



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

PLAISTOW BOARD OF SELECTMEN MINUTES

DATE: June 1, 2020

MEETING CALLED TO ORDER: 6:32 p.m.

SELECTMEN:

Selectwoman, Francine Hart, Chairman
Selectman, Julian Kiszka
Selectman, Jay DeRoche

Selectman, Greg Taillon, Vice Chairman
Selectman, John A. Blinn, Sr.
Mark Pearson, Town Manager - Remotely

G. Taillon motions to approve the minutes of May 18, 2020. Seconded by J. DeRoche.

Discussion: J. Kiszka does not agree with the section regarding public comment. There was a long discussion and the minutes do not reflect his comments.

J. DeRoche withdraws his second to the motion.

G. Taillon withdraws his motion.

F. Hart states this will be tabled until the next meeting.

PUBLIC HEARING TO CONSIDER THE AQUATIC MITIGATION GRANT (ARM)

F. Hart opens the public hearing at 6:35p.m.

The phone number to call for comments is 603-560-8337.

F. Hart ask M. Pearson, Town Manager to provide a history of the grant.

M. Pearson states when he knew the Pollard Road Culvert needed to be replaced, he looked to see if any grants were available. He found a grant through the Department of Environmental Services and applied for it. The process took several rounds with several committees and in the end, Plaistow was awarded the ARM Grant for a total of \$135,000.00. None of the grant money needs to be paid back. The remaining funds for the project will come from a warrant article that passed in March 2020. Some funds have already been spent on permitting. Tonight's acceptance of the grant will complete the funding to replace the Pollard Road Culvert.

There were no questions from the public or the Board.

J. Kiszka motions to accept the Aquatic Resources Mitigation (ARM) Fund Grant awarded by the New Hampshire Department of Environmental Services in the amount of \$135,000.00 for the replacement of the Pollard Road Culvert and authorize the Town Manager to sign off on all related paperwork. Seconded by J. Blinn.

Vote: 5-0-0

Motion carries

SAFE ROUTES TO SCHOOL (SRTS) FLOWER BEDS

Jim Peck, Oak Ridge Road is present tonight as a citizen. He has pride in his hometown especially the Village Center. The Town Hall area is well maintained by the Town's Highway Department. He is happy the Islands on Route 125 have been cleaned up. He thanks M. Pearson. Tonight, he is here about the "soft stuff". J. Peck has reached out to three (3) businesses in Town and asked them to step up and take care of the islands created by the SRTS project. He is also getting bids from local landscapers to be the fourth (4th) business. The idea is to have each business pay ¼ of the cost to maintain the islands for one (1) year. The chosen landscaping company will do the work. Each business will have a sign to recognize their support. The companies that have agreed are Fran Berube of Brookside Funeral Home, Dave Hansbury of Joseph Hills Insurance Agency, and Tessa Paziale-Rigattieri of Paziale Real Estate. The largest island is on the corner of Elm Street. This is a historical corner. The big elm tree used to be there, the trolley went through there and the yellow house is a historical home. The Town Pound (jail) was once in that area too. The historical society will put a granite bench and historical marker in the island.

J. DeRoche asks who will mow the grassy areas.

J. Peck replies maybe the Town's Highway Department or the landscaper.

J. Blinn asks if the supporting companies will put in mulch and flowers.

J. Peck replies many of the Islands have nice bushes. A spring cleanup will be done. They will add mulch as needed and do some weeding in summer months.

G. Taillon states it will basically be a maintenance contract.

F. Hart states she did some research and suggests creating a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) for the businesses who are contributing. The Board agrees. She will work on the MOU and have it reviewed by M. Pearson and town counsel. She asks if the signs will be 16 X 24 metal signs.

J. Peck replies they may be a little smaller and will be tasteful.

J. Kiszka states the signs should be low, no higher than one (1) foot.

J. Peck will get information for the signs and asks if the Town will pay for the signs.

The Board agrees the Town will pay for the signs.

