

**Town of Plainfield Special Select Board Meeting
Monday, June 27, 2022, 5:30 pm
Sprooved Minutes**

Agenda:

Changes to Agenda

Announcements

Outline of Issues Relating to Repair of Main Street Bridge and Completion of the Pedestrian Bridge Project (Including whether or not to close the bridge entirely for a month or to do the repairs with one lane remaining open, and including the costs of each approach to the Town and local businesses, and including the impact on essential services like fire, rescue and ambulance service, water & sewer, and postal and delivery services)

Public Comment

Select Board Decision

Adjourn

Present: Select Board members Jim Volz (chair) and Sasha Thayer. Also present were Linda Wells (Town Clerk/Treasurer), Tammy Farnham (Project Manager), Jamie Lewis (Plainfield Co-op General Manager), Jessie Taylor (Plainfield Co-op Board member), Greg Light (Plainfield Fire Chief), Mike Nolan (Road Foreman), Liz Bicknell, Lucy Blue, George Cushing, Dawn Fancher, Kathy & Bob Fancher, Susan Grimaldi, Ed Hutchinson, Cat Klarich, Alice Merrill, Rose Paul, Deborah Stoleroff, and Peter Youngbear. Also present were Eric Blaisdell (Times Argus) and Rachel Hellman (Seven Days).

Jim Volz called the meeting to order at 5:31 pm.

There were no Changes to Agenda or Announcements.

Outline of Issues Relating to Repair of Main Street Bridge and Completion of the Pedestrian Bridge Project (Including whether or not to close the bridge entirely for a month or to do the repairs with one lane remaining open, and including the costs of each approach to the Town and local businesses, and including the impact on essential services like fire, rescue and ambulance service, water & sewer, and postal and delivery services):

Volz noted the Board has been talking about this for quite a while and has heard concerns from the Plainfield Co-op and the Fire Department regarding the impact if the bridge is shut down. He stated that two options are under consideration: one is to close the bridge entirely and the other is to do one lane at a time. That option also doesn't do quite as good a job for the repair to the damaged membrane and is more expensive, but is acceptable, stated Volz. Thayer added that she had spoken with Mr. Waters of the Montpelier Post Office which provides mail service to Plainfield and he said that shutting the bridge down entirely could have very significant consequences and could result in a large portion of the Town not receiving mail on a daily basis.

The following background was presented prior to the Public Comment:

Project Manager Tammy Farnham started out by suggesting reviewing an email with pertinent

information from Matt Belden of Daniels Construction. Farnham noted that they are looking at two different options: a Class II level repair option and Class III level repair option. Farnham explained that to maintain traffic the repair would be more complicated because they will have to send traffic up onto the northern sidewalk. She stated that that's why the price is higher than it was before.

Volz summarized the information in the email which sets out two basic options. One is to rebuild the bridge by closing it entirely for a period of time and there are two different options for that relating to class of repair, the other is to keep one lane of the bridge open with two options for that relating to class of repair done. He explained that there are four options relating to the completing of the Pedestrian Bridge project and repair of problems found this year in connection with that work and observations relating to water leaking through the bridge. A portion of the membrane being replaced adjacent to the new pedestrian bridge has always been a part of that project. In the course of the work on the Pedestrian Bridge project and observation of water leaking through the bridge, it was learned that the entire membrane beneath the road surface of the bridge needs replacement.

Volz summarized the options:

Option 1 – Maintain alternating one way traffic on north sidewalk and repair 100% of the bridge deck to a class II level, approx. cost \$510,000.

Option 2 – close bridge to traffic and repair 100% of the bridge deck to a Class II level, approx. cost \$353,000.

Option 3 – Maintain alternating one way traffic but build it to a Class III level, approx. \$639,000.

Option 4 – Close bridge entirely, build it to a Class III level, approx. cost \$479,000.

Volz noted Option 2 is the cheapest.

The email from Matt Belden of Daniels Construction, as read by Volz, stated:

“Our proposal (pricing) is attached for the additional deck and t-beam repair work that we’ve discussed. There are two different traffic control options (keep road open and close road) and two different deck repair options (100% class II and 100% class III) for a total of four scenarios. The excel file also has notes describing some of the items which aren’t on the pdf file.

Maintaining traffic would be much more difficult than we first envisioned because we’d have to put the travel lane for phase 1 onto the Northern sidewalk. During this phase, pedestrians would be required to use the new Southern sidewalk which would be directly adjacent to our deck repair work area, so we’d also have to install temporary shielding to protect them from concrete debris. For these reasons, the pricing for the two ‘maintaining traffic’ options increased from what we’d previously provided.

