



Town of Plaistow ♦ Board of Selectmen
145 Main Street ♦ Plaistow ♦ NH ♦ 03865

PLAISTOW BOARD OF SELECTMEN MINUTES:

DATE: July 15, 2019

MEETING CALLED TO ORDER: 6:30 p.m.

SELECTMEN:

Selectwoman, Francine Hart, Chairman
Selectman, Steve Ranlett
Selectman, Greg Taillon

Selectman, Julian Kiszka, Vice Chairman
Selectman, John A. Blinn, Sr.
Mark Pearson, Town Manager

A moment of silence is held for the passing of Scott Pearson, brother of Mark Pearson, Town Manager.

MINUTES

J. Kiszka motions to approve the minutes of June 17, 2019. Seconded by G. Taillon.

Discussion: J. Kiszka states his name is spelled wrong on page 4 at the top. This will be corrected.

Vote: 5-0-0

Motion carries

F. Hart states we will go slightly out of order with the agenda.

RECOGNITION OF POLICE OFFICERS

M. Pearson calls Interim Police Chief Mullin, Officer D'Auria, and Officer Simone to the front of the Board. Interim Chief Mullin states he would like to recognize these two officers for saving a life. They responded to an unconscious victim who was not breathing. The victim was given Narcan and the officers saved his life.

F. Hart states on behalf of the Board she thanks the officers and the department for serving and protecting our Town.

PUBLIC HEARING – ASSESSING

Marybeth Walker is the Town's Assessors Agent. Part of the routine assessing services is to report the emerging sales ratio to the Board of Selectmen. The sales year is from October 2018 through September 2019. The assessed property values are compared to sale prices, giving the current ratio. The current ratio for all sales is 79% of market value. There have been ninety-nine (99) sales so far. There are several properties on the market and some of them will sell in the next few months affecting the 2019 ratio (through the end of September). If all these properties sell the median ratio will drop to 76%. The last full revaluation was done in 2016 and the ratio was 95.5%. In 2017 the

ratio dropped to 88.1% and in 2018 the ratio dropped to 80.9%. The Board must decide if they want to do a Town wide statistical update this year or wait until next year.

J. Kiszka asks if we wait until next year before acting, what month do we need to decide.

M. Walker replies as part of the Boards procedures, they get a recommendation from the assessor about this time of year, every year. Next year some type of adjustment will need to be done because of the software conversion. When a decision to change values is made in July it will show in the final tax bill of the year.

J. Kiszka likes the charts provided by Ms. Walker. He states when the percentage is skewed, we are not being fair and equitable to all properties. We cannot favor one (1) group over another. Any decision should be based on what is fair for all.

F. Hart asks about Utility Assessments. Have they changed significantly enough to include the Utility component in this process?

M. Walker replies, if a statistical update is done Utilities will need to be looked at just as all other properties need to be looked at. The right of way values and conduits and poles have to be looked at every year according to law. They will not be at the same ratio as the rest of the community.

G. Taillon asks if homes over \$500,000.00 are either way over or under valued.

M. Walker replies higher priced homes tend to be under assessed more than older ones. If a statistical update is done this year values that are off by only 1% will not be changed.

G. Taillon thinks it is confusing for people to have an idea of what their house might sell for and what an accurate assessment is. Is there a process people can follow?

M. Walker states there is a very good assessing presentation on the Town's website. Watching it will help people understand assessing.

The goal of valuing property is to be within 10% of sales value and to adjust all properties at the same time. Corcoran does a robust sampling of properties and all properties will change when a statistical update is done. If the Board chooses to do a statistical update this year residential, commercial, and utility properties will all be updated. Some properties will increase in value, some will decrease, and some will stay the same.

F. Hart would like to recap tonight's discussion. All properties are about 25% below sale prices. In order to be fair all properties need to be assessed at the same time. If we do nothing this year next year the changes will be more dramatic. She believes it is better to do a little this year and a little next year in order to prevent a huge tax increase next year.

M. Walker states when assessments change it does not necessarily change your taxes. The tax rate will determine your tax bill. Values will change next year due to the change in CAMA systems (commercial assisted mass appraisal). Next year's changes will be based on new software as well as market value.

S. Ranlett recommends changing values this year to bring the percentage up to 89%. That will make next year easier by doing a little this year and a little next year.

