

SELECTBOARD REPORT -2012

This is our yearly opportunity to update Plainfield residents on the work of their town's executive branch. The Selectboard would like to begin by thanking our dedicated and hard working staff and volunteers for their hard work. All of our departments, boards and committees etc. contribute so much to our community. Plainfield continues to benefit from a core group of active, civic minded people who make our town special. If you would like to get involved, you can join us for our meetings on the first and third Wednesdays of the every month at 6 pm at the Meriden Town Hall. You can also get in touch with us through our town office staff (call 603-469-3201) or by visiting the official Town website (www.plainfieldnh.org). You will find below, in no particular order, some of the areas we wish to detail you on. The written minutes for all Selectboard meetings may be found in the monthly issues of Plain Facts, on our town's website or by viewing them at the Plainfield Town Office.

- Willow Brook Road "Completion" Phase – Our contractor, Morrill Construction, was finally able to finish the FEMA funded hazard mitigation work at two different water crossings on this busy town road (1000+ trips a day). Work began years ago planning for this project and it was nice to see it through to the new bridge/culverts at both Cole Brook and Hibbard Brook respectively. We believe this to be the end of nearly 4 years of improvements to this road. The feedback from Willow Brook Road drivers has been very positive thus far.
- Highway Dump Truck Replacement – We are pleased to report that a brand new International dump truck is now in service to the town at the highway garage. The new machine features a "municipal" style body that functions both as a dump body and sander in one. This means more utility and better performance. The old truck was traded in at purchase and we now begin the process of saving money in our capital reserve for the next big ticket replacement, most likely to be a grader in some years time.
- Police Department Staffing – In June, the Selectboard celebrated the long and dedicated service of Larry Dore to the town's police department. Deputy Chief Dore retired as the longest-serving employee in the town's police department history. We would like to wish Larry and his wife Bev a happy and healthy retirement together. This retirement, along with a departure of another long time police officer, presented us with some serious staffing challenges. With a little trial and error, we seem to have found some new officers who can help guide the department into the future. Chief Paul Roberts is to be commended for his leadership during our staffing transitions. Our police department provides an extremely important service to our town, and we are blessed to be so well served by our dedicated and highly trained officers.

- Cable Franchise Renewal – With our current cable provider, Comcast, we have worked towards negotiating a new franchise agreement. The most important thing the Selectboard sees going forward here, is the expansion of the current geographic area served by broadband internet providers. We have heard from many people who either live just outside of Comcast's service area or who are nowhere near broadband capabilities. Our negotiating partner at Comcast has promised us that expansion in certain areas is most likely possible. Obviously feasibility is a primary concern for any service provider and we hope to conclude negotiations in 2013. We will not sign an agreement that does not provide some expansion of coverage. It is helpful to note that Fairpoint Telephone Co. has seen this opportunity to expand their service (DSL) to many areas in town.
- Townwide Property Tax Revaluation – As mandated by New Hampshire state law, the town of Plainfield has negotiated a contract with Avatar Inc. to conduct a complete town-wide revaluation for tax purposes. This project commenced during the fall 2012 and should be complete for the 2013 tax billing cycle. Work for this project includes site visits to all properties for measurement and listing purposes, as well as a comprehensive analysis of recent sales data for value calculation. We appreciate everyone's cooperation during this process and we hope that the end result is an accurate, fair and efficient property tax system.
- Class VI Roads – Over the course of 2012, issues with class VI roads came to the forefront. Many residents expressed a desire to use a provision of New Hampshire RSA statutes known as "gates and bars". While the Selectboard has indicated a consistent wish to maintain public access for all on town rights-of-way, it has become clear that something needs to be done to protect the public and these fragile old roads. Therefore, we developed a new written policy concerning the placement of gates and bars, that will strike a balance between protecting historic access and protecting the public and property. We also plan for improved signage and enforcement of laws preventing destruction of Class VI roads. So far we have approved one such gate project and anticipate others may follow. Please remember that at no time will any road be completely shut off and that all gates and bars must be unlocked and access assured.
- Townwide Library System – This year was a maturation year for our town's new combined library trustees board. In early 2012 the Selectboard was made aware of an accounting error concerning unspent appropriations at the Meriden library. Working with the state of New Hampshire attorney general's office our library trustees investigated the situation, determined the scope of the accounting errors and returned said funds to the town. We would like to thank the trustees and others including current and former staff for their work in resolving issues related to this matter. In general the combination of the Meriden and Plainfield library boards into one town-

wide board seems to have had a positive impact and is taking Plainfield in the right direction for the future.

As a rule the Plainfield Selectboard runs a tight ship. We recognize that everything we do will impact the taxpayers in a myriad of ways. The challenges we face are numerous. One of the largest economic challenges is the so-called downshifting of what was once state funded obligations to the local municipality. This is particularly true when it comes to retirement pensions for our staff. Another dwindling contribution from the state is known as the highway block grant, which we have traditionally used for pavement projects. Unfortunately these funds are in decline and with rising petroleum prices, they provide less and less value to the town. It seems as though we will continue to face these headwinds for some time.

We hope to see you at Town Meeting 2013 for some important discussions and debate!

See you at Town Meeting,
Judy Belyea, Tom Williams Jr, Rob Taylor