

Minutes of the 3/26/24 Select Board Meeting

Date: March 26, 2024

Time: 7:00 pm

Location: Plainfield Town Hall

Present: Ben Gillette, Hillary Weeks, Judy Cole

Approve Minutes: The minutes of the Select Board Meeting on March 12, 2024 were unanimously approved.

MTRSD School Committee: Martha Thurber discussed the funding of a new State requirement to upgrade the telephone infrastructure at schools to support enhanced 911 calling by the end of 2025. The upgrade is mandated and the town funding will have to come from a Warrant Article to be proposed for the May Town Meeting. There was a credit from a previous year's capital project which came in under budget, and the expense for this new mandate is less than the amount of that refund, so it was suggested that the town utilize the \$11,787 credit against the previous town assessment. The MTRSD needs \$3,927 from Plainfield for our share of the the 911 upgrade project, which, when netted against the \$11,787 surplus from the previous year's assessment, means we will get \$7,859 net refund from the previous year's capital budget credit. Martha Thurber also provided the language for the Warrant Article for this year's Town Meeting in May.

Energy Management Committee: David Alvord, noting that the resignation of Walter Jennings left the town without an Emergency Director, recommended Daniel Shearer for the position. His resume was given to the Select Board. The Select Board voted unanimously to approve this appointment. Walter Jennings has already arranged a meeting for him and Dan with NEMA.

Sustainability Study Presentation: Jake Eberwein, Berk 12 Director, presented a detailed report on the educational and fiscal challenges the many rural areas across the northeast face, noting declining enrollment, rising operational costs, relatively flat state aid, and increasing needs of our student body. BERK12 is currently in the 2nd phase of a sustainability study for the MTRSD and will report their final findings in February of 2025, with interim updates as the study moves forward. Copies of Jake's slides for today's presentation were given to the Select Board and made available to all present.

Agricultural Commission: The Select Board voted unanimously to approve an appointment of James Page as an alternate member of AgComm.

Building Committee: Peter Lapointe reported that a test of the water to the Town Hall, supplied by a shallow spring, has tested positive for coliform which is not potable. Ellen Dupont has posted a notice in the Town Hall kitchen not to drink the water. Jerry Little suggested getting a water cooler with 5 gallon jugs for potable water. Walter Jennings noted that the Highway Department and Police Department both had water coolers paid for out of their budgets stating that a cooler costs \$150 and the 5 gallon jugs cost \$7 each. Hillary stated that the town had no budget for that, and suggested that perhaps the COA might consider providing the water since their luncheons held at the Town Hall were the only regular need for potable water. Walter further noted that Culligan was the only supplier that will deliver to Plainfield and that they were the worst company that he had ever had to deal with, hence his recommendation to purchase a water cooler at Home Depot and use the recyclable 5 gallon jugs.

HRMC: Judith Hanson and Jack Nelson reviewed a potential bill in State House regarding Paint Stewardship Legislation. This would keep paint out of landfills (there are only 5 landfills existing in the State and no future ones planned). The bill is proposing that paint could be returned to paint/hardware stores to be recycled for later reuse. This would decrease hazardous and greenhouse gases. The Select Board voted unanimously to approve and sign a letter of support for the legislation.

Highway Department: Walter Jennings reported of the status of West Street, noting that he was awaiting appropriate weather to fill potholes. He further noted that the base of the road is crumbling and to properly repair it would cost in excess of \$2M. Eversource has committed to fixing the portion of it they have damaged when their work in the area is complete. Walter has applied unsuccessfully for the past 2-years for a Grant to fix the road. Kimberly Longey noted that this is the most populated road in town, and that we should continue to apply for this grant. Walter will provide the link to "One Stop" containing the previous grant applications to help with the writing of a future grant application.

A letter from a resident on West Street requesting payment for a flat tire caused by a pothole was read. Hillary noted that the town was not responsible per a State Law.

Walter Jennings' letter of retirement was read. He will remain active until May 3rd. Hillary noted that the town has already posted the position in search of a replacement. The SB moved and accepted the letter giving Walter huge thanks for his service to our town.

Plainfield Light and Telecommunications Department (Broadband): Kimberly Longey presented a Broadband Mid-Year Report and Proposed

FY2025 Broadband Budget. Operating expenses have been covered by subscribers and are generally on target for the current year. She was bringing the Broadband Budget to the Select Board first, since the Select Board is also the governing Board for the MLP enterprise. The Select Board voted unanimously to approve the proposed FY2025 budget as presented. Kimberly also proposed a \$67k Warrant Article to transfer last year's retained earnings of the Broadband enterprise to the MLP Stabilization fund (which is nearing its target funding level) for consideration at the annual town meeting. She also proposed forming an ad hoc financial strategy committee to consider restructuring the Town's current broadband debt when it renews this fall. The Select Board agreed with and approved both of these recommendations.

Proposed Articles for the Annual Town Meeting Warrant: Bob Baker requested that the approval of articles be postponed until the next SB meeting noting that the Finance Committee has not yet reviewed them and that several additional articles may need to be included. Hillary noted that articles could be added until April 23rd. Judy Cole supported the 2 week delay and moved to delay approval until April 9th which was unanimously approved. Brian Hawthorne also is to be copied on all articles since he is Moderator of the Town Meeting.

Town Clerk: There was a discussion of changing the position of Town Clerk from an elected position to an appointed position, which would go into effect when the new term begins in 2025. Since there was no objection to this suggestion, a Ballot question will be added to the Town Ballot on May 4 and there will also need to be a Warrant Article presented at the Town Meeting.

Gun Club Permit: Renewal of the permit was unanimously approved.

Eversource Energy: A letter informing of the selective application of herbicides in 2024 along power line rights-of-way was signed.

Mohawk Trail School System: A letter was received regarding the town's FY25 operating, transportation, and capital assessments.

The Meeting was adjourned at 8:45 pm

Respectfully submitted,

Jerry Little