G. Taillon recommends going to 90% this year.

J. Kiszka recommends 90 or 95% this year although he typically like to aim for 100%.

S. Ranlett agrees to go to 90%.

J. Blinn is also in agreement with 90%.

F. Hart states commercial properties will drop if we go to 90% since the three (3) sales are at 96%. We need to give M. Walker a range to aim for and a higher percentage will be better so commercial properties will not come down. She favors a statistical update this year.

G. Taillon states to keep in mind we want to bring properties up to market value. For some time, the overall value of property is going up. The amount of tax you pay may be similar with a statistical update. He believes the percentage should be 95-100%. Both S. Ranlett and J. Blinn agree.

F. Hart states there will be more criteria to value commercial property next year. She also would like to have an outside audit done to make sure we are valuing commercial property at the highest level possible.

J. Kiszka states he spoke to Greg Colby, Finance Director last year about Utilities and they make up a very small percentage of tax revenue.

G. Taillon motions to do a statistical update providing our assessor to aim for 95-100% of market value. Seconded by S. Ranlett.

Vote: 5-0-0

Motion carries

M. Walker states she had been in touch with Visions Software and they are on schedule for the conversion.

Bob Hamilton, 3 Balsam Way states during the last update in 2015 there were several important things the Board did not know. He said state tax bill history can be found online at www.eb2gov.com. He states Plaistow lost ¼ of a million dollars in tax revenue from shopping centers. Residents had to make this up. It sounds like the same thing is about to happen this year. He has tax bills from State Line Plaza, and it shows a lower tax bill in 2015 than 2014.

F. Hart interrupts him stating this information has been presented before. She asks if he has any new information to offer.

B. Hamilton states it may be new to some selectmen.

F. Hart asks if he has any comments on the current situation.

B. Hamilton states a statistical update does not bring in more revenue, it redistributes it. Again, he mentions State Line Plaza.

The last time a full revaluation was done was 2016. It was based on regional sales and was done for all properties.

J. Kiszka wants to mention one (1) point. A statistical update is not just residential because you cannot try to favor one (1) group over another.

M. Walker clarifies a statistical update looks at all properties and all strata. If commercial is already at 96% of market value the values will not change. Residential is at 76% and needs to change. When Mr. Hamilton states it changes the burden of taxes it is only in appearance. State law requires each town to be at 90-110% of market value. Other states have different rates for commercial and residential property, New Hampshire does not.

Peter Bracci 2 Balsam Way is puzzled with this public hearing. He does not know why the Board voted before the public was able to speak.

F. Hart states she had meetings with M. Walker and L. Sadewicz. This Board represents all people. The decision was based on what is best for the Town as a whole. Ms. Walker is a professional.

P. Bracci states the public should have input before the vote.

G. Taillon states we are not coming here blind making a decision. Homework was done and they came prepared.

P. Bracci still thinks the order was wrong.

J. Kiszka states he takes Mr. Bracci's comment whole-heartedly. We could change the vote if we want. Procedurally it would have been wise to have people speak first.

S. Ranlett motions to rescind the previous motion and redo it after the public hearing is closed. Seconded by J. Kiszka.

Vote: 5-0-0

Motion carries

Laurie Milette 27 Smith Corner Road states by law we do not have to do a full update until 2021. She understands a median ratio to be in the middle. Since only three (3) commercial properties sold at 96% she does not think a statistical update is needed. If we do a statistical update this year, values anew next year, and values anew in 2021 it will be too expensive and unnecessary.

F. Hart states we are required to do an update next year because of the software change. We will not have to do one in 2021. She is concerned that many properties are assessed too low and if we do not do something this year next year most assessments will go way up.

L. Milette asks how much values anew will cost and if there is money since this was not budgeted for?

F. Hart believes the cost is about \$15,000.00 and there is enough surplus money to cover this.

P. Bracci states an increase in assessment does not mean taxes go up. It is the budget that matters. A statistical update causes more burden to residents. If assessments go up and the tax rate comes down, businesses pay less and the burden shifts to the residents.

