

**Town of Plainfield, Vermont**  
**Select Board Meeting**  
**March 22, 2021**  
**Minutes - Approved**

NOTE: During the meeting several mentions were made of the next Select Board meeting being on April 13. The correct date for this regular Select Board Meeting is April 12, 2021.

***Electronic Participants:*** Tammy Farnham (select board member), Sasha Thayer (select board chair), and Jim Volz (select board member), Charlie & Racheal Cogbill (community members), George Cushing (community member), Owen Bradley (community member), Jesse Taylor (community member), Julie Hackbarth (community member), Linda Wells (Town Clerk/Treasurer), Jesse Cooper (community member), Donnie Osman (community member), Greg Light (Fire Chief), Alice Merrill Melissa Rutter (Vtrans Utility Coordinator Supervisor) & Eric Blaisdell (Times Argus Reporter).

The meeting commenced at 7 PM.

***Announcements:***

The second informational hearing relating to town meeting will be held on March 30<sup>th</sup> at 6:30pm. If there are issues or questions regarding the warning Sasha encouraged community members to attend.

Sasha made a COVID-19 Update.

Sasha reminded that Town Meeting will be held on April 6<sup>th</sup> due to COVID-19. She encouraged community members to contact the Town Clerk's office if they would like an absentee ballot. The Town Hall Opera House will be open on April 6<sup>th</sup> for in-person voting.

***Public Comment:***

Tammy announced that she decided that she will not be running for select board. She does not believe she has the time or knowledge to support the town. She believes that by herself stepping down it will allow someone else to step up and become a leader. She has enjoyed her time as a select board member and hopes that with two large projects coming up at the town can come together now more than ever to make those projects a success. Jim & Sasha thanked Tammy for her time and service. Linda added that with Tammy's resignation that if anyone is interested in considering running to encourage voters to use the write in space on the current ballot. If there are not enough votes the select board will need to elect someone to run until next year. If Tammy receives the most votes, the select board will be called upon to elect someone. Rachel thanked Tammy for her time and dedication.

Donnie criticized the select board for adding article 6 & 7 to the ballot. He asked the select board members to resign for "the good of the town" as he does not believe they are capable. He thanked Tammy for resigning.

***Town Clerk/Town Treasurer Report - Linda Wells:***

Town meeting will be held on Tuesday April 6, 2021 – the polls will be open from 9am – 7pm. Linda mentioned that ballots can be requested by calling the office at 802-454-8461.

***Warrants:***

Payable: March 16 & 17<sup>th</sup>

Payroll: March 19<sup>th</sup>

Jim moved to approve the above warrants with a unanimous approval of the select board.

***Repair of Municipal Building Roof***

Tammy suggested to seek alternate bids as only one has been submitted. Linda stated that she could put it in the paper as well. Linda mentioned that the current municipal building fund for repairs and maintenance would cover the cost of repairing the roof. Alice inquired about what the cost for the roof replacement would be, the project was bid at \$33, 446.

***Approval of Firehouse Repair Contract - Fire Chief Greg Light***

Ken Randall was the only one that showed interest/bid the firehouse project. The firehouse bid for sidewall repairs was \$12,680 and the rest of the repairs and upgrade was \$55,130. Greg did have a couple of contractors come and look at the job and agreed that the bid figures seemed accurate. Several community members know Ken Randall and have indicated that he is a very honest and respectable contractor. Greg proposed taking approximately \$42,000 from the building reserve fund, and keeping \$5-7,000 in the fund and financing the remainder of the project for 4-years. The town contributes yearly to the building repair fund and Greg proposed taking that funding and putting it toward the loan. He emphasized the importance of leaving a sum in the reserve sum in case of an emergency or unforeseen circumstance. The remaining money (actual figured TBD) would need to be borrowed. Alice mentioned that there might be grant funding opportunities for infrastructure and depending on the timeframe it might be worth looking into some of those options. Greg said that in addition to the project bid that the town would need to allot an extra \$10,000 for a contingency fund for unforeseen problems outside of the scope. Greg confirmed that the cost of materials will not change the bid.

Jim moved to approve the Ken Randall Contracting, Inc. bid of \$67,810 for the firehouse repair and upgrade. Tammy amended the bid to include “with a 10% overrun”, Jim adopted the amendment, with a unanimous approval of the select board.

