

Town of Plainfield Select Board Meeting
October 14, 2024
Town Hall Opera House at 18 High St. and Via Zoom
Minutes - Approved

As there was no recording of this meeting due to a technical issue, the minutes presented here are abbreviated as they are taken from memory and brief notes.

Agenda:

- Changes to Agenda
- Announcements
- Public Comment
- Town Clerk's Report (Bram Towbin)
 - Update on search for Town Treasurer
 - Update on securing loan from Bond Bank
 - Update on Town Employee health insurance
 - Update on Mill St. Bridge
 - Discuss use of ARPA funds for Town administration
- Road Commissioner's Report (Josh Pitts)
- Appoint Johnathan Matthews Fire Chief (Gary Graves)
- Appoint Karen Jones Town Auditor
- Grants Administration Team Report (Karen Hatcher)
 - Request motion of support to move forward with funding available through the Federal Highway Administration for the repair of Brook Rd.
- Discussion regarding purchase of Goddard College property (Mike Davidson)
- Proposal for replacing the EVSE charger at the Mill St. Park (Bob Atchinson)
- Discussion and Appointment to fill open Select Board seat through Town Meeting 2025
- Approval of Warrants:
 - Accounts Payable: August 27th, September 1st, 3rd, 6th, 17th, 19th, and 29th, and October 10th, 2024
 - Payroll: August 28th and September 5th, 12th, 19th, 25th, and October 2nd and 9th, 2024
- Approval of draft minutes
- Announce date for next Select Board meeting
- Adjourn

Present: Select Board members Karl Bissex (Chair), Patti Jamele, Frances Rose Subbiondo, and Dan Fingas. Also present were Eric Jacobson, Charlie Cogbill, Emergency Management

Director/member of Hazard Mitigation Committee Michael Billingsley, Town Clerk/Treasurer Bram Towbin, Road Commissioner Josh Pitts, Fire Chief Gary Graves, Town Grants Administrator Karen Hatcher, Kristie Farnham, Mike Davidson, Town Energy Coordinator Bob Atchinson, Peter Youngbaer, and David Perreault. There were 20 in-person attendees and 30 Zoom attendees.

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

Changes to Agenda:

There were no changes to the agenda

Announcements:

Fingas announced that the Select Board will hold all future meetings at the Plainfield Town Hall Opera House unless otherwise noted.

Public Comment:

Bissex recognized Eric Jacobson who asked about plans for use of the Goddard campus. Bissex recognized Charlie Cogbill who submitted a copy of correspondence he'd had with the Town attorney for Select Board review. Bissex recognized Emergency Management Director/member of Hazard Mitigation Committee Michael Billingsley who provided information regarding an upcoming meeting about the Marshfield Dam being held Thursday, October 17, 2024 at 7 pm.

Town Clerk's Report (Bram Towbin):

Update on search for Town Treasurer – Towbin and Cogbill discussed legal requirements and posting for the position of Town Treasurer. Towbin stated he has gotten legal opinion from Vermont League of Cities and Towns regarding the process.

Update on securing loan from Bond Bank – Towbin shared he was continuing the process to get a bond for Plainfield from the Bond Bank.

Update on Town Employee health insurance – Towbin shared that the current health plan offered to Town employees is the Blue Cross Blue Shield Gold Plan and a reimbursement account. He raised the question of whether the Town will support family health insurance or subsidy as some towns do. He shared that a representative from Blue Cross Blue Shield will come and speak at a future Select Board meeting. He informed the Select Board that the Town employee health insurance needs to be chosen by the new year at the latest.

Update on Mill St. Bridge – Towbin discussed meeting with the chief engineer from the State and option of raising the bridge and associated costs.

Discuss use of ARPA funds for Town administration – Towbin stated that Town staff are aware of expenses and the need for making informed spending decisions.

Road Commissioner's Report (Josh Pitts):

Pitts reported that he had accomplished submitting all documentation for the 2023 Federal Highway flood event and damage to recoup costs for repair of Brook Rd. in that flood. He shared that the next step in addressing the current damage to Brook Rd. from the 2024 flood is to go to the State for a list of engineers to figure out scoping and needs of the road. He stated that a new member of the road crew has started work and will be attending State sponsored trainings.

