

Town of Plainfield Select Board Meeting
August 21, 2023
149 Main St. Plainfield, VT 2nd Floor and via Zoom
Minutes - Approved

Agenda:

- Changes to Agenda
- Announcements
- Public Comment
- Town Clerk/Treasurer Report (Robin Miller)
 - Loan Proposal from Community Bank for 2022 CV515
- Road Foreman Report (Michael Bingham)
- Future Changes for Plainfield Town Government
- Next Steps for Request for Proposal for External Audit
- Follow-Up Discussion of Municipal Technical Assistance Program Report
- Send 79 Bean Road Update on Fines for Ongoing Zoning Violations
- Emergency Management Budget/Delegation of Authority (Michael Billingsley)
- Emergency Watershed Protection Program
- Approval of Warrants:
 - Accounts Payable: 8/16/23
 - Payroll: 8/10/23, 8/17/23
- Approval of Draft Minutes: 8/7/23, 8/11/23
- Adjourn

Present: Select Board members Riley Carlson (Chair), Bram Towbin, and Jim Volz. Also present were Town Clerk/Treasurer Robin Miller, Road Foreman Michael Bingham, Emergency Management Director Michael Billingsley, Town Grant Administrator Alice Merrill, Eric Blaisdell of the Times Argus, Hazard Mitigation Committee member Maggie Baird, and Brenda Lindemann.

Chair Carlson called the meeting to order at 6:01 pm.

Changes to Agenda:

Carlson suggested the addition of a brief discussion regarding the Old Home Days organizers request for the Town to waive the Town Hall Opera House rental fee for the Old Home Days Variety Show on Friday, September 8, 2023.

Carlson suggested a brief discussion about rescheduling the next Select Board meeting as it would fall on the Labor Day holiday if regularly scheduled.

Select Board members agreed to add these changes to the end of the agenda prior to the approval of warrants and draft minutes.

Announcements:

There were no announcements.

Public Comment:

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

Town Clerk/Treasurer Report (Robin Miller):

Loan Proposal from Community Bank for 2022 CV515 – Miller stated that she had provided the Select Board members with a copy of the proposal prior to the meeting. She stated that the proposal includes the additional warranty. **Carlson moved to authorize going forward with getting the loan from Community Bank and to authorize Robin Miller to sign the initial documents. The motion carried unanimously.**

Road Foreman Report (Michael Bingham):

Bingham shared that the culvert project on Lower Rd is progressing well and the road crew is working to grade roads. He explained that he may hire trucks to deliver the winter sand. He shared that grading on Middle Rd. is scheduled for later this week.

Volz shared that the Recreation Field Skate Park and Basketball Court continue to be covered in a thick layer of silt and asked if there is a plan to address this. Towbin stated that they were quoted \$8,000 for clean-up and removal of the contaminated silt. He stated that he's contacted the Friends of the Winooski to explore other options. Select Board members discussed pros and cons of either removing or piling the contaminated silt. Bingham stated that there might also need to be riprap added to the bank where it has washed away at the Recreation Field. Carlson suggested the Town may be able to get some funding for that project from the Emergency Watershed Protection Program.

Future Changes for Plainfield Town Government:

Carlson proposed possible changes that could help the Select Board be more effective in completing day to day work as well as long term planning. He stated his first proposal would be for expansion of the Select Board to five members from the current three. Select Board members discussed pros and cons of this idea and agreed to put together a proposal to be presented at Town Meeting in 2024. Carlson recognized Alice Merrill. She shared that she had spoken with a

representative at the Vermont League of Cities and Towns (VLCT) regarding the possibility of Plainfield having a Town Manager or Administrator and was told that the Select Board should contact the Municipal Assistance Center at VLCT for a free 30 minute consult. She reminded the Select Board that Christian Meyers of Central Vermont Regional Planning Commission (CVRPC) had encouraged the Town to apply for a grant to fund capital planning for which the deadline is Fall 2023; she encouraged the Select Board to contact Meyers. Carlson stated he will contact Meyers. Carlson stated that his second proposal would be to hire a Town Manager or Administrator. He explained the difference between these positions; Town Manager is defined by Vermont statute and does not oversee any elected officials and Town Administrator duties would be defined by the Select Board. Carlson recognized Michael Billingsley. Billingsley stated his support for the hiring of a Town Manager. Carlson stated that he will do further research on these proposals.

Next Steps for Request for Proposal (RFP) for External Audit:

Carlson noted there had been friction between the Town Auditor and the Town Office leading to the Select Board plan to seek an external audit. Carlson stated that Town Clerk/Treasurer Miller will have the RFP prepared the following day. Towbin questioned whether it was appropriate for Miller to draft the RFP. Towbin proposed a Special Select Board meeting to review and approve the RFP, Select Board members agreed to schedule a special meeting once the draft RFP is completed. Volz shared his opinion that an external audit is a good idea to establish a baseline for the Town finances.

