

**TOWN OF PLAINFIELD
BOARD OF FINANCE
MINUTES**

Received For Record At Plainfield CT
On March 24, 2021 @ 11am
Attest: Barbi J. Gardiner
Barbi J. Gardiner, Town Clerk

The Board of Finance for the Town of Plainfield held a Regular Meeting on Wednesday, March 17, 2021 at 6:30 p.m. at the Plainfield Town Hall. The meeting was called to order by Chairman Tom Sinkewicz.

Members present: Tom Sinkewicz, Travis Irons, Matt Radant, Don Kivela, Ted Dumaine, Dean Gorman and Keith Sheeley

Members absent: Gary Stalaboin

Also present: First Selectman – Kevin Cunningham, Finance Director – Kelly Vachon, Selectman – Art Gagne, Police Chief – Mario Arriaga and Deputy Chief - William Wolfburg

Tom Sinkewicz appointed Matt Radant for voting.

Minutes of February 17, 2021 Meeting

Matt Radant motioned to approve the minutes of February 17, 2021. Don Kivela seconded. Keith Sheeley and Travis Irons abstained. Motion carried.

New Business

Item 1. Discuss and act on Line Item Transfers

Kevin Cunningham reviewed the Line Item Transfers.

Travis Irons motioned to approve the Line Item Transfer totaling \$31,744.00. Ted Dumaine seconded. All in favor, motion carried.

Item 2. Discuss Board of Education 2 percent savings

Tom Sinkewicz referred to the email from Kelly Vachon explaining the 2 percent savings set aside, which was adopted last year. He said there were questions from the auditors.

Kelly Vachon stated that each year the Board of Finance needs to motion to set aside the money. She said the school budget is comprised of the mill rate, State and local taxes. She added that if the revenues do not come we are short, resulting in using the fund balance to offset the loss of revenue. There was a discussion with the auditors to have a practice of netting the loss of revenue and expenditures to be reflected in the school 2 percent account. Otherwise we would go through the fund balance in a few years. The Town would be the only contributor to the fund balance.

Matt Radant noted that the verbiage is "up to 2 percent". Ms. Vachon said in the past the fund balance has grown based on additional revenue coming in or the school and town spending

less. Going forward it would just be the Town. Mr. Sinkewicz added that the public doesn't vote on it. Ms. Vachon said it could be similar to the fund balance. Anything over \$50,000, the public votes on it.

Mr. Dumaine asked if there is a maximum. Ms. Vachon said the Board of Finance votes on it each year, up to 2 percent and we do not want to grow another fund balance.

Mr. Radant added, we don't set mill rates to build savings accounts. Mr. Sinkewicz said we can change it.

Mr. Dumaine asked what if we don't use the 2 percent. Ms. Vachon stated that it goes to fund balance. Mr. Sinkewicz said it is similar to fund balance. Mr. Radant asked if upon 2 percent of the budget, the BOE would have to explain the expenditure to the BOF for permission. He said with the guideline, if underrun we can tell them we can approve from 0 – 2 percent to hold onto for what they need. Ms. Vachon said you could set a policy. Mr. Radant suggested that a policy document is necessary, with legal review. He said it would be more of an annual process. Mr. Sinkewicz asked if we compared it to other towns. Ms. Vachon did not know of any towns with it and will research it. Recommendations can go to Mr. Sinkewicz. Mr. Cunningham will ask CCM and legal.

Item 3. Discuss and review current FY 20/21 Budget Statement

Ms. Vachon noted that we haven't received any additional revenue. She said the Mashantucket Pequot fund. An Out-of-town Tuition payment came from Sterling, \$890,000. Mr. Dumaine asked the cost per student. Recreation enrollment will begin soon. February tax revenue is posted, \$27 million.

Ms. Vachon reviewed the expenditures. She noted Highway Overtime is up due to February storms. Mr. Radant suggested the Unemployment Credit be carried over. Mr. Sinkewicz inquired about pool reopening. Mr. Cunningham stated hopefully in April, with limited capacity. Summer recreation program will as well. There was a brief discussion regarding Covid liability. Mr. Cunningham added that masks, sanitizer and guidelines will be used. He noted other town events are planned such as VJ Day parade, Plainfield Day and Bike night. He added that there are weekly meetings with Emergency Management.

