

**Town of Plainfield Select Board Meeting**  
**July 17, 2023**  
**Plainfield Municipal Building, 149 Main St, 2<sup>nd</sup> Floor and via Zoom**  
**Minutes - Approved**

**Agenda:**

- Changes to Agenda
- Announcements
- Public Comment
- Flood Update/Next Steps:
  - Plainfield Emergency Management Director, Michael Billingsley
  - Plainfield Road Commissioner, Bram Towbin
  - Plainfield Road Foreman, Michael Bingham
  - Plainfield Town Clerk/Treasurer, Robin Miller
- Town Clerk's Report (Robin Miller):
  - Set the Tax Rate
  - Update on budgetary implications of HRA rollover
- Hazard Mitigation Committee authorization (Michael Billingsley) Recreation and Public Arts Committee Report (Jamie Spector):
  - Update on Rec Field flood damage
  - Update on cost of trash removal contract with Casella for Rec Field
  - Updated ARPA request for water fountain/spigot installation for Rec Field
- Old Home Day Sheriff Deputies
- Approval of warrants: Accounts Payable: January 27, 2023; July 12, 2023 Payroll: July 13, 2023
- Approval of draft minutes: November 17, 2022; July 5, 2023
- Adjourn

**Present:** Select Board members Riley Carlson (Chair), Bram Towbin, and Jim Volz. Also present were Fire Chief Greg Light, Michael Morlan of the Recreation and Public Arts Committee, Emergency Management Director Michael Billingsley, Town Clerk/Treasurer Robin Miller, Michael Bingham (Road Foreman), Delinquent Tax Collector George Cushing, Recreation and Public Arts Committee Chair Jamie Spector, Melinda Vieux, Karl Bissex, Kim Nolan, Judy Cyprian, and Mary Terice.

**Carlson called the meeting to order at 6:02 pm.**

### Changes to Agenda:

Carlson suggested the addition of a report from Fire Chief Greg Light during discussion of the Flood Update/Next Steps as well as the addition of an executive session at the end of the meeting to discuss legal consult regarding the property at 79 Bean Rd. Towbin suggested including a public comment prior to the executive session to allow residents to share concerns regarding the property at 79 Bean Rd. Select Board members agreed to the proposed changes to the agenda.

### Announcements:

Volz expressed appreciation for the Plainfield road crew and Road Commissioner Towbin for their outstanding work to address damages to the Town's roads during the flooding event last week. Towbin included gratitude and kudos to emergency services and contractors brought in to help.

### Public Comment:

Chair Carlson opened the floor to public comment. There was no public comment.

### Flood Update/Next Steps:

Carlson shared that last week there was extensive rainfall with flooding that caused major damages in Plainfield and throughout Central Vermont to bridges, roads, and private property. He stated that this discussion is to review the Town's disaster response, identifying what has gone well, what can be done better, and the next steps for recovery and for preparing for future disaster events.

Towbin announced that Cory Cochran, resident of Brook Rd., can expect that the Road Foreman and Towbin will be visiting him in about 2-3 weeks to address a problem Cochran has been having.

### *Plainfield Road Commissioner, Bram Towbin –*

Towbin shared that as a result of the storm three bridges on Brook Rd were impassable due to washouts from debris flow, significant washouts on Lower Rd., Upper Rd., Gonyeau Rd., Batchelder Rd., Bean Rd., and Reservoir Rd., as well as multiple other road shoulders that were compromised. He shared that all these sites had been geotagged as documentation is important for requesting recovery funds from FEMA. He reported that the bridges were all opened within two days and VTrans District 6 will be sending inspectors to assess for repairs. He thanked Road Foreman Michael Bingham, road crew members Casey and Shawn, Farnham Excavating, contractor Mike Burrell, and citizens who helped with the effort, stating that within three days of the flooding all Plainfield roads were open. He particularly thanked former Road Foreman Mike Nolan for coming out of retirement to assist with road restoration. He acknowledged that major road work over the years had allowed for many past trouble spots to remain undamaged during this event citing the large culvert on Country Club Rd., Lower Rd., Lee Rd., the new culvert above the Cameron Rd. bridge on Brook Rd., new culvert on Bean Rd., Gore Rd. on the low

