



Welcome to the Early Fall Newsletter, with news and information about goings-on in Brandon and the work of the Downtown Brandon Alliance. The DBA is Brandon's part of the Vermont Downtown Program which was established in 1994 providing technical assistance and training to help towns revitalize their downtowns, a program which was strengthened by the Downtown Development Act of 1998. Towns that receive downtown designation under this Act are eligible for a number of benefits, including tax credits, loans and grants from various state agencies.

THE SEGMENT SIX PROJECT

The DBA is organized into four committees and they have been hard at work on many projects helping make Brandon a better place to live, to shop, and to work. The Design Committee has been fully engaged in an upcoming project that will change the face of Brandon for years to come – the Segment 6 Project. Their ideas about how this could and should take shape were presented to the Select Board, the project engineers, and all interested parties (the proposal can be found in the Downtown Brandon Alliance's portion of the Town of Brandon's website <http://townofbrandon.com/2012/08/16/downtown-brandon-alliance-design-committee/>). A memo was sent by the Design Committee to the engineers and project manager detailing their desired changes and, at length, a reply was received indicating that the proposed changes were practical and could be accomplished. It is hoped that face-to-face meetings are in the near future and that the few remaining areas of concern soon will be ironed out.

The first phase of Segment 6 is the installation of the water main. Agreements over the rights-of-way have finally been concluded and are in the hands of the town attorney from whom they will be sent to the state for their final approval. Once the state gives the word to Brandon that we can proceed, applications for bids will go out, a contractor will be hired, and if we're lucky, construction can begin shortly after October 15th. The Chamber and the DBA made it clear to the Select Board that construction during the height of the leaf season when the majority of tourist dollars come into the town was unacceptable. So any work done while the tourists and their dollars are still flowing will be started at the north end of the project and not in front of the Brandon Inn. Once work starts there is bound to be some form of dislocation and we will do our best to see that everyone is kept informed so as to minimize inconvenience.

THE SUMMIT AT THE FALLS

A forum just held at the Town Hall, led by the DBA Design Committee and the Planning Commission, explored Brandon's relationship with the Neshobe River and its watershed. The substantial crowd that attended got a virtual tour from the headwaters in Goshen to the junction with Otter Creek. They learned about good river management, about floodplains and their regulation, and how we can try to deal with potential flood events before they do damage. Goals of the

workshops were increased river access for the public, more education and outreach, and broader planning for the entire watershed. Some of this is already happening with work to open up a viewpoint for the lower falls.

THE TOWN OFFICES

Three architects – Max Ferro, Robert Black, and Blaine Cliver -- who happen to be members of the Design Committee though not engaged on their behalf, have been working closely with the Select Board and Town Manager on renovations to the Town Offices at 49 Center Street. Plans and drawings have been prepared for the town, have gone out to bid and the contract is being negotiated and about to be signed and restoration started. A crew of volunteers is already hard at work in removing debris before the construction proper can begin. It's important to point out that the hard work of these three architects have been provided free of charge, a major contribution when the town is focusing on every dollar spent.

ECONOMIC SURVEY

The DBA's Economic Restructuring Committee is charged with figuring out how to support the rehabilitation and maintenance of our downtown commercial core by expanding the business mix and the market area. Although our downtown will never likely provide the range of goods and services they provided a generation ago, with a concerted and focused effort downtown Brandon can contribute to the economic vitality of the region. To accomplish this, the Committee has worked with a Community Development Specialist from the UVM-Extension to conduct a market survey and analysis. The results are in and they are fascinating... and, in some cases, surprising with implications of which Brandon's businesses can take advantage. A presentation to whom all will be invited will be scheduled shortly.

BRANDON BUSINESS BREAKFAST MEETINGS

Under the joint auspices of the DBA and the Brandon Area Chamber of Commerce, a monthly breakfast meeting of downtown businesses was launched in early Spring of 2012 to increase communication between Brandon area businesses. The group meets the second Tuesday of each month at Café Provence's event space starting at 8AM and concluding at 9AM. Under the leadership of AnnMarie Roth, the meetings focus on sharing practical ideas that enhance profitability – as well as discussing issues of importance to the business community. It is proving to be a valuable resource to those who attend. And you don't have to be a business owner to join in.

BRANDON'S BARRELS

When the Chamber became unable to continue placing and maintaining the flower barrels in the central business district, the DBA undertook the task. Led by Judy Bunde, nearly two dozen flower-filled barrels were placed, with arrangements with sponsoring merchants to keep them watered and looking their best. Judy's group is now in the process of changing the summer flowers for mums and other appropriate autumnal plants. Some time before snow flies they'll have to be removed, cleaned, and stored. If you've got space, please let us know.

Credit Nancy Leary for putting together a group of citizens that in less than a half hour performed what the town couldn't seem to do – they weed-wacked, cleaned up, and spruced up Green Park. It no longer is an eyesore and work is underway to open up access to this attractive mini-park.

And it's not just Green Park that's looking up. Things are definitely moving forward in Brandon. New shops are going into formerly vacant spaces like Nancy Leary's Home Shop, the Discount Grocery going into the Johnson's space, the new bookstore/coffeehouse soon to be in Warren Kimble's former gallery, Rob Zollman's "Hands on Music" where the video store used to be, plus the new owners bringing a new feel to Shapiro's. Finally, last but not least, is the excitement that Robin Bennett, our new town manager has already generated throughout the entire community.