G. Taillon states if commercial was at 50% of market value and thirty (30) properties sold the same argument would be happening on the opposite side. Commercial Property owners would be saying the burden is on them. It is all about equity. Residential homes are valued at 76% which is not equitable. He believes a statistical update will help. The bottom line is all property should be assessed as close to market value as possible.

P. Bracci states values anew uses regional sales which is a better way to value commercial properties.

J. Kiszka states five (5) years is a long time to wait and a lot can happen in that amount of time. In the future we may want to do a full revaluation more than once every five (5) years.

F. Hart states commercial shopping plazas are going away as more people shop online. We are trying to level the playing field.

B. Hamilton states as a border Town we have a lot of shopping activity especially with no sales tax. He thinks if the Board votes to do a statistical update tax revenue of commercial properties will be going down and the burden will be put on the residential properties. He believes the Town will lose about ¼ of a million dollars from commercial properties that will have to be made up by residents.

F. Hart if we do nothing and residential is at 76% we will get many commercial requests for abatements and we will be paying money back.

S. Ranlett does not believe we will lose ¼ of a million dollars of commercial tax revenue. Commercial property values will not be coming down if they are at 96 %. This is a scare tactic.

G. Taillon motions to do a statistical update with the range given to the assessor to be at 95-100% of market value. Seconded by S. Ranlett.

Vote: 5-0-0

Motion carries

PURCHASE OF EQUIPMENT – CABLE DEPARTMENT

Dean Zanello, Cable Coordinator would like to purchase some equipment to complete the cable upgrades at the library. Four (4) mounted cameras and microphones will be purchased along with equipment for the control room. The funds will come from the Plaistow Cable Franchise Fund. This project has been part of the Capital Improvements Plan since 2013.

G. Taillon asks if this new equipment will take care of the local lag/echo experienced during Candidates Night.

D. Zanello replies it should help.

S. Ranlett motions to withdraw \$13,402.00 from the Plaistow Cable Franchise Fund to purchase equipment for cable updates at the Plaistow Public Library. The specific equipment was presented to the Board on July 15th, 2019 by Dean Zanello, Cable Coordinator. Seconded by J. Kiszka.

Vote: 5-0-0

Motion carries

DISCUSSION OF POLICE FLEET

M. Pearson refers to the meeting minutes from May 1, 2017. The Board authorized him to purchase two (2) police vehicles from the Public Safety Revolving Fund (Outside Detail) account. Tonight, he proposes the same. With all the construction in Plaistow two (2) cruisers are not enough to cover all the Outside Details. He asks the Board to purchase two (2) vehicles from the current fleet, one (1) patrol vehicle and one (1) administrative vehicle with funds from the Public Safety Revolving Fund (Outside Detail) account in the amount of \$21,000.00. The funds will be deposited into the general fund, Unassigned Fund Balance. This will reduce the Police Department Fleet of vehicles by two (2). These vehicles are older and no longer covered under warranty due to mileage and age. All future costs for these vehicles will be paid by the Outside Detail account including fuel. The department will purchase a newer 2019 vehicle to add to the current fleet. The administrative vehicle will not be replaced. He also proposes to use funds from the Public Safety Revolving Fund (Outside Detail) account to purchase items such as shirts, pants, shoes/boots, hats, reflective jackets, mandatory trainings and small items like flashlights and batteries for detail officers and cruisers.

J. Kiszka asks how the value of the vehicles was determined.

M. Pearson replies, he used Blue Book and took an average.

S. Ranlett motions to expend \$21,000.00 from the Public Safety Revolving Fund (Outside Detail) for the purchase of two (2) Police vehicles; a 2007 Dodge Charger, VIN: 2B3KA43H87H770405, Mileage: 65,100 and a 2015 Ford Explorer Utility SUV, VIN: 1FM5K8AR1FGC41346, Mileage: 75,562 and the funds to be deposited into the General Fund, Unassigned Fund. Seconded by G. Taillon.

Vote: 5-0-0

Motion carries

S. Ranlett motions to direct the Town Manager to expend \$9,300.00 from the Public Safety Revolving Fund (Outside Detail) for the equipment to equip the purchase of the new police vehicle. Seconded by G. Taillon.

Vote: 5-0-0

Motion carries

G. Taillon motions to authorize the expenditure of Public Safety Revolving Funds (Outside Detail) for the ongoing expenses for fuel, maintenance, repairs and insurance for the two (2) Outside Detail cruisers identified in a previous motion. Seconded by S. Ranlett.

