

## Minutes of the Select Board Meeting, December 12th, 2023

Ben Gillett, Hilary Weeks, and Judy Cole were in attendance. The meeting was called to order at 7:00 p.m. The minutes to the October 24<sup>th</sup>, 2023 and November 14<sup>th</sup>, 2023 meetings were accepted as submitted but with suggested edits that will be made.

Highway Department: Walter Jennings:

The condition of West Street Road near 237 West Street was discussed and brought to the attention of the board by Shirley Todd. She asked if there is a plan and a timeline of when the roads will be repaired, and agreed with Walter that Eversource has caused the issue with their large equipment. Walter gave a timeline and said that Eversource plans to fix the issues once they are done working in the area. Walter said that the pavement is failing, and that 47 tons of blacktop have been applied in the last two years, and that the Highway Department has applied for three grants. It will cost \$1.7 million to repair. \$179K a year has been set aside in Chapter 9 funds. Prospect Street will get repair work first. Walter also reminded everyone that West Street is comprised of oil and stone, and that paving over it won't solve the issue, because there is no "base" on the road itself. Walter is intending to apply for grants again. Judy Cole asked if anyone has ever discussed this with a State Representative. Walter said that their response is suggesting to apply for grants, which Plainfield often doesn't meet the requirements for because we don't have sidewalks, etc. Walter mentions that Cummington updated their sidewalks and did receive a grant.

Public Hearing: Pub 116 Extension of Premises Application:

Chief Alvord confirmed that he has done the fire safety inspection at Pub 116 for the dining room reopening/extension and everything passed inspection on that end. The town is waiting to hear back from the Building Inspector about her portion of the inspection.

Tax Assessor: Gina Papineau:

Tax Classification Hearing: The board of assessors recommended a single tax rate to the town: \$21.42. The value of the town increased by \$8 million this year. Gina had thought that this increase would have dropped the tax rate somewhat, but it

did not as the expenses are still high. Judy Cole asked how the value of the town is calculated. Gina confirmed that it's based on inspections and sales primarily, and that we had a significant of new growth this year in properties sold and houses that were built. Hillary moved to vote to accept the single tax rate for the Town of Plainfield as recommended by the Tax Assessors. The board voted unanimously to accept the tax rate.

Renewal of Pub 116's Liquor License (pending inspection certificate). The population increase form was signed by the Select Board. It was estimated by Paula King that we went from 733 residents last year to 750-775 this year. Hillary moved that the Board vote to renew the liquor license for Pub 116. The Board voted unanimously to renew the liquor license.

Ed's Auto Repair and AP Auto Licenses to be signed by Select Board: Hilary moved to vote to renew the licenses for Ed's Auto Repair and AP Auto. The Board voted unanimously to renew the licenses.

The Annual Town "Recycled Product Purchasing Policy" was signed by the Select Board. Ben Gillett confirmed that this is an annual agreement that recycled products will be purchased by the town whenever possible. An annual reminder has been sent out to all boards and committees as well.

Building Commissioner: Charlene Baiardi: Charlene was not present at the meeting. No update on Building Commissioner items was given.

Planning Board & Buildings Committee: Peter Lapointe:

Peter said that the town posting sign in front of the town offices is falling apart and needs to be repaired. An alternate posting location needs to exist while it is repaired. Peter suggested that the posting location across the street at the Police Station be used temporarily while the one at the office is repaired. The Police Station does use it but suggested that they could find another location in the meantime if need be. Hillary suggested going with moving the sign from the Police Station to the town offices temporarily, since the actual location can't just be changed per the by-laws. Peter is going to continue investigating what it will take to get another sign in the location in the meantime while the current one is being repaired.

Proposal to form a Master Plan Committee: The Planning Board would like to request that the Select Board establish a Master Plan Committee to come up with a Master Plan for the town. We are required by the state to have a Master Plan and we currently do not have one. Peter ran down a list of some of the issues within the town that the Planning Board is thinking about: energy independence and working with the Energy Committee to reduce the town's energy consumption, not relying on fossil fuels, making buildings more energy efficient, and coming up with a strategy to become a net-zero community where we don't expend money on utilities and we create as much energy as we use. Peter feels that these are feasible goals for the town and that a Master Plan would be a useful document to achieve these goals. The Hazard Mitigation plan that Howard previously did could also be a part of it as well as The Climate Resiliency Plan that was done by the Conway School. The Ag Committee could help with anything that falls under Plainfield being a "Right to Farm Community." The Buildings Committee suggested doing a building assessment of how all buildings are used and to come up with a long-term plan to be able to meet the needs of the community. Peter also mentioned failing septic systems around town, as well as what's needed at Town Hall. There is also a state requirement for affordable housing that needs to be met. Peter also mentioned the Historical Commission around the town's buildings and how this should also be a part of a Master Plan. He suggests someone from each of the town's boards and committees be a part of the Master Plan Committee. Peg Keller is open to being the Chair of the Master Plan Committee. She has a planning background so would be a great resource. The Select Board said that they are in favor of a Master Plan Committee, but that some research needs to be done around how the Committee should be structured.

ARPA Funds: Discussion of two proposals for the planning study for The Village Green. (Survey Work and Engineering Study.) Peter's original proposal estimate was \$12,000, but there aren't enough ARPA funds to cover that. Peter pointed out that there is inadequate parking at Town Hall, as well as potholes, a failing culvert, no public water supply, that an eventual well would be useful, and that there is a number of things that need to be investigated through an engineering study. Peter gave an updated financial proposal for the two projects that would work within the remaining ARPA funds. Having estimates for the projects after an

engineering study and survey work would open up other opportunities for grants and funding. Peter suggested speaking to the engineer about what can be done within the financial parameters that we have within the remaining ARPA funds and what can be done with half of the amount of the fees so that we are getting the project going. Hilary moved to vote to release up to the remaining \$8,000 of ARPA funds for the Village Green Engineering Study and Survey work. The Board voted unanimously to release the funds.

Peter gave an update about the failing septic system at the Highway Garage. The tank will continue to be pumped on a monthly basis until repairs can be done. There will be expenses related to this and the money that was transferred from the highway roof project can cover this in the interim.

MMA Massachusetts Municipal Association Invoice for Webinar Series. Select Board to approve to be paid from "Training and Seminars" Account. The Board approved the payment unanimously.

Donald Shelton's resignation letter from the Planning Board was accepted with regret and appreciation.

Peter asks that Judy Cole be appointed as a member of the Planning Board after Donald's resignation. The Board voted unanimously that Judy be appointed as a member of the Planning Board.

Other mail was reviewed.

Warrants were signed.

A motion to adjourn was approved at 8:19 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Shannon Dry