section before the hill, new culverts on Reservoir Rd., and a drainage project behind the Health Center that helped prevent some erosion. He noted that even before this event there were two bridges on Brook Rd. and an eight foot culvert on East Hill Rd. that have been slated for replacement. He acknowledged that the Brook Rd. bridge in the center of town has been a long standing problem with debris build-up during flood events. He stated that the Select Board considers this a top priority. He shared that to fully replace the bridge would cost nearly twice the yearly town road budget, that UVM is doing extensive drone studies of the brook which measures the log debris, and stated that studies have determined that removal of woody debris is not a feasible solution due to ongoing erosion of brook walls. He suggested that debris catchers, such as those installed in Barre, may be an option for Plainfield.

George Cushing, as a resident living near the Great Brook, shared that this flood event was the worst he's seen in 40 years and expressed his frustration with the Town's response to addressing the problem with brook debris. Towbin responded that removing more than 10 yards of material from the brook requires approval from the State and shared his opinion that replacement of the bridge is a better option. Volz voiced his agreement. Cushing expressed concern that if the Brook Rd. bridge is widened that debris will then get caught up further downstream at the Mill St. bridge. Billingsley stated that this is not the case as the Mill St. bridge has a greater capacity for brook flow as well as the benefit of being located on a straight section of the brook. Light shared that, in his observation of the flooding at Mill St. bridge during this event where he saw water flowing over the road, a better solution is the installation of a flood control dam further up the brook and stated his hope that the Select Board will focus on this problem.

*Plainfield Fire Chief, Greg Light -*

Light stated that on Monday afternoon July 10, 2023, when he observed the heavy rain continued to fall, the Fire and Rescue crew began identifying town safety needs and monitoring the waterways. The crew shut off propane tanks in the village and evacuated residents in danger of flooding from the Great Brook and the Winooski River. He reported that the biggest problem he saw was the lack of local emergency shelter as people were unable to access the Barre emergency shelter designated for Plainfield's use. He shared that he had met five stranded individuals the night of the storm, two of whom spent the night on a firefighter's couch while others slept in their cars because they couldn't reach the shelter in Barre due to flooded roads. He suggested that Plainfield needs to identify a local emergency shelter as soon as possible. Towbin stated that the Select Board will focus on that. Select Board members thanked Light and his crew for all their hard work.

*Plainfield Road Foreman, Michael Bingham –*

Bingham shared that the night of the storm he spent the night at the Town Garage to ensure that he would be available to begin recovery efforts as soon as possible.

*[At this point in the meeting the Zoom session expired and the meeting was resumed in a second Zoom session.]*

*Plainfield Emergency Management Director, Michael Billingsley -*

Billingsley pointed out that the Hazard Mitigation Committee, which was active until 2020, had been evaluating the bridges and the option of debris catchers. He shared that prior to the storm he had reviewed evacuation and emergency shelter options with families living along the village Great Brook corridor. He stated that he had opened the Plainfield Emergency Operations Center (EOC) at the Town Hall Opera House the evening of the storm and had worked with Green Mountain Power to have electric service turned off to an apartment building with a propane leak. He shared that while staffing the EOC he kept in touch with the State regarding the impacts of the storm as well as coordinating with displaced people to access emergency shelter for themselves and their pets, with some staying at the EOC. He explained that the Town Hall Opera House has not been able to be designated as a formal emergency shelter due to the lack of back-up power and, as such, the emergency supplies such as cots and hygiene items were unavailable at the EOC. He shared that although a generator had been available it was not usable and so the EOC was without power the night of the storm from 10:30 pm until the following morning at about 6:30 am. He reported that in the morning he walked through town to check on resident's safety and the condition of infrastructure. He shared that some residents have been unable to return to their homes due to flood damage. He strongly encouraged residents to fully document any damages and expenses incurred by the storm and visit Vermont 211 to fill out forms to request to be included in the damage reports. He stated that FEMA forms will be available on the Town website. He shared that he was notified by State Representative Marc Mihaly just prior to this meeting that Governor Scott has requested a Major Disaster Declaration which was approved by the White House. He stated that the Town will need to submit damage report forms prior to September 12, 2023. He stated that the Town needs someone to be in charge of making sure that all necessary forms are completed by deadline. He acknowledged the pain and sorrow that many community members are feeling at this time. He stated that he would like to call a community meeting next Monday (July 24, 2023) at the Town Hall Opera House which would include Representative Mihaly, Keith Cubbon from Central Vermont Regional Planning Commission (CVRPC), and representatives from Washington County Mental Health. This would be an opportunity for community members to share their stories, ask questions, and connect with resources.

