

Town of Plainfield Select Board Meeting
Monday, November 25, 2024, 6:00 PM
Plainfield Town Hall Opera House, 18 High St., and Via Zoom
Minutes - Approved

Agenda:

- Changes to Agenda
- Announcements
- Public Comment
- Update from attorney Eli Emerson regarding loan from Bond Bank
- Discuss and act on letter of commitment for Municipal Climate Recovery Fund (MCRF) - EA loan
- Town Treasurer's Report (Josh Pitts)
- Road Commissioner's Report (Josh Pitts)
- Discuss and act on Village Expansion Steering Committee request for Select Board to request Vermont Council on Rural Development assistance with organizing an up-coming community design process meeting for Feb. 8, 2025 (Arion Thiboumery)
- Plainfield Arts Update and review renewal contract for Plainfield Arts (Keith Swann)
- Grants Committee Update (Karen Hatcher)
- Energy Coordinator Update (Bob Atchinson)
- Appointment of Beto Silva to Recreation and Public Arts Committee
- Approval of Warrants:
 - Accounts Payable: November 3, 2024
 - Payroll: November 14 and 21, 2024
- Approval of draft minutes: November 18, 2024
- Executive Session pursuant 1 V.S.A. § 313 to consider an employee grievance
- Return from Executive Session/Decisions (if any) in public
- 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/Road Commissioner Josh Pitts, Co-Manager of Plainfield Farmer's Market Rae Carter, Keith Swann of Plainfield Arts, Village Expansion Steering Committee member Arion Thiboumery, Emergency Management Director Michael Billingsley, Charlie Cogbill, Dawn Fancher, Town Grants Administrator Karen Hatcher, Mary Trerice, David Delcore, Eli Emerson, Grace Worcester, George Cushing, Scottie Harrison, Kristie Farnham, Phillip Parisi, and Town Energy Coordinator Bob Atchinson.

Chair Karl Bissex called the meeting to order at 6:04 pm.

Changes to Agenda:

Bissex announced there were changes to the agenda. Fingas suggested the agenda be modified to include an accessibility request related to AmeriCorps after the Road Commissioner's Report. He also noted the Executive Session had been warned incorrectly and would be changed to "Executive Session pursuant 1 V.S.A. § 313 A 1 B to consider labor relations with employees".

Announcements:

Bissex announced that the following week's Select Board meeting would be held at the Municipal Building on December 2, 2024. He announced that Jamele would be joining the meeting shortly. Youngbaer announced that the Town website now has a page for the Board of Abatement. He also shared that the previous week a delegation from the White House and FEMA visited to understand the challenges faced by Vermont towns post-flood. The visit included discussions on inter-agency coordination and the need for additional federal funding. Fingas noted that Jamele had joined the meeting via Zoom. Billingsley stated that the first winter storm is expected the following day, urging caution with ice and freezing rain.

Public Comment:

Bissex opened the floor to public comment. Rae Carter, Co-Manager of Plainfield Farmer's Market, shared that the Winter Market will be held the first Sunday of each month at the Town Hall Opera House from 11am-3pm. Karen Hatcher expressed gratitude for the Friendsgiving held at Goddard campus put on by Mike Davidson, Celina Barton, and other volunteers.

Update from attorney Eli Emerson regarding loan from Bond Bank:

Bissex recognized Eli Emerson. Emerson shared that the Bond Bank approved a loan specifically for flood response designed as interim financing until FEMA funds are received. The loan does not require a town vote but needs approval from the Select Board, with closing expected soon. The loan is structured as a one-year current expense note, which can be replaced with a refunding note if necessary. Key conditions include using 50% of any FEMA reimbursement to prepay the loan and providing audited financial statements annually. Full loan documents will be approved and signed at a future meeting with closing expected the week of December 16, 2024. Bissex recognized Philip Parisi who asked for clarification regarding the loan and the Town request for FEMA reimbursement. Hatcher explained that the town has incurred approximately \$2 million in costs related to flood recovery, with ongoing tracking of damages and invoices. She also clarified that the FEMA application deadline this evening pertains to individual assistance, not public assistance for municipalities. Questions were raised regarding the implications if FEMA does not reimburse the expected amounts and the potential burden on taxpayers. The loan has a low interest rate of 0.5%, but concerns about future federal administration changes and

their impact on funding were expressed. Hatcher shared that the Bond Bank mentioned a possibility for loan forgiveness if full reimbursement from FEMA is not achieved. She mentioned that FEMA is one of several funding sources being pursued, including Federal Highway funding. Emerson stated he will discuss the loan forgiveness verbally mentioned with the Bond Bank to encourage its inclusion in the legal documents as loan forgiveness commitment is not currently in the commitment letter.

Discuss and act on letter of commitment for Municipal Climate Recovery Fund (MCRF) - EA loan:

Youngbaer moved that the Select Board Chair sign the commitment letter. Subbiondo seconded. The motion carried unanimously.

Pitts will email the letter to Ken the following day.

Town Treasurer's Report (Josh Pitts):

Pitts stated that the Town is addressing a backlog of invoices from flood-related expenses and has paid off non-flood expenses. He shared that the Town still needs to move the now uncommitted ARPA funds to the General Fund. The fiscal position is stable, with revenue from the Federal Highway Works Administration reimbursement for 2023 flood damage expected the following week. He shared that he is meeting with representatives from Fire and Rescue and the Highway Department to prepare the proposed budget for the coming fiscal year. A simplified chart of accounts is being developed to improve financial tracking and budgeting.

Road Commissioner's Report (Josh Pitts):

Pitts shared that the Highway Department has obtained all the needed sand for the winter weather maintenance. He shared that the road crew is putting in guard rails on Cameron Rd. and Brook Rd. and plans to put in guard rails on Maxfield Rd. He described the system for documenting flood funds and payment. The Town will invoice the State for reimbursement of expenses related to these emergency repairs. The process for reimbursement from Federal Highway is more efficient compared to FEMA.

