

Minutes of the Select Board Meeting, August 8, 2023

Ben Gillett, Hilary Weeks, and Judy Cole were present. The meeting was called to order at 7:00 p.m. The minutes of July 11, 2023 were accepted as submitted.

Chapter 61 Right of First Refusal

Hilary moved not to exercise the Town's right of first refusal on the Campbell property, lots 17.5, 17.6, and 17.7, owned by Michael Crane, the motion, seconded by Judy, was unanimously approved.

COA

Agreements were signed for MCOA Transportation Grant to implement new programs for the benefit of older adults age 60 and older, the NCO Vaccine Grant to provide flu vaccinations and COVID-19 boosters, and FRTA Easy Ride Expanded Service. The expanded service will include disabled and handicapped persons under age 60 provided there is room on the bus. The process for signing up for transportation with the Hilltown Community Development Corporation was explained.

Project Updates

Judy Cole suggested several dates for an upcoming All Boards Meeting. Judy had plans to submit a grant application through the Massachusetts Office on Disability for equipment needed for hybrid meetings, however, Plainfield doesn't qualify due to the lack of a current ADA Coordinator. Suggestions for seeking volunteers and posting vacant positions on the website and in the Plainfield Post were noted. Judy has reached out to Cumington in reference to sharing an Executive Assistant, but has not yet heard back from Cumington's chair. She also contacted the Massachusetts Municipal Association. Adding the pay scale, hours, and benefits to the job posting on the website was suggested.

Highway Superintendent

Grant Street will be paved with Chapter 90 funds at the end of August. Highway Superintendent Walter Jennings reported the Town has been awarded a grant for resurfacing five miles of Rte. 116 & Rte. 8A. MassDOT will be doing the work. When asked about culverts, Walter stated any normal work is included.

A grant application for both Prospect Street and West Street has been submitted. Both streets require full depth reclamation before resurfacing.

Walter also noted he has been in contact with Eversource weekly regarding the condition of West Street. He is hopeful that Eversource will compensate the Town once their project is completed.

American Recovery Plan Act (ARPA)

Chief Litchfield reported he is working on a grant application for solar power speed signs and radar speed equipment in the amount of \$10,000. He also stated he is withdrawing his request for ARPA funds for POST training.

Hilary issued the reminder that the Select Board has the final say in regard to the use of ARPA funds and would consider the community led process ideas. The goal is to use those funds for the benefit of all Plainfield residents.

Discussion followed:

A town solar system was redlined due to roof and structural repairs required for the police station. The Buildings Committee voted not to recommend town solar at this time, but will continue its endeavors to reduce energy use.

The radar speed signs were also removed from the list due to Chief Litchfield's grant application.

Protect and Preserve Plainfield Pond \$12,500 - Hire an environmental consultant to investigate vulnerabilities such as fluctuating water levels, invasive plant species, erosion, water quality, etc. The consultant will also assist in developing a long-term pond management plan. The \$12,500 will increase the town's access up to \$25,000 grant fund through the DCR. It was noted the dam may be part of a Hazard Mitigation Plan; there is a question as to the ownership of the dam.

Fire Truck Down Payment \$15,000 - The fire truck was approved at Town Meeting and has been ordered. It is happening.

Baseball Field/Play Structure Repairs \$10,000 - Ed and Sandy Morann gave a brief history of the Carpenter property purchase for recreation with the front acreage reserved for a public safety building. The ballfield and play structure, originally constructed by volunteers with funds raised by volunteers, needs repairs to the backstop and upgrades to the play structure. Questions about the number of children in town were raised.

Equipment for More Accessible Town Meetings \$3,500 - Hilary stated the Town is eligible for a Community Compact IT Grant for the necessary equipment.

Website \$6,000 - Funds to retain a professional to maintain the town's website, notably a municipal web host.

Village Green \$12,500 - design to identify better parking, public safety accessibility, safe access to Rte. 116, close Union Street from Rte. 116 to its intersection with Church Lane, etc.

Mutual Support Network - Did not discuss

Hilary stated her criteria for the use of ARPA funds: Actual costs, the benefit to the community as a whole, and ongoing costs once projects are completed. She asked that budgetary detail for the use of funds for each proposal be provided.

The use of the word “earmarked” as opposed to “allocated” will be used pending more budgetary detail and program cost updates. It was also noted there is no urgency in approving projects.

Judy moved to earmark the seven programs for the use of ARPA funds pending final budget figures. The motion, seconded by Hilary, was unanimously approved.

Other Business

Former MLP Manager Kimberly gave a brief report of the FY23 figures which will be confirmed by the accountant’s figures. She also reported due to Lucas Suarez-Orozco’s plans to move to Boston a new MLP manager is needed.

Correspondence

The Mohawk Trail Regional School District has been awarded a \$250,000 Community Compact Grant to further their Sustainability Program.

Updated solar estimates were received from Tim Walter who later mentioned support for playground repairs.

An email in support of hybrid meetings was received from Anna Hanchett. The board received an eUpdate from KP Law entitled “Initial Policies and Procedures to Promote Equity in the Cannabis Industry”.

Other mail was reviewed.

Warrants were signed.

A motion to adjourn was approved at 9:20 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Paula J. King