

**Town of Plainfield Select Board Meeting and Budget Meeting
December 4, 2023
149 Main St. Plainfield, VT 2nd Floor and via Zoom
Minutes - Approved**

Agenda:

- Changes to Agenda
- Announcements
- Public Comment
- Cutler Memorial Library Budget Discussion (5PM)
- Select Board Budget Discussion
- Listers Budget Discussion (6PM)
- Recreation and Public Arts Committee Budget Discussion (6:30PM)
- Fire and Rescue Department Budget Discussion (7PM)
- Approve FEMA HMP grant for the replacement of Brook Rd. bridge
- Approve State Homeland Security Program grant application for generator for Town Hall/Opera House
- Approval of warrants:
 - Accounts Payable: 11/17/23
 - Payroll: 11/22/23 and 11/30/23
- Approval of draft minutes: 11/20/23
- Adjourn

Present: Select Board members Riley Carlson (Chair), Tim Davis, and Jim Volz. Also in attendance were Town Clerk/Treasurer Robin Miller, members of the Cutler Memorial Library Board of Directors Mary Niebling, Karen Hatcher, and Mary Trerice, Cutler Memorial Library Director Angela Ogle, Listers Sandy Ross and Gary Smith, Chair of the Recreation and Public Arts Committee Jamie Spector, Emergency Management Director Michael Billingsley, Fire Chief Greg Light, and Fire and Rescue squad member Joe Perreault.

Chair Carlson called the meeting to order at 5:09 pm.

Changes to Agenda:

Carlson suggested the addition of approval of an accounts payable warrant circulated amongst Select Board members earlier in the day by Town Clerk/Treasurer Miller. Select Board members agreed to this addition during “Approval of Warrants”.

Announcements:

There were no announcements.

Public Comment:

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

Cutler Memorial Library Budget Discussion:

Angela Ogle, Cutler Memorial Library Director, stated the library's request for an appropriation from the Town of Plainfield is for \$50,000. She shared that this increased request is due to the increased patronage at the library and associated administrative work, internet costs, and utility bills. She notes this is a \$5,000, or 10%, increase over the previous year's budget. She indicated that, compared to other town libraries, Cutler is providing services with far less funding. She notes that in the past year the library has received grants which have been helpful. Mary Niebling shared that in the last year the library had received \$116,000 in grants for various specific purposes. Select Board members acknowledged the great work of the Cutler Memorial Library and noted there is a lot of support for the library and its programs among residents and voiced support for the proposed budget. Ogle asked if the library should continue to enter their budget request at Select Board budget meetings in future years. Carlson stated that that would be acceptable and added that if the library were ever unhappy with the Select Board decision about the proposed library budget they would have the option of petitioning instead.

Select Board Budget Discussion:

Miller stated that Country Floors had recently made repairs to the tile floors at the Municipal Building and had recommended that all the tile floors be fully replaced. She stated this should be considered in the budget within the next few years. Carlson suggested updating the maintenance plan for the Municipal Building. Robin shared that the Vermont League of Cities and Towns (VLCT) insurance representative recently did a walkthrough of the Municipal Building and made suggestions for needed updates to meet code including emergency lighting and lit exit signs. She shared that she is waiting on an estimate from electrician, Alana Norway, following a walkthrough with the fire marshal. She shared that she will also be seeking quotes for replacement of some interior doors with fire-rated doors. She stated that she will email the fire marshal's report to Select Board members. Carlson noted there are some reserve funds for Municipal Building maintenance that may be able to be used for some of the needed work. Select Board members reviewed the line items in the Select Board proposed budget including Select Board and Auditor stipends and Town Maintenance Manager pay. Carlson recommended Miller add Municipal Building Cleaning as a separate budget line item. Carlson noted that Town Grant Administrator, Alice Merrill, is considering stepping away from the position and Select Board members explored the idea of combining some of the Town Administrative positions. Miller

recommended an increase in the yearly stipend for the Health Officer position, which is currently set at \$500, to \$750 or \$1000. Select Board members discussed and agreed to increase the stipend to \$1000.

Listers Budget Discussion:

Town Lister Sandy Ross joined the meeting. Ross shared that she has identified a firm to complete a town wide reappraisal in 2025. Miller stated that she will add the reappraisal cost, which is estimated to be approximately \$160,000, to the reappraisal fund. Ross indicated that the Lister's 2024 proposed budget should be about the same as the previous year's budget. Ross stated that the Town would like to find a third Lister to join her and Gary Smith. She explained that paper, printing, and postage of tax bills are a big part of the Lister budget. Lister Gary Smith pointed out that most Lister trainings are free of charge through the State. Ross stated that retired Lister Rick Pope is willing to continue to donate his time to assist with updating the GIS maps. Ross acknowledged that real estate prices have drastically increased and noted that the Town's state aid to education is tied to how close the ratio is between actual sale prices and the Town's grand list. She stated that the last town wide reappraisal was in 2008 and the town CLA (common level of appraisal) was at 98% for 6 or 7 years, then at about 95% and 93% until about two years ago when real estate prices began increasing and the percentage dropped to 85% and then last year to 73%. She noted that generally a reappraisal is mandated by the State once the CLA drops below 80% but shared that the town has not yet received a letter with that mandate. She stated that this is reflected in the increase in the individual tax bills residents have received. She explained that when the reappraisal is complete property values will be higher but that the end effect is that taxes will go down because the CLA will be adjusted. She shared that Plainfield currently has 605 taxable properties, 70 of which are vacant land, and 3 are utilities. Carlson verified with Ross that the Lister budget request is for level funding for the coming year. Ross asked if the Listers would be able to have new computers as the ones in their office now are about 15 years old. Miller shared that the Town Office has contracted with RB Technologies. Smith stated that, in addition to a desktop computer, the Listers would benefit from access to one or two tablets for field work. Ross pointed out that this expense could come from the reappraisal fund as these items will be needed for that work to be completed.