Select Board members thanked Billingsley for his hard work and leadership posting information and keeping everyone updated on the situation during the flood event.

*Plainfield Town Clerk/Treasurer, Robin Miller –*

Miller shared that the Town Clerk's office had received inquiries about FEMA funding and stated that that information has not yet been released by FEMA. She stated she has encouraged residents to document damages. She shared that she has started a folder of information that will

be required once FEMA reporting begins. Carlson asked Miller if she felt additional help would be needed to manage the extra workload that will come up regarding FEMA documentation. Miller expressed her belief that that would be unnecessary, but suggested that input from past Town Clerk, Linda Wells, might be beneficial. Carlson suggested Miller keep open the option of bringing in extra help should it be needed. Billingsley shared that Keith Cubbon of CVRPC had told him that the documentation process can take a year and a half to complete.

Town Clerk's Report (Robin Miller):

*Set the Tax Rate –*

Miller shared that she and Lister Sandy Ross had met earlier in the day to determine the tax rate. She shared that the tax rate will go up mostly due to the CLA (Common Level of Appraisal) adjustment being at 75% which cannot be changed until a town-wide reappraisal is completed. She shared that Ross has made thirteen requests for reappraisal without success in finding an appraisal company that is available.

**Volz moved to approve the tax rate proposed by Town Clerk Robin Miller.** Towbin inquired about the possibility that the State may be changing the requirements regarding the need for reappraisal. Miller stated that this may become a possibility if the Town cannot get a reappraisal and if the Statewide mandate of the reappraisal doesn't go through. Towbin invited Delinquent Tax Collector George Cushing to comment. Cushing acknowledged the impact of property sales during Covid-19 on the CLA adjustment. Towbin explained that the CLA adjustment takes into account the sale price of properties which is impacted by the skyrocketed price of properties sold during the pandemic, expressed his disagreement with this system, and acknowledged that there is no alternative at this time. Carlson called for a vote. **The motion carried unanimously.**

*Update on budgetary implications of HRA rollover -*

Miller stated that rolling over the HRA funds to the next year will not impact the budget. She shared that in conversation with the Town employee's HRA company, Health Equity, she learned that she can retroactively roll over money from last year to this year's HRA. She requested that the Select Board approve an amount that would be rolled over and recommended at least \$1,000 yearly. She shared that the HRA is currently set at \$1,530 yearly. **Towbin moved to approve rolling over up to \$1,000 per employee per year of any unused HRA funds. The motion carried unanimously.** Carlson thanked Miller for her work on this matter.

Carlson noted that Miller had suggested an air conditioner be installed in the Select Board meeting room. Billingsley suggested the possibility of several continuous days of 100 degree weather and requested that Select Board consider also installing an air conditioner at the EOC to provide a cooling center. Towbin shared his research on air conditioner models and pricing. Miller stated that an air conditioner will be ordered prior to the next Select Board meeting.

