

Town of Plainfield Select Board Special Meeting
Monday, January 6, 2025, 6:00 PM
Plainfield Town Hall Opera House, 18 High St., and Via Zoom
Minutes - Approved

Agenda:

- Call Meeting to Order
- Changes to Agenda
- Announcements
- Public Comment
- Discuss and act on East Montpelier Ambulance Services Contract
- Central Vermont Economic Development Corporation Update (Melissa Bounty)
- Hazard Mitigation Committee Budget Review (Maggie Baird/Michael Billingsley)
- Emergency Management Budget Review (Michael Billingsley)
- Shelter Reserve Fund Budget Review (Michael Billingsley)
- Recreation and Public Arts Committee Budget Review Finalization (Jamie Spector)
- Listers Budget Review
- Discussion of Town Office and how to modify and assist with roles
- Approve of Draft Minutes: December 16 and 23, 2024
- Approval of Warrants:
 - Accounts Payable: December 9 and 19, 2024 and two warrants dated January 1 and one dated January 3, 2025
 - Payroll: December 12, 19, 26, and 28, 2024
- Announce date for next Select Board Meeting: January 13, 2025
- Adjourn

Present: Select Board members Karl Bissex (Chair), Frances Rose Subbiondo, Dan Fingas and Peter Youngbaer. Select Board member Patti Jamele was not in attendance. Also present were East Montpelier Fire Department Chief Albert Petrella, East Montpelier Fire Department board member Sandy Conti, East Montpelier Fire Department board president Jay Copping, Town Treasurer/Road Commissioner Josh Pitts, Central Vermont Economic Development Corporation Executive Director Melissa Bounty, Emergency Management Director Michael Billingsley, Hazard Mitigation Committee Chair Maggie Baird, and Plainfield Lister Kayle Hope.

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

Changes to Agenda:

Subbiondo suggested the addition of a discussion of Mill St. Bridge safety. Bissex suggested this item be added toward the end of the meeting, Subbiondo agreed.

Announcements:

Bissex announced temporary changes to the Town office hours due to illness. The office will now be open from 8 AM to 4 PM on Mondays and Fridays.

Bissex stated that Town Meeting is scheduled for March 4, 2025. He shared the Town is seeking additional Town Auditors and an Administrative Assistant for the Clerk's Office.

Bissex announced public information meetings regarding the Plainfield Village Expansion Project are scheduled for January 9 and 12, 2025.

Subbiondo announced that the Town sidewalks were plowed today with new Town machinery. She thanked the Road Foreman and Road Commissioner.

Public Comment:

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

Discuss and act on East Montpelier Ambulance Services Contract:

Bissex welcomed members of the East Montpelier Fire Department and stated the Town's interest in signing a one-year contract for ambulance services. East Montpelier Fire Department representatives provided information regarding Plainfield ambulance calls for the past 3 years with a total of 120 calls in FY22-23, 136 in FY23-25, and 132 in FY24-25. It was noted that typically a town has engaged in a three-year contract with a one-year notice for termination. Concerns were raised about the timing of contract decisions affecting budget planning for the ambulance service. The current cost for the ambulance service is \$58,596, with proposed increases over the next three years. A compromise of a two-year contract was suggested to balance predictability and flexibility for both parties. A decision was made to consult the Plainfield Fire Chief before taking any action on the budget at next Monday's Select Board meeting. Bissex will reach out to Plainfield Fire Chief Johnathan Matthew.

Central Vermont Economic Development Corporation Update (Melissa Bounty):

Bissex welcomed Central Vermont Economic Development Corporation (CVEDC) Executive Director Melissa Bounty. Bounty explained that historically CVEDC has requested an appropriation of \$300 from the Town of Plainfield but noted that this year they had received a donation from a private citizen to cover the cost. She reported that in the past year CVEDC assisted three businesses in Plainfield focusing on flood recovery and business location issues, facilitated the "Capitol for a Day" visit of the Governor and Cabinet to Plainfield post-flood, as

well as facilitated four visits from Federal delegation members. She explained that Plainfield flood recovery is on the CVEDC priority list. The organization is available to help Plainfield with funding opportunities and project proposals. She stated that there is a ride program that can give rides to and from the new Plainfield Co-op location. She further explained that CVEDC could be available to help with the old Co-op location if there are potential buyers, listing the building for sale or lease, connecting with the Co-op Board, and other potential needs.

Hazard Mitigation Committee Budget Review (Maggie Baird/Michael Billingsley):

Bissex recognized Hazard Mitigation Committee Chair Maggie Baird who informed the Select Board that the Hazard Mitigation Committee is requesting a budget of \$1,174 for 2025 to fund the work of the committee which will focus on emergency preparedness initiatives and a feasibility study for the Batchelder Dam. She noted this is up from \$1,024 budgeted last year of which \$38 was used. The committee plans to host a spring forum focused on emergency preparedness for individuals with disabilities and to purchase public resource materials. There was a discussion about the appropriateness of the budget request in light of previous spending, with some members expressing concerns about the overall budget size.

