

Town of Plainfield Select Board Meeting
September 18, 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)
- Road Foreman Report (Michael Bingham)
- Discussion of the Revolving Loan Fund for possible use for the Town Hall Opera House Arts Council grant (Karl Bissex)
- Town Hall Opera House Accessibility (Michael Billingsley)
- Emergency Management Report (Michael Billingsley)
- Discuss issue of empty houses in Plainfield (George Cushing)
- 79 Bean Road Update
- Formal 'Yes' for participating in Municipal Technical Assistance Program (MTAP)
- Approve signing the Statement of Work for Central Vermont Regional Planning Commission for MTAP
- Approve signing the Application for Access Permit for Peter Burmeister
- Approval of warrants:
 - Accounts Payable: 9/7/23
 - Payroll: 9/7/23, 9/14/23
- Approval of draft minutes: 9/5/23
- Adjourn

Present: Select Board members Riley Carlson (Chair) and Jim Volz. Also present were Chief Operator for Plainfield Water/Wastewater Department Tristan MacGregor-Stewart, Emergency Management Director Michael Billingsley, Town Clerk/Treasurer Robin Miller, Road Foreman Michael Bingham, Karl Bissex of the Revolving Loan Committee, Town Grant Administrator Alice Merrill, Hazard Mitigation Committee member Maggie Baird, Zoning Administrator Karen Storey, Eric Blaisdell of the Times Argus, Mary Trerice, Kim Nolan, and Brenda Lindemann.

Chair Carlson called the meeting to order at 6:00 pm.

Changes to Agenda:

At the request of Chief Operator for Plainfield Water/Wastewater Department, Tristan McGregor-Stewart, Carlson suggested the addition of approval and signature of a Public Source Water Permit following Public Comment. Volz agreed to this addition.

Announcements:

There were no announcements.

Public Comment:

Chair Carlson opened the floor to public comment.

Mary Trerice inquired about any response to the notice of need to fill the open seat on the Select Board. Carlson stated there has been one response to date. Trerice asked for explanation of the procedure that would be required for the Town to make a change to a five member Select Board. Carlson explained that this would require a Town vote which could happen at Town Meeting or by vote at a special meeting. Carlson stated that he will reach out to the Vermont League of Cities and Towns (VLCT) for consultation on the matter. Trerice encouraged the Select Board to continue to advertise the open seat. Volz stated that he has reached out to many people and has received no positive response.

Kim Nolan requested that the Town attorney be invited to a future Select Board meeting to give an overview of the Town's process in regards to the ongoing zoning violations at 79 Bean Rd. Select Board members indicated that they would do their best to share ongoing updates from the attorney but stated their reluctance to invite the attorney to attend a Select Board meeting due to the cost involved.

Approval and Signature of a Public Source Water Permit (Tristan MacGregor-Stewart):

MacGregor-Stewart explained that the Town currently has five springs on Town owned land located on John Fowler Rd. and seeks to add an additional spring on the same land to the Town water source. He requested signature of a Public Source Water Permit. **Volz moved to authorize Tristan MacGregor-Stewart to complete and sign the Public Source Water Permit. The motion carried unanimously.**

Town Clerk/Treasurer Report (Robin Miller):

Miller shared that she's been busy completing flood related documentation for FEMA. She provided an update regarding the Town Garage's need to replace a broken plow truck, sharing that there are options being explored that include leasing a truck. She stated that another option she and Road Foreman Michael Bingham had explored was putting the job of plowing and sanding the village out for bid. She added that the sidewalk clearing will also need to go out to bid and could possibly be combined with the road clearing bid.

Chair Carlson recognized Michael Billingsley who asked for an update on the option, presented at the previous Select board meeting, of the Town purchasing a plow and sander for the already existing Town pick-up truck. Road Foreman Michael Bingham addressed this, explaining that if this option were to be chosen he would be left using his personal vehicle for other Town road needs which is not an option he's in favor of due to wear and tear on his vehicle. Bingham and Miller agreed to further explore options for addressing the Town's need for a plow truck and will provide an update at a future Select Board meeting.

