

Minutes of the Select Board Meeting August 9, 2022

Patrick Williamson, Hilary Weeks, and Ben Gillett were present. The meeting was called to order at 7:00 p.m.

Old Business

The Board approved the assigned liaison list as submitted by Patrick. The list will be posted on the Town website.

Suggestions compiled by members of the community for the remaining \$57,177.00 of American Recovery Plan Act (ARPA) were submitted by Dalila Almquist. Recreation Committee Chair Sandy Morann and Highway Superintendent Walter Jennings also submitted written proposals for repairs to the backstop and play structure at the town park and for two defibrillators, respectively. Discussion of a community-led process followed, noting this as an opportunity for an exchange of ideas. Dalila proposed a time-line for compiling ideas and research culminating with the Select Board's decision by the end of June 2023. Sandy briefly described the history of the town park and the need for repairing the backstop. Patrick praised the work that has been done stating he would like to see the community led processes kept alive integrating it into the town by initiating service on the Finance Committee and other boards and committees.

Hilary added the Board retains the right to override any decision in the event of an emergency. It is the consensus of the Board acceptance of proposals rests with them.

Lucas Suarez-Orozco, MLP Manager, submitted a revised Exterior Service Drop and Installation Policy, previously amended February 2021, to include newer homes by subsidizing installation costs up to \$1,000. Hilary moved to approve the revised drop policy as presented. The motion, seconded by Ben, was unanimously approved.

Police Department

Chief Litchfield was unable to attend.

Those who seek to obtain the investigation report are asked to submit their request by letter or email to the Select Board. The report will then be emailed.

Patrick opened discussion by stating the Select Board does not run the police and highway departments, but does have oversight of those departments. He also stated the Board cannot comment on rumors circulating about the police department. Kimberly Longey asked the Board to describe the internal investigation. Howard Bronstein stated the investigation was done by Ashfield police officer F. Bezio who is trained in human resources. Kimberly added the Plainfield police chief was hired by the Select Board when Howard was the chair and is now the administrator to the chief, etc. She strongly suggested an independent investigation. Plainfield Officer Tony Gibbs who has been a per diem Plainfield officer since 2018, stated police officers are acquainted with officers in other towns. He questioned how anyone can have an opinion on the investigation without having read the report. Rebecca Coletta noted the relationships between officers. Elaine Sidney said there is a need to feel trust on all levels. Officer Gibbs offered the reminder we are talking about allegations and added people who “run free” muddy the waters. Chief Litchfield hasn’t commented. Patrick curtailed the discussion as inappropriate.

Response to Recommendations

As liaison to the police department, Patrick referenced both sets of recommendations as 1. Before the Survey (March 2021) and 2. Response to the Community Policing Survey (April 2022). Addressing the recommendations has to be broken up into manageable parts. He has proposed that the police department work through the recommendations in the following categories: 1. Not doing; 2. Done; 3. Ways to address.

Patrick issued “no comment” to the question of the length of the investigation. While expressing appreciation for the work, Kimberly stated asking questions is OK.

Police Staffing Plan

The Select Board approved 85 hours of police coverage per week which was approved by Town Meeting. That allowed for two full time officers, the chief (salary) and one 40 hr. per week position, leaving 5 hours for weekend coverage. Twenty-four/seven coverage requires 168 hours per week. As a salaried employee, the chief has the responsibility to respond to calls, attend to administrative duties, monitor roads (6 a.m.- 2 p.m. Mon.- Fri.) He will also respond to emergency calls at any time, when available. The second officer has agreed to four days on (1-9 p.m.) followed by two days off which will provide for weekend coverage. (Officer Gibbs noted that when working a case, he isn’t able to patrol.) There will still be times when weekends are not covered and state police will respond.

New Business

Hilary moved to sign a revised Class II license certificate for AP Automotive Inc. The motion, seconded by Ben, was unanimously approved.

Hilary moved to appoint Bonnie Phillips to the Vocational Education Advisory Committee through June 30, 2023. The motion, seconded by Ben, was unanimously approved.

The Waste Management Recycling contract was signed.

A Special Town Meeting for FY22 Morton Salt invoices totaling \$19,000 not billed until July 27, 2022. (Plainfield and several other towns were billed delinquent for FY22 and were not informed of outstanding balances.) Funds for the VOIP telephone system were also discussed.

Peter Lapointe, Building Committee Chair, informed the Board that the contractor hired for the heating systems at the Town Hall and Town Offices is asking for more money.

Other mail was reviewed.

Warrants were signed.

The meeting adjourned at 9:20 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Paula J. King
Administrative Secretary