Emergency Management Budget Review (Michael Billingsley):

Emergency Management Director Michael Billingsley shared that Emergency Management focuses on disaster recovery and community resettlement after disasters occur. The current Emergency Management budget is significantly lower than other departments, with a request for a stipend to attract a new director. The budget for Emergency Management has increased from \$2,800 to \$6,000, reflecting the growing needs due to recent disasters. Billingsley has been heavily involved in coordinating disaster response efforts, including sheltering and resource distribution. A disaster reserve fund is proposed to provide immediate cash for emergency-related expenses without waiting for board approvals. The fund would allow for quick responses to disasters, covering costs such as equipment rentals and safety barriers. A request was made for the Emergency Management budget to be set at \$11,000. Billingsley explained that Washington County has experienced a high number of declared disasters, making the proposed budget for Emergency Management reasonable. A suggestion was made to reduce the budget by \$1,000 by opting for a less expensive cell phone plan. The budget includes funding for an employee to maintain institutional memory for disaster response. There was discussion of the need for funding sources to cover Emergency Management expenses, including food and supplies for shelters. The Red Cross may reimburse costs if the shelter is certified, but upfront funding is required. The possibility of utilizing funds from donations made for disaster relief was raised.

Shelter Reserve Fund Budget Review (Michael Billingsley):

A suggestion was made to increase the annual contribution to the shelter reserve fund to ensure adequate resources for feeding individuals during emergencies. The current balance of the shelter

reserve fund is approximately \$3,000, and increasing it would help prepare for future needs. The current budget request is for \$1,400.

Recreation and Public Arts Committee Budget Review Finalization (Jamie Spector):

Recreation and Public Arts Committee Chair Jamie Spector was not in attendance. Fingas reviewed the minutes from the December 16, 2024 Select Board meeting stating the proposed budget for the Recreation and Public Arts Committee totals \$8,750, covering expenses such as mowing, trash, and power bills. Subbiondo clarified that this agenda item should have been an Old Home Days line item discussion regarding the proposed increase from \$900 to \$1,800. Town Treasurer Pitts stated that amount should be able to be covered.

Listers Budget Review:

Select Board members, Pitts, and Lister Kayle Hope briefly reviewed the Lister budget which is proposed to be level funded from the previous year.

Discussion of Town Office and how to modify and assist with roles:

Bissex began discussion of the role of the new Administrative Assistant, the hours required, and if the position needs to be part-time or full-time. The need for clear job descriptions for the Town Clerk and Treasurer roles was emphasized to improve office efficiency. The board discussed the importance of addressing the high workload and stress levels among current staff members. The discussion highlighted the inefficiency of current processes, suggesting that administrative tasks could be delegated to a new hire. An outline of office functions has been created to clarify roles and responsibilities, which will assist in training new staff. Subbiondo stated her willingness to participate in the hiring process and will coordinate with current Administrative Assistant Kristin Brosky. Recording interviews with prospective candidates was proposed to allow other board members to provide input later. There is a need to post the job on Indeed, but access to the account is currently unclear.

Safety Concerns at Mill Street Bridge:

Subbiondo raised concerns about the lack of guardrails on the Mill Street Bridge posing a risk to children crossing it. A potential solution discussed was the installation of storm fencing at an estimated cost of \$250 to enhance safety. The board considered whether the Road Commissioner could handle the installation without requiring a formal vote.

Approve of Draft Minutes: December 16 and 23, 2024:

Fingas moved to approve the draft minutes dated December 16 and 23, 2024. Subbiondo seconded. The motion carried with the four board members present voting in favor.

Approval of Warrants:

Accounts Payable: December 9 and 19, 2024 and two warrants dated January 1 and one dated January 3, 2025; Payroll: December 12, 19, 26, and 28, 2024 –

Fingas moved to approve the accounts payable warrants dated December 9 and 19, 2024 and two warrants dated January 1 and one dated January 3, 2025 and the payroll warrants dated December 12, 19, 26, and 28, 2024. Subbiondo seconded. The motion carried with the four board members present voting in favor.

Announce date for next Select Board Meeting: January 13, 2025:

Bissex announced the next Select Board meeting will be held on Monday, January 13, 2025 and will begin an hour earlier than usual, at 5 PM, to ensure ample time for discussion and decision-making. The next meeting will focus on finalizing the Town budget and preparing for warning Town Meeting.

Adjourn:

Fingas moved to adjourn at 8:24 PM. Subbiondo seconded. The motion carried with the four board members present voting in favor.

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