Hazard Mitigation Committee authorization (Michael Billingsley):

Billingsley provided historical context regarding the Hazard Mitigation Committee, sharing that it had grown out of a Flood Advisory Committee that was started by Towbin after the 2011 flood. He shared that in 2016 the Hazard Mitigation Committee worked with CVRPC to identify potential threats to the village; that list included river and brook flooding, landslides, resident displacement, damage to property, and extended power outage/grid failure. He stated that at that time Plainfield was one of only six communities in Vermont to have a Hazard Mitigation Committee and received kudos from State Emergency Management for preparedness. He requested authorization from the Select Board to renew the Hazard Mitigation Committee as an official Town committee as it was described in 2016 with two exceptions. The first change would be that the Plainfield Fire and Rescue would be involved with the committee, the second that a Marshfield resident would be included but without voting rights. He suggested also that an Emergency Management District be created that would bring together the towns of Marshfield, East Montpelier, Cabot, and Plainfield for the purpose of sharing resources and expertise. He volunteered to serve as clerk for the committee as he had in the past and requested he be appointed to the committee so he can begin work immediately.

**Towbin moved to authorize reforming the Plainfield Hazard Mitigation Committee as it was described in 2016 and to appoint Michael Billingsley as the committee clerk. The motion carried unanimously.**

Carlson stated that appointment of other Hazard Mitigation Committee members will be on the agenda for the next Select Board meeting. Jamie Spector suggested that renters as well as homeowners be represented on the committee.

Recreation and Public Arts Committee Report (Jamie Spector):

*Update on Rec Field flood damage –*

Spector shared that the Recreation Field damages were mainly to the basketball court and skate park but fortunately the baseball field, picnic shelter, and play structures were unharmed. She shared that she had displayed signage at the Rec field asking visitors to refrain from use of the basketball court as well as swimming in contaminated waters. She requested Select Board input regarding solutions for removal of silt from the Recreation Field and inquired about road crew availability to assist in the endeavor. She suggested that the Recreation and Public Arts Committee could request community members with tractors to volunteer to assist in the cleanup of the Recreation Field.

*[At this point in the meeting the second Zoom session expired and the meeting was resumed in a third Zoom session.]*

Spector noted that the silt would likely need hauling away; Towbin stated he would inquire with Michael Bingham about finding someone to help with this. Spector shared that Ben Youngbear of the Recreation and Public Arts Committee has reached out to the Skateboard Foundation to request support in restoration of the skate park. She shared that the committee has also discussed

calling the skate park a loss due to the flood damages and stated that they will be soliciting community input on the matter. Towbin stated he will provide Spector with contact information for a person from the Northeast Kingdom who builds concrete skate parks.

*Update on cost of trash removal contract with Casella for Rec Field –*

Spector corrected the information posted on the agenda, informing the Select Board that the trash removal contract would be with Myers rather than Casella. She shared that Arion Thiboumery, whose property abuts the Recreation Field, has agreed to allow the Recreation and Public Arts Committee to have trash totes placed on his property for Rec Field use. She reported the monthly cost for two bins, one trash and one recycling, would be \$71/month with the option of suspending service in the winter months. **Volz moved to approve a trash removal contract with Myers for the Recreation Field, as described by Spector, at the cost of \$71/month. The motion carried unanimously.** Spector will follow up with Town Clerk Miller to set up a new Myers account. Towbin suggested Spector connect with Twinfield to request students to do community service hours helping at the Rec Field.

*Updated ARPA request for water fountain/spigot installation for Rec Field -*

Spector stated that the fountain the Recreation and Public Arts Committee had found includes a fountain for filling water bottles, an ADA water fountain, a low fountain for pets, and a higher water fountain. The total ARPA request would be \$5,600 for the project. Spector shared that Alice Merrill, Town Grant Administrator, had emailed advocating that the project be postponed until the Town has an idea of the cost for the future Rt. 2 intersection project. Spector has been working with Merrill to identify grant monies to help fund a new climbing structure for the Rec Field and stated that there may be the option of also funding the water fountain that way. Select Board members agreed that a water fountain at the Rec Field is a good idea and that investigating grants to fund the project is a good idea; they declined to allocate ARPA funds to the project currently. Carlson explained that he feels that using ARPA funds for leveraging grants is the best use of those funds as well as acknowledging that the Select Board has heard concern from community members who are in support of setting aside ARPA funds for future large Town projects. Select Board members encouraged Spector to work with Merrill to seek grant funding as well as to bring the Recreation and Public Arts Committee budget requests to the budget meetings that will be held in the Fall of 2023.

