

Town of Plainfield Select Board Meeting
Monday, October 28, 2024, 6:00 PM
Plainfield Town Hall Opera House, 18 High St., and Via Zoom
Minutes - Approved

Agenda:

- Changes to Agenda
- Announcements
- Public Comment
- Town Clerk's Report (Bram Towbin)
- Discuss and approve Town Treasurer health insurance and annual salary of \$45,000
- Appointment of Bram Towbin as Assistant Town Treasurer by Town Treasurer followed by discussion and approval of annual salary of \$45,000 for the Town Clerk/Assistant Town Treasurer position
- Discuss and act on ARPA funds reclassification
- Road Commissioner's Report (Josh Pitts)
- Discuss issue of parking in front of 20 School St
- Discuss and act on East Montpelier Ambulance Services Contract
- Discussion about and possible appointment of Select Board Vice Chair and Secretary
- Discuss delegating areas of specialization to each Select Board member
- Discussion about completion of Select Board minutes
- Authorize Town Clerk Bram Towbin to sign paving contract for Mill St. Bridge
- Approval of Warrants:
 - Accounts Payable: October 11 and 25, 2024
 - Payroll: October 16 and 24, 2024
- Approval of draft minutes: September 18, October 14 and 21, 2024
- Announce date for next Select Board meeting
- Adjourn

Present: Select Board members Karl Bissex (Chair), Patti Jamele, Frances Rose Subbiondo, Dan Fingas, and Peter Youngbaer. Also present were Town Clerk Bram Towbin, Town Treasurer Josh Pitts, Charlie Cogbill, Town Grants Administrator Karen Hatcher, Emergency Management Director Michael Billingsley, Plainfield Fire Chief Johnathan Matthew, Dawn Fancher, and State Representative Marc Mihaly.

Chair Karl Bissex called the meeting to order at 6:02 pm.

Changes to Agenda:

There were no changes to the agenda.

Announcements:

Bissex announced his new email is selectboard8@plainfieldvt.gov. Peter Youngbaer announced that work is in progress to allow for Board of Abatement information to be posted on the Town website.

Public Comment:

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

Town Clerk's Report (Bram Towbin):

Towbin suggested that the Town Clerk and Town Treasurer salaries be set at \$45,000 each annually. He stated that he would mentor the new Town Treasurer in learning the roles of the position.

Towbin shared that the Personnel Policy had mistakenly not been followed regarding offering health insurance to a new Road Crew member with benefits being offered at Day 1 rather than Day 30 of employment. He requested that the same courtesy be extended to newly hired Town Treasurer, Josh Pitts.

Subbiondo asked if Towbin's resignation as Town Treasurer was complete. Towbin stated his understanding that he had provided notice of his resignation to the Select Board.

Charlie Cogbill pointed out that the Town Clerk/Treasurer gets paid approximately \$7,000 annually from the Water/Wastewater Department. Cogbill stated his understanding that the Town cannot set a new salary for the Town Treasurer position per the Town Charter as the budget had passed with an elected rather than appointed Town Treasurer. Towbin disagreed. Fingas also disagreed, pointing out that the switch to the Town Treasurer position being appointed had occurred at Town Meeting ahead of the approval of the budget. Cogbill encouraged the Town to get advice from Vermont League of Cities and Towns (VLCT). Fingas spoke in support of approving the Town Clerk and Treasurer salaries at his time. Subbiondo suggested a motion could be presented that includes seeking VLCT opinion.

Josh Pitts, speaking as Water Commissioner, pointed out that the Water/Wastewater budget is paid by the users of the system who are not all Plainfield residents. He noted that the Water/Wastewater budget does not come out of the Town budget and it is at the discretion of the Water Commission to represent the interests of the users of the system.

