

**Plainfield Select Board Meeting**  
**May 10, 2021**  
**Minutes - Approved**

**This meeting was convened at 5:30 PM for a site visit at the Old Fire House on School Street.** No business was conducted and no record of those present was made.

**The Select Board meeting was conducted in-person at the shelter at the Recreation Field.** The meeting commenced at 6:15 PM. Those present included Select Board members Tammy Farnham, Sasha Thayer, and Jim Volz (chair), Paula Ackel (community member), George Cushing (community member), Bob and Kathleen Fancher (community members), Dan Gadd (Historical Society board member and community member), (Susan Grimaldi (Historical Society board member and community member), Greg Light (Fire Chief and community member), Ruben Ramirez (community member), Melinda Vieux (community member), and Betsy Zeigler (community member).

**Future of the old fire station:** the sole focus of this Special Select Board meeting was the condition of the Fire House, the proposal by Ruben Ramirez to purchase the building and his plans for renovation, and other community members' responses and proposals for the building. The Old Fire House is located on School Street (Rte 2) in Plainfield, just east of the former Plainfield Hardware Store/Peak Hydroponics located at 20 School Street at the intersection of Rte. 2 and Main Street. The southern boundary of this property is the Winooski River which is at the rear of the building.

The reason for the Special Select Board meeting is that the building is in poor repair, with problems with the roof and exterior wall having been known for some time and the Town not having money to make the repairs. Fire Chief Greg Light brought the issue to public awareness that the building deficits are such that the building may fall into the river if repairs are not made before the next winter season.

Ruben Ramirez has recently purchased the building at 20 School Street and has expressed an interest in purchasing the Old Fire House building at little or not cost and renovating it for use as an office. Concerns were expressed that unless a sales contract included specific provisions requiring the repair and renovation of the Old Fire House, the buyer could, instead, tear the building down and use it for parking. Mr. Ramirez stated that because of the very small lot size and a hydrant being on the lot, at most the lot would only be sufficient for one car. He also stated that his intention is to repair the building, erect an historical marker and make use of the building after renovation.

A number of concerns were expressed by community members present including concern that an historical landmark could be lost to the town, that the town had not previously raised money to repair and renovate the building, that meeting this burden had been directed to the Historical Society which has very limited resources, that the Town had taken no role in seeking resources to make the needed repairs to the building outside of the annual town budget. At the previous Select Board meeting on April 26, 2021, Susan Grimaldi, a member of the Historical Society board, had reviewed that the Historical Society's grant application made on behalf of the Town for the Burns grant which was not approved. Susan shared that grant funding went to other larger communities where the grant was seen as supporting economic activity in the community and that it was felt that the Town hadn't given enough care to the building, the use of the building as a museum was too specific and localized and that historical museums aren't a big draw for economic activity. At the April 26<sup>th</sup> meeting Susan had also shared that the Burns grant program suggested that it might be better for the town to rent the building and at the same time she noted that the Old Fire House is not in good enough shape to be occupied. At the April 26 meeting, Susan also noted that the building is considered very stable overall, but the problems with the back wall and roof are the concern right now, with the problems with the back wall getting

worse and worse, but if the town sells it cheap enough then the building could be fixed up for use for a variety of purposes.

Sasha Thayer expressed concerns about the problems with the Old Fire House building and suggested that there be a 99-year lease for \$1 or sale at a similar price. When individuals present stated that conditions should be attached to such a lease or sale, Tammy Farnham expressed her view that having such conditions attached would be a deterrent to someone buying the building because the costs of repair aren't currently known. Jim Volz indicated that he was more inclined to want to have conditions attached to the sale of the building.

No decision was made about the sale, or leasing, of the Old Fire House, but the Select Board encouraged Mr. Ramirez to provide the Select Board with a written proposal for consideration at the next regular Select Board meeting on May 19<sup>th</sup>.

**Adjourn** Sasha moved that the meeting adjourn and the motion passed unanimously at 6:48 PM.