

Town of Plainfield Select Board Meeting
October 16, 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):
 - Town Report - Planning for Budget Meetings
 - Sidewalk Snow Removal Bid
 - Plow Truck Replacement Update
 - Rec Field Basketball Court Clean-up
- Road Foreman Report (Michael Bingham)
- Review Bids for External Audit
- Emergency Management Report (Michael Billingsley)
 - Discuss Emergency Management Budget Proposal
 - FEMA Buyouts of Flood-damaged Properties
 - Clarify Emergency Watershed Protection Program
- Authorize up to \$500 to bring fire engine for repair
- Approval of warrants:
 - Accounts Payable: 10/4/23
 - Payroll: 9/27/23, 10/5/23, 10/12/23
- Approval of draft minutes: 10/2/23
- Adjourn

Present: Select Board members Riley Carlson (Chair), Tim Davis, and Jim Volz. Also in attendance were Town Clerk/Treasurer Robin Miller, Road Foreman Michael Bingham, Emergency Management Director Michael Billingsley, Melinda Vieux, Kim Nolan, Jennifer Guarino, Joanne Szwed, Town Administrative Assistant Kristin Brosky, and Eric Blaisdell of the Times Argus.

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

Changes to Agenda:

At the request of Maggie Baird, chair of the Hazard Mitigation Committee, prior to this meeting Carlson suggested the addition of the appointment of David Hill to the Hazard Mitigation

Committee. It was agreed that this item would be added following the Emergency Management Report.

Announcements:

Carlson formally welcomed new Select Board member Tim Davis.

Carlson announced the resignation of Town Auditor Lorraine Cappetta, stating that she had sent a letter dated October 4, 2023 to the Select Board resigning as of October 1, 2023. Carlson read aloud the letter which cited multiple issues with receiving requested printouts from Town Clerk Miller and her dissatisfaction with computerized books without accompanying paper documentation as reason for her resignation. In the letter she recommended an outside audit for the year ending June 30, 2023.

Public Comment:

Carlson recognized Melinda Vieux. Vieux stated she was following up on the issue of the Town owned spotlight on the Plainfield Co-op building. Carlson stated he had brought the issue to the attention of the Town Clerk and Assistant Town Clerk and had been unable to find any record indicating that the light is owned by the Town. He suggested that Vieux contact the Co-op to see if they have documentation of ownership of the light. Select Board members agreed that, since the Town does not believe that the light is Town owned, there is no objection to the Co-op removing the light. Volz stated if it's determined that the Town owns the light then the Town will remove the light.

Carlson recognized Kim Nolan. Nolan asked for an update on the 79 Bean Rd property, noting that it is not on this meeting's agenda. She asked if the Town had provided a draft letter to the Animal Control officer as requested at the previous Select Board meeting. She shared that the dog owned by the residents at 79 Bean Rd had again come onto her property behaving in an aggressive manner. Town Clerk Miller stated that Plainfield Animal Control Officer Yasus had stopped by the clerk's office today and she had shared the Town Attorney's contact information with him so that he may pursue having an animal complaint letter drafted. Volz stated that he had already reached out to the Town Attorney Michael Tarrant and is awaiting a reply; he stated he will follow up the following day. He indicated that he had asked for counsel on wording for a dog complaint letter to mail to the residents of 79 Bean Rd, about the possibility of the Town bringing a lawsuit against the residents of 79 Bean Rd, and about a separate issue regarding empty houses in Plainfield. Nolan asked if a letter informing the residents at 79 Bean Rd of their zoning violations had been sent. Carlson confirmed that such a letter had been sent. Miller stated that Devon Lynch, a resident of 79 Bean Rd, had called the clerk's office and stated that they have sewer and water at the property and had intimated that the Town has incorrect information. Volz stated he would report back once he speaks with Michael Tarrant.

