

**Town of Plainfield
Plainfield Select Board
Public Informational Hearing: Australian Ballot Items
February 27, 2017
Draft Minutes**

PRESENT: Ross Sneyd (Select Board Member), Bram Towbin (Select Board Chair), Betsy Ziegler (Select Board Member), Linda Wells (Town Clerk/Treasurer), Keith Swann (Videographer), and Cindy Wyckoff (Minutes Recorder).

PUBLIC INFORMATIONAL HEARING: AUSTRALIAN BALLOT ITEMS

- Bram Towbin opened the Public Hearing at 7:04pm.
- Towbin stated the purpose of the Public Informational Hearing was to discuss the Australian ballot articles for Town Meeting on 3/7/17. He noted that Article 14 is scheduled to be discussed under "Other Business." Ross Sneyd and Towbin read aloud the two Australian ballot items, Articles 1 and 2. All other warned articles will be discussed and voted on from the floor. **Sneyd made a motion to close the Public Information Hearing. Betsy Ziegler seconded the motion. The motion was approved.**
- The Public Information Hearing closed at 7:06pm.

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PRESENT: Ross Sneyd (Select Board Member), Bram Towbin (Select Board Chair), Betsy Ziegler (Select Board Member), Linda Wells (Town Clerk/Treasurer), Keith Swann (Videographer), Cindy Wyckoff (Minutes Recorder), Pat Martin (Fire Chief), Andy Robinson (Resident, Sanctuary City Issue), Nicola Morris (Resident, Sanctuary City Issue), Daniel Caddy (Resident, Town Constable Issue), and Michael Billingsley (Emergency Management Director).

Bram Towbin called the Select Board meeting to order at 7:07pm.

AGENDA

- Public Informational Hearing regarding Australian Ballot Items (Note: Other Aspects of Town Meeting will Be Discussed in SEPARATE Agenda Items)
- Beginning of Select Board Meeting/Announcements and Public Comment
- Town Clerk's Report
- Road Report
- Discussion of Town Meeting in General - Delinquent Tax List, Grand List, Use of Paper Ballots vs. Show of Hands
- Discussion of Sanctuary City Declaration
- Town Constable - Preparing for the Future.... Expanded Duties?
- Michael Billingsley - Request for Funds, Duties of Emergency Management Coordinator
- Town Website - Follow Up
- Going Forward: AFTER Town Meeting - Appointing New Chair, Procedures for Agenda-Posting, Getting ICS 100.....
- Minutes

Towbin added two items to the agenda: discussion regarding the new fire truck and an update on the house on Cameron Road. He also moved the Town Constable discussion to earlier in the agenda. **Betsy Ziegler made a motion to accept the agenda as amended. Ross Sneyd seconded the motion. The motion was approved.**

ANNOUNCEMENTS/PUBLIC COMMENT

- Towbin announced that Town Meeting Day is coming up on 3/7/17 and will be held at the Town Hall Opera House. Town Clerk/Treasurer Linda Wells noted that polls are open between 9am and 7pm and that Town Meeting begins at 10am. Wells advised that residents bring to the meeting their Town Report to follow along with the proceedings.
- Ziegler announced that the final draft of the Sidewalk Study grant report has been completed and will be available this week. Project engineer Andrea Day would like to make a presentation to the Select Board at its next meeting.

- Ross Sneyd saluted Pat Martin of the Fire Department and others from surrounding towns for their work over the weekend in search a person who went missing after a car accident in the Cameron Road area of the Great Brook. Martin noted that the situation is still not resolved and briefly reported on the status of the search. Ziegler noted how impressed she was with the effort being put forth by the State, the local rescue squad, police, and others. Martin noted the large number of volunteers and organizations who joined the search from as far away as Stowe and Colchester as well as the donations made by various local business, including Maplefields, Positive Pie, and the Plainfield Co-op, which contributed food and drink to those working as part of the search effort.

