

**TOWN OF PLAINFIELD
PLAINFIELD, VERMONT**

**PLAINFIELD CONSERVATION FUND
POLICY & PROCEDURES**

I. PURPOSE:

The purpose of the conservation fund is to conserve Plainfield land and waters for agricultural, forest, wildlife, scenic, recreational, historic or natural area use pursuant to 10 VSA Chapter 155. Establishment of a conservation fund and an appropriation to the fund were authorized at the March 6, 2001 Plainfield Town Meeting by voters' approval of the following articles:

*Article 3 - To see if the Town will authorize the Select Board to establish a Land Conservation Fund to accept monies for the purpose of conserving land and waters for agricultural, forest, wildlife, scenic, recreational and natural areas. **Approved as presented.***

*Article 4 - Shall the Town voters authorize an appropriation of \$5,000 to a conservation fund? **\$2,500 was approved by the voters.***

This document outlines the policies and procedures for administration of the Plainfield Conservation Fund.

II. USE OF FUND

As funding allows:

- A. For technical assistance to landowners, including but not limited to legal work, surveying, or appraisals. A preference is given to funding competitively priced technical services that are a part of the local economy.
- B. To provide local matching funds as required to capture private, state or federal grants for significant conservation projects.
- C. To purchase resource lands or conservation easements in Plainfield, in cooperation with landowners and/or nonprofit organizations.

III. Application Review Process

The Plainfield Selectboard approves any expenditure from the fund. The Plainfield Conservation Commission ("PCC") will make recommendations about applications to the Select Board through the use of the application review process and the Section IV guidelines included in this document.

- Plainfield landowners may contact the PCC for assistance with fund applications or to discuss an informal proposal. The Chair of the PCC shall include the request on the agenda of an upcoming meeting.
- Proposals for use of the fund shall be submitted on the PCC Fund Application Form to the PCC through the Chair of the PCC. A copy shall be submitted to the Plainfield Selectboard.
- The PCC will review each request for use of the fund to make sure it is complete and conforms with the Section IV guidelines.
- If a project conforms with the guidelines listed in Part IV, the PCC will make a written recommendation to the Selectboard. Of it does not conform, the PCC will notify the applicant of insufficiencies. Applicants may revise and resubmit their application.
- The Select Board will then approve the project, ask for more information, amend the requested amount or decline the use of Conservation Funds for the project.
- If the PCC declines a project, the landowner can appeal to the Select Board.

IV Guidelines For Use Of The Plainfield Conservation Fund

All projects should conform to the Plainfield Town Plan (available at the Town Clerk's Office), demonstrate a clear and important benefit to the Town of Plainfield, as outlined in Section V, and must result from a voluntary agreement between the Town and the land owners.

When determining whether the Fund should be used on a particular parcel of land or water, a number of items should be considered. Since each possible use of the fund is different, the guidelines listed below are general and are meant to address issues that would be applicable to any proposed use of the Fund. Consideration will be given to the following issues:

- Importance of the land for agriculture, forest, scenic, recreational or natural area use.
- Effect of purchase and restrictions on adjacent land and other land in the area.
- Effectiveness of the proposal in meeting the purpose of the fund.
- Existing or potential educational use for the people of Plainfield.
- Threat of conversion to other uses.
- Ability to leverage other funds and private participation in the project.
- Cost of the proposal relative to the funds available in the Conservation Fund.
- Existing land use restrictions or easements.

V. Benefits To The Town

Use of the fund must result in at least one of the following benefits to the town:

- Protection of agricultural land that will ensure the continuing viability of farms and agricultural enterprises in the town.
- Protection of the town's rural character, historic value, forests and scenic open space.
- Provision of recreation access for the people of Plainfield.
- Preservation of natural habitats for plants and animals.
- Prevention of excessive increases in public service costs.

Adopted by:

James Howard

Michael A. Bunn

KEITH E. Gossett

Plainfield Selectboard

11/15/02
Date