The two deck repair options are described below:

‘Class II’ repairs would entail removing approximately 6” of concrete from the entire bridge deck surface (curb to curb/end to end), adding a new mat of reinforcing steel and placing a new 6” concrete topping (and filling in the existing drains). But, this would not be the typical VTrans

class II repair item in that unsound concrete would likely remain. I'd expect this option to provide a 30+/- year life expectancy, which should line up fairly well to the remaining life of the existing t-beams.

'Class III' repairs would be the complete removal of the existing concrete bridge deck (curb to curb/end to end), installation of two new mats of reinforcing steel and placing a brand new concrete bridge deck (with no drains). This new bridge deck should have a 75 year life expectancy, but ultimately the bridge's overall life expectancy would be controlled by the condition of the existing t-beams.

With the two Class II repair options, there would be a slight chance that the condition of the bridge deck wouldn't be as bad as we've assumed in that a portion of the deck's area could become class I repairs (2"-3" depth) or may not even require repairs at all (both of which would reduce the cost of the repairs), but from what we've seen we think this would be highly unlikely.

We agree that the t-beam repairs would be more cosmetic rather than life extending and we'd not recommend they be done due to the associated high cost.

If the town could somehow find a way to close the bridge (for 5 weeks +/-) and secure the required funds, option 2 would provide the most value for the dollar by delivering a repaired bridge deck at a sensible price which would have a life expectancy correspondent to the remaining life expectancy of the existing t-beams."

Farnham stated that Daniels recommends closing the bridge because that would give the best cost and quality. Farnham noted that VTrans is assuming we would do Class II vs. Class III repair when they considered the funding they could provide the Town, that amount is estimated at \$330,130. She stated that the Town's share for Option 2 is \$34,676 without addressing the T-beams underneath which we're not looking at doing at this time. Farnham also stated that it had been discussed that this would be addressed when the Rt. 2 project is done, as it's more cosmetic.

Farnham stated that we have been advised that the repair of the T- beam and concrete does not need to be done at this time, and that the Option 1 and Option 2 repairs will provide the bridge with approximately 30 years additional life. Farnham also noted that the engineers have advised that being able to do the needed repairs with the bridge entirely shut down would provide greater integrity for the repairs than doing the repairs in two parts as would occur if only half of the bridge is shut down at a time.

Volz asked for clarification of how the project will be paid for. Farnham stated the Town budget has \$30,000 set aside for this project with an additional \$8,000 available for Main St/Bridge, and to cover the balance an additional \$220,000 loan was in the warning for the 2022 Town Meeting to be voted on. This was approved.

Thayer suggested others may be able to offer addition information related to costs.

Public Comment

An extended public comment period of 20 minutes was scheduled to allow an opportunity for

members of the community to share their thoughts.

Greg Light, Plainfield Fire Chief, stated the figures aren't accurate, that an additional \$85-90,000 would need to be added to cover ambulance and fire protection if the bridge is closed. He stated that Fire and Rescue would need four weeks to prepare for closing of the bridge to give the best protection to Plainfield citizens. He stated if one lane is left open these costs wouldn't need to be considered.

Farnham stated that initial estimates provided by Fire and Rescue had been \$68,000 and after discussion with the State she was told by the State that this amount was considered a betterment of services so they couldn't justify covering it. She stated VTrans suggested they could offer some coverage, but not to the amount requested. Farnham stated that people will still have pedestrian access to the bridge during construction.

Greg Light stated that if the original proposal presented by Fire and Rescue isn't supported that Fire and Rescue would be 100% against shutting down the bridge.

George Cushing asked if the bridge project is necessary at this time and if grant funding will be available later. Farnham stated that the contractor is already here and is familiar with the bridge, that some costs will roll into the Pedestrian Bridge cost which is reducing costs for the Town vs. doing a whole new project, and that the State is able to get us additional funds now. Cushing asked about the option of a bypass bridge and expressed concerns about bridge contractor. Thayer responded that she had looked at various alternative approaches, one being the far end of the Town Cemetery which is not possible because of water issues, the State said the Town would have to pay for any bypass, and one issue had been sight lines. Volz reiterated that a bypass bridge idea was explored.

Farnham defended current bridge contractor, explained the reasons for the delays on Pedestrian Bridge project, and stated VTrans will oversee remainder of project because we have a contractor already and it won't go out to bid.

Alice Merrill responded to Greg Light's statement and stated that that total cost to the Town would be \$68,000 plus the Town share of \$34,000.

Rose Paul, Plainfield resident and Treasurer of Plainfield Co-op, shared on behalf of Plainfield Co-op Board that the Co-op prefers keeping one bridge lane open to maintain customer access. She stated in Quarters 3 and 4 of 2021, compared to prior two years, the Co-op lost \$15,000 in Q3, and \$38,000 in Q4. She suggested that the one lane bridge was a contributing factor. Paul asked about mitigation money from VTrans and asked that the Select Board could follow up with VTrans about this possibility.