Item 4. Discuss and review current Board of Education Financial Report

Mr. Radant noted the size of budget underrun could be close to \$700,000 and we should keep an eye on it. He added the importance of getting a 2 percent policy in place. He also noted the use of ESSER funds and questioned the BOE on limitations on when and how the funds will impact the budget.

Mr. Sinkewicz will follow up with Ron Lussier and Ken DiPietro before the BOE meeting. Mr. Cunningham wanted to meet with Mr. Sinkewicz and Ms. Vachon to discuss ESSER funding. He mentioned the \$1.9 trillion Bill, noting that it comes to the town and there are guidelines. Mr.

Sinkewicz stated that based on savings from last year, many believe the BOE should not be asking for more money.

Item 5. Police Department update

Chief Mario Arriaga distributed a packet and introduced himself and Deputy Chief William Wolfburg. He reviewed some highlights of the Police Accountability Bill and the financial impact. Mr. Radant inquired about the effective date. Chief Arriaga stated Body cams will be 2024, Accreditation 2025. He added that the new jail cells are complete, \$192,000 was budgeted and it came in under.

Item 6. Discuss and act on Police Communications upgrade and send to Town Meeting

Chief Arriaga stated that over the last years the department has invested thousands on improving the communications system. This includes mobile radios, portable radios and dispatch systems. They are old, outdated analog systems. He noted that they have replaced everything possible. He stated that a complete new system would cost \$500,000 to \$1 million, which is not feasible. He discussed an alternative less costly option. The state offers a program to join their network for free. He added that it is a digital, quality system. It will require replacing our equipment and using their network. He said the Highway and School Departments can join on as well. He said the cost to replace each portable and dispatch console will be \$110,000. Mr. Radant asked about pitfalls. Chief Arriaga stated that there will be dead spots, but the coverage will only get better. Mr. Radant assumed that if more towns join it will strengthen the coverage. Mr. Dumaine asked how it will tie in with Travis Irons. Chief Arriaga said they plan to meet regarding it. Mr. Irons said they will have the option of tying in and it will be a better quality.

Dean Gorman asked if it would be added to the existing budget. Chief Arriaga said there is money in salaries due to State Covid funds, to cover the cost of the equipment. He noted the extra salary because they could not hire due to academy push back and a departure. Ms. Vachon stated that there is Covid funding of \$95,000 from the federal government due to additional Covid duties. She said the federal government sent funds to cover extra patrolling. Mr. Radant said these budget lines are technically underruns and will be put forth as line item transfers. Mr. Cunningham stated that the Board of Selectmen voted to send the request for \$108,249.80 to the Board of Finance.

Mr. Gorman asked if the Behavior Assessment was in the new budget. Mr. Arriaga replied, yes. Mr. Kivela asked how long the replacements would take. Chief Arriaga said once it goes to bid, hopefully a few months.

Mr. Radant asked about verification on the verbiage of Town Charter requiring Town Meeting and whether there are other options. Mr. Cunningham said there is a question on whether paper ballot. He said Town Meeting can refer to a referendum on 4/12 or 4/19, adding that he preferred polls. Mr. Sinkewicz agreed. Mr. Radant questioned absentee ballots.

Travis Irons motioned the Police Department expense for radio equipment in the amount of \$108,249.80 be heard at Town Meeting on April 5, 2021 at 7 p.m. Matt Radant seconded. All in favor, motion carried.

Citizens Participation

Resident Joe Charron stated he has recently retired and did research regarding the cost of Police. He stated he is not against law enforcement, he is against the cost. He reviewed the resident trooper program in Tolland, a similar size town. He said the cost is \$774,000 per year vs. our \$2 – 3 million per year. He said it is reasonable and they have no issues. He said he does not understand the cost and that people are leaving. He suggested it could be on the ballot.