Road Foreman Report (Michael Bingham):

Bingham shared that he's received quotes for paving the Brook Rd. bridge in the village as well as other spots on the Brook Rd. affected by the flood at a cost of just over \$14,000. He also provided details about damage and proposed repair expenses for other road sites that will require repair stating that, although he's reached out to multiple companies, he's not gotten many proposals returned for these projects. He stated that the costs for these repairs will be reimbursable by FEMA. He stated that he'll work with Town Clerk Miller to put these repairs out to bid. He also shared that 20-30 of the Town's road cones had been stolen from where flood damage was marked on Town roads and would need to be replaced. He shared that he's been in discussion with a representative from the State, Ross Gouin, who will be helping the Town identify funding to address the bridges on the Brook Rd. which are undersized.

Discussion of the Revolving Loan Fund for possible use for the Town Hall Opera House Arts Council grant (Karl Bissex):

Bissex requested that this discussion be postponed until the next Select Board meeting in order to allow time for the Revolving Loan Committee to meet to discuss the issue.

Town Hall Opera House Accessibility (Michael Billingsley):

Billingsley shared that at the recent FEMA event held at the Town Hall Opera House it was brought to his attention that the building requires accessibility updates. He stated this includes updates to the accessible parking space in the front of the building as well as at the front door, which requires a small ramp to address the one-inch threshold. He proposed that a paved van-accessible parking space be installed at the front of the building and stated he's discussed this possibility with Keith Swann of Plainfield Arts and will continue to investigate options and costs. Miller added that Swann had contacted her regarding the need for a ramp at the front door of the Town Hall Opera House and she will reach out to the contractor who replacing the ramp at the Municipal Building.

Emergency Management Report (Michael Billingsley):

Billingsley stated that in the past two months 45 households have reached out to him for assistance, many of whom have already received individual assistance checks from FEMA. He encouraged those who have received checks which were not for the total they'd asked for to

enter the appeal process. He shared that Plainfield Emergency Management was able to supply cleaning supplies, fans, and dehumidifiers which were provided by the National Guard. He stated that some of those supplies may be used for the Winooski River clean-up scheduled for September 30, 2023. He stated that the deadline to apply for FEMA assistance has been extended to October 12, 2023. He shared that driveway repair can now be included in FEMA claims. He shared that claims can be made at the FEMA Recovery Center in Barre or online at FEMA.gov.

He shared that he and Road Foreman Bingham are working with the State to address the need for storm drain cleaning.

He reported that he and Hazard Mitigation Committee Chair Maggie Baird will attend an Emergency Preparedness Conference on September 20, 2023.

He reported that the Regional Coordinator for Vermont Emergency Management, Harry Schoppmann, had requested a report evaluating Plainfield's emergency response following the flood in July 2023. Billingsley stated that he had identified the need for an accessible public shelter in Plainfield and a community leadership plan to improve communications amongst Town authorities during an emergency. He reports that Schoppmann is working with Town Grant Administrator Alice Merrill to seek funding for an upgrade to the generator at the Plainfield Emergency Management office and that he continues to seek funding assistance through USDA for the same.

He described qualification criteria and benefits of the FEMA buyout program for homeowners. He stated that he is collaborating with State Hazard Mitigation to compile a list of homeowners who are interested in exploring this program.

He stated that he is modifying the Town LEMP (Local Emergency Management Plan), which the State requires be updated yearly, and will provide the document to the Select Board for their review and approval.

He shared that the Governor's office is partnering with Vermont Emergency Management, Efficiency Vermont, and FEMA in an initiative to assist homeowners in replacing furnaces and boilers which were damaged in the July flooding. He stated that the program is currently in planning stages and he will provide updates as they become available.

He shared that the Hazard Mitigation Committee is meeting on September 21, 2023. He shared that there have been volunteers who have come forward to create a Town Emergency Task Force and that he has reached out to Friends of the Winooski who have agreed to assist with possible participation in the Emergency Watershed Protection Program. Carlson stated that he is currently awaiting a response following the Town's application for the program.