Thayer clarified that a major issue is that supplies wouldn't be able to be delivered to Co-op. Paul stated options for delivery are being explored and noted that the Co-op is already in the red for this calendar year. She stated that the bridge closure will be very hard on the Co-op.

Jamie Lewis, Plainfield Co-op General Manager, reiterated that larger vendors would not be able

to deliver if the bridge is closed.

Liz Bicknell asked how long the contractor estimates the bridge could last if the repair is done with one lane open. Farnham replied that contractor did not provide that number, but stated last time it lasted 15 years.

Debra Stoleroff, Plainfield community member, spoke in support of leaving bridge open, noting possible detrimental impact on local businesses and her distress about the impact on Fire and Rescue's ability to function to take care of community.

Ed Hutchinson, Plainfield resident, spoke against closing the bridge. He suggested a temporary bridge past Littlewood Farm on Recreation Field Road if the bridge were to be closed.

Bob Fancher spoke in favor of keeping the bridge open for emergency services and local businesses and asked how long the project is projected to take. Farnham stated Daniels has said closure will be 4-5 weeks and suggests we can put that in the change order. Fancher stated his agreement to putting 4-5 weeks in the change order.

Lucy Blue asked if anyone has thought of contacting the Coast Guard because of the river crossing.

Jessie Taylor, from the Plainfield Co-op Board, stated they would prefer to have one lane kept open. As a resident, Taylor wondered if using the sidewalk as a traffic lane will further deteriorate the bridge. They also asked if eastbound Rte.2 traffic will be prohibited from turning left onto the bridge even if one lane is kept open. Farnham clarified that this is correct: large vehicles would need to go further east and turn around to come back for a right turn over the bridge. Farnham said Daniels has stated any cost of further damage inflicted to the bridge by cars traveling on the sidewalk would be covered by them.

Thayer shared information from two emails, one from Carol Smith, Assistant Town Clerk, in favor of keeping a lane open so she can get to work and another email from Mary Neibling and David Spence who support keeping one lane open as well.

Linda Wells, Plainfield Town Clerk, spoke in favor of keeping one lane open, noting hardship to people going into and out of village as well as the ambulance and Fire Department. She noted extra gas mileage will be a hardship for people.

Volz clarified that Daniels has stated the best value is Option 2, but this option would close the bridge, so has widespread impacts on the Town.

Farnham and Volz discussed the idea that full closure of bridge for one month may have less impact on village businesses than closing one lane for a longer period. Jessie Taylor shared the projected financial impact on the Co-op of full closure of bridge vs. one lane open. She also suggested that a golf cart be available to shoppers to come to the Co-op from the Rte. 2 side of the bridge.

Greg Light shared having spoken to long-time resident Lyndall Lumbra who could only recall the bridge being closed for one day in the past.

Thayer clarified that concerns include logistics as well as human impacts if the bridge is closed. Fire Chief Light stated his concern that with a full bridge closure delays in emergency response could be detrimental to structures in the village should a fire occur there. He clarified that Plainfield is part of a Capital Fire Mutual Aid Compact which allows us to request equipment from member towns to respond to our emergencies.

Linda Wells stated the Town is responsible for 20% of the cost of repairs and that there are grants we could apply for, or borrow money from the bank. Wells stated that a FEMA (Federal Emergency Management Agency) grant could be possible. Farnham stated she doesn't believe we can get another grant, that we would need to borrow to cover the bridge repair costs.

Peter Youngbear requested more information, stating that an article he read in the newspaper had indicated that the bridge repair may include more work determined by the contractor as they assess the condition once they take pavement off. Youngbear expressed his concern that this could prolong the bridge closure. Farnham replied that VTrans is assuming Class II level repairs and that, if more work was indicated that required above Class III, we would have to repave and reevaluate.

Volz stated he agrees with Youngbear's concern that the project could take longer than anticipated which would impact emergency response and have a negative impact on village businesses. Volz stated his support for Option 1, which keeps one lane open. Thayer stated her agreement.

Farnham clarified that if the project costs more, that the state only has \$300,000 for their portion, so if project goes over \$375,000, the Town will have to raise those additional funds. Alice Merrill asked for clarification of the cost for Option 1. Volz stated the cost would be \$330,130 of which Town pays 20%.

Jim Volz moved to approve Option 1 to keep one lane open for the Main Street bridge repair and Pedestrian Bridge project completion. The motion passed unanimously.

Adjournment

Sasha Thayer moved to adjourn and the motion passed unanimously at 6:45 pm.