Mr. Cunningham said he appreciated the input and asked how many troopers they have. Mr. Charron did not know. Mr. Cunningham said 4, and the medium income of Plainfield is \$42,000 and Tolland \$138,000. He added that we have an outstanding program. Chief Arriaga thanked Mr. Charron and reviewed the daily calls/activities of the police department. He noted that Tolland has a state barracks of 40 to 50 police officers, Plainfield has 19 sworn police officers. He said studies have been done in the past. He compared similar towns and asked Mr. Charron to come to see the Police Department and gather all facts.


Sean Peterson suggested the old equipment go to the Highway Dept. He asked if the BOE 2 percent was only for Covid. Mr. Cunningham said no. Mr. Sinkewicz noted that the Board of Selectmen adopted it.

Mr. Peterson noted that our mill rate is 28.23 and Tolland is 36.5.

Adjournment

Ted Dumaine motioned to adjourn the meeting at 7:53 p.m. Travis Irons seconded. All in favor, motion carried.

Respectfully submitted,


Dodie Mineau
Recording Secretary

Plainfield Police Department

Communications System

Plainfield PD Current System	Projected New System: Department of Emergency Services & Public Protection
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Coverage – Our coverage is very weak. There are many parts of town without coverage. Sometimes it works better in neighboring towns than in Plainfield. 2. Noises – Our radios picks up all noises making it difficult for users to understand each other. There is often a lot of static as a result of all the different radio interferences. 3. Two-way - Allows for only one two-way conversation at a time per channel, which limits our ability to communicate as a team. 4. Upgrades – Radios, mobiles, antennas, and repeaters have been replaced at a cost of \$75,000- \$100,000 over the last several years with little to no improvements. The system has been in place since PD established. 5. Improvements – There is nothing more to improve unless the complete system is replaced to a digital system at a cost of anywhere \$750,00 to \$1.5 million. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Better Voice Quality - Automatic error correction capabilities maintain the clarity of voice, even with background noise or a corrupted signal. Speech is digitally encoded, which means advanced algorithms can deliver clear voice in extreme conditions. 2. Greater Capacity - Exceptional bandwidth far outreaches what analog can offer. In fact, it is so efficient, it allows you to double the capacity of your existing 12.5kHz channel. 3. Stronger Coverage - Digital performs better even at the far edges of coverage. Built-in error correction helps eliminate the static, background noise, and voice distortion that can occur with analog radios as you reach the limits of coverage. Our coverage will reach anywhere in the state. This helps tremendously especially when engaging suspects outside of Plainfield or transporting prisoners from different parts of the state. Coverage will only get better. 4. Longer Battery Life - While battery life is a challenge for all mobile devices, digital technology is much more efficient. Digital radios provide up to 40% longer battery life. 5. Infrastructure – There is no cost as it relates to infrastructure as the state maintains that as well as backups. 6. Costs – We do not pay for anything other than the equipment to get onto the network. This includes all portable radios, mobile radios, and dispatch consoles. It is costly at a one-time purchase of approximately \$110,000. No other costs are associated with the State Network.

Analog Radio vs. Digital Radio

- Advantages of Analog Radio
 - o Accessories and add-ons available.
 - o Easy to use and well understood
 - o Productive use of bandwidth
- Disadvantages of Analog Radio
 - o Most cases, only one two-way conversation using same channel.
 - o Receivers and transmitters use for particular transmission.
 - o Devices can be upgraded but not technology
 - o Business software not available.
- Advantages of Digital Radios
 - o Ability to have more conversations.
 - o Unit Id, enhanced text messages and status buttons can be embedded into channel.
 - o Existing infrastructure and antenna systems can be used transmitting.
 - o Better voice quality, capacity, coverage, and battery life.
- Disadvantages of Digital Radios
 - o Takes more time for first-time users to learn how to use.
 - o Digital signals will not tolerate RF (radio frequency) signals, and as a result if there is ever too much RF noise the signal can completely drop in error.
 - o Due to the fact it is newer and more technologically advanced it is also more expensive.