Greg Light added that he has been talking with Peter Youngbaer at the Plainfield CO-OP, as the project might interrupt normal operation.

***FEMA Grant:***

Jim moved to authorize Sasha to sign and submit FEMA Agreement #02140-32002MC-00, the Notice to Proceed, and the Financial Report Form #1 relating to grant funds for Brook Road Bridge replacement grant administration additional \$2,000 grant (with a town share of \$500), with a unanimous approval of the select board.

***Approval of Fleet Permits:***

Amerigas. Inc., Waterbury, VT  
Connecticut Valley Trucking, Orford, NH  
Curtis Lumber Co., Inc., Williston, VT  
Darrell Matthews/Matthews Excavating, Waterford, VT  
Gillespie Fuels & Propane, Inc., Northfield, VT  
K Bellevance Landworks & Hauling, Barre, VT  
McCollough Crushing, Inc., Middlesex, VT  
N.A. Manosh, Inc., Morrisville, VT  
Newton/Dubois Construction Inc., Middlesex, VT  
Structural Wood Corporation, Waddington, NY  
Trono Oil & Gas Inc., Barre, VT  
Weston Pulpwood Sales, Inc., Essex Junction, VT

Tammy moved to approve the fleet permits, with a unanimous approval of the select board.

***Consideration of/approval of application for liquor license:***

BAS, LLC DBA Fairways & Greens located at the Country Club of Barre.

Tammy moved to approve the liquor license renewal with a unanimous approval of the select board.

***Approval of Meeting Minutes:***

January 12 and 19 and March 8

Jim moved to approve the meeting minutes, with a unanimous approval of the select board.

***Route 2-Main Street Intersection Remediation Project Update:***

Melissa Rutter, Vtrans Utility Coordinator Supervisor (handling the water & sewer component) shared that the town can either use Stantech or hire a private engineer. If the town selects Stantech as the design consultant, the state could reimburse the town the determined percentage of the design cost (TBD) or the state could receive the invoices from Stantech and the state could bill the Town of Plainfield to circumvent the 30-day payment period from Stantech. The engineering cost is expected to be \$68,000, the percentage will need to be configured (based on linear footage) in order to establish the cost to the Town of Plainfield. Stantech cannot begin any work until the agreement is signed for engineering; construction will be discussed later down the road. Once the agreement is signed Stantech will start collaborating with the town to establish a plan. If the scope and fee is agreed upon, an agreement can be generated within a month to sign and proceed with engineering the water & sewer component of the project. Stantech has been involved in this project for several years and will be designing other aspects of the project. Alice added that she will be looking into grant funding as the project progresses.

***Pedestrian Bridge Project Update:***

The contract has been updated and the blanks have been filed in. The contract has been approved at a state and federal level. The contractors that had bided on the project (including Dufranes) intended to sign the contract provided at the time of bidding. Tammy reminded that the project is only good for 30 days and the delay of signing the contract is putting it at risk for changing the cost. If the select board chooses to make changes to the contract then it will need to go through

the review process again, including state and federal review. Tammy urged the select board to sign the contract as-is, she emphasized that a lot of thought and time has gone into this contract and she believed it would be a mistake to delay the signing. Tammy indicated that she would take time to get the contract notarized if the select board chooses to proceed. Sasha suggested to reach out to the contractor to see if they could extend the signing for another week to have the contract reviewed further. Alice indicated that the contract is well vetted by VTRANS and suggested to sign the contract, Jim agreed that it makes sense to move forward.

Jim moved to finish the details and sign the contract. Jim and Tammy voted “aye” and Sasha abstained from voting.

Tammy indicated that she would figure out the logistics of getting the contract signed.

***VHB Engineering Firm for Resident Engineer Services During Construction:***

The last estimate was \$65,000 and the new estimate is \$65,053, the select board was hopeful that the estimate would come in lesser as the project had been shortened by a week. VHB Engineering indicated that the cost of labor has gone up which is why the project remained at a similar cost. Ross recommended moving forward with VHB. Sasha iterated that they have been really great to work with and it would make sense to continue on with VHB. Since there are no changes, there is no further approval needed; the town had just hoped for a lesser estimate.

Jim moved for Tammy to let VHB that the town is prepared to move forward with them as the resident engineer and moving forward with a contract, with a unanimous approval of the select board.

