

Town of Plainfield Select Board Special Meeting
March 11, 2024
149 Main St. Plainfield, VT 2nd Floor and via Zoom
Minutes - Approved

Agenda:

- Changes to Agenda
- Announcements
- Public Comment
- Town Clerk's Report (Bram Towbin)
 - Transition Update
 - Update on Municipal Office Technology & Infrastructure Needs
- Amend Approved Town Budget
- Follow-up on issue of muddy sidewalks on School St.
- Discuss Illegal Garbage Dumping in Plainfield's Town Forest
- Approve a Review Committee to work with VTrans on the US2/Main St Project
- Approve LaPerle/Holt Permit for Use of Right-Of-Way
- Define Expectations of Constable Position
- Reappoint Christopher Keast as Constable
- Reappoint Betsy Ziegler to CVSWMD Board of Supervisors for 1 year term
- Appoint Michael Billingsley as Plainfield's Emergency Management Director, Public Information Officer, and Representative to the Regional Emergency Management Committee
- Discuss request to move the 7500W generator from the Town Hall to the Municipal Building (Michael Billingsley)
- Approval of Warrants and Fleet Permits:
 - Accounts Payable: 3/4/24, 3/6/24, and 3/7/24
 - Payroll: 2/29/24 and 3/8/24
 - Fleet Permits
- Approval of Draft Minutes: 2/26/24
- Adjourn

Present: Select Board members Jim Volz (Chair), Tim Davis, and Patti Jamele. Also present were Steven Farnham, Assistant Town Clerk/Treasurer Carol Smith, Emergency Management Director Michael Billingsley, Town Clerk/Treasurer Bram Towbin, former Town Clerk/Treasurer Linda Wells, Eric Blaisdell of the Times Argus, Town Website Administrator Bob Fancher, Town representative to the Central Vermont Regional Planning Commission Paula Emery, Mo Lynch, and Town Grant Administrator Alice Merrill.

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

Changes to Agenda:

There were no changes to the agenda.

Announcements:

There were no announcements.

Public Comment:

Volz opened the floor to public comment and recognized Michael Billingsley. Billingsley asked the Select Board about their choice to continue holding special meetings on the second and fourth Mondays of the month rather than on their regular first and third Mondays. Volz explained the dates had been changed for the past few months due to holidays. The Select Board discussed the issue and agreed to make the second and fourth Mondays of the month their regular meeting time. Volz asked Town Grant Administrator Bob Fancher to update the website with this information.

Town Clerk's Report (Bram Towbin):

Transition Update – Towbin stated that his top priority is setting a date for Town Meeting and explained that within another two weeks this should be possible. He shared that he, the Town Auditors, and former Town Clerk/Treasurer Linda Wells are currently organizing the needed information for the Town Report. He explained that it will be beneficial to enlist Wells help for the next couple of months as well as increasing Town Administrative Assistant Kristin Brosky's schedule to thirty hours/week. He acknowledged Assistant Town Clerk/Treasurer Carol Smith's dedication to her position and the extra work she's putting in during the transition to a new Town Clerk. He shared that he'd met with Road Foreman Michael Bingham regarding ongoing work needed for the Town to be reimbursed for July 2023 flood damage. He expressed his interest in more clearly defining the roles of the Town Clerk and Town Treasurer, exploring the possibility of the positions being held by two people. He shared that he's researching how other Vermont towns define these roles. He shared his idea that, if on Town Meeting Day the voters approve expanding the Select Board from three to five members, each Select Board member would have an area of specialty. He used as an example that one of the Select Board members could also hold the position of Road Commissioner. He expressed his belief that the compensation for Select Board members should be increased. Billingsley shared that FEMA had been sharing information with him regarding deadlines for submission of documentation, stating that former Clerk Miller had not been able to meet deadlines, and asked Towbin where the Town currently stands in terms of flood assistance. Towbin shared that he will be meeting with a representative from FEMA this coming Monday. He explained that FEMA covers flood damage for all Town roads except Brook Rd. which has a federal designation and is therefore under the purview of VTrans. Towbin reiterated his belief that it will be helpful to have more public discussion and

involvement to help define the Town Clerk and Town Treasurer roles. He stated that former Town Clerk/Treasurer Wells will report about the Town budget at the next Select Board meeting.

Update on Municipal Office Technology & Infrastructure Needs –

Towbin shared that the Town will be getting a technology quote from Ormsby's after hearing rave reviews of their services from Marshfield Town Clerk/Treasurer Bobbi Brimblecomb. He stated that he will provide the proposal to the Select Board prior to their next meeting.