Appoint Johnathan Matthews Fire Chief (Gary Graves):

Graves reported that he will be stepping down as interim Plainfield Fire Chief and recommended appointment of Johnathan Matthew to the position. **Fingas moved to appoint Johnathan Matthew as Fire Chief. Subbiondo seconded. The motion carried unanimously.**

Appoint Karen Jones Town Auditor:

Towbin presented regarding the need for a Town Auditor and recommended the appointment of Karen Jones to the position. **Fingas moved to appoint Karen Jones as Town Auditor through Town Meeting 2025. Subbiondo seconded. The motion carried unanimously.**

Grants Administration Team Report (Karen Hatcher):

Request motion of support to move forward with funding available through the Federal Highway Administration for the repair of Brook Rd. – Hatcher explained that 100% of repair costs will be covered by a Federal Highway grant with the caveat that the repairs need to be made within 270 days of the federal disaster declaration. She stated that the funds could be used to safely rebuild and to hire an engineer to do scoping. She suggested emergency repair be made now with longer term planning done under the Hazard Mitigation grant. She shared that the RFP seeking a consultant for assistance with FEMA applications had resulted in a firm from Tallahassee, FL winning the bid. She reported that a representative from the firm will attend the upcoming community information meeting on October 21, 2024. She stated that the Grants Administration Team is seeking input from town folks on the Village Expansion Project and explored whether the project may qualify for Neighborhood Development designation. Kristie Farnham asked about the Town being on a State list for future projects. Farnham and Hatcher agreed to meet soon to further discuss the State grant program.

Discussion regarding purchase of Goddard College property (Mike Davidson):

Davidson shared that he is a developer who will be purchasing Goddard College campus, having just heard of the property two weeks ago. He stated that he is still developing ideas and doesn't currently have a specific plan for the property. He imagined plans could include housing, arts, food, and wilderness and expressed his interest in geothermal and solar energy. He stated he

would appreciate input from the Town and acknowledged that losing Goddard College is a loss for the Town. Davidson acknowledged the many niches within the scope of the project that he knew he has no capacity to take on and underscored how the success of the project depended upon the right people stepping forward to take on breathing life into its component pieces. He shared his hope that the ethos of Goddard can be maintained. There was discussion about how large a population the Town could support, exploring the idea the population could potentially increase to 1500 or 1600 residents.

Proposal for replacing the EVSE charger at the Mill St. Park (Bob Atchinson):

Atchinson shared that Green Mountain Power (GMP) will pay for up to \$750 per port. He noted if the project goes over budget, money can be pulled from the Energy Coordinator budget. He presented a letter to GMP regarding use of the funds to be signed. **Fingas moved to approve replacing the EVSE charger at the Mill St. Park. Subbiondo seconded. The motion carried unanimously.**

Discussion and Appointment to fill open Select Board seat through Town Meeting 2025:

It was shared that Peter Youngbaer, David Perreault, and Lydia Vitale had applied for the open Select Board seat and had been interviewed by Bissex and Subbiondo. Youngbaer and Perreault each spoke of their experience. Subbiondo stated that the interview process had shown that all three are qualified candidates. Jamele shared she had known Youngbaer for a long time. It was stated that the term of office would be through Town Meeting 2025. Billingsley stated that there is also a need for someone to fill the Emergency Manager position which will be on the ballot at Town Meeting in March 2025 in addition to three Select Board seats. Subbiondo pointed out the short term of the appointment and the need for someone who can address Towns needs right away, noting that Youngbaer has knowledge of issues like health insurance and is already informed and researching issues related to the upcoming Rte.2/Main St. intersection project. Graves expressed his opinion that Youngbaer would make a great Emergency Manager; Youngbaer declined. Bissex noted that Youngbaer seems ready to work on road and healthcare issues. **Subbiondo moved to appoint Peter Youngbaer as the fifth Selectperson through Town Meeting 2025. Jamele seconded. The motion carried unanimously.** Select Board members expressed their hope that Perreault and Vitale will run for the Select Board in the future or apply to fill other open positions in Town government.

Approval of Warrants:

Accounts Payable: August 27th, September 1st, 3rd, 6th, 17th, 19th, and 29th, and October 10th, 2024 – Fingas moved to approve accounts payable warrants dated August 27th, September 1st, 3rd, 6th, 17th, 19th, and 29th, and October 10th, 2024. Jamele seconded. The motion carried unanimously.

Payroll: August 28th and September 5th, 12th, 19th, 25th, and October 2nd and 9th, 2024 –
Fingas moved to approve payroll warrants dated August 28th and September 5th, 12th, 19th, 25th, and October 2nd and 9th, 2024. Subbiondo seconded. The motion carried unanimously.

Approval of draft minutes:

Fingas noted he had not been present for the September 24, 2024 Select Board Special Meeting and should be removed from the list of those present in the minutes. **Subbiondo moved to approve the draft minutes for the September 24, 2024 Select Board Special Meeting with the noted change. Bissex seconded. The motion carried unanimously.**

Announce date for next Select Board meeting:

It was announced that the next Select Board meeting will be a Special meeting held on Monday, October 21, 2024 at 7:00 pm at the Town Hall Opera House and via Zoom.

Adjourn:

Bissex moved to adjourn at 7:45 pm. Subbiondo seconded. The motion carried unanimously.

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