Karen Hatcher suggested the budgeted \$56,000 for the Town Clerk/Treasurer positions be split between the Clerk and Treasurer as an interim step to allow time to consult with VLCT with the final salaries being figured out later. Pitts pointed out there is too much work to be done for one person, that two fully paid individuals are needed to do the required work of the Town Clerk and Treasurer positions. Michael Billingsley pointed out that the fiscal year is already one third done so the remaining two thirds of the budgeted salary is remaining for the Town Clerk and Treasurer positions. Fingas stated the Town can use APRA funds for municipal salaries and pay both positions \$45,000. Youngbaer agreed and stated the Town had received that advice from Vermont League of Cities and Towns (VLCT) and pointed out that the Town budget has been thrown off by the unexpected expenses required by flood recovery. He spoke in support of approving \$45,000 annual salary for both the Town Clerk and Town Treasurer positions noting that he feels these salaries should be considered for an increase in the coming budget cycle.

Towbin resigned as Town Treasurer effective immediately. He agreed to provide his resignation in writing to the Select Board.

Discuss and approve Town Treasurer health insurance and annual salary of \$45,000:

See discussion above. **Fingas moved to approve a salary of \$45,000 a year along with health insurance for the Town Treasurer. Subbiondo seconded. The motion carried unanimously.**

Appointment of Bram Towbin as Assistant Town Treasurer by Town Treasurer followed by discussion and approval of annual salary of \$45,000 for the Town Clerk/Assistant Town Treasurer position:

Fingas moved to approve an annual salary of \$45,000 for the Town Clerk position.

Subbiondo seconded. Youngbaer pointed out that the attorney from VLCT informed the Town that the Town Treasurer may only appoint one Assistant Town Treasurer, he noted that the Town currently has an Assistant Town Treasurer therefore Towbin would not be appointed to that position at this time. He acknowledged that time will be needed for Towbin and Pitts to sort out the tasks of Clerk and Treasurer that until now have been performed by one person, he stated his expectation that the job descriptions for both positions will be revised expressing hope that this may happen in time for Town Meeting budget decisions. Bissex called for a vote. Billingsley pointed out that the motion did not include health insurance. Youngbaer and Fingas voiced disagreement with the need to include this as this would be covered by the Personnel Policy which already applies to the Town Clerk position and noted the motion is for salary adjustment only. **The motion carried unanimously.**

Discuss and act on ARPA funds reclassification:

Towbin explained he was informed by VLCT that the approximately \$173,000 in ARPA funds which was allocated to replacement of the Brook Rd Bridge 21 in the village could legally be unobligated and put to alternate use by the Town.

Fingas moved to unobligate \$173,250.00 that was obligated at the 10/18/2022 Select Board meeting for the Bridge 21 project. Jamele seconded. The motion carried unanimously.

Fingas moved to expend SLFRF funds in the amount of \$180,790.99 for the purpose of municipal workforce retention to pay for payroll expenses for the period of July 1, 2023 through April 15, 2024. Subbiondo seconded. The motion carried unanimously.

Road Commissioner's Report (Josh Pitts):

Pitts shared that he is working with the Road Foreman to identify areas to work on in town. He shared that they've created a citizens reporting form for anything that people see that is wrong with the roads. He reported that all submissions had been completed for the 2023 Federal Highway Reports which should lead to flood repair reimbursements. He described the scope of work and shared that the Mill St. Bridge re-work by J.A. McDonald and directed by VTrans began today and should take a couple of days to complete. Towbin stated that the Town is seeking a contractor to do winter sidewalk clearing. Hatcher thanked Pitts for his great work as Road Commissioner. Subbiondo echoed this sentiment and praised the auto reporting form which will create a system of records of road conditions. Youngbaer raised concerns about speeding on Town roads. Towbin stated traditionally the Town Clerk or Road Commissioner would liaise with the sheriff but noted that increased patrolling would mean increased Town costs. Youngbaer requested clarity on the policy for who is the Town contact to the Sheriff's Department and requested that the Select Board take up the issue at a future meeting. Bissex pointed out that the Road Crew has installed speed limit signs to meet the standards. Towbin stated he will request the State consider putting up signs at the intersection of Rte. 302 to warn drivers of the road closure at Brook Rd. and the grades on East Hill Rd. Fingas suggested the Select Board would play a role in approving increased expenditures for sheriff patrols. Billingsley requested a Select Board motion to empower him to use Waze software to redirect traffic to Middle Rd rather than East Hill Rd. He shared that the Town is a Waze partner and he is the representative who can mark a route as being preferred. Bissex stated the Select Board would need further information. Towbin returned to the topic of the Sheriff contract, sharing that that the yearly contract is for \$10,000 of which approximately \$9,000 has already been paid.

