

Minutes of the Select Board Meeting, April 11, 2023

Patrick Williamson, Hilary Weeks, and Ben Gillett were present. The meeting was called to order at 7:00 p.m. The minutes of March 28, 2023 were accepted as submitted.

Highway Superintendent

Walter Jennings, Highway Superintendent, reported the 2013 Komatsu loader requires repairs in the amount of \$7,345 and has significant rust/rot. He also referenced expensive parts and long wait times for parts and lack of technicians for repairs. The purchase of a used Volvo with a 90-day warranty is one option. A new Hyundai would be \$109,000 with trade in and with a three-year bumper to bumper warranty with an option to renew for five years/5,000 hours. While noting the purchase of a loader with Chapter 90 funds means less money for road work, Walter feels the benefits of purchasing a new loader are worth it. Hilary inquired about available Chapter 90 funds. The current balance is \$109,000 with the FY24 proposed allocation of \$188,804.00.

Once bids for road materials are awarded, Walter will determine which roads to be resurfaced this year. He is submitting grant applications for West Street, Prospect Street, and the bridge on River Road. A State Numbered Route grant for a portion of Routes 116 and 8A has been submitted. Hilary moved to approve Chapter 90 funds for the purchase of a Hyundai loader. The motion, seconded by Ben, was unanimously approved.

Massachusetts did not meet the MEMA threshold for emergency funds for the March 13-14 snowstorm. Nine towns declared a state of emergency during the storm. The cost of a loader rental will be borne by the Town. State legislators are working to obtain some funding for the storm.

The illegal dumping of trash, mattresses, furniture, etc. was also noted by Superintendent Jennings.

FY24 Budget

The FY24 proposed operating budget was presented by the Finance Committee. Robert Baker, Finance Committee Chair, stated with recommended reductions in the Historical Commission request of \$700, the Planning Board offer to reduce their budget by \$1,000, and no increase in stipends the proposed budget is just

below the levy limit. Kimberly Longey noted the IT proposed budget is too low; asked about software upgrade and POST training for the Police Department. ARPA funds for the POST training were discussed; Accountant Paula King stated the FY23 police department expense account will be over budget due to items purchased for POST training. Dalila Almquist spoke about the “community led” process (One Plainfield) which is working on proposals for ARPA funded projects using the unallocated \$57,000. Patrick noted the commendable job on proposed ARPA funded projects adding that One Plainfield project suggestions could be brought forward at future town meetings if ARPA funds were adjusted for POST training. Discussion centered around the costs and funding for POST training with points raised by Elaine Sidney, Peter Lapointe, Chris Cole, and Roberta Wooldridge. Olan Thompson, in response to the suggestion of 32 hours per week versus 40 for the police, addressed the difficulty of hiring and keeping officers. Kimberly Longey noted the Plainfield Police Working Group’s recommendations to create full time positions and questions concerning the running of a complicated department.

The chair entertained a motion to accept the FY24 budget proposal as recommended by the Finance Committee. The motion, moved by Hilary and seconded by Ben, was unanimously approved.

Other Business

Peter Lapointe, Planning Board, reported a member of the Planning Board has not been attending meetings and public hearings, but hasn’t resigned. The Board’s authority to remove members was brought up. Hilary suggested taking the time to clarify before taking any action.

The 2023 unemployment rate was increased to 1.5% up from 0.1%.

An email in praise of the Highway Department for their promptness in response to his call concerning a sink hole on Maple Street was received.

KP Law issued an eUpdate entitled “Pandemic Related Legal Updates”.

An “Advisory Regarding Expansion of Patio Service and Take Away/Delivery of Alcohol By On-Premises Licensees” was received from ABCC.

A time-line for the One Plainfield community led process for recommending projects for ARPA funds was received from Dalila Almquist.

No action was taken on Paula’s retirement letter.

Other mail was reviewed. Warrants were signed.

Respectfully submitted,

Paula K. King, Administrative Secretary