postpone the meeting contingent on the legislation passing, that the meeting will be postponed, by the time that the warning would need to be completed. Select Board members confirmed that at the joint meeting previously attended (December 29, 2020) it appeared that the Marshfield Select Board is in favor of postponing the annual meeting as requested by the Twinfield school board.

Town Clerk/Town Treasurer Report - Linda Wells

Tax due date: Linda stated that the February taxes due on February 10, can be dropped iof in the dropoff by bo 4 PM on the 10th to be considered on time. She stated that they can mail their taxes and they take into account the postmark dated. Linda also stated that if people want to use auto-pay to pay taxes they can contact Linda by phone or email by January 15, so she will have plenty of time to set up new people. Linda confirmed that for those individuals, the taxes are deducted on the actual tax due date.

Preparing for informational meeting: Sasha proposed moving the decisions regarding an informational meeting to the January 25 Select Board Meeting. The Select Board members agreed.

Approval of warrants Linda asked for approval for payroll warrants for December 4, 11, 18, 25, January 1, and 8. **Jim Volz moved to approve those warrants (December 4, 11, 18, 25, January 1, and 8).** Prior to a vote on these warrants, there was discission of questions Tammy had raised the payroll warrants and how pay is calculated. Tammy explained that she was asking for clarification is when someone is out on sick time or vacation or holiday, how that pay is done. She read the personnel policy on page 14, which says, “employees will be compensated at the rate of one and a half times the amount of their usual salary for all hours beyond forty hours in the same week. Paid sick leave may be used as a portion of the employees reported hours for the purpose of overtime compensation” Tammy’s understanding is that if someone take sick time, that those hours would be considered “hours worked,” but if someone has vacation time within the week, then they would have to have worked 48 hours, because vacation and holiday time are not considered “work.” Tammy gave the example of Christmas, that if they didn’t actually work on the holiday, they’d have to work 48 hours before they actually started getting overtime. Tammy statee that the personnel policy states “hours worked” and “work” is hours physically worked, not just hours in the week. Linda disagreed with that interpretation, but said she’d have to review the personnel policy. She also stated that is not how employees have been paid. Sasha also stated that she disagreed and that her view is that any work over the 40 hours should be paid as overtime.

There was discussion about whether paying time and a half applies when a person is off due to a holiday, and whether they have to work more than 40 hours in order to get overtime, not counting the holiday. Tammy urged that the personnel policy requires this because this isn’t considered “work hours”, Tammy also noted that, per the personnel policy, if an employee is called in on a holiday, they get paid double time. Linda stated that as far as she is concerned, it has always been that if person works more than forty hours including holiday and vacation, Tammy argued that overtime is to pay an employee for working over the forty hours and that isn’t how we’re paying people. She said that she’d never worked anyplace where whe was paid overtime when part of the work week was vacation, and that it’s unusual to include sick leave in the hours worked. Jim state that he didn’t agree with that interpretation and wanted to hear from Linda how we had been doing that. Tammy questioned if we’re giving someone a holiday why would we pay them overtime if we’re not overworking them.

Sasha said she thinks the Select Board needs to be mindful of what the effect would be on the employees if we changed how we are doing this. Jim suggested that we put this off and discuss it further. Sasha stated that she

would put that on the agenda for January 25.

Tammy also asked the policy states that the Select Board receive a copy of the payroll card for each employee so that she could match up the pay to the cards submitted. She also mentioned that she understands that the payroll cards state what the employees are doing. Linda stated that it would be time-consuming to have to scan all the payroll cards, but that after the office opens up again, select board members could stop in and look at the payroll cards. She confirmed that the payroll cards do reflect what the employees have been doing. Jim asked whether the payroll cards get saved and Linda confirmed that they do. Jim suggested that the Board members could come in on a periodic basis to look at the payroll cards. Sasha indicated that Tammy could make an appointment with Linda to review the payroll cards to avoid a time when someone is coming in to do a title search.

A vote was taken on Jim Volz's motion to approve the December 4, 11, 18, 25, January 1 and 8 payroll warrants. Jim and Sasha voted to approve the warrants. Tammy declined to vote on approving the motion because she hadn't reviewed the warrants. The motion passed..

Approval of minutes, including December 3, 10, 14, 16 and 22, 2020 - Jim moved the approval of these minutes. Alice Merrill noted that she was at that meeting on December 3rd and that she is not listed. This change to the minutes was agreeable to all Select Board members. **Jim then moved the approval of these minutes with the change just discussed and the motion was approved unanimously.**

Approval of the budget for town meeting - The approval of the budget for town meeting was deferred until January 25.