Discuss issue of empty houses in Plainfield (George Cushing):

Cushing was not in attendance. The issue was tabled for a future meeting.

79 Bean Road Update:

Carlson stated that a letter had been mailed to the property informing current inhabitants of the zoning violations and the past DRB decision, the Town's intent to enforce zoning ordinances, and requesting that the property be vacated. He stated that he was told by VLCT that the notice of violation mailed in the past is sufficient and that it would be up to the court to define the amount of the fines imposed for the varying violations. Carlson stated that he has reached out to the Town attorney regarding the matter and awaits a response. Volz will attempt to reach the attorney and will report back at the next Select Board meeting. Carlson noted there is the option of holding a special meeting on the subject if needed to continue the process moving along.

Carlson recognized Mary Trerice. She inquired about her outreach to Carlson regarding the dog issue at 79 Bean Rd, wondering if Animal Control officer Peter Yasus had been in touch with the residents. Volz stated he will follow up with Yasus.

Carlson recognized Kim Nolan. Nolan asked if the Select Board had received follow up correspondence from the residents of 79 Bean Rd in response to the letter mailed. She also inquired about what language was included in the letter. Carlson stated he will provide Nolan with a copy of the letter.

Carlson recognized Zoning Administrator Karen Storey. Storey requested she also be provided a copy of the letter sent and asked that it be recorded in the land records. She requested that Town attorney, Michael Tarrant, also write a letter to the tenants of 79 Bean Rd. Volz will reach out to Tarrant to inquire about a letter and about whether a lien is needed, and will report back. Volz clarified that this case is held up in probate court.

Nolan shared that she believes the illegal activities on the property include lack of septic system. Volz added that the property line setback violations and possible year round occupation are also concerns. Nolan asked if the taxes had been paid on the property. Miller stated that although the taxes had been paid late, they were paid in full by a survivor of the deceased property owner. Nolan stated her belief that the driveway at 79 Bean Rd. was changed without a permit.

Formal 'Yes' for participating in Municipal Technical Assistance Program (MTAP):

Carlson moved to approve participating in the Municipal Technical Assistance Program. The motion carried unanimously.

Approve signing the Statement of Work for Central Vermont Regional Planning Commission for MTAP:

Volz moved to approve signing the statement of work for Central Vermont Regional Planning Commission for MTAP. The motion carried unanimously. Carlson will sign and return the document to Central Vermont Regional Planning.

Approve signing the Application for Access Permit for Peter Burmeister:

Carlson stated he had received an email from a neighbor of Burmeister concerned with wetland status. He stated that if this is an issue it would be resolved between the landowner and the State, that it's not in the Select Board's jurisdiction to manage wetlands. He reported that he had consulted the State wetlands map and noted the area of Burmeister's land in question appears to contain no wetland. **Carlson moved to approve the access permit for Peter Burmeister. The motion carried unanimously.**

Approval of warrants:

Accounts Payable: Carlson presented the September 7, 2023 accounts payable warrant for approval. **Volz moved to approve the presented warrant. The motion carried unanimously.**

Payroll: Carlson presented the September 7 and 14, 2023 payroll warrants for approval. **Volz moved to approve the presented warrants. The motion carried unanimously.**

Approval of draft minutes for 9/5/23:

Volz moved to approve draft minutes for September 5, 2023. The motion carried unanimously.

Kim Nolan shared that campers are parked at two properties on Brook Rd. and another camper is parked inside a structure on the same road. She stated that two of these campers appear to be inhabited. She also pointed out that someone on Brook Rd. is living in a bus year-round. She asked if anything is being done to address this issue which she referred to as an "infection". Carlson stated that a letter had been sent to Michael Hull regarding the trash on his property and noted that that property appeared to have been cleaned up. Volz and Carlson acknowledged the difficulties posed by the current housing crisis in the state which has been further exacerbated by the recent flooding. Volz stated that the Select Board will continue to focus on addressing the issues at the 79 Bean Rd. property before addressing these other complaints.

Adjourn: **Volz moved to adjourn at 7:11 pm. The motion carried.**

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