

Minutes of the Select Board Meeting, October 24th, 2023

Ben Gillett, Hilary Weeks, and Judy Cole were in attendance. The meeting was called to order at 7:00 p.m.

Police: Chief Justin Litchfield gave a Mass Dot grant update. He stated that the 2014 sedan/second cruiser needs work. The work is estimated at about \$6,000. It's in overall good shape but does need work. The estimation will be shared with the Select Board.

Highway Department: Walter Jennings gave an update on the paving of Rt. 116. The paving will possibly be completed on Monday. The line painting and rumble strip work will start at Savoy and work its way back at a later date. Walter said he applied for an Emergency Services grant for a defibrillator which would expedite peoples' care in the long-term since we would have one available.

MTRSD (Mohawk Regional): Discussion on proposed changes to the regional Agreement. Bob stated that the district would like to amend the agreement so that it is more equitable payments for kids who are sent to charter schools and other schools that are not in Mohawk. He explained that they all get merged together and that it doesn't get broken down how each town spends their money. Six towns have passed the amendment and Heath turned it down. Plainfield has not decided yet.

Old Business: ARPA Funds: Email RE: Plainfield Pond. Judy Ferber from Friends of Plainfield Pond and the Conservation Committee gave an update on who owns the Plainfield Dam. The DCR disavowed ownership of the dam and said that there's no record that the Commonwealth ever acquired it. Brian Hawthorne researched it and found that at least two very large parcels of the pond do belong to the Commonwealth and that the dam and the land under it were exempt from this, and that the heirs of whoever owned the land when this happened would be the owner of the dam. So, either the town or an unknown heir of the previous owner of the dam currently owns the dam. The town owns the beach and the boat launch. The bottom line is that the pond is jointly owned. Repairing the dam is not within the scope of the project, but evaluating the condition of the dam is in the project. Also, whether or not invasive species are present and if they need to be addressed, the impact of the usage and increase of usage on the boat launch and beach area, etc. And developing a long-term management plan, and using the remainder of the money to implement recommendations from that plan, for

example increasing signage on the waterfront area and addressing invasive plants. This is the scope of the project; the overall health and integrity of the pond.

The Board votes to release ARPA funds unanimously.

Kimberly Longey is here as a citizen, working with a small group to talk about upgrading the town website. The current website was built specifically for basic things and during the time of dial-up communication. Typically, the website would be updated every 3-5 years. We have gotten good use out of the website, but should shift to more engaging tools on the website and ease up repetitive questions on staff. ARPA funds could be used to upgrade the site to bring it into the next generation. Research was done and Civic Plus is being recommended to take on the migration project into a new website. They are based out of Kansas and are a company solely devoted to municipal websites. There could be options for paying bills online (excise tax, etc.), citizens could sign up for topics they are interested in, and it would make communication much easier. Polly Ryan has volunteered to manage the project, which could take about 13 weeks. It could cost between \$4,000 and \$9,000. Ideally, we would have the website done before the town meeting next year. We could commit to Civic Plus for FY 25'-26'.

Judy adds that the price for this isn't expensive, and if signed by December 5th we will receive a 25% discount. Kim recommends committing the ARPA funds and seeing how it plays out. She says that if the Board can commit \$9,000 to FY 24' that would let Polly work with assessors to say that we think we should get specific modules for the website and move everything over. Then, consider adding more money from ARPA funds when appropriate.

Hilary asks about online permitting and Kim says that it's possible, but the module costs around \$325. Walter Jennings asks what other towns are using similar sites so that we can all look at them. Kimberly recommends taking a look at Chesterfield and Ashfield's websites. Judy says that she spoke to Ashfield regarding their website and that they are very satisfied with it. Kimberly mentions that it will take the pressure off of Town staff. Civic Plus will archive 5 years of site history, putting it into the new architecture and guiding us through the modules, as well as 7 am-7 pm support.

Hilary moves to use \$9,000 from ARPA funds to update the website. The board votes to approve unanimously.

Kimberly says that Polly will be great at driving the project and is very dedicated, and explains that the contract agreement is for the basic project. We will get an update each time. Hillary makes a motion to sign the loan contract and the board signed it as well as the loan document for the broadband network construction.

Recreation Committee: Sandy Morann. Date of Halloween Observance. Trick or treat 4-6 pm, Parade at Mr. Tire, Hayrides, cider, donuts, etc. There will be a fire until people want to go home.

Deborah Wagner email: Mohawk Trail Excess and Deficiency was discussed. Unaudited balance sheet was submitted with an amount of E&D at \$489,800.

Martha explains that E&D is appropriated funds that are budgeted to the Mohawk Trail School District. If only a portion spent of that it goes to E&D, then it is used to help offset town assessments. They are appropriated funds that are over and above what we use.

Plainfield Mutual Support network: \$2,500 was released from ARPA funds for mutual support network. The board voted unanimously to release the funds.

Judy Sargent, a resident, suggests upgrading the sound system because she has trouble hearing at meetings. Judy Cole suggested having a microphone at meetings. Shannon and others will look into what the town might have for town meetings. Jerry Little of S Union Street mentioned also having trouble hearing at meetings, and suggested that meetings be recorded and uploaded to the website for later viewing and hearing.

Miscellaneous Mail and Meeting Notices: A letter was sent out from Eversource Energy to notify property owners residing on or adjacent to Eversource transmission Right-of-way where upcoming vegetation work will occur.

Other mail was reviewed.

Warrants were signed.

A motion to adjourn was approved at 8:11 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Shannon Dry