DISCUSSION ON THE FIRE TRUCK WITH FIRE CHIEF PAT MARTIN

- Fire Chief Pat Martin was present to provide information on the proposed new fire truck, a bond for which will be voted on at Town Meeting. Martin noted that four proposals were coming in based on what is needed in a new fire truck. The bond vote question will be based on a figure of \$200,000 and additional money will be added from the department’s capital/truck fund. The full cost of the truck is estimated in the \$310,000-to-\$320,000 range depending upon the final configuration of components. Due to the poor condition of the old truck, its trade-in value is not being considered in the cost for the new truck. Plans are to sell the old truck on the open market. If the bond vote is passed, Martin will come back to the Select Board to discuss the proposals submitted for the purchase of the new truck. Discussion ensued on various safety components and equipment upgrades being specified for the new truck. Sneyd wanted to make it clear that the funds to purchase the new fire truck were different from the Article 4 item at Town Meeting to establish a Personal Protection Equipment Reserve Fund. Wells confirmed that both funds are for very specific purposes. Martin will be available at Town Meeting to answer questions.

TOWN CLERK’S REPORT

- Towbin provided a brief background regarding the house on Cameron Road that is in danger of falling into the Great Brook. The Town had initiated discussions with the Two-Rivers Ottauquechee Regional Planning Commission to help organize a buyout. Towbin noted the complicated nature of the issue, but stated that once the transaction goes through, the Town will be responsible for only Town Attorney James Jamele’s closing fees and a couple of other things, and will not be responsible for anything else in terms of liability. Towbin pointed out the potential cost to the Town if no action is taken to remedy the situation as well as the danger posed to first responders and others if any of the buildings on the property were to go over the cliff. In order to move the buyout process forward, the Select Board needs to authorize a Memorandum of Understanding and Agreement (MOU) between Phil Hoepfner and the Town of Plainfield for a short sale of the property. Towbin read aloud the MOU. He noted that the MOU misstated Cameron Road as Cameron Street, and made the correction to the document. **Sneyd made a motion to accept the Memorandum of Understanding and Agreement between Phil Hoepfner and the Town of Plainfield. Ziegler seconded the motion. The motion was approved.** Towbin underscored the fact that that the Town was taking this action to protect the municipal taxpayers.

TOWN CONSTABLE - PREPARING FOR THE FUTURE.... EXPANDED DUTIES?

- Towbin noted that George Cushing has expressed to him that he wishes to wind down in his position as Plainfield’s Town Constable. Towbin publicly thanked Cushing for all of the service that he has

provided to the Town. During the course of discussions with Cushing regarding someone to assume the responsibilities of the position, Towbin noted the name of a resident who has recently moved to the area, Daniel Caddy, and who has been involved in public discussions about organizing a community watch group in Plainfield. Towbin referred to a State certification process that allows for town constables to issue tickets, including speeding violations, which could help augment the efforts of the overtaxed Sheriff's Department. Caddy introduced himself and gave an account of his background and experience and how the skills he possesses would dovetail with constabulary duties. He is currently in the Vermont Guard, which requires a time commitment of one weekend per month and two weeks of training in the summer; otherwise he works out of his home. Discussion followed regarding equipment the Town currently has that would be used by a constable; details about the process of certifying a constable; and what requirements someone in such a position needs to fulfill when encountering an undocumented person who may be living in or visiting Plainfield. With regard to the latter, Towbin noted the State policy and strongly held view in the Town that Vermont peace officers would not be involved in that process, to which Sneyd recommended having the Select Board specifically state the certification process for constable if it were to be pursued.

