

MINUTES
of the
Plainfield Finance Committee Meeting
Wednesday, July 15, 2020, 7 p.m.
Remote Meeting

The meeting was called to order at 7:02 p.m.; present were Tee O’Sullivan, Bob Baker, Bob Silberberg, Lew Robbins, and David Kramer (chairman).

The minutes of the May 28, 2020, meeting were approved.

The committee discussed the annual budget process in light of concerns expressed by some members of the community that the budget presentation was less than fully transparent regarding the full cost of running each town agency. The committee’s consensus was to consider how budgets might be presented in the future to make it easier for the public to understand sources of revenue and the true costs of running the town. The committee also concluded that detailed line-item budgets should be more strictly required of committees and departments seeking funding by the town and that such budgets be made more widely available to the public.

The committee’s consensus was also that the Board of Selectmen should be more deeply involved in its departmental supervisory role, in particular in determining operating budgets, salaries, and wages for the departments under its authority (e.g., police, fire, highway, broadband). The chair offered to reach out to the Board of Selectmen to discuss this matter.¹

The committee also discussed the structure and funding of the Police Department. The committee noted the lack of understanding in the town about the nature and scope of the Police Department’s work, and the following items were noted:

1. The Finance Committee and Board of Selectmen should work together to arrange a public forum and reporting mechanism whereby the activities of the Police Department can be better understood by the town so that an informed decision can be made as to what kind of policing the town wants to maintain, how much of it, and at what cost.

¹ The chair subsequently opened a discussion of the issue at the August 11, 2020, meeting of the Board of Selectmen.

2. The full cost of policing, including salaries, benefits, infrastructure, and operating costs along with potential sources of income should be clarified.
3. The Police Department and the Board of Selectmen should strive for transparency in the activities of the department, with a goal of providing police activity logs or their equivalent to the public.
4. The issue of the use of town equipment for off-duty police activity (traffic detail) should be clarified as well as whether the ability of the town's police officers to earn income by performing such traffic detail duty should be considered in determining their departmental salaries.

The committee then discussed a proposal submitted by Kate Nevins, the town's animal control officer and barn and cattle inspector, that her operating budget and stipends be reevaluated during this fiscal year. The committee agreed that any such action should be taken in concert with the Board of Selectmen. The chair of the Finance Committee will contact the Board of Selectmen to proceed with this matter.²

The agenda item of long-range capital planning was deferred to a future meeting.

The Finance Committee passed a resolution declining to accept Peter Lapointe's resignation from the Buildings Committee and thanking him for his willingness to continue to serve on that committee.

The committee voted to approve a transfer \$1,000 from the reserve fund to the FY21 insurance account.

The committee voted to approve a transfer of \$580 from the reserve fund to the FY20 police salaries account.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:06 p.m.

Minutes prepared by David Kramer, chairman and secretary

² This issue was raised by the chairman at the August 11, 2020, meeting of the Board of Selectmen.