Amend Approved Town Budget:

This agenda item was postponed to the next Select Board meeting at the request of Towbin.

Follow-up on issue of muddy sidewalks on School St.:

Davis shared that he has reached out to the State District 6 representative to inquire about having the thick mud removed from the School St. sidewalks. He stated he's awaiting their response. He explained that if the State refuses he will reach out to the contractor who is currently working with the Town on sidewalk snow removal to see if that person has the capability of also removing mud. Towbin explained that the Town road crew is unable to do the work because their equipment is too large for use on the sidewalk. Billingsley added that he has also mentioned the need to clear the mud from to sidewalks to the State representative for District 6.

Towbin explained that he has contacted the State Agency of Transportation regarding the land collapse on the south side of Rte. 2 to the west of the village. He shared that he's been told that there is the possibility that Rte. 2 will need to be rerouted which would involve a temporary detour. Towbin expressed his concern that this could result in an increase of local traffic on the Town's unpaved roads. Billingsley added that he's been in discussion with river engineer George Springston regarding the bank collapse. He explained that the State geotechnical team has made the site a priority, coring down sixty feet to determine slope stability. He stated that the decorative boulder with an informational plaque has been temporarily moved from the location to the Town Garage for safe keeping. He stated he's awaiting results from the geotechnical team.

Town representative to the Central Vermont Regional Planning Commission (CVRPC) Paula Emery requested to speak having missed the opportunity for public comment earlier in the meeting. Volz recognized Emery who shared that, on March 21, 2024 from 6 to 8:30 PM at the Central Vermont Chamber of Commerce and via Zoom, the Natural Resource Board will give a presentation regarding the proposed changes to Act 250. Emery stated the information can be found on CVRPC's website and that she will post the information on Front Porch Forum.

Discuss Illegal Garbage Dumping in Plainfield's Town Forest:

Volz shared that concerned citizen, Sarah Fowler, had contacted the Select Board sharing that a large pile of garbage had been dumped in the Town Forest off of Taylor Farm Rd. and requesting

that the garbage be removed and a game camera installed to identify the illegal dumper. Volz stated that the road crew doesn't generally do that type of clean-up and that a group of volunteers may need to be identified. Emery stated that when items are dumped within the village residents pick it up and move it to the trash and suggested that the spot be addressed on Green-Up Day. Billingsley stated that the Town Forest is under the purview of the Conservation Commission and suggested they be contacted. Towbin suggested the Town put up 'No Dumping' signage. Davis stated that it would be a great idea for someone to donate temporary use of a trail camera. Volz questioned whether the land is Town owned. Towbin added he believes that the land may be privately owned.

Volz recognized Mo Lynch who shared that the Act 250 bill H687 is still in committee. She further shared that members of the Conservation Commission are in attendance of this meeting via Zoom and stated that clarifying which parcel the garbage has been dumped on would be helpful to the conversation. She also reminded the Select Board that Green-Up Day is strictly a volunteer effort.

Volz recognized Steven Farnham who asked if the potential Rte. 2 reroute at the west side of the village might be able to be done concurrently with the scheduled Rte. 2/Main St. intersection rebuild so as to minimize the disruption to local businesses. Towbin stated that the Town is awaiting confirmation from the State that the reroute will be necessary before making any decisions, but noted that the timing may not line up. Billingsley stated his disagreement with the suggestion that there would be any benefit to the projects occurring concurrently.

Approve a Review Committee to work with VTrans on the US2/Main St Project:

Volz stated that Town Grant Administrator Alice Merrill had urged the Select Board to consider appointing a committee to work with VTrans on the US/Main St. project. Select Board members expressed their support for this. Volz stated that the next step will be to reach out to the individuals Merrill had suggested in order to determine their interest in serving on such a committee.

Approve LaPerle/Holt Permit for Use of Right-Of-Way:

Volz stated that Road Foreman Michael Bingham had informed the Select Board prior to this meeting of his approval of the requested use of right-of-way. Volz shared that applicants Justin LaPerle and Hailee Holt have sought permission to excavate and backfill the public highway in order to install sewer, water, and electric lines to a house at the top of Harvey Hill Rd. **Davis moved to approve the LaPerle/Holt Permit of Use of Right-Of-Way. The motion carried unanimously.** All Select Board members signed the permit application.