Volz thanked Spector for all the work she does.

Carlson recognized Plainfield resident Melinda Vieux. Vieux requested that the Town remove the parking lot spotlight located on the Co-op building near her house. She shared that there are three lights on the parking lot and she has requested that the Fire and Rescue Department remove their light. Select Board members stated they will look into the issue.

Old Home Day Sheriff Deputies:

Towbin shared that he had inquired about hiring two deputies at \$70/hour per deputy for a minimum of four hours. This is for the purpose of closing off Rt. 2 traffic to the village during the Old Home Day parade. Carlson noted that there is not money in the Old Home Day budget to cover the expense. **Towbin moved to approve the hiring of two Washington Country sheriff's deputies for four hours at a cost of \$70/hour/officer for the Old Home Day parade. The motion carried unanimously.**

Approval of warrants: Accounts Payable: January 27, 2023; July 12, 2023 Payroll: July 13, 2023:

Carlson presented January 27 and July 12, 2023 accounts payable warrants for approval. **Volz moved to approve these warrants. The motion carried unanimously.**

Carlson presented the payroll warrant for July 13, 2023 for approval. **Volz moved to approve this warrant. The motion carried unanimously.**

Approval of draft minutes: November 17, 2022; July 5, 2023:

Carlson presented draft minutes for November 17, 2022 and July 5, 2023. **Volz moved to approve these draft minutes. The motion carried unanimously with Towbin abstaining from voting on the November 17, 2022 minutes.**

Executive Session regarding legal matters re: 79 Bean Rd:

Prior to entering executive session Select Board members agreed to open the floor to public comment.

Karl Bissex informed the Select Board that the structure at 79 Bean Rd is a travel trailer owned by a woman who passed away and currently inhabited by her relatives. Towbin offered the clarification that the property is out of compliance with zoning regulations and that no one should live there. He further explained that neighbors of the property have expressed to him concerns regarding septic disposal and past criminal activity at the property. Kim Nolan added that a woman and young child appear to be residing in the travel trailer on the property currently. Volz explained that because of the size of the lot and the zoning setbacks the property cannot support a full time residence but can be used for recreational purposes for six months per year. Bissex expressed his concern about the septic waste from the property, noting the trailer sits right above the brook. Towbin added that neighbors downstream have stated that their children play in the brook and are concerned about possible septage in the brook. Judy Cyprian thanked the Select Board for addressing this issue.

Carlson explained that the Select Board would enter executive session to discuss possible litigation regarding the property at 79 Bean Rd pursuant Title 1, Section 313. Carlson stated that attendees via Zoom should email him if they wished to be notified when the Select Board returned from executive session. **The motion was made to enter executive session, the motion carried unanimously.** The Select Board entered executive session.



The Select Board returned from executive session, waiting 5 minutes for Zoom attendees to rejoin the meeting. Towbin and Carlson explained that the Town attorney specializes in municipal law. Towbin explained that there is a legal challenge posed by the 79 Bean Rd estate being in probate but that the Town will be vigorous in enforcing zoning regulations. Carlson explained that the Town will move forward as quickly as possible to address the issue. Towbin explained that the Town will reach out to the people at the property. He also requested that neighbors report any disturbances at the property to Town Constable Chris Keast; Towbin will provide Keast's contact information to Nolan and other neighbors. Carlson thanked the neighbors for their concern.

**Adjourn: At 8:11 PM, Carlson moved to adjourn. The motion carried.**

Minutes respectfully submitted by Kristin Brosky, Plainfield Town Administrative Assistant.