F. Hart states she will run the idea by the Zoning Board just to be sure there are no issues with the plan. The Planning Board is not usually in favor of mulch however, that is for new construction. She mentioned the use of mulch to the Fire Chief and he agreed with the plan.

J. Kiszka states the islands in front of Pollard School and the Baptist Church were already cleaned. They look nice.

F. Hart states Pastor Goodro and members of the congregation did the work. She thanks them.

F. Hart thanks Mr. Peck for his presentation.

SOLAR PANELS FOR SALT SHED

F. Hart states the Request for Proposal (RFP) was created last summer by the Energy Committee. It was submitted to M. Pearson and town counsel for review.

G. Taillon motions to direct the Town Manager to follow through with the sending of the RFP for solar panels on the salt shed. Seconded by J. Kiszka.

Discussion: The results will go to the Energy Committee.

G. Taillon asks if the RFP will be put on the NHMA website.

B. Hossack replies, yes.

J. Kiszka recommends not going with the first bid received. The bids will probably have a lot of variances.

G. Taillon asks if it will be put on the Town website.

B. Hossack replies, yes.

J. Blinn asks if we are buying or renting the solar panels.

F. Hart replies, we are buying the panels outright. The Energy Committee had a vendor give them a presentation and renting to own takes a long time for pay back. They decided buying them would be best for the town.

Vote: 5-0-0

Motion carries

RESPONSE TO ELECTED AUDITORS FINDINGS

F. Hart states she responded to the elected auditors for two (2) reasons. First, she wanted to reassure new Board members that Town Hall has good, competent people working here. Most encumbrances start with Department Heads. The information is given to the Finance Director for review. Next, she feels the elected auditors did not have all the information that the Finance Director had. The elected auditors disagreed with Greg Colby, Finance Director, Plodzik and Sanderson, Professional Independent Auditors, and the Board of Selectmen. F. Harts asks if anyone else has a comment.

G. Taillon states the elected auditors seemed to have missed the key words “and other” when referring to RSA 231:30. Municipalities have the flexibility to make decisions and to set aside money based on the planning of their Boards. He feels F. Hart explained that point well. He believes the elected auditors only focused on the first part of the phrase.

J. Kiszka states he read and reread the information. He made phone calls to get opinions. He understands the intent of the encumbrance, yet F. Hart’s response made him disagree with the \$25,000.00 encumbrance for a computer system. He is not against the need for the money. He feels the Board should be proactive and preeminent. The money in his opinion was not grounds for an encumbrance. It should have been added to the budget during the budget process. J. Kiszka states no one did anything wrong, yet he feels it would have been better and more transparent to have the funds added to the budget and not encumbered. F. Hart states someone mentioned it was kept out of the budget to help keep the budget lower.

J. Kiszka understands that however he believes putting it in the budget would have been the proper way to do it. The way it was encumbered gives the appearance of a back-door approach. F. Hart states she understands J. Kiszka’s opinion.

M. Pearson states the \$25,000.00 is almost 25% of the total 2019 encumbrances. It is one of the larger ones. He would like to provide some factual information. As the 2020 budget season approached the Board asked for a lean budget. Originally the \$25,000.00 was going to be another warrant article for 2020. This would have been the third \$25,000.00 warrant article for 2020. There was a surplus in the 2019 budget. M. Pearson felt it was better to encumber the 2019 surplus than to ask taxpayers to raise and appropriate another \$25,000.00. The State make it known they were going to change their software. The Plaistow Police Department is one of two (2) departments in the State that is using old software that will no longer be supported. The software integrates vehicles with headquarters. The software currently used by many towns is coming close to its end of life too. M. Pearson did not want to purchase new software without knowing if it would be compatible with the States new software. It was indicated the State was going to make their decision in January.

It was a difficult road and the actual vendor was not known at the end of the year. No one could have known that in June of 2020, the State still had not decided. This was a very unusual situation. M. Pearson states there is already \$50,000.00 in a capital reserve account towards software from previous years warrant articles. He did want to make a \$75,000.00 mistake.

J. Kiszka states he understands and remembers all of it. No one did anything wrong, no one was trying to be sneaky. In hindsight he would rather have added the funds to the budget. He would like to unencumber the money now.