Define Expectations of Constable Position:

Volz stated that the Select Board is not prepared to define the constable position at this meeting. Towbin stated that the position of Town Constable has evolved over time and needs to be reevaluated. He noted that currently the main responsibility of the Town Constable is to ensure that the streets are clear of parked cars for the road crew to complete village snow plowing. Billingsley stated that job descriptions exist for all Town positions and encouraged Select Board members to research how other towns define the role of Constable. Volz stated that he will do that research and asked Towbin to include consideration of the Town Constable position in the reworked budget he will bring to the next Select Board meeting. Davis questioned whether the Town might consider phasing out the Town Constable position. Billingsley stated that the Town Constable should have state training.

Reappoint Christopher Keast as Constable:

Davis moved to appoint Christopher Keast as Constable with the understanding that the Select Board will define his position. The motion carried unanimously.

Volz recognized Steven Farnham who shared his observation that the road crew has been doing tremendous work under abysmal conditions to keep Town roads clear. He expressed his thanks to the road crew. Volz encouraged Farnham to email his comments to Road Foreman Bingham.

Reappoint Betsy Ziegler to CVSWMD Board of Supervisors for 1 year term:

Davis moved to appoint Betsy Ziegler to the CVSWMD (Central Vermont Solid Waste Management District) for a one year term. The motion carried unanimously.

Appoint Michael Billingsley as Plainfield's Emergency Management Director, Public Information Officer, and Representative to the Regional Emergency Management Committee:
Volz thanked Billingsley for all of his work for the Town. **Jamele moved to appoint Michael Billingsley as Plainfield's Emergency Management Director, Public Information Officer, and Representative to the Regional Emergency Management Committee. The motion carried unanimously.**

Discuss request to move the 7500W generator from the Town Hall to the Municipal Building (Michael Billingsley):

Billingsley explained that the 7500W generator is in good condition. He stated that he is interested in creating resiliency and continuity of government in the face of a disaster that might cause a loss of electricity to the Municipal Building. He stated that the Vermont Community Foundation has indicated that they may be able to supply the funding to move the generator. He stated that he's requesting Select Board approval for the move so it may be written into the grant proposal. Davis inquired why the Fire Department had turned down the offer to have the generator moved to their building. Billingsley explained that the Fire Station already has a

gasoline powered generator. Select Board members expressed agreement with the idea of moving the generator to the Municipal Building but withheld full approval until Billingsley can provide quotes estimating the cost.

Volz recognized Emery who shared that it appears that the illegal garbage dumping is occurring on Rhea Wilson and Rick Levy's property, not on Town owned property.

Approval of Warrants and Fleet Permits:

Accounts Payable: 3/4/24, 3/6/24, and 3/7/24 – **Jamele moved to approve the accounts payable warrants dated March 4, 6, and 7, 2024. The motion carried unanimously.**

Payroll: 2/29/24 and 3/8/24 – **Jamele moved to approve the payroll warrants dated February 29 and March 8, 2024. The motion carried unanimously.**

Fleet Permits – there were no fleet permits presented for approval.

Volz recognized Town Grant Administrator Alice Merrill who shared that she has been speaking with Vermont Community Fund who have indicated to her that they will cover the cost of moving the 7500W generator from the Town Hall Opera House to the Municipal Building. Merrill apologized for missing the earlier discussion of agenda item “Approve a Review Committee to work with VTrans on the US2/Main St. Project” and informed the Select Board that the intended purpose of the review committee would be to review the engineering report looking at the functional and aesthetic aspects of the US2/Main St. project and bringing recommendations to the Select Board. She stated that the reviews will occur when the design is 30%, 60%, and 90% completed. She clarified that she has not yet reached out to all her recommended review committee members. She stated that she recommends the following individuals for the committee: a representative from the Town road crew, a representative from the water/wastewater plant, a water/wastewater commissioner, Susan Grimaldi of the Plainfield Historical Society, Keith Swann of the Town Hall Opera House, Jane Bradley for her ADA expertise, Town representative to CVRPC Paula Emery, Town representative to the CVRPC Transportation Advisory Committee Bob Atchinson, and former Select Board member Tammy Farnham for her experience working with VTrans on the Main St. Bridge project. Volz stated he would reach out to this list of individuals to request their participation.

Volz recognized Billingsley who stated Lori Stratton has expressed interested in an appointment to the position of Emergency Management Coordinator. He asked if Stratton had reached out to the Select Board. Volz stated she had not.

Approval of Draft Minutes - 2/26/24:

Davis moved to approve draft minutes dated February 26, 2024. The motion carried unanimously.

Adjourn

Davis moved to adjourn at 7:10 pm. The motion carried unanimously.

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