***Followup on query re Town Meeting articles relating to Australian balloting for future town meetings:***

Sasha stated that there had been some confusion about how a Select Board can go about putting something on a Town Meeting warning. She explained that at any time the Select Board can get a request and put something on the Town Meeting warning. She observed that there are likely many points of view as to whether or not that was a great way to proceed in this case.. Sasja also stated that the email from Charlie had been the first time that she had been alerted to the question of whether or not the town could go forward with this kind of article at this juncture with an Australian Ballot town meeting. Sasha reviewed the discussion on this topic that had occurred at the informational meeting on March 18th and that voters are able to vote the articles up or down and, as Jim Volz had mentioned at the meeting on the 18th, if it is the case that the town can not go forward with these articles if they are passed, the Select Board can consider the outcome of the vote to be advisory. Sasha stated that the Select Board can’t change the warning at this point and she encouraged community members to vote as they think is appropriate and hoped that we can all be listening to one another. Sasha also stated that she felt that some good discussions had come from the discussions in public fora, in particular relating to accessibility issues and what we might want to be doing to address those. Charlie had expressed a desire to speak about this further and was allowed by the Select Board to do so. Charlie Cogbill questioned whether the Zoom recordings could be made available to the public, in particular for the 3rd & 8th of

February. Sasha responded that a previous account for putting up videos had not been available and that she had recently made a new account to be able to put these on YouTube and so far the videos for December 16<sup>th</sup>, 26<sup>th</sup>, 28<sup>th</sup>, 29<sup>th</sup>, January 5<sup>th</sup>, 7<sup>th</sup>, 11<sup>th</sup>, 19<sup>th</sup> are up and the others will be up shortly, within a day or so. Charlie asked to be provided with a copy of the letter requesting that these articles be put on the Town Meeting warning. Sasha explained that it was an email that the Select Board had received and that she would be happy to provide him with a copy of that, probably later that evening. Charlie also inquired whether the Select Board had sought legal advice on Articles 6 & 7, particularly the town attorney or the Vermont League of Cities and Towns to get a legal opinion.. Sasha stated that the Board had not, for a couple of reasons, one being that the articles can not be removed from the warning at this juncture, In addition, the Select Board had had a lot of other matters to deal with and thus had not sought legal advice. Sasha said she had reviewed the law after Charlie had raised his concerns the previous week and it would also be important for the Select Board to consider who would be the best person to address these concerns as this is an area of the law that a lot of attorneys are not likely to have expertise in. Charlie urged the Select Board to obtain a legal opinion prior to the second informational meeting on March 30 to explain to the voters what their vote is for. Charlie expressed some uncertainty as to the outcome if “No” votes prevailed on these articles. Sasha explained that if the “No” votes prevailed there would be no change to how the annual town meeting or other town meetings are conducted. She also stated that if the “No” vote prevailed and the articles were found to not be legitimate, then there would be no change. Charlie also stated “if no tends to prevail in this vote I would propose that this is not an advisory vote to the select board that the majority of the town does not want Australian ballot.” Sasha thanked him for that suggestion. When Charlie again expressed that he was uninformed of what his vote on these articles is for, Sasha clarified that at this juncture, his vote would be whether he thinks this is a positive article he’d like to see passed, or that he doesn’t think it’s a positive article. Tammy encouraged Charlie to email to the Select Board any documentation he has relating to the validity of the articles. Sasha reviewed that there were several select board meetings that these articles were discussed; she said that she would have the Zoom recordings available within a day or so. Jim also stated that he’d found the email the Select Board had received from Gary Graves on January 8<sup>th</sup> requesting these articles be included, and that he’d just forwarded that to Charlie. Charlie also stated that the minutes are late (5+ days), and are vague. Jim added that the town does not have a meeting minute taker so if anyone knows of someone who would be willing to do so to let the select board know.

***Administrative Assistant Job Description:***

Tammy urged to finalize the administrative assistant in an official manner by putting it on the next select board meeting agenda (4/13). Sasha asked about making a special meeting for this topic, as Sasha reminded that even once the position is posted that it may take a few days or weeks to get a response. It was agreed that this topic would be added to the April 13<sup>th</sup> agenda. Sasha will look back in the minutes to make sure the facilities manager description had been approved.

Agenda Items for Upcoming Meetings:  
Organizational Meeting  
Town Plan Approval

Approval of description for administrative assistant (& facilities manager?)

***Adjournment:***

Jim moved to adjourn and the motion passed unanimously at 9:18 PM.