G. Taillon states we have our own expertise with our Finance Director and professional auditor. They have the education and background. Since the encumbrance was approved by them it seems like the elected auditors are second-guessing the expertise of others.

J. Kiszka states he did not realize there were other options at the time. He felt rushed. He agrees with the elected auditor's opinion that they along with the Board should receive the list of encumbrances at least one week before the end of the year.

F. Hart agrees it may be better to review encumbrances earlier.

G. Taillon wants to know what the real issue is. It was approved by the Finance Director and professional auditors. They have the education and certification to make good decisions. The two elected auditors do not have the same education. They never asked the Finance Director or professional auditors for clarification. The Town did follow the policy, nothing was done wrong.

J. Kiszka agrees nothing was done wrong. He thinks it is responsible for the Board to verify the expert findings.

F. Hart states after the elected auditor's presentation she spent a lot of time talking to department heads who provided backup and satisfied her curiosity. She is satisfied the Board made the right decision. She agrees with J. Kiszka's point about getting information earlier in the year. She does not think a policy change is needed.

G. Taillon is glad F. Hart did the research. The two (2) elected auditors should have done the same. He believes Peter and Bob made a hasty decision. They should have done their due diligence/homework. He also believes the initial presentation should have communicated their issue instead of it being emailed later. A dialogue should have occurred between the elected auditors, department head, and finance director.

J. Kiszka motions to amend the encumbrance policy by adding, "the Town Manager must provide the Board of Selectmen and the elected auditor(s) with a list of proposed encumbrances and supporting documentation at least one (1) week prior to the end of the fiscal year".

Seconded by J. Blinn.

Discussion: F. Hart is concerned that the Board might be hog-tied waiting for elected auditors to respond.

J. Kiszka states if they do not respond timely the Board will decide without their input.

Vote: 3-2-0 (no F. Hart, G. Taillon)

Motion carries

SPEED LIMIT ON ROUTE 121A

F. Hart emailed the Board a magazine article of another community that requested a reduction to a speed limit. The speed limit was increased, not decreased. You need to be careful of what you wish for. She wants to make it clear that everyone knows Route 121A (North Main Street) is a State Road.

G. Taillon states the resident who wrote the email said she contacted the Police Department and did not receive a response. Her email is just her opinion. He would like to know if Chief Mullin did hear from the resident and are people really speeding?

M. Pearson believes the writer of the email stated she has called the Police Department and asked for patrols on the road. He reiterates the road is regulated by NH DOT.

G. Taillon asks if the Police Department patrols this road.

M. Pearson replies, yes.

G. Taillon states there may be information the Police Department has that differs from the resident's opinion.

F. Hart states she contacted Chief Mullin. State roads are strictly regulated as to the number of driveways allowed as well as the speed limit. The same road may have different speed limits on different sections of the road. She thinks the email should be taken under advisement. The road is narrow and curvy. People should not be walking, bike riding or dog walking on the road.

J. Kiszka states a kid will not carry a bike to another road just to ride it. He also believes a posted speed limit of 30 mph will not prevent people from going close to 40 mph. If it is changed to 25 mph people will not go over 35 mph. Enforcement can change people's habits. People do not want their insurance rates to increase. He states Route 121A is a cut-through for Route 125. Perhaps the speed limit should be increased on Route 125 and lowered on Route 121A.

J. DeRoche asks if the email is an actual petition.

F. Hart replies, no.

J. DeRoche asks if the Town can put up signs to try to slow traffic on a State road.

F. Hart defers to M. Pearson.

M. Pearson replies the radar trailer can be moved around town as temporary signage. Permanent signage would come from the State.

F. Hart recommends doing what we can for now before contacting the State.

J. DeRoche commends the resident for doing this.

J. Blinn asks if Chief Mullin will put the sign out.

F. Hart suggests Chief Mullin try to get patrol cars in the area when possible.

J. Kiszka is concerned how long it will take. He does not want to see a kid get hurt. The radar sign is a temporary fix. He wants to be proactive.

