

Town of Plainfield Select Board Special Meeting
November 13, 2024
18 High St., Plainfield, VT and Via Zoom
Minutes - Approved

Agenda:

- Call Meeting to Order
- Changes to Agenda
- Announcements
- Public Comment
- Town Clerk's Report (Bram Towbin)
- Town Treasurer's Report (Josh Pitts)
 - Discuss scheduling budget meetings
 - Update on discussions with the Bond Bank about a loan
 - Request approval to retain Elijah Emerson of Primmer Piper Eggleston & Cramer PC if the Bond Bank offers the Town an opportunity for a loan
- Road Commissioner's Report (Josh Pitts)
- Discussion regarding Bean Road and next steps
- Nominations for Select Board Vice Chair
- Approval of warrants
 - Accounts Payable: 11/3/24
 - Payroll: 10/31/24 and 11/7/24
- Approval of 10/28/24 draft minutes
- Announce date for next Select Board Meeting
- Adjourn

Present: Select Board members Karl Bissex (Chair), Patti Jamele, Dan Fingas, Frances Rose Subbiondo, and Peter Youngbaer. Also present were Kristie Farnham, Town Treasurer and Road Commissioner Josh Pitts, Town Clerk Bram Towbin, Elijah Emerson of Primmer Piper Eggleston & Cramer PC, Adam Hochschild, Kim Nolan, and Ryan Christiansen.

Call Meeting to Order:

Select Board Chair Karl Bissex called the meeting to order at 6:03 pm.

Changes to Agenda:

There were no changes to the agenda.

Announcements:

Bissex shared that FEMA and engineering consultants will visit next week to assess Brook Road's repair needs, noting the cost of repairs is uncertain, potentially ranging from one to twenty million dollars. He stated that the Select Board has not made any decisions regarding cash flow needs from the Bond Bank.

Public Comment:

Bissex opened the floor to public comment and recognized Kristie Farnham. Farnham expressed concern for the safety of residents of Brook Road and adjoining roads noting emergency response time is now longer to many of these homes and urged the Select Board to invest in opening Brook Road or investing in making East Hill Road safer for through traffic. Road Commissioner Josh Pitts explained that portions of Brook Road are being repaired with some sections still incomplete and the option of temporary bridges is being explored. He stated that each portion is being reviewed with a municipal project manager and noted that the project is large and will take time.

Town Clerk's Report (Bram Towbin):

Town Clerk Bram Towbin apologized for not posting tax dues dates due to network issues, sharing that ongoing software outages have hindered tax payment processing and other administrative tasks.

Town Treasurer's Report (Josh Pitts):

Discuss scheduling budget meetings – Pitts stated his readiness for scheduling budget meetings and requested a point person from the Select Board. He stated he will draft a schedule for the budget meetings which the Select Board can adopt with the goal of having the budget complete by mid-January to allow for printing and distribution of Town Report prior to Town Meeting. The possibility of forming a subcommittee for detailed budget discussions was considered and instead the Board agreed to participate in the budget creation process as a whole. It was explained that there will likely be four budget meetings.

Update on discussions with the Bond Bank about a loan – Pitts shared that he has spoken with Ken Fengal, representative from the Bond Bank, and was informed that the Town is likely to be approved.

Request approval to retain Elijah Emerson of Primmer Piper Eggleston & Cramer PC if the Bond Bank offers the Town an opportunity for a loan – Towbin described the role Emerson would play in providing counsel through the process of borrowing from the Bond Bank, stating Primmer Piper Eggleston & Cramer PC has worked with the Town in the past. Bissex recognized Elijah (Eli) Emerson who stated he has a good working relationship with the Bond Bank and is familiar with the needed forms and documents and provided an overview of the process for

borrowing from the Bond Bank. **Fingas moved to approve retaining Elijah Emerson of Primmer Piper Eggleston & Cramer PC as our Bond counsel for this upcoming bond. Jamele seconded. The motion carried unanimously.**

The board discussed the potential for the case to go to trial if the resident does not pay the fines, emphasizing the need for a clear communication of the fine amount before the court date. The board acknowledged that if the resident moves the RV, they may still pursue the fines but the primary objective remains to have the RV removed.

Road Commissioner's Report (Josh Pitts):

This topic was discussed following “Discussion regarding Bean Road and next steps”.

Pitts explained that the Town has a process for receiving a 100% refund from federal funds for work done to repair Brook Road before April 5, 2025. He stated that the first refund should be for work on the section of Brook Road between Cameron Road and Creamery St. He stated that temporary bridges are being considered for areas of Brook Road that are currently impassable.

He shared that the public has been using the online new roads form to report issues on Brook Road and for culvert repair requests. He reported that he spent time with residents on Fowler Road discussing needed maintenance on that road.

The board is awaiting a report from the Integrity Group regarding FEMA Public Assistance which may provide better estimates for necessary road repairs. The board discussed the need for engineering assessments to determine costs for potential infrastructure projects, particularly concerning Brook Road, with a focus on obtaining accurate estimates without incurring out-of-pocket expenses.

Discussion regarding Bean Road and next steps:

This topic was discussed prior to “Road Commissioner's Report (Josh Pitts)” at the request of Adam Hochschild.

Bissex recognized Kim Nolan who requested the Select Board set a dollar amount for the fines that will be levied against the property owner who has violated Town Zoning Regulations. There was discussion of the fee structure for the violations from February 2, 2021 to present. It was determined this is a total of 1,382 days in violation at \$200 per day for a total fine of \$276,400. **Fingas moved to send both the Melanie Sargent estate and Devin Lynch a letter with a fine for \$276,400 for zoning violations spanning from February 2, 2021 to present. Subbiondo seconded. The motion carried unanimously.**

Nominations for Select Board Vice Chair:

Jamele moved to appoint Frances Rose Subbiondo as Select Board Vice Chair. Youngbaer seconded. The motion carried unanimously. The Vice Chair will assist in agenda discussions and provide support when the chair is unavailable.

The Select Board discussed the formation of liaisons instead of committees to address Town issues. Members expressed interest in various topics: Bissex for roads and infrastructure, Youngbaer for health and long-term egress from Town, Subbiondo for development and future visioning, Fingas for Development Review Board and Zoning, and Jamele for Hazard Mitigation. The importance of having multiple liaisons for accountability was emphasized, though it was noted that not every issue requires two representatives. The board considered inviting the Vermont Council on Rural Development (VCRD) to assist in long-term planning for the Town.

Approval of warrants

Accounts Payable dated 11/3/24 and Payroll dated 10/31/24 and 11/7/24 – **Fingas moved to approve the Accounts Payable warrant dated November 3, 2024 and the Payroll warrants dated October 31, 2024 and November 7, 2024. Subbiondo seconded. The motion carried unanimously.**

Approval of 10/28/24 draft minutes:

Youngbaer moved to approve the October 28, 2024 draft minutes. Jamele seconded. The motion carried unanimously.

The board discussed the ongoing concerns about compliance with meeting minutes, with significant gaps noted from previous months, and shared that Administrative Assistant Kristin Brosky is working on updating the minutes.

Announce date for next Select Board Meeting:

The next regular Select Board meeting is scheduled for Monday, November 25, 2024 at 6:00 pm.

Adjourn:

Fingas moved to adjourn. Jamele seconded. The motion carried unanimously and the meeting was adjourned at 7:33 pm.

Minutes respectfully submitted by Kristin Brosky, Administrative Assistant.