Recreation and Public Arts Committee Budget Discussion:

Jamie Spector joined the meeting. Spector requested that lawn mowing be moved from the Maintenance and Equipment account to the Port-a-let/Power account. She then asked that the Port-a-let/Power account be renamed "Fixed Expenses", as it will be used to pay for the port-a-let, power, mowing, and trash and recycling removal, and be budgeted at \$4,672.08. Spector requested the Maintenance and Equipment budget be increased to \$1,800, noting that there will be ongoing repairs needed to the aging electrical system at the Recreation Field. She requested level funding of the Outreach and Supply budget at \$150 for printing of flyers to advertise

community events. She requested a \$500 contribution to the Recreation and Public Arts Committee's reserve fund, the same amount as the previous year. She stated that the total request for the coming year is \$7,122.08. Carlson stated that this request seems reasonable. Spector requested that Miller review the records to ensure that the Recreation and Public Arts Committee had received full reimbursement from Cutler Memorial Library for shared expenses from the Vermont Afterschool Grant. Miller stated she will look into it. Spector shared that she hoped for a grant to fund a water fountain at the recreation Field had not been received. She explained that the total cost for the water fountain would be approximately \$6,000 after donation of a pressure reducing valve and excavation. She requested \$3,000 in ARPA funds and \$3,000 from the Town to fund completion of this project in the Spring of 2024. Select Board members stated support for proposing \$3,000 in the budget as a match for the federal ARPA funds to be put toward the water fountain project. Carlson stated that approval of ARPA funds for this purpose would need to be a warned agenda item at a future Select Board meeting. Spector stated she will confer with Town Grant Administrator Alice Merrill and provide information to the Select Board. Spector informed the Select Board that the Recreation and Public Arts Committee is also seeking grants to rebuild the skate park and install an ADA compliant loop path around the Recreation Field.

Fire and Rescue Department Budget Discussion:

As the meeting was ahead of schedule, and representatives from the Fire and Rescue Department were not yet in attendance, Select Board members agreed to discuss this agenda item later in the meeting. See below.

Approve FEMA HMP grant for the replacement of Brook Rd. Bridge:

Carlson explained that Town Grant Administrator Alice Merrill has requested that the Select Board approve the application to HMP for project management funding for a 0% Town match grant for replacement of the Brook Rd. Bridge in the village. **Volz moved to approve application for the HMP grant for project management funding for the Brook Rd. Bridge replacement project. The motion carried unanimously.**

Approve State Homeland Security Program grant application for generator for Town Hall/Opera House:

Carlson explained that this grant would be to upgrade the generator at the Town Hall Opera House and is also 0% Town match. Michael Billingsley explained that this grant would cover all of the cost involved in installing a generator behind the Town Hall Opera House that would power all electrical needs of the building in the event of a power outage, with the exception of the theatrical lighting. **Volz moved to approve application for the State Homeland Security Program grant for a generator for the Town Hall Opera House. The motion carried unanimously.**

Approval of Warrants:

Accounts Payable: Carlson moved to approve accounts payable warrants dated November 17 and December 4, 2023. The motion carried unanimously.

Payroll: Carlson moved to approve payroll warrants dated November 22 and 30, 2023. The motion carried unanimously.

Approval of Draft Minutes - 11/20/23:

Carlson moved to approve draft minutes from November 20, 2023. The motion carried unanimously.

Fire and Rescue Department Budget Discussion:

Fire Chief Greg Light joined the meeting. Light shared that the stipend for Rescue Squad members is \$250, with \$300 for two members who do additional administrative work. He recommended doubling the stipend as it has been the same for seven years. Select Board members agreed. Light shared that call volume is up this year and that the Fire and Rescue Department is in need of new members. He proposed level funding the electricity line item at \$1,400, internet and telephone at \$1,700, and disability insurance at \$2,200. Light and Select Board members agreed to increase the Fuel and Furnace line item from \$7,000 to \$7,500 to reflect increased cost of heating fuel. Carlson stated that the Fire and Rescue Department Building Improvement fund had a little under \$10,000 in it as of June 30, 2022. Light explained that basement floors will need to be replaced at the Fire Station and he's working to get an estimate. Light shared that the squad is looking at replacing the rescue truck and requested to know what funding was available in the equipment reserve fund. Miller stated she would send that total to Light the following day. Carlson stated that the total on June 30, 2022 was approximately \$100,000. Light and Select Board members agreed to level funding of the Equipment Reserve Fund at \$10,000. Perreault stated that EMT Captain Jonathan Matthews would like to replace the 20 year old AEDs (Automated External Defibrillators). Light stated that they will work with the Fireman's Club for assistance with that expense. Select Board members agreed to also increase the Safety Equipment and Medical Supplies budget to \$4,000. Light suggested leaving the Small Items and Repairs budget at \$3,000. Select Board members and Light agreed to keep Radio System Replacement in the budget. Select Board members and Light discussed the idea of budgeting for stipends for Fire Department volunteers.

Adjourn:

Carlson moved to adjourn at 7:33 pm. The motion carried unanimously.

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