

Minutes of the Select Board Meeting, May 25, 2021

Hilary Weeks, Rebecca Coletta, and Patrick Williamson were present. Also in attendance: Paula King, Ellen Dupont, Anne Williamson, Alice Schertle, Pleun Bouricious, Susan Pearson, Ann Kohn, Roberta Wooldridge, Matt Stowell, Bob Baker, Jack Nelson, Justin Litchfield, Jeanne Sargent, Anna Hanchett, Conrad Liebenow, Kimberly Longey, Peg Keller, and David Alvord. The meeting, held via conference call in accordance with Governor Baker's temporary modifications to the Open Meeting Law, was called to order at 7:00 p.m.

Invitation

Fire Chief David Alvord extended an invitation to the Board and the public to the dedication renaming the Public Safety Complex to the Dennis A. Thatcher Public Safety Complex at 38 North Central Street on Saturday, May 29, 2021 at 10:00 a.m.

NEXAMP PILOT Agreement

Hilary moved to accept and sign the amended NEXAMP PILOT agreement reflecting the additional \$2,800 for battery storage. The motion, seconded by Patrick, was unanimously approved: Hilary, yes; Rebecca, yes; Patrick, yes.

Police Chief

Chief Justin Litchfield reported on an active month which included seven calls at Swift River, seven speeding complaints, 3 road rage calls. Officers have been busy with active court cases (a 2019 case is just coming up). The chief has approached S. Morann asking if she might be interested in volunteering to process police detail billing. Chief Litchfield, Sgt. Miazga, and Officer Wright have completed 40 hours of IMC training. In answer to Rebecca's question about police responding to medical calls the chief replied in Massachusetts police officers are first responders. Police officers respond to animal calls if the ACO doesn't respond.

Ad Hoc Plainfield Police Working Group

Select Board members and Bob Baker acknowledged Joseph Sabourin's resignation from the ad hoc working group expressing appreciation for his service. Ideas for the next phase include: implementing a community input process/town-

wide survey, continuing to develop a working relationship with the chief, approach state legislators to seek assistance with costs of POST legislation, research the possibility of regionalization, etc.

Kimberly noted interest in engaging the community to see that needs are met, support for the chief with the collection and sharing of data, educating the public that may result in limiting certain types of calls, etc.

The group has reached out to Ed Morann, former chief, to see if he is interested in replacing Joe Sabourin as member of the working group.

Referencing the specific scope of work the ad hoc group was charged with, Hilary feels those goals have been accomplished and would like to dissolve the group and come up with something similar to a “Friends of Police” to achieve support and assistance with POST regulations. She added meeting with the chief once a month in open meeting is the Board’s effort in promoting transparency. There is a need to band together in order to sustain public safety. Patrick would like to see the group continue with changes and the establishment of an agenda which includes POST requirements and exploring regionalization with other towns. Hilary added the group is not a committee, but a working group. She expressed concerns with the open meeting law. Kimberly said the group is an extension of the Select Board to whom the group reports their findings, ideas, etc. Hilary feels strongly about a police presence and expressed additional concerns whether information is the “right information by the right people”.

Changing the group’s name to indicate a change of purpose was suggested. The benefit of a police officer with experience as a part of the group was also noted. Rebecca would like the chief and the sergeant directly involved as well as someone like Ed Morann, former chief. Chief Litchfield and Sgt. Miazga support and want to work with the group, but noted time is an issue.

Discussion concerning establishing an agenda and changing the name ensued. Hilary moved to move forward with the current group changing the name to Plainfield Police Working Group with the following agenda: 1. Conduct a community survey - assuring anonymous input by participants. 2. POST regulations - gathering data and seeking assistance from legislators. 3. Researching regionalization. 4. Working to establish a supervisory relationship between the Select Board and the Police Department - comprehensive plan. The motion, seconded by Patrick, was unanimously approved: Hilary, yes; Rebecca, yes; Patrick, yes.