G. Taillon agrees and states it is an issue of enforcement. He recommends the Police Department pull people over whenever possible and collect data.

M. Pearson states only one (1) person from North Main Street contacted a State Representative and emailed the Board. The person claims most town roads are posted at 25 mph. He does not think this is true. He also thinks a request to reduce a speed limit of 40 mph to 25 mph is unrealistic. The Plaistow Police Department generally has two (2) officers on duty at a time. It is hard for two (2) officers to cover the whole town especially when responding to calls. M. Pearson reviews the monthly police reports and some significant speeds have been recorded on Route 121A. The Police Department has pulled people over for this. They are out there when they can be. We cannot have coverage on every road 24/7. The trailer is used to help look for speeders. Sometimes perception is not what you think it is. When you think someone is speeding yet you hold a radar gun on them, they are often not going as fast as you think.

G. Taillon asks if the radar trailer records data for tracking reasons.

M. Pearson is not sure due to the age of the equipment. He will check with Chief Mullin.

J. Kiszka agrees with M. Pearson's comments. He also remembers Chief Jones saying the radar trailer can track data.

J. DeRoche asks if the Highway Safety Committee should be involved.

F. Hart states that is an excellent point. She recommends looking at some short-term fixes and re-visiting this again in a month or so.

G. Taillon motions to table further discussion regarding the speed limit of Route 121A .

Seconded by J. Blinn.

Vote: 5-0-0

Motion carries

TOWN MANAGERS REPORT

- Attended Several Meetings.
- Public Safety Complex Road and Cemetery Expansion Projects – RFP.
- Westville Road Bridge Work Completed.
- Pollard Road Culvert Project – RFP.
- Salt Shed RFP Results.
- Landfill Cap Project Contract.
- Water Project Update.
- Water Tests Returned.
- Atkinson Easement.
- Water Department Work in Town.
- Pollard Park Sidewalk Replacement Project.
- Route 125 Island Maintenance.
- Public Safety Antenna Problems.
- Police Evidence Room Auction.
- CARES Act – Finance, Grants and Reimbursements.
- First Responder (Police, Fire and EMT's) Grant.
- Town Forest Parking Overflow.
- Route 121A Electronic Radar Signs.
- Tax Anticipation Note (TAN) Increase.
- Staffing.

J. Kiszka has a concern about the playscape at Ingalls Park. He has noticed many towns have roped off play areas. He suggests Plaistow do the same.

F. Hart states we should discuss it at the next meeting.

OTHER BUSINESS

F. Hart states she recently received two (2) resignations.

Maxann Dobson has resigned from the Trash and Recycling Advisory Committee.

Katie Ingalls has resigned from the Budget Committee.

At the next meeting, Marybeth Walker of Corcoran & Associates will provide an update on the software conversion. We will also discuss an RFP for an assessing contract.

M. Pearson asks the Board if they agree to have a water meeting on June 29. The Board agrees.

SELECTMEN'S REPORTS

J. Kiszka

- Has been in contact with the cemetery sexton. There are a lot if little issues that need to be addressed including, financial, logistics, and land.

J. Blinn – nothing to report.

F. Hart

- Attended a meeting with some Recreation Members and the Cub Scouts. J. DeRoche was also at the meeting and he will report on it.

G. Taillon – nothing to report.

J. DeRoche

- He thanks Maxann Dobson for her time on the TRAC Committee and he thanks Katie Ingalls for her time on the Budget Committee.
- He congratulates the Class of 2020. It was not a typical year.
- The Cub Scouts met with the Recreation Commission. It was decided that will look at other locations for a shed. One location is the Library, and another is The Public Works Facility. Ingalls and P.A.R.C. would be considered as third and fourth place locations.

J. Kiszka asks if a decision has been made regarding the summer recreation program.

J. DeRoche replies, a final decision has not been made yet. It is complicated and the Recreation Commission is looking into it.

J. DeRoche read the recent letter from Comcast regarding changes to programming packages.

F. Hart adjourned the meeting at 8:45 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Beth Hossack,
Recording Secretary