

Town of Plainfield Select Board Meeting
November 20, 2023
149 Main St. Plainfield, VT 2nd Floor and via Zoom
Minutes - Approved

Agenda:

- Changes to Agenda
- Announcements
- Public Comment
- Town Clerk/Treasurer's Report (Robin Miller)
 - Budget Planning update
- Road Foreman's Report (Michael Bingham)
 - Update on the Emerald Ash Borer/ Ash Tree Report
- Emergency Management Update (Michael Billingsley)
 - FEMA Flood Home Buyouts
- Approval of warrants:
 - Accounts Payable:
 - Payroll: 11/8/23, 11/16/23
- Approval of draft minutes: 11/6/23 and 11/9/23
- Executive session pursuant 1 V.S.A. § 313 evaluation of town employee (requested by employee)
- Return from Executive Session and announce any decisions
- 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, Conservation Commission members Becky Atchinson, Rose Paul, and Mary Trerice, Emergency Management Director Michael Billingsley, and Jennifer Guarino of the Hazard Mitigation Committee,

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

Changes to Agenda:

At the request of Miller, Carlson suggested the addition of a discussion regarding the Town Constable position reimbursement during the Town Clerk's Report. Select Board members agreed to this change.

Announcements:

Miller reported that the Town Office will no longer be posting announcements on the Plainfield People Facebook page. She stated that information and announcements will be posted to the Town website going forward.

Public Comment:

This agenda item was not discussed.

Town Clerk/Treasurer's Report (Robin Miller):

Budget Planning update – Miller stated that she has scheduled the committees, departments, and commissions who will present their budgets to the Select Board on November 29 and December 4 and 5, 2023.

Discussion regarding the Town Constable position reimbursement – Miller shared that Constable Christopher Keast had billed the Town for use of his private vehicle, fuel for his vehicle, use of his personal cell phone, a constable badge that he ordered, and his hours. She stated that Keast will be reimbursed for the badge once he submits a receipt. She notes that the Town pays for mileage at the Federal rate but does not reimburse for vehicle use or cell phone use. Carlson suggested Miller request that Keast submit mileage for reimbursement. Miller stated she will do so. Volz shared that Keast has requested that his cell phone number be removed from the Town website if its use will not be reimbursed. Miller will do so, leaving the Constable email address as a contact.

Road Foreman's Report (Michael Bingham):

Update on the Emerald Ash Borer/ Ash Tree Report – Bingham stated that he would like more information regarding this issue. Mary Trerice of the Conservation Commission stated that the full ash tree survey completed in 2019/2020 is available to view on the Conservation Commission page of the Town website. She shared that Plainfield has over 1,000 ash trees in the Town right-of-way and another 1,000 that are on private land but which would potentially fall into the Town right-of-way. She stated that, at the time of the survey, there were 139 ash trees that were dead or in poor condition. She noted that the Emerald Ash Borer has been identified in Plainfield and is doing damage to these trees. She explained the danger posed by dead ash trees and advised that the Town budget for and make a plan to address this issue. Becky Atchinson of the Conservation Commission added that there may be some ash trees which are immune and urged some caution around the removal of healthy trees. Rose Paul of the Conservation Commission, who is a botanist, offered to organize a drive around Town to identify the ash trees. Trerice suggested Bingham attend a State training regarding Town management of Emerald Ash Borer. Michael Billingsley suggested an AmeriCorps volunteer might be able to help with the effort. Davis suggested that the Town investigate partnering with a firewood supplier to cut the ash trees and sell it locally. Jennifer Guarino asked whether the tree survey had identified a

ranking for which ash trees need removal first and if there are state regulations regarding handling of the ash trees once cut. Trerice stated the report does contain recommendations. Bingham stated he will investigate the issue and will try to include this in the proposed budget for the coming year. He noted that the Road Foreman from East Montpelier had informed him that there are some grants available for the removal of ash trees. Bingham stated that he would appreciate Davis's help in investigating partnering with a local firewood supplier.

Bingham shared that the solar speed sign on Barre Hill has been vandalizing and will cost \$4,100 to replace or one third that cost to send out for repair but would have to be taken down for a couple of months. He stated the road crew will first attempt to repair it.

Emergency Management Update (Michael Billingsley):

FEMA Flood Home Buyouts – Billingsley shared that there are five Plainfield property owners who have expressed interest in participation in the FEMA home buyout program and have given their consent for their properties to be appraised to determine their pre-flood market value. He shared that the Town would be responsible for funding the appraisals and would then be reimbursed within three weeks of documentation of the expenditure. He further explained the buyout process and the Town's involvement. He shared that once the property owner finalizes their participation in the program the Town would then be reimbursed by FEMA for the cost of demolition of the structure. He explained that the only cost to the Town will be grading and seeding the land. Carlson and Davis expressed their support for participation in the program and will look forward to reviewing an agreement being put together by the State.

Guarino provided an update regarding the dam on the Winooski in Plainfield. She shared that she had spoken with Michele Braun, director of the Friends of the Winooski River, regarding the possibility of removing the dam. She stated that a feasibility study could be done at no cost to the Town. Select Board members expressed support for Guarino exploring having the study done.

Approval of warrants:

Accounts Payable – There were no accounts payable warrants presented for approval.

Payroll 11/8/23 and 11/16/23 – Carlson presented for approval payroll warrants for November 8 and 16, 2023. **Carlson moved to approve the presented warrants. The motion carried unanimously.**

Approval of draft minutes 11/6/23 and 11/9/23:

Carlson presented for approval draft minutes from November 6 and 9, 2023. **Carlson moved to approve the presented draft minutes. The motion carried unanimously.**

Executive session pursuant 1 V.S.A. § 313 evaluation of town employee (requested by employee):

Carlson moved that the Select Board enter executive session at 6:53 pm. The motion carried unanimously.

Return from Executive Session and announce any decisions:

The Select Board returned from executive session. **Carlson reported that, while in executive session, the Select Board had voted and approved a 10% increase in the pay rate of Assistant Town Clerk Carol Smith.**

Adjourn:

Carlson moved to adjourn at 7:04 pm. The motion carried unanimously.

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