Discuss issue of parking in front of 20 School St:

This topic was discussed after "Discuss and act on East Montpelier Ambulance Services Contract".

Towbin explained that this discussion is in reference to a short stretch of road connecting Rte. 2 and Main St. in front of the old hardware store building at 20 School St. and shared that over the years there have been many disagreements regarding parking in that area. He explained that in the past the area was approved for parking nine vehicles for business customers. He stated that the area falls in the highway right of way and that the intersection will change when road work is

done in 2029. He shared that many residents have contacted him with concerns about the safety of the road and the ability of emergency vehicles to navigate through. He shared that the current owner doesn't feel parking should be banned and hopes the Town will make a suggestion of the number of parking spaces that would be approved. Matthew shared that it can be a problem for emergency vehicles and larger vehicles to fit through. Fingas suggested the space be measured to figure out if parking can be accommodated and noted that the Town parking lot doesn't allow overnight parking. Pitts shared that he owned a business at and now lives in the building at 20 School St. and noted that the sidewalk in front of the building has not been maintained by the Town. He further noted it is illegal to park on a sidewalk and suggested the Town could improve the sidewalk. He also noted that the road is not currently meeting federal standards for a connector road and suggested the town leverage more attention for safety and design. Fingas asked what the State's role might be in determining parking on the road as it is a State right of way and therefore may not be under Town jurisdiction. Subbiondo asked if the redesign of the Rte.2/Main St intersection takes this issue into account and noted any action the Town takes is temporary. Youngbaer stated he is awaiting a reply from Tammy Farnham regarding the intersection design. Towbin stated the Town has committed to the intersection project. Dawn Fancher pointed out that vehicles have gotten bigger and so the problem is greater. Bissex suggested the Select Board do further research on the intersection and invite the landlord of 20 School St to attend a future meeting for further discussion.

Discuss and act on East Montpelier Ambulance Services Contract:

This topic was discussed before "Discuss issue of parking in front of 20 School St".

Towbin explained that Plainfield contracts with East Montpelier for ambulance services. Bissex recognized Fire Chief Johnathan Matthew who shared that East Montpelier has a fast response time for calls to Plainfield. Youngbaer clarified the fees, reading from the contract that Year 1 would be \$55,232; Year 2 would be \$56,890; and Year 3 would be \$58,596. Towbin stated he would look up the Town's current payments to verify if the contract amounts are correct because the contract states incorrect dates. Youngbaer stated the Select Board should not sign the current document. Subbiondo requested that Towbin contact Paul Guare of East Montpelier Ambulance Services for clarification.

Discussion about and possible appointment of Select Board Vice Chair and Secretary:

Bissex urged the Select Board to consider appointment of a Vice Chair who would sit in in the Chair's absence and a Secretary that would be contacted regarding minutes and issues being brought to the Board. Bissex clarified that if he were absent from a meeting the Select Board could vote to appoint an acting Chair for that meeting. Towbin suggested a member of the Board should consider reviewing the Town Health Plan prior to the deadline. Subbiondo spoke in favor of another Board member aside from the Chair collaborating on finalizing agendas. Billingsley stated that if there is no Emergency Management Director appointed then the Chair is the

