

## SELECTBOARD REPORT -2013

Another year has come and gone for the Town of Plainfield and as we traditionally do, here is an update of the Board of Selectmen's activities for the previous 12 months. Of course, many issues were addressed and decisions made. In the interest of brevity we will list the most notable activities here as bullet points. Our complete meeting minutes are available on the Town's website: [www.plainfieldnh.org](http://www.plainfieldnh.org) or in hard copy at the Town Office in Meriden.

- A vacancy on our police force was filled with an experienced officer from Claremont. The Selectboard weighed whether or not to fill this vacancy against the need for staffing in the Town. In the end it was decided that the public safety considerations far outweigh any financial savings a force reduction would garnish. For many years Plainfield has made it so that an officer is available to respond to calls for service 24/7/365. This is expensive to the taxpayers, but seems to be the best for public safety. We continue to work to balance service with fiscal discipline.
- A new highway truck and sander were put into service early in the year. This new machine features a departure from the old system of a "slide in sander" and instead uses the so called "municipal body" concept. This is where the sander is actually incorporated into the dump body and is continuously available for transition from dump truck mode to sand an/or salt application mode. The result is a simpler and faster set up for all uses as well as increased capacity over the old sander technology. Our road agent feels so strongly about the benefit of this new system we are asking for Town Meeting approval to retrofit another truck in our fleet with this system.
- Our old 1974 "Tiger" tractor has reached a point where it needs to be replaced. The road agent has requested that the Town purchase a more modern tractor with newer mowing equipment to improve our mowing program. The Selectboard considered many options here including leasing equipment, but decided to ask the Town to purchase a machine which will have more uses, including (perhaps) sweeping, leaf blowing and chipping.
- With the diligent help of the Plainfield Energy Committee, the Selectboard has approved multiple improvements to the Town facilities to make them more efficient. Most notably the work at the Town Hall in Meriden has seen multiple upgrades to the building, heating system and lighting. We will continue to work with the Energy Committee to improve our facilities Townwide. A big "thank you" is in order for the members of this committee. Stay tuned for some interesting solar developments.
- Thanks to some hard working volunteers, the Town won a grant to restore and preserve the backdrop that once hung in the Meriden Town Hall stage. The grant funds helped to secure the professional services of a restoration specialist. Together with some of our finest citizens, the work was completed and the fruits of their labor now hang in the Selectboard's conference room as decoration and as tribute to the spirit of volunteerism in Town.
- As dictated by State law, the Town completed a complete revaluation of all properties (land and buildings) for purposes of property taxation. The firm Avatar Associates was contracted to do the work and our Town Assessor, George Hildum, supervised the entire enterprise. It is always a painstaking

job, but the end result is as close to 100% as we can get. The Selectboard wishes to thank all property owners in Town for their patience and cooperation in this endeavor. The data is now available online as well as in the Town Office.

- Selectboard members attended the celebration activities for Kimball Union Academy's 200<sup>th</sup> anniversary in May. This is quite an accomplishment for the school and on behalf of all our residents, we wish to congratulate the school on reaching this milestone. Happy 200<sup>th</sup> KUA!
- The Selectboard re-negotiated a contract with Comcast for the franchise rights to operate in Town. The biggest concession we were able to extract from this giant corporation is an expansion of service on True Rd. (in the next 12 months) and an agreement to expand wherever more residential density is achieved. The major factor in this negotiation was access to high speed internet service. Thankfully other providers have stepped in to increase access for more homes elsewhere.
- In July major rainstorms caused extensive damage to roads all over Town. Heaviest hit was Hell Hollow Road, which required almost complete reconstruction. With the help of a few outside contractors and their large equipment, our highway crew spent the better part of the summer fixing drainage and reshaping drive lanes. Due to the losses incurred, the Town was able to secure some disaster assistance from the FEMA the federal disaster agency.
- A major road refurbishment on Center of Town Road was performed once the storm damage was complete. This work included upgrading drainage that had been problematic for many years. A complete repaving of the road was the last step to get this road done. Residents on the road seem happy with the improvements.
- The Selectboard appointed a committee tasked with considering options to bring the Meriden Library into a compliant state of ADA access. As it currently stands, this facility is not accessible to those with a disability. The committee held numerous meetings and developed a report listing the recommendations. The Library Trustees will now have to decide how to proceed, but the Committee is to be commended for their hard and thorough work.
- The conservation easement on the Walker Farm land on Sandborn Road was a topic that got much attention in 2013. The land is some 100 acres with guaranteed public access as well as deeded trail areas. Conflict has arisen between the land owner and members of the public. The Selectboard has inspected the property and is developing a plan (ie. Signage and trail construction) to strike a balance between landowner rights and the rights of the public to access this property.
- Our trash and recycling contractor, Casella, met with the board to recommend the use of "totter" containers in Town. These totters offer better refuse storage as well as easier pick up at curbside. We have been getting Town feedback and will probably make a decision soon. So far the advantages seem to outweigh the down sides to this system. Please take a look at sample totters in the Plainfield Library and let us know what you think.

Finally, the Selectboard would like to thank everyone who serves the Town in all the capacities required. From the members of our various boards and committees, to the Fire and Rescue personnel who answer our calls for help. It is this volunteer spirit that means so much to our community. A few people to specifically call out include Stephanie Schell and Al Grindle for the work they do with the senior socials and with our neediest residents. We also would like to recognize one of our own who has decided not to run for re-election. Tom Williams has served as Selectman for many years now and will finish his term at the upcoming Town Meeting. Tom's roots go back to the beginning of Plainfield as a Township. We want thank him for his service and wish him the best.

As always, please join us at one of our meetings on the first and third Wednesdays of each month. Or call the Town office at 469-3201 to express an opinion. If you would like to serve the Town in other ways let us know, there is always a need for volunteers. Here is hoping for a good 2014 for Plainfield!

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



**Selectman Taylor presenting the Stephen H. Taylor Award posthumously to David Chellis. Cheyenne Chellis accepting the award. Photo: S. Halleran**