Nolan asked why the Highway Department had not traded in the old 10-wheeler when the new one was purchased. Road Foreman Michael Bingham stated that the Highway Department had decided to sell the truck outright so as not to be without a truck for any period of time. He stated there is one offer on the truck currently which will be presented during his report this evening.

Town Clerk/Treasurer Report (Robin Miller):

Town Report - Planning for Budget Meetings –

Miller indicated that scheduling of the budget meetings will need to be on the agenda for the next Select Board meeting. Carlson stated that at least three budget meetings will need to be scheduled. He stated he will work with the Town Administrative Assistant to compile a list of contacts for those meetings. Miller stated she had emailed Town committees, commissions, and boards to request reports for the Town Report. Miller stated she had not yet completed last year's budget spreadsheet but would complete it in time for review at the next Select Board meeting stating she hoped to be able to provide it to Select Board members by the end of the following week.

Sidewalk Snow Removal Bid –

Miller stated the Town had received only one proposal for sidewalk snow removal from the same person who had been hired last winter. Carlson noted that the bid includes a minimum amount the Town would be charged for the whole winter and asked if that amount was in the budget. Miller stated that it is approximately \$1000 over the budgeted amount for snow removal and noted that last year the Town spent \$5000 on snow removal. She noted he had been reliable last winter and residents had shared positive reviews of his work. She recommended the Select Board approve the bid. Bingham stated he had no objections. Davis read aloud the language included in the bid, including that the snow will be removed if there's an inch of snow or more at a rate of \$150/hr. with a minimum of \$7,000 for the season. **Volz moved to approve the sidewalk snow removal bid from David Herring and Louis Quinten for the terms that were submitted in their bid. The motion carried unanimously.**

Plow Truck replacement update –

Miller informed the Select Board that the International truck the Highway Department had expressed interest in purchasing would not be purchased. She shared that the existing plow truck has been repaired for now and a plow will also be ordered for the Highway Department's GMC pickup truck as a backup. She stated that a new plow truck would be considered in next year's budget. Bingham provided the Select Board with two bids for the plow for the GMC, Miller requested that the Select Board approve the expenditure. Bingham recommended purchasing from a Boss plow dealer in St. Johnsbury as the dealership the truck was purchased from can also service that brand of plow. **Volz moved to approve the bid from Boss Plow for installation of a plow at a cost of \$9,850. The motion carried unanimously.** Davis inquired about the option

of buying a State surplus plow truck. Bingham stated that this wouldn't be considered due to the wear and tear on such vehicles.

Rec Field Basketball Court Clean-up –

Carlson stated he would like the Town to put out a request for bids for removal of debris from the Recreation Field basketball court. Miller expressed her belief that the Recreation and Public Arts committee (Rec Committee) should take this on. Carlson stated that past Select Board member Bram Towbin had previously informed the Rec Committee that he was taking up the matter, and now it was unclear who would address it. Miller stated that she would put out a request for bids and would reach out to Lloyd Farnham who had previously entered a bid with Towbin. Carlson stated that the work description has changed as now the Town would like to push the debris to the side of the basketball court rather than truck it away. He stated that the goal is to make a safe area for children to play and noted that trucking the debris away adds considerable cost to the clean-up. Emergency Management Director Billingsley added that seeding the flood silt with grass would further improve its safety. Miller stated she would add seeding to the bid request.

Road Foreman Report (Michael Bingham):

Bingham provided Select Board members with a number of bids for the rip-rap work that had been put out to bid. He explained that this would address flood repair work needed at two locations on the Recreation Field Rd. where there is bank erosion, a location on Brook Rd. at the foot of Cameron Rd. where the wing wall has fallen apart, a location on the Brook Rd. near the intersection of Gray Rd. where there is bank erosion, and bank stabilization work on the Cameron Rd. Bingham explained that FEMA will reimburse for some of the cost of these repairs and recommended that the Select Board approve the bid from J. Fenoff Site Works. Carlson added that the FEMA reimbursement is 92.5% for eligible municipal projects. **Volz moved to approve J. Fenoff Site Works to do the projects that are listed on the bid that they put in. Carlson added that the Recreation Field Rd. site #1 would be a total of \$28,900, Recreation Field Rd. site #2 a total of \$18,220, Brook/Gray Rd. site a total of \$10,000, Cameron Rd. would be \$66,100, and Brook/Cameron Rd. would be \$7,760. The motion carried unanimously.**