Proposal for AmeriCorps Position (Michael Billingsley):

Billingsley is seeking a letter of intent to create an AmeriCorps position to assist with Emergency Management tasks. The position would focus on disaster planning and hazard mitigation, with no financial commitment required from the Town. The Select Board will review the draft letter of intent and RFP for approval at the next meeting.

Discuss and act on Village Expansion Steering Committee request for Select Board to request Vermont Council on Rural Development assistance with organizing an up-coming community design process meeting for Feb. 8, 2025 (Arion Thiboumery):

Thiboumery stated that the steering committee for the Village Expansion Project requested the Select Board to formally ask for help from Vermont Council on Rural Development (VCRD) with the design and facilitation of a public design day on February 8th, 2024. VCRD requires the request to come from the Select Board to access their funding streams for facilitation services and direct mailings. A draft letter requesting assistance has been prepared and needs to be signed and sent to Jessica Savage of VCRD. The Select Board discussed the content of the draft letter, which thanks VCRD for their previous visit and outlines the specific request for assistance with the community design meeting.

Subbiondo moved to formally request VCRD assist with upcoming Feb 8th community design process meeting for Village Expansion Steering Committee by signing the letter. Jamele seconded. The motion carried unanimously.

Subbiondo moved to have Karl Bissex sign request letter. Youngbaer seconded. The motion carried unanimously.

Plainfield Arts Update and review renewal contract for Plainfield Arts (Keith Swann):

Swann shared that fourteen events have been staged by Plainfield Arts and twenty-one events and multi-day rentals were held in the past year. He stated that Plainfield Arts has been managing the Town Hall Opera House without a formal management agreement since July 2024 due to the floods and they are requesting a payment of \$5,000 for their services. The Select Board confirmed that the management contract had already been signed, and they discussed the need to process the payment for the services rendered. The Select Board agreed to send an invoice to facilitate the payment to Plainfield Arts.

Grants Committee Update (Karen Hatcher):

Hatcher shared that the Grants Group's mission is to secure flood recovery funds for the Town, with an informational webpage available for updates. Emergency repair work is nearing completion, including the temporary Mill Street Bridge funded by VTrans and road repairs under the Federal Highway Program. A damage inventory for FEMA Public Assistance (PA) grants is being compiled, with significant contributions from consultants and team members. The group is currently in a 60-day window for FEMA PA, aiming to finalize damage inventory and submit for reimbursement. Future work will focus on engineering and community discussions regarding reconstruction options and resilience planning. She shared that the group is investigating the Emergency Watershed Protection Grant and is looking at sixteen properties that could potentially be helped by grants for mitigating future damage due to floods. She stated that a \$30,000 grant was secured to pay for consultation from the Integrity Group to help with these processes.

Energy Coordinator Update (Bob Atchinson):

Atchinson shared that the application for the Municipal Energy Resilience Program was approved, securing \$306,180.60 for various energy efficiency projects including energy upgrades at the Town Hall Opera House, Municipal Office Building, Fire Station, and Town Garage. Planned improvements include weatherization, geothermal systems, battery backups, and EV chargers for municipal buildings.

Atchinson stated that the Town owns land behind the old schoolhouse, which is a potential site for a solar array. He explained that there is an urgent need to contract solar installations before January 1st due to changes in group net metering regulations. He stated that the grant agreement needs to be signed in order to take funds by December 16, 2024.

Subbiondo moved to allow Bob Atchinson to sign on the Town's behalf for MERP funds in the amount of \$306,180.60. Jamele seconded. The motion carried unanimously. A team will be formed including Pitts, Towbin, and Sam Lash to oversee related tasks.

Atchinson shared that he will be working to fix the current EV charger; he needs to order a part and get a local electrician to do the work. A quote for replacing the Mill St. Park charger was received for \$678, with reimbursement expected to be \$750. He plans to order an extra unit for the Municipal Building as part of the MERP grant, considering accessibility and electrical panel locations.

Appointment of Beto Silva to Recreation and Public Arts Committee:

Fingas moved to appoint Beto Silva to the Recreation and Public Arts Committee. Subbiondo seconded. The motion carried with four Select Board members voting in favor and Youngbaer abstaining.

Approval of Warrants:

Accounts Payable: November 3, 2024; Payroll: November 14 and 21, 2024 –

Fingas moved to approve the Accounts Payable warrant dated November 3, 2024 and the Payroll warrants dated November 14 and 21, 2024. Subbiondo seconded. The motion carried unanimously.

Approval of draft minutes: November 18, 2024:

Youngbaer moved to adopt the minutes from November 18, 2024. Subbiondo seconded. The motion carried unanimously.

Executive Session pursuant 1 V.S.A. § 313 A 1 B to consider labor relations with employees:

Fingas moved to enter Executive Session pursuant to 1 V.S.A. § 313 A 1 B to consider labor relations with employees. Youngbaer called for a point of order, explaining that the executive

session could not be for a personnel grievance as a grievance had not been made as outlined by the personnel policy. **Youngbaer seconded. The motion carried unanimously.**

Return from Executive Session/Decisions (if any) in public:

The Select Board returned from Executive Session and Bissex announced there was nothing to report and no decisions had been made.

Announce date for next Select Board meeting:

The next Select Board meeting is scheduled to take place at the Municipal Building on Monday, December 2nd at 6:00pm.

Adjourn:

Fingas moved to adjourn at 8:22pm. Jamele seconded. The motion carried unanimously.

Minutes respectfully submitted by Kristin Brosky, Plainfield Town Administrative Assistant.
Minutes created with AI assistance from the Sembly app.