Radio

- State of Connecticut received COVID-19 funds from state and federal government.
 - o Police Salaries
 - o \$95,000.00
 - o Line Item Transfer
- Will already accomplish a Five Year Capital Improvement item.
- Current Radio System
 - o Mobile, Dispatch, and Vehicle devices.
 - o Analog System
 - o Scanner Accessible
 - o Weather Impacted
 - o Infrastructure Outdated
 - Antenna on State Tower – Ekonk Hill
 - Replacements made over years costing between \$50,000 and \$100,000.
 - Radios, Repeaters, Antennas
 - o Frequency Interference Common
 - o Officer Safety Concerns

Internal System Replacement

- Install new towers, repeaters, and issue new equipment (portables).
- \$750,000 - \$1.5 Million

Connecticut Land Mobile Radio Network

- Digital System
- Free for Municipalities – No monthly, yearly fee, 5 year contract
- Statewide Coverage = Higher Bandwidth
 - o Can communicate with any state or municipal agency on network.
 - o Voice quality improved even in extreme conditions.
- Infrastructure – No maintenance, state maintained
 - o Training conducted by State initially.
- Portable radios, vehicle radios, dispatch equipment required to be replaced.
 - o Approximately \$108,248.80
 - o P25 Radio
 - o Battery life increased.
- System backups throughout the state
 - o Covered by “D” sub system
 - o Overlapping from “E” and “K” sub systems
- Virtual Channels known as “Talk Groups” unlimited amount.
 - o Able to have various town entities on system (i.e. Town Highway).
 - o Encryption capabilities.

Connecticut Land Mobile Radio Network MOU Summary

- Connecticut Land Mobile Radio Network (CLMRN)
- Town of Plainfield and State of Connecticut Department of Emergency Services and Public Protection, Division of Statewide Emergency Telecommunications (DESPP).
- Five year initial term, with option to renew for four additional five year terms.
- Town Responsibilities included but not limited to:
 - o Town of Plainfield must purchase portable radios, mobile radios, dispatch consoles, etc. which meet requirements of the CLMRN. Equipment must be approved through state.
 - o If Town of Plainfield desires enhanced coverage that requires additional site(s), Town shall fund costs and maintenance.
 - o 42 portable and mobile radios.
 - o Town shall fund, maintain, repair, and secure reasonable upgrades to equipment.
- DESPP Responsibilities included but not limited to:
 - o Provide reasonable support to Town for management of CLMRN.
 - o Ensure municipality participation will not degrade performance.
 - o Will not charge user or subscriber fee.

Plainfield Police Department

COVID Related Salary Expenses

The below numbers reflect the amount of time officers accumulated while performing patrol checks to businesses and homes, as well as filling shifts while sick, during quarantine, filling open shifts, etc. from March 1, 2020 through December 31, 2020. The salary expenses totaled \$97,000.10.

Patrol Checks:

The average time for each patrol check was approximately 4 minutes. The total number of patrol checks that were completed was 7, 759, totaling approximately 517.30 hours. This total was calculated by the following using an average Police Officer hourly rate of \$34.00:

	7,759 (checks)
x	4 (minutes each check)
<hr/>	
	31,036 (total minutes)
÷	60 (minutes)
<hr/>	
	517.30 (total hours)
x	\$ 34.00 (average hourly rate)
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	\$ 17,588.20

Coverage Hours:

The department has calculated employee coverage hours accumulated for Police Officers and Dispatch/Administrative Assistant due to the COVID 19 pandemic. This list is for all time expended due to coverage, while employees while either in quarantine, sick, and/or were required to cover vacant shifts for Police Officers and Dispatch. The coverage totaled: \$79,411.90.

COVID Re-imbursement:

The department has received \$95,000 salary re-imbursement from the State/Federal Government because of the above COVID expenditures. In order to cover the cost of the radio system, I would later request a line item transfer from salaries in the amount of approximately \$110,000 to purchase the equipment for the new radios/mobiles in order to join the State Radio Network. Due to retirements and departures, I anticipate having enough money in salaries to cover the additional \$15,000.