Bingham informed the Select Board that the grader, which had been leaking oil at the valve cover and also needed the line from the turbo to the intercooler replaced, has been repaired and the road crew has been catching up on grading. He shared that road signs and cones continue to come up missing and will need to be replaced. Jennifer Guarino thanked Bingham for the good job grading the Lower Rd.

Bingham informed the Select Board the Steve Hogan had put in a proposal of \$20,000 for the purchase of the old 10-wheeler. Carlson stated that the sale of the truck should be put out to bid. Bingham stated that he will ask Town Clerk Miller to advertise the request for proposals.

Review Bids for External Audit:

Carlson shared that the Select Board had received three or four responses to the RFP for external auditing services for the fiscal year ending June 30, 2023, two of which included bids. He stated one is from Sullivan Powers and Company for \$28,000 and the other from Batchelder and Associates for \$25,000. He reiterated that former Town Auditor Cappetta had recommended an external audit. At the request of Davis, Carlson explained that the Town uses accounting software and Cappetta had exclusively used a handwritten paper ledger and for the fiscal year ending June 30, 2023 there had been a \$100 discrepancy between the two. Davis expressed his opinion that the expense of an external audit is not justified by such a small discrepancy, with Volz stating his agreement. Carlson pointed out that the Town has one other elected auditor, Susan Bradley, and the Town is required to have an audit completed every year. He suggested asking the opinion of Bradley. Volz suggested budgeting an external audit for next year and also stated that another good reason to have an external audit is the recent change of Town Treasurer. Carlson recognized Michael Billingsley who asked if there is any requirement for the interval of external audits. Carlson replied that the Federal government requires the Town to complete an external audit if the Town receives \$750,000 or more in federal funding and noted that that this will likely occur when the Town receives Federal funding for the replacement of the Brook Rd. bridge in the village. Volz suggested waiting until then to have an external audit completed. Carlson suggested gathering input from Town Clerk Miller, Assistant Town Clerk Carol Smith, and Auditor Bradley regarding their recommendation. He noted that the cost of an external audit this year would likely come out of the Town ARPA funds, which he acknowledged would be a use of funds that the Town has many other important uses for. Volz suggested the Select Board table the issue for now but continue to think about it.

Emergency Management Report (Michael Billingsley):

Discuss Emergency Management Budget Proposal –

Billingsley shared that the Emergency Management budget for the past four years has been \$500 during times of no disaster and was rarely spent. He noted that in 2018 the Select Board had approved a budget of \$1500. He noted there are ongoing expenses to outfit the Emergency Operations Center, sharing there is currently still a need to install radio communications. He requested that the Select Board approve an increase in the budget this year to \$1500. Carlson asked for a detailed proposal which Billingsley stated he has been unable to supply due to illness. Billingsley stated that the requested increase is to cover communications equipment, first aid equipment, and additional out-of-pocket expenses for the Emergency Operations Center. Davis voiced his support for the increase. Billingsley further described the needed first aid and communications equipment at the request of Select Board members. Carlson explained that it's difficult for the Select Board to approve a budget increase mid-fiscal year and asked Billingsley if he had discussed the request with Town Treasurer Miller as the increase would have to work within the budget that was approved at the last Town Meeting. Carlson acknowledged that the flood in July used the majority of the current Emergency Management budget. Jennifer Guarino

