

Minutes of the Select Board Meeting, April 28, 2020

Howard Bronstein, Winton Pitcoff, and Hilary Weeks were present. Paula King, Police Chief Justin Litchfield, Highway Superintendent Merton Taylor, Jr., Tree Warden Rob Pytko, MLP Manager Kimberly Longey, Judy and Dudley Williams, Pleun Bouricius, Matt Stowell, Elizabeth Lambert, Rebecca Mlynarczyk, and C.J. Lammers were also in attendance.

The meeting, held via conference call consistent with Gov. Baker's temporary modifications to the Open meeting Law, was called to order at 7:01 p.m.

The minutes of March 10, 2020, March 14 and 17, 2020 (Emergency Meeting), and April 14, 2020 were accepted as submitted (Howard, yes; Winton, yes; Hilary, yes).

Animal Control/Animal Inspection

The Town Clerk is in receipt of Casey Dwyer's resignation as Animal Control Officer. Howard moved to appoint Kate Nevins as Animal Control Officer through June 30, 2020. The motion, seconded by Winton, was unanimously approved (Howard, yes; Hilary, yes; Winton, yes). ACO schooling has been postponed until September. Questions about the application and scholarship program were raised. Hilary will follow through on the process. Howard will check with Cummington concerning sharing the Animal Control position.

MDAR nomination form for the Animal Inspector will be addressed at the next meeting.

COVID-19

The Board received notice of Peppermint Park's COVID-19 Policies from the Board of Health. The Board defers to Board of Health for approval of the policies which are subject to any changes set forth by Gov. Baker.

The second round of COVID-19 funding \$2,215.00 was received.

Broom Street

A letter concerning the condition of Broom Street was received from Theresa Thatcher detailing damages to her property from storm water run-off. Mert, Jr. has cut a swale to redirect water. He stated the level of the road needs to be raised which will take time and money. Winton asked if the damages were due to nature

or road maintenance to which Mert, Jr. replied, "Both". Howard added Chris Roos, 27 Broom Street, will have his contractor correct damage to Theresa's lawn and driveway.

Rte. 116 Trees

Trees marked for removal along Rte. 116 in the area of the Williams property by Tree Warden Rob Pytko have been questioned by the Williams and other concerned citizens. Howard stated the one mile of Rte. 116 up Barber Hill is the most dangerous mile of road in town. After meeting with Rob Pytko, Police Chief Justin Litchfield, and Highway Superintendent Mert Taylor, Jr. it was agreed the marked trees are a public safety hazard and are in need of removal. Winton, former Tree Warden, recalled his meeting with an Eversource arborist 2-3 years ago who said the trees needed to be removed. Hilary supports the opinion of two tree wardens and the Eversource arborist. It was also noted since Eversource has done tree trimming along the power lines there have not been outages in town. The Tree Warden is elected and is doing a good job following the law.

(Judy Williams spoke remotely and was not able to be heard. Others suggested she hang up and connect by other means.)

Pleun Bouricius agreed the trees have to be removed, but asked that the process be more transparent and respectful. Howard stated the trees marked for removal are on Town property. The Tree Warden budget is \$6,000 which covers the removal of approximately two trees; The position of Tree Warden is volunteer. More trees need to be removed in the interest of public safety than resources allow. Pleun asked if there could be a town discussion on tree removal to which Howard replied not when the matter involves public safety.

Rob Pytko said the trees slated for removal were all marked with numbers which he also recorded in a notebook. The markers were removed from the trees. Rob is consulting contractors for cutting and trimming. When asked Rob said landowners have the option of keeping the wood when trees are cut.

Judy Williams rejoined the meeting by telephone. She said Plainfield boards and committees work hard to keep things moving smoothly. She stated Dudley came home to 30 marked trees. She would like the process to be respectful and that landowners be notified. Rob replied he walked along the trees with Dudley and there was no disrespect.

Open Space and Recreation Plan

Plainfield's Recreation and Open Space Plan has expired. C. J. Lammers, Assistant to the Executive Director of The Conway School in Northampton, has expressed an interest in partnering with Plainfield to update the plan. Judy Williams and two other members of the Conservation Commission and Kimberly Longey are willing

to work on the project. The committee would be needed January through March of 2021. C. J. addressed two grants and the hurdles defining the process for each. Howard stated matching funds from the Town is impossible, but an in-kind match of \$2,500 might work.

IT Grant

(Winton closed his computer connection and resumed his connection by telephone.)

Novus is revising the IT bid proposal. Winton and Paula are working on ways to reduce the costs related to email accounts.

MLP Update

A proposal to safely resume broadband installation for the 50 remaining customers, halted in March by the COVID-19 pandemic, was detailed by MLP Manager Kimberly Longey (document attached). Temporary installations using outside “team boxes” to house broadband equipment have been installed on the premises of 12 public officials during the last month. The lack of supplies has slowed the process. Kimberly provided safety protocols for resuming inside installations. Installations were scheduled to be completed in April and have been delayed resulting in a loss of revenue of \$4,600 per month. The consensus of resuming interior installations follows: Howard, supports; Hilary, supports on the basis of customer consent; Winton, supports if Ellen Dupont and the Board of Health are in agreement.

If Ellen Dupont agrees, Kimberly asked the Board to support the following priorities: 1. Connect the northeast corner of town. 2. Connect other customers who previously signed up, but have not yet been connected and complete interior installations for those who have connected with team boxes. 3. Connect customers who signed up for a cold drop and who converts to a service account. 4. Any new construction and installation. Howard, agree; Winton, agree; Hilary, agree. Kimberly also recommended extending the time-line for interior installation work paid for by the Town from April 2020 until September 2020. Howard, agree; Winton, agree; Hilary, agree.

MVP Action Grant

Work on the MVP Action grant, halted in March, is expected to resume next week in hopes of identifying culverts. Notice of the FY21 MVP funding round was received.

West Street

The Select Board and Highway Department received a letter from Steve and

Phoebe Bushway concerning the rise in real estate taxes and the decrease in property value due to the condition of West Street. Mert, Jr. plans to use FY21 Chapter 90 funds on West Street. He noted that the funds have yet to be approved and Plainfield's allocation is only sufficient to complete ½ of West Street from Rte. 116 to the Gowdy residence.

Correspondence

The Board received a letter from the Northampton Cycle Club cancelling the June 13th bicycle race.

Eversource sent notice of Emergent/Hotspot Hazard Tree Work for 2020 with copies of notifications to property owners on or adjacent to the Eversource transmission Right of Way where work will occur.

KP Law issued an update on the deadline to adopt the FEMA Flood Insurance Rate Map.

Other mail was reviewed.

The meeting adjourned at 8:14 p.m.

Respectfully,

Paula J. King
Administrative Secretary