Pedestrian Bridge Project update - Tammy Farnham Tammy noted that at the meeting that was scheduled for January 10 there were Zoom issues so the meeting was rescheduled for Tuesday, January 12 at 11 AM. Tammy reminded the board that they are welcome to be present, but this is for contractors to ask questions and that the questions or any other participation is not recommended for select board members. Tammy verified numbers with Ross (Gouin, VTrans) and that the amount our there for the grant money for the Pedestrian Bridge Project total \$127,820.15. Of this amount, the Project Manager cost is \$32,052.59 and the costs for Engineering is \$95,757.56. So if we do not move forward with project, that is what we would have to pay back. The additional money paid to the engineer, of \$4500, that we agreed to do to get the project back out to bid is in another category and would not have to be paid back.. Sasha asked where that additional amount came from. Tammy explained that although we haven't had a project manager for months, the State had paid \$32,052.59 for Project Manager costs. Alice offered that she has worked closely with Ross and Vtrans over the years and we can trust Ross' figures. Tammy confirmed that Ross is the one that gave Tammy these numbers. The \$127,820.15 is the amount that the Town would have to pay back. It was clarified that the \$100,000 has already been paid for engineering, and that \$6000 in excess of that \$100,

Re the timeline, Tammy explained that once the bids are received on January 22, the way the process works is that the bids are then sent to Dufresne for review to assure that they aren't missing anything and then they go to Vtrans again to review the bids. There is typically an award within the 30 days after the bid opening, and that contractors could start backing out and contractors only hold their prices for 30 days. Tammy stated that if the decision regarding going forward were delayed until the Town Meeting in March, we would be in the same position. Tammy also stated that Ross has recommended going forward not be put to the voters for approval. Tammy says that it's hard to make decisions until we have the numbers which will come on on January 22.

Sasha said that in terms of looking at the big picture and what the town obligations would be it would be good

to have an idea of what the projections are based on anticipated actions being taken, and having a chart that would show the various potential costs and when these would come due.

Tammy says we know none of the above, that the Pedestrian Bridge cost isn't clear, nor when that would start. She said that we're at the beginning of that process, the RFP for the Pedestrian Bridge project allowed a contractor to go until 2022 to complete the work. Tammy says she doesn't have the answers to these questions. Sasha reminded Tammy that she has given the Select Board numbers in terms of a reduction in costs for water and sewer work for the Rte intersection. Tammy explained the Route 2 project is a 3-5 year out project. Sasha said that if Tammy could put something together to give us a general idea of when various costs may come due and what those amounts are.

Alice stated that for the Pedestrian Bridge project until the bids come in, we won't have the details of what the costs would be. Sasha stated that there were other figures relating to the Route 2 project and reductions that Tammy says that the \$250,000 for water and sewer, but that this is only estimated, but that the State is still working on the process to determine the figures. Tammy says that there are no actual numbers at this time, but they are just estimation.

Sasha state that the fact that it's currently estimation for various costs, it would be helpful to have in writing a general idea of what the costs to the Town would be and when these would need to be paid. Tammy said that at this time nothing has changed since the community meetings Alice suggested that is we go back and review the minutes where these amounts have been discussed.

Sasha explained that this is what she doesn't want to do since Tammy has the details of what could be somewhat accurate at this time about what the costs would be and what the tentative time frames are.

Approval of draft language for Town Meeting article re the Pedestrian Bridge Project - This was deferred to the January 25, 2021 select board meeting.

Contract for refinishing Town Hall/Opera House floor - Dave Strong

Dave Strong stated that the town had spent hundreds of thousands of dollars on fixing the Opera House, but we've never found enough money to fix the floors. About three years ago, he thought the cost would be about \$5000. Dave talked with Mr. Stone, the person who runs Dunrite Custodial services. He does the municipal building and Twinfield floors as well. Mr. Stone he came up with an estimate of \$3185. FDave stated that he doesn't think the floors have been refinished in 20 years. Dave recommends that the Select Board take Mr. Stone up on his proposal. Dave says this would qualify as a capital improvement. Sasha stated that Linda had confirmed that there is enough money in this fund to cover this. Dave said that the important thing is the cleaning that he would do, scrubbing the existing floor and buffing and then putting the finish on. Dave said he said he thinks this would bring it back to where it looks good all throughout the floor. Dave noted that this is an old floor and sanding isn't necessarily the best idea because if you sand the floor nails can pop up and over time you can lose the flooring if you sand it down too many times. He would be putting on two coats of water-based wood floor finished. Tammy asked about oil versus water base. Dave said he asked Mr. Stone about that and he said that it's not harder, but it's better for the wood.

Tmmy made the motion to go forward with the refinishing of the floor of the Town Hall=Opera House and that Dunrite do the work at a price of \$3185, The motion passed unanimously.

Sasha thanked David for bringing this to our attention initially and for bringing it back to our attention again.

Contract content for sidewalk plowing approval (vendor approved 12/3/20) - Sasha noted that the time was 9 PM and that we have approved the sidewalk plowing, but that there had been discussion about having contracts for this kind of work so that it's more concrete than the bid we receive. Tammy confirmed with contracts, that we could then put on our website what is wanted every year to inform interested parties.

Adjournment - Jim moved to adjourn and the motion passed unanimously at 9:04 PM.

Agenda items for January 25, 2020 Select Board Meeting

- Town Clerk - Update re FY20-21 expenditures
- Town Meeting
 - Final budget approval
 - Question of mailing ballots out to everyone on the check list
 - Consideration of adding articles to Town Meeting warning including
 - Gary Graves' request for articles changingTown Meeting decisions to be made by Australian ballot
 - Approval of language for Town Meeting article re the Pedestrian Bridge Project
 - Planning for informational meetings prior to Town Meeting day
- Route 2-Main Street Intersection Remediation project update
- Pedestrian Bridge Project update
 - Bids received January 22, 2021
 - Process and timing now that bids are received
 - approval of final language for Town Meeting article re Pedestrian Bridge project
- VHB report regarding Brook Road bridge project
- Approval of language for notice for Select Board hearing on Town Plan
- Contract for sidewalk plowing (vendor approved 12/3/20)