Vote: 5-0-0

Motion carries

F. Hart states basically we are taking the charges out of the budget and allocating them to the revolving fund. It levels the budget.

F. Hart has a question regarding the possibility of using the Public Safety Revolving Fund (Outside Detail) account to purchase items for Outside Detail Officers. She thought these officers were hired with the understanding they would provide their own uniforms, weapons, etc.

M. Pearson replies she is correct. He would like the option to purchase items as necessary to pay for training and items to make uniformity such as reflective vests and/or jackets.

G. Taillon asks if M. Pearson and Chief Mullin will keep the Board informed on these expenses. M. Pearson agrees.

S. Ranlett states he is in favor of the motion; however, he wants to make sure it is legal to pay for training for the detail officers to come out of the Public Safety Revolving Fund (Outside Detail).

M. Pearson states it is legal. Their sole purpose is outside detail.

S. Ranlett motions to authorize the expenditure of the Public Safety Revolving Fund (Outside Detail) for the ongoing expenses of uniforms, training, ammunition and supply costs for outside detail part-time officers. Seconded by J. Kiszka.

Vote: 5-0-0

Motion carries

DISCUSSION OF LETTER SUBMITTED BY RESIDENT

F. Hart states the Board received a letter written by a resident concerning the processes regarding the potential Pro Quip development on the Sandborn's Candies lot. She thinks the ideas mentioned in the letter should be addressed.

J. Kiszka agrees some good points were made.

F. Hart wants the public to know the approval for the site plan is conditional. One condition concerns the alteration of terrain. That has thirty-two (32) pieces of criteria that must be met. She recommends everyone take a "deep breath" and let the process unfold. She invites the resident to join the Conservation Commission.

S. Ranlett states he was on the Planning Board for twenty-five (25) years and the Board must follow the law and all regulations. They cannot vote against something just because they may not like it. That could open the Town to a lawsuit.

J. Kiszka agrees, He also mentions the Zoning Board of Adjustment has more power than the Planning Board.

G. Taillon states the town must improve the process regarding zoning decisions. Decisions must be documented, and the information must get out to the public. We need to be more transparent. A process should be in place, so the public is aware of decisions allowing time for recourse. People need time to organize and get counsel if necessary, to fight a decision. He believes it was deplorable how the zoning decision was made almost behind the scenes. He believes there should be a process, so the public is aware when the Zoning Board of Adjustment makes a decision.

J. Blinn states the Conservation Commission does the best they can with what they have. The Conservation Commission would like help all the time not just when things go bad. People should not criticize after the fact.

DISCUSS CHANGES TO THE BOARD OF SELECTMEN POLICIES & PROCEDURES

G. Taillon states the recommended changes are just a suggestion to help future Boards. He has no problem with the Chair of the Board of Selectmen negotiating a contract with the Town Manger. He believes after the initial negotiations the Chair should bring it back to the Board. The Board may have questions or suggestions. It would also be a learning opportunity for new Selectmen. His recommended changes are noted below:

III. Duties of Selectmen

A. Chair

The Chair shall preside over all Board meetings and shall have authority to:

1. Review and approve meeting agendas as drafted by the Town Manager.
2. Ensure that informational parliamentary procedures are followed, with the assistance of the Town Manager.
3. Maintain orderly Board meetings by placing limits on the length of time and the content of input provided by meeting participants and requesting the voluntary (or involuntary removal by a Police Officer) of persons who disrupt Board Meetings.
4. Call for special or emergency meetings.
5. Represent the Town at ceremonial events.
6. Serve as the Board spokesperson by presenting the official viewpoint of the Select Board to the media, citizens, government agencies, civic groups, and others.
7. Along with the Town Manager, serve as the point of contact for department heads between Board meetings.
8. Along with the Town Manager, serve as the point of contact with Town Counsel.

9. Negotiate Town Manager contracts

- a. Present to Select Board a summary of the negotiated contract before review by Town Counsel to provide an opportunity for Select Board member input.**
- b. Review Town Manager Contracts with Town Counsel.**
- c. Present final Town Manager Contract and receive approval of the Select Board**

10. The Vice-Chair shall have all the duties and responsibilities of the Chair in the event of a vacancy, absence, or disqualification.