DISCUSSION OF SANCTUARY CITY DECLARATION

- Plainfield residents Andy Robinson and Nicola Morris were present at the request of the Select Board to talk about the Sanctuary City declaration, which will be up for discussion at Town Meeting. Towbin stated that the Select Board had decided to put the article under "Other Business" in the Town warrant rather than as a warned article due to the potential of endangering transportation and school funding opportunities if Plainfield were to officially declare itself a sanctuary city. While the vote at Town Meeting will be non-binding, Towbin noted that the Select Board may in the future decide to make it official Town policy and/or incorporate it into the Town Constable policy. Robinson reviewed the local campaign and how the issue has evolved to this point. Discussion followed, including prior legal vetting of the language in the article; possible safeguards to shield municipalities from potential retribution by the federal government; and weighing the financial risks involved versus taking a moral stance in a time of increasing prejudice-motivated crimes.

DISCUSSION OF TOWN MEETING IN GENERAL - DELINQUENT TAX LIST, GRAND LIST, USE OF PAPER BALLOTS VS. SHOW OF HANDS

- Towbin noted that some residents had expressed disapproval of publishing the Delinquent Tax List, particularly last year when copies of the list appeared on chairs at Town Meeting. Wells explained that it is the Town Auditors' decision to publish the list in the Town Report and that the reason it appeared on people's chairs was because it had been inadvertently left out of the Town Report.
- Regarding the Grand List, Wells explained that it has been published in the Town Report for years, however, because of the increasing number of pages in the Town Report, efforts to keep printing costs down, and the fact that the Grand List is two years old by the time it appears in the Town Report, the decision was made not to include it this year. The Grand List is available to anyone by contacting the Town Clerk's office.
- Towbin noted that regarding the Sanctuary City question, a number of people have voiced concern about voting on it via a show of hands from the floor as opposed to casting paper ballots because of fear of being pilloried by some in the community. He asked if it was possible to have a paper ballot

vote on a controversial issue at Town Meeting. Wells responded affirmatively, explaining that the process involves someone from the floor making a request to the Town Moderator to vote by paper ballot and seven people agreeing with the request. Voters will line up, get a piece of paper on which to write their votes, go through a voter check list, and drop their ballots into a ballot box. The Justices of the Peace present at the meeting then count the paper ballots. Wells will be prepared with the needed supplies in the event a paper ballot is requested on any issue. Towbin will post Wells' write up of the process on social media prior to Town Meeting Day.

- Sneyd noted that Mary Niebling is looking for donated pies to sell at Town Meeting to raise money for the Town Hall Opera House Fund.
- Wells noted restrictions on politicking at the polling place during elections: standing outside the Town Hall Opera House with signs is allowed, but signs cannot be placed in the ground; standing in the way of people entering the building is not allowed; and no visible signs, buttons, or anything of that nature involving an issue to be discussed at Town Meeting are allowed inside the Town Hall Opera House.
- Towbin noted that the video of the recent "Meet the Candidates" forum will be posted soon to social media.
- Wells and Dave Strong will be setting up the Town Hall Opera House to ready it for Town Meeting.
- Sneyd and Ziegler noted that they both will be away on 3/13/17 when the next Select Board meeting is scheduled. It was decided that unless any pressing business arose, they would reconvene at the next regularly scheduled meeting date of 3/27/17. Ziegler stated that she will schedule Sidewalk Study project engineer Andrea Day for that meeting to make a presentation regarding the final report. A brief discussion followed on the process of developing and posting the agenda for Select Board meetings. For the next meeting, it was decided that Sneyd would gather info on what agenda items to include and forward it to Wells to post.
- Towbin noted that some grants require that a member of the Select Board be certified under the Incident Command System 100 (ICS 100). Towbin currently holds ICS 100 certification, but will be leaving the Select Board, therefore another Select Board member needs to take the certification test. A decision will be made regarding which Select Board member should take on that role after the new Select Board convenes after Town Meeting.