Reporting on the 4th Tuesday will continue.

Mosquito Spraying Opt-Out

An application to opt-out of the state’s aerial pesticide spraying for mosquitos in Plainfield, co-sponsored by the Agricultural Commission and Conservation

Commission, was presented to the Board. Additionally, a required alternative plan for mosquito control was included. Concerns about the effects of chemical spraying on the environment, wildlife, other insects and pollinators, pets, and humans were extensively discussed. A zoom meeting of 38 concerned citizens took place on May 23rd. Hilary expressed concerns about using the Blackboard Connect system for general information dissemination. She asked for confirmation the Agricultural Commission was taking on the project and any required reporting which was confirmed by Anna Hanchett. Anna is named as the contact person in the application. Board of Health Chair Ellen Dupont expressed concerns about educating the public noting Plainfield has a lot of wetlands which are breeding grounds for mosquitos. She noted EEE and the West Nile and Zika viruses carried and transmitted by mosquitos. Ways for individuals to reduce mosquito breeding such as removing tires and other vessels with standing water were noted. Hilary added the opt-out, if accepted by the state, can be over-ridden if there is an outbreak. It was also stated the opt-out application is only valid through December 31, 2021. Rebecca mentioned Plainfield is a low-risk area and is comfortable with the efforts of the Agricultural Commission, the Conservation Commission, and the Board of Health. After additional comments and concerns were discussed, Hilary moved to vote to sign and submit an opt-out application for wide area and aerial pesticide application by the SRMCB. The motion, seconded by Patrick, was unanimously approved: Hilary, yes; Rebecca, yes; Patrick, yes.

HR Manual

Hilary brought the matter of a written time off form, an employee evaluation form, and a salary increase policy before the Board. Hilary moved to adopt the Time Off Request Form and to amend the HR Manual to reflect the request for time off. The motion, seconded by Patrick, was approved: Hilary, yes; Rebecca, yes; Patrick, yes.

The Board also discussed an employee evaluation form noting the benefit of the superintendent evaluating employees and employees evaluating the superintendent. Patrick supported a minimal evaluation form keeping the process simple. A salary increase plan was also discussed with Rebecca pointing out the wording in the two documents is not consistent. Hilary moved to adopt the salary increase policy and add it to the HR Manual. The motion, seconded by Patrick, was approved: Hilary, yes; Rebecca, yes; Patrick, yes.

Appointment

Hilary moved to appoint Linda Mason to the Flag & Flower Committee through June 30, 2021. The motion, seconded by Patrick, was approved: Hilary, yes; Rebecca, yes; Patrick, yes.

Other Business

IT Grant: Hilary will sign the revised agreement with NOVUS. We are still awaiting a cost proposal for the municipal intranet work plan.

MLP: Kimberly reported Charter has withdrawn their application for federal funding and has filed with FCC to withdraw their application to provide fiber optic service to Plainfield and other towns. The Emergency Broadband Relief Project has been initiated. The MLP is working with Mutual Aid Network and COA to assist those who are eligible to participate. This a temporary project.

There have been six new subscribers in recent months.

The last mile grant has been closed out.

Kimberly noted the inability to obtain FY'21 broadband revenue figures from the treasurer; the accountant doesn't have the figures either.

Hilary moved to approve a M.G. L. Chapter 44:33B end of year transfer from the FY'21 Highway Salaries Account to the FY'21 Winter Roads Account in the amount of \$1,555.57. The motion seconded by Rebecca, was approved: Hilary, yes; Rebecca, yes; Patrick, yes.

Hilary will sign the Climate Resiliency Grant letter of support. A draft of the grant application was received.

Correspondence

The ACO report for April was received.

Highland Ambulance/EMS submitted the report for the quarter ending March 31, 2021.

Other mail and emails were reviewed.

A motion to adjourn was entertained at 9:05 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Paula J. King
Administrative Secretary