Emergency Management Director. State Representative Marc Mihaly shared that when he was Vice Chair of the Calais Select Board the workload was minimal other than to cover in the Chair's absence. Fingas suggested board members bring nominations to the next regular meeting. **Subbiondo moved to establish the position of Vice Chair on the Select Board of Plainfield. Youngbaer seconded. The motion carried unanimously.**

Discuss delegating areas of specialization to each Select Board member:

Bissex and Towbin expressed interest in the Select Board designating liaisons for certain areas of work including Roads, Personnel, Emergency Management, Fire and Rescue, Grants, Hazard Mitigation, Development Review, and Planning. Youngbaer pointed out the benefit of two Select Board members being able to confer and stated his interest in the areas of Town health benefits and personnel. Fingas pointed out the Open Meeting Act would govern any committees formed by the Select Board and suggested instead appointing liaisons to other Town groups. Hatcher shared that Bissex is liaison to the Grants Workgroup. Billingsley pointed out that the charter of the Hazard Mitigation Committee states that a member of the Select Board takes part in the committee.

Discussion about completion of Select Board minutes:

Bissex stated that the minutes should be completed within five days of a meeting. He suggested that AI be used to draft minutes which would be reviewed by the Administrative Assistant. Pitts recommended P Script for transcription. Youngbaer argued for succinct minutes. Bissex suggested the minutes be completed by someone attending the meetings in person. Subbiondo stated she would follow up with Administrative Assistant Kristin Brosky to see about trialing AI for minutes; Bissex stated he would ask if Brosky would attend meetings in person for completion of minutes. Fingas stated that the minutes should follow State law. Bissex stated the Select Board should follow up with Brosky and other Towns. Mihaly suggested that minutes should include a to-do list for future meetings.

Authorize Town Clerk Bram Towbin to sign paving contract for Mill St. Bridge:

Jamele moved to authorize Town Clerk Bram Towbin to sign paving contract for Mill St. Bridge. Towbin requested "for Mill St Bridge" be removed from the motion as the contract includes other paving as well. Bissex requested a modified motion. **Jamele moved to authorize Town Clerk Bram Towbin to sign paving contract in the amount of \$89,440 to Pike Industries. Fingas seconded.** Towbin and Pitts shared that the paving work will be paid out of a dedicated fund and from Water/Wastewater. **The motion carried unanimously.**

Approval of Warrants:

Accounts Payable: October 11 and 25, 2024 – **Jamele moved to accept accounts payable warrants for October 11 and 25, 2024. Fingas seconded. The motion carried unanimously.**

Payroll: October 16 and 24, 2024 – Jamele moved to accept payroll warrants for October 16 and 24, 2024. Fingas seconded. The motion carried unanimously.

Approval of draft minutes: September 18, October 14 and 21, 2024:

Youngbaer stated he would abstain from voting on approval of minutes from September 18 and October 14, 2024 as he was not yet on the Select Board. **Fingas moved to approve draft minutes dated September 18 and October 14 and 21, 2024. Jamele seconded. The motion carried with four members voting in favor and Youngbaer abstaining.** Youngbaer pointed out that the October 21, 2024 minutes should read “Federal Single Audit” rather than “audit” under the discussion regarding the Integrity Group. He pointed out that the Federal Single Audit would be an expense for the Town.

Announce date for next Select Board meeting:

Bissex stated that the next regular meeting would fall on Veteran’s Day. Select Board members conferred and agreed to meet on November 13, 2024 at 6pm.

Youngbaer stated the need for the Select Board to schedule budget meetings. He requested Towbin or Pitts provide a budget versus year to date through September 30, 2024. Towbin stated he will attempt to provide this information and learn how to break out Plainfield money versus monies from outside sources. Towbin stated flood related expenses are separately accounted for.

Adjourn:

Fingas moved to adjourn at 8:08 pm. Subbiondo seconded. The motion carried unanimously.

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