MICHAEL BILLINGSLEY - REQUEST FOR FUNDS, DUTIES OF EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT COORDINATOR

- Emergency Management Director Michael Billingsley reported on his recent attendance at the Spring Flood Workshop, sponsored by Vermont Emergency Management and Homeland Security. After Billingsley's report on Plainfield's efforts in handling flood events at the workshop, he was asked to give the report to the entire emergency response network in a few weeks. Billingsley also met with Central Vermont Regional Planning Commission staff to discuss generating a new set of maps identifying highways that become covered with water during a flood event so that first responders can choose alternative routes. In discussions with the Director of the Vermont Red Cross, Billingsley received certification information regarding new shelters. Upcoming workshops/meetings include helping homeowners work with towns so that private roads and driveways meet the requirements of safe thoroughfares and the passage of water, which will be scheduled in early June; a presentation regarding how streams behave, what debris does, etc. on 6/3/17 at the Plainfield Town Hall Opera House; and a presentation by George Springston on 3/16/17 on the flood history in Plainfield.

- Billingsley reported on monitoring the newly painted high-water gauge on the cement in the Great Brook, which showed a rise to 4.5 feet, below flood level, during last weekend's high water event.
- Discussion followed on the design and costs involved in an emergency information mailing Billingsley would like to send out to everyone in Plainfield. The piece would include a mail-back card indicating any hazardous materials that may be on a property, a card to put in the window during an emergency noting the evacuation status of residents in a house, and a listing of emergency contact information. Billingsley requested the amounts of \$680 for printing and \$193 for mailing. Sneyd made the point that the budget does not begin until 7/1/17 and that it first needs to be passed at Town Meeting. Stating that the amount proposed in the budget was \$700, Sneyd noted that the Select Board could choose to allocate more, however, it would have to come from somewhere else in the budget. Ziegler asked if perhaps Fire and Rescue would have any funding available for getting emergency information out to the public. Billingsley will discuss it with Fire Chief Pat Martin as well as investigate other emergency planning grants that may be available. Towbin asked if Plainfield might it be viewed more favorably when applying for other funding if it becomes a model for emergency management planning, which Billingsley agreed might be a possibility. A brief discussion followed on what would be done with information collected via such a mailing and ensuring that the mailing would go to everyone in Plainfield, especially residents without a Plainfield mailing address. Towbin thanked Billingsley for all his work.

FLEET PERMIT REQUESTS

- Towbin presented the following fleet permit requests for approval:
 - Donald Giroux
 - Winterset
 - Gilman I. and Sylvia J. LaCourse, Gil's Construction
 - Bourne Inc. Propane

Sneyd made a motion to approve the fleet permit requests for Donald Giroux; Winterset; Gilman I and Sylvia J. LaCourse, Gil's Construction; and Bourne Inc. Propane. Ziegler seconded the motion. The motion was approved.

OTHER BUSINESS

- Towbin stated that he will continue to be available after he leaves the Select Board, but needs authorization to continue working on a few issues he has begun as a Select Board member and would like to see through. They are the Cameron Road buyout process, speaking with State legislators regarding the abandoned building or zombie house issue, and grants relating to river corridor issues. **Sneyd made a motion that the Select Board appoint Bram Towbin as its representative in addressing the Cameron Road buyout process, the zombie housing issue, and grants dealing with river corridor issues. Ziegler seconded the motion. The motion was approved.**

TOWN WEBSITE - FOLLOW UP

- Discussion was tabled on the Town website until the next meeting, however, Sneyd presented written information on the website provider being considered as well as cost estimates.

MINUTES

- **Sneyd made a motion to approve the minutes from the 2/15/17 special Select Board meeting as written. Ziegler seconded the motion. The motion was approved.**
- **Noting a correction to the minutes from the 2/13/17 Select Board meeting, Ziegler made a motion to approve the minutes from the 2/13/17 Select Board meeting as amended. Towbin seconded the motion. The motion was approved.**

The meeting adjourned at 9:10pm on a motion by Ziegler. Sneyd seconded the motion. The motion was approved.

Respectfully submitted by Cindy Wyckoff