Follow-Up Discussion of Municipal Technical Assistance Program Report:

Merrill stated that the Rt. 2 Intersection project is in the preliminary stages of engineering design and will need to be funded soon. Select Board members agreed this is a top priority. Merrill suggested that it would also be a good idea to look at work potentially needed for the Mill St. Bridge. Billingsley, speaking on behalf of the Hazard Mitigation Committee, added that the scoping study completed on the Brook and Mill St. Bridges showed that, although the Mill St. Bridge is 60% under capacity in the instance of a 100 year flood, due to the specifications of the Mill St. Bridge it may not require replacement once the Brook Rd. Bridge is replaced. Carlson noted that bridges along the Great Brook are included in the report but that transportation assets are not an eligible use for the Municipal Technical Assistance Program which is why the Select Board isn't currently prioritizing it for this report. Merrill added that Jane Bradley, resident of Mill St., had shared with her that during the flood debris had built up below that Mill St. bridge and sent water and debris flooding into her backyard.

Select Board members agreed the Town's main priorities identified in the report are the Rt. 2/Main St. water supply and wastewater infrastructure and the municipal planning grant for a capital improvement plan. Carlson stated that he will communicate this to Christian Meyers. Volz thanked Merrill for her insights.

Send 79 Bean Road Update on Fines for Ongoing Zoning Violations:

Carlson stated that he will consult with Zoning Administrator Karen Storey to determine the fine amount. Volz suggested that the Select Board should then consult with the Town attorney to explore options. Towbin expressed his opinion that the Select Board act swiftly once the estate is out of probate to address the issues at the property.

Emergency Management Budget/Delegation of Authority (Michael Billingsley):

Billingsley announced that he has learned that the State will offer FEMA assistance to homeowners whose driveways have washed out preventing access to public roads. He stated that this is not applicable to private roads. He outlined that his goals as Emergency Management Director include establishing an Emergency Operations Center, creating a plan for continuity of government in the event of an emergency or power outage, establishing a public emergency shelter, establishing a cooling center, and making the Emergency Operations Center ADA compliant.

Billingsley pointed out that when he was appointed in May 2023 he had asked then for a change in the Emergency Management budget as well as a Delegation of Authority.

Carlson noted that Brenda Lindemann had joined the meeting and asked Billingsley to address Lindemann's inquiry about removal of flood damaged scrap metal and appliances. Billingsley suggested that individuals may contract with scrap haulers and expressed his willingness to provide names of scrap haulers which he will post to the Town website.

Carlson expressed reluctance to approve a change in the Emergency Management budget outside of the annual budgeting process. Billingsley stated his interest in providing the Select Board with a detailed budget presentation at the next Select Board meeting. Select Board members will include this on the agenda for the next Select Board meeting.

Towbin announced that a statewide Green-Up cleanup is scheduled for Saturday, August 26, 2023 but Plainfield is currently not participating. Billingsley stated that there may be a clean-up scheduled later in the year to address debris along the waterways. Towbin asked if Billingsley would inquire about the possibility of Plainfield participating in the Green-Up effort and if the waterway waste was now considered safe to handle. **Towbin moved to approve Billingsley to investigate the possibility of Plainfield participating in the Green-Up event. The motion carried unanimously.**

Select Board members agreed that the scope of the Delegation of Authority document provided by Billingsley is broader than they're comfortable with. Carlson will modify the document, collaborating with Billingsley, and bring the updated document to the next Select Board meeting.

Emergency Watershed Protection Program:

Carlson explained that if the Town chooses to participate in the program the USDA would assist with 75% of the cost associated with eligible projects. Carlson provided a letter to Volz and Towbin which requests Town participation in the program without obligation at this time. He stated that Central Vermont Regional Planning Commission is listed as the administrative contact for the Town in the letter because they are willing to provide the Town with assistance should the Town choose to apply for assistance through the Watershed Protection Program. He explained that this letter of request to participate, if accepted, would allow for site visits to assess eligibility for the program. **Volz moved to approve the letter to be sent on Town letterhead once it's updated to include Michael Bingham as technical contact. The motion carried unanimously.**

Request to Waive the Town Hall Opera House Rental Fee for the Old Home Days Variety Show:

Carlson moved to approve waiving the Town Hall Opera House rental fee for the Old Home Days Variety Show. The motion carried unanimously. Carlson will notify the Old Home Days organizer.

Rescheduling the Next Select Board Meeting:

Select Board members agreed to reschedule the next Select Board meeting to Tuesday, September 5, 2023 at 6pm.

Approval of warrants:

Accounts Payable: 8/16/23 – Carlson presented the August 16, 2023 accounts payable warrant for approval. **Volz moved to approve the presented warrant. Towbin abstained from voting. The motion carried with Carlson and Volz voting in favor.**

Payroll: 8/10/23, 8/17/23 – Carlson presented the August 10 and 17, 2023 payroll warrants for approval. **Volz moved to approve the presented warrants. Towbin abstained from voting. The motion carried with Carlson and Volz voting in favor.**

Approval of draft minutes for 8/7/23, 8/11/23:

Volz moved to approve draft minutes for August 7 and 11, 2023. The motion carried unanimously.

Adjourn: **Volz moved to adjourn at 7:22 pm. The motion carried.**

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