voiced her support for approval of increasing the Emergency Management budget. **Davis moved to approve the budget increase of \$1000 for Emergency Management. Volz moved to amend the motion, stating he would like to see an email identifying the specific identified expenses.** Carlson explained that the request to amend the budget mid-way through the year should receive the same scrutiny as a request would during the normal budget process. **Carlson moved to approve an allocation of an additional \$500 at this time to the Emergency Management budget and then at a future meeting the detailed request can be taken up and discussed at that time.** He stated his willingness to discuss with Town Treasurer Miller where this increase could be drawn from. Carlson acknowledged Joanne Szwed who voiced their support for fully funding the requested increase. **Carlson called for a vote on Davis' original motion. Davis voted in favor, Carlson and Volz opposed, the motion did not pass. Carlson called for a vote on his motion; there was no further discussion, the motion carried unanimously.**

Billingsley provided an update on the river bank cleanup showing photos of the effort for which there were 18 volunteers on September 16th and 24 volunteers on September 30, 2023 who removed 2.93 tons of debris from the river including 600 bags from the Montkush property upriver.

FEMA buyouts of flood-damaged properties –

Billingsley stated that the owners of 3 properties along the Winooski and one along the Great Brook have reached out to him expressing interest in the FEMA buyout program. He described the process and benefits of participation in the program. He requested the Select Board sign a resolution asking to participate in the program. Guarino asked for clarification about the Town's responsibility with participation in the program. Billingsley explained his understanding of the terms of the program and noted that the full terms of the program are currently unclear to him. **Davis moved to approve the resolution that reads: The Town of Plainfield agrees to participate in the Vermont Emergency Management Mitigation Programs property buyout program of 2023 and agrees to sponsor eligible properties for buyout. The motion carried unanimously.**

Clarify Emergency Watershed Protection Program –

Billingsley described the Emergency Watershed Protection Program and some of the Town areas that may benefit from the program. He shared that Jennifer Guarino is heading a task force that would look at Town properties that may benefit from the program. He shared that the Conservation Commission supports this proposal. Guarino clarified that the current request is for the Select Board to sponsor participation in the program. Billingsley stated that the deadline for commitment to participate in sponsorship of identified properties is October 24, 2023. Carlson clarified that the Emergency Watershed Protection Program (EWPP) is a federal program that works closely with State river management engineers to identify eligible sites. He further

clarified that the program does not cover property that was damaged in floods rather they cover property that was not damaged but, because of erosion of nearby waterways, may be damaged in future floods. Carlson stated that he would provide contact information to the Hazard Mitigation Committee for the Town's contact at Central Vermont Regional Planning for assistance with related administrative tasks. **Volz moved to approve the following language: The Town of Plainfield authorizes the Hazard Mitigation Committee and its EWPP task force headed by Jennifer Guarino to act as Plainfield's representative to identify sites on its behalf to be evaluated by the Emergency Watershed Protection Program. The motion carried unanimously.**

Authorize up to \$500 to bring fire engine for repair:

Volz moved to authorize up to \$500 to bring the fire engine in for repair. The motion carried unanimously.

Davis excused himself briefly from the meeting. Carlson and Volz informally discussed addressing the need for a Town Audit. Carlson shared that he had spoken with Town Clerk Miller and Assistant Town Clerk Smith and both expressed interest in having an auditor reconcile the books regularly. He stated this may require a separate RFP. Davis returned to the meeting.

Approval of warrants:

Accounts Payable:

Carlson presented for approval accounts payable warrants for October 4, 2023. **Volz moved to approve the presented warrants. Davis abstained. The motion carried with Carlson and Volz voting in favor.**

Payroll:

Carlson presented for approval payroll warrants for September 27 and October 5 and 12, 2023. **Volz moved to approve the presented warrants. Davis abstained. The motion carried with Carlson and Volz voting in favor.**

Approval of draft minutes: 10/2/23:

Carlson presented for approval draft minutes from October 2, 2023. **Volz moved to approve the presented draft minutes. Davis abstained. The motion carried with Carlson and Volz voting in favor.**

Adjourn:

Carlson moved to adjourn at 8:07 pm. The motion carried unanimously.

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