S. Ranlett does not think we need to change the policy as each future Board will so things their way. He thinks it would tie the hands of future Boards. When he was Chair, he did negotiate a Town Manager contract. He sat with the Town Manager and they worked on a contract together. Then he brought it back to the Board. Some changes were made which he reviewed with the Town Manager. Next, it went to Town Counsel.

J. Kiszka believes a contract for a Town Manager should be negotiated between the Board of Selectmen Chair and the Town Manager. Then brought back to the Board for changes and to Town Counsel.

F. Hart states it is unnecessary to change the policy since we have a multi-year contract in place. She did email the contract to the Board for input however it may not have been clear that input was expected. She does not think this inaction should force a change in the policy.

G. Taillon agrees with the process S. Ranlett used and that is what he is trying to put in the policy. It is just a guideline.

J. Kiszka states we are trying to fix policies this year, so it is a good time to make changes.

S. Ranlett motions to put in a, b, and c (above under A. Chair) and renumber 9 and 10 into the Board of Selectman Policies and Procedures. Seconded by G. Taillon.

Vote: 4-1-0 (no F. Hart)

Motion carries

APPOINTMENT OF TREASURER

M. Pearson states there is no need to appoint a Treasurer. He refers to RSA 41:29-a, when a Treasurer resigns the job defaults to the Deputy Treasurer. We will need to find a Deputy Treasurer soon.

APPROVAL OF NON-PUBLIC MINUTES

Deferred to a future meeting.

TOWN MANAGERS REPORT

- Attended Several Meetings
- P.A.R.C. Drainage Swales Project
- New Softball Field at P.A.R.C. Project
- Road Next to the Police Station Project
- Cemetery Property Expansion Project
- Public Works Garage Information
- AT&T Cellular Agreement Renewal
- Westville Road Bridge Reconstruction Project
- Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) Grant Approved
- Police HVAC Humidity Issues
- Water Project – Pump House Easement(s)
- Smith Corner Culvert Replacement Report
- Safe Routes to School Project Update
- Unfair Labor Practice (ULP)
- Personnel

ACTION ITEMS

Correct the wording in # 4 from “statistical update” to “values anew”.

OTHER BUSINESS

F. Hart mentions a letter send by Governor Sununu. He is having a meeting on Friday, July 19 to discuss the State Budget and every Town/City may send one (1) member to the meeting. She asks if anyone is interested.

G. Taillon is interested; however, he cannot attend on Friday.

F. Hart states she will attend to represent Plaistow.

F. Hart asks for a volunteer to review past sealed minutes and make a recommendation to either unseal or keep them sealed.

S. Ranlett volunteers.

F. Hart states all Selectmen should get their list of Town Manger goals and comments to her no later than Friday for M. Pearson’s yearly evaluation.

SIGNATURE FOLDER

F. Hart states the Accounts Payable Manifest is going around. There is no signature folder tonight.

SELECTMEN'S REPORTS

S. Ranlett

- Attended the 50th Wedding Anniversary Celebration for Nancy & Ralph Bolduc.
- Attended Old Home Day.

G. Taillon

- Has a handout of the survey about the Town website he would like to set up. He asks the other Selectmen to look it over and provide feedback.

J. Kiszka

- Will be attending a seminar on 7/23 for Energy Projects.
- Will attend the Rockingham Planning Commission meeting – and will forward the information to all.
- Visited the new Highway Garage – it is amazing what has been put into the building. He would like a motion made to direct the Town Manager to apply for grants to make the Highway Garage an official heating/cooling center for the Town. F. Hart states this will be added to the next agenda.
- Is concerned that the streetlights in front of Pollard School are old technology and will cost the town more in energy.

J. Blinn

- He has nothing to report however he did have a nice vacation.

F. Hart

- Attended a CEDS meeting.
- Attended a Planning Board Meeting.
- Attended Old Home Day. She thanks co-chairs Haley Bush and Jim Peck and all the volunteers for making it a great event.
- Met with our assessor.
- Historical Society – painted cabinets and discussed preserving some old records using digitalization.

F. Hart adjourned the meeting at 8:45pm

Respectfully submitted,

Beth Hossack,
Recording Secretary