

**Brandon Select Board Meeting
May 6, 2013**

NOTE: These are unapproved minutes, subject to amendment and/or approval at the subsequent board meeting.

In Attendance: Ethan Swift, Dave Atherton, Devon Fuller, Blaine Cliver

Also in Attendance: Richard Baker, Wayne Rausenberger, Kathleen Rausenberger, Allan Leavitt, George Reilly, Richard Kirby, Anna Scheck, Bernie Carr, Gary Meffe, Tecari Shuman, Lee Kahrs, Jim Leary, Helyn Anderson, Phyllis Reed, Frank Spezzano, Judy Bunde, Steve Beck, Norm Milot, Brian Fillioe, Francis Farnsworth, Dennis Reisenweaver, Craig Lee, Scott Trask, Lynn Orth, Bill Orth, Ann Malbon, Lucia Sudrez, Roger Bougor, Jake Bertrand, Jenn Philo, Sam Stone, Priscilla McKeighan, Shauna Lee, Jon Andrews, Lance

1. Call to order

The meeting was called to order by Board Chair, Devon Fuller, at 7:02PM.

Devon Fuller advised this is a special budget workshop meeting to obtain comments and discuss potential changes to the proposed budget.

a) Agenda Adoption – Motion by Dave Atherton/Blaine Cliver to adopt the agenda as presented. **The motion passed unanimously – 3 to zero.**

2. Fiscal

a) Warrant – May 6, 2013 – \$375.00

Motion by Blaine Cliver/Dave Atherton to approve the warrant of May 6, 2013 in the amount of \$375.00. **The motion passed unanimously – 3 to zero.**

Richard Baker advised this warrant was for the town hall floor waxing.

4. Discuss Budget Options

Devon Fuller opened the budget discussion to the public for comments in helping the board revise the budget. Mr. Fuller called for specific ideas.

Public Discussion:

Phyllis Reed read the following letter:

“I would like to thank the Select board for making the informational meeting possible that took place last Monday in regards to the town budget re vote and thank everyone that attended. I'd like to thank everyone that voted, as a "vote is your voice.”

Following is what I'd like to see in regards to a new, revised budget:

Keep the Rec Coordinator part-time. If one were to do research, one would find that recreation revenues do not cover recreation expenses. With a NET recreation increase of \$52,000 (I am presuming the 2012/2013 actual budget is the same as the 2012/2013 budget, which of course is not usually the case), 2000 people (half the population) would have to pay \$26.50 in fees to cover this. Is this realistic to get 1/2 the people involved in the Rec department? Probably not. As I stated at the info meeting, there is no recreation revenue being reported in the line item revenue in the town budget. I would like to see this reported. IN NO WAY SHOULD THE REC DEPARTMENT BE DISSOLVED.

Also, as I stated at the informational meeting, I have only seen Mr. Sanderson (the Public Works Superintendent) at a handful of Select board meetings in the couple of years since he has been hired. Thus, I don't know how he justifies an additional laborer an addition to the bottom line NET public works of \$78,000 (presuming again 2012/2013 budget vs. a possible actual). What I don't understand: why would there be a line item of OT of \$20,000 if we were to bring on a new laborer? That could go away.

As to the new loader, if the cost is \$160,000, and we are doing a 5 yr. lease, where is the \$32,000 we would pay per month in the budget? (I have no idea how a municipal lease works). I am guessing the \$85,000 in the budget for Equipment Leases is for the new equipment the town previously bought. The specific new equipment is in the Auditor's Report, which I believe is a dump truck and something else?

I still have questions and comments, but, hopefully I will be able to ask these at the budget workshop.

MY BOTTOM LINE is, we, as a community, need to work together, and the Select board listen to the public. The idea of Blaine Cliver's finance committee is right on (this, in essence, would be what the Jakalias' said was a taxpayer's committee may years ago).

Phyllis Reed''

Devon Fuller stated Mr. Sanderson provides a public works report for every meeting and also attends meetings on a regular basis. The municipal lease proposed is not a monthly lease. The lease figure of \$100,000.00 would include the new lease and would be the same leasing program for the next 5 years. There would be a couple of leases coming off in the next couple of years. Anna Scheck stated the \$100,000.00 would get transferred to the capital equipment fund and covers other items that are considered capital equipment.

Sam Stone advised there is a petition circulating to maintain the full-time recreation director position in the budget and currently there are close to 200 signatures on the petition. The petition has also been on-line and Ms. Stone advised there are some very good comments from people that include the welfare of the children in town, the economic benefits of having a recreation department relating to tourism and providing a vibrant community. She stated the gas tax has

been increased and having to travel to other areas for recreation will be costly and she would like to see the activities stay in the community. The recreation director position is not a part-time position and the current director works well over the time that he is getting paid for. It is not felt that a part-time position will sustain a good employee. The current director has generated a lot of momentum and the community is concerned this will be lost. It was questioned what the timeline will be for decisions on the budget and Mr. Fuller advised there is not a specific timeline, but it is hoped information will be obtained over the next couple of weeks.

Wayne Rausenberger agreed that the recreation department needs to be either full time or eliminated altogether. There had been issues with the recreation department previously and Mr. Moore does good work and should not be expected to work for the pay he is getting. Mr. Rausenberger stated there is \$35,000.00 in the budget for sidewalks on Park Street and he suggested they do not need to be done this year. There should also be consideration of eliminating residential sidewalk plowing, as other towns are also considering elimination of this service.

Devon Fuller stated the board is looking for budget cutting suggestions and questioned if there is a number that the board needs to consider in order to get a budget approved. Mr. Fuller advised the \$35,000.00 is not only for the sidewalks on Park Street, but also for other areas in town. Ms. Orth stated she supports the recreation department, providing it is funded through grants or user fees. Dave Atherton stated because this department has been defunct in the past, it will take a while to get the department up and running again. He noted it takes time to write and receive grants. Lynn Orth stated there is a question of whether a town of this size can afford a recreation department and perhaps the grants have to come first. Mr. Atherton noted Maria Ammatuna sent an email with some points that the town has lost the Sportsman Club that had many activities that will no longer be offered and suggested the recreation department could possibly assume the organization of these types of activities. Ms. Orth stated those types of activities do need to be self-funded. Devon Fuller stated it may take some time to build up the department to be self-funded and questioned if the budget could be reduced in other areas, would bringing the taxes down and maintaining a full-time recreation director be acceptable. He stated that the public works department does need a fourth person, but that increase may have to be postponed. Ms. Orth stated her concern is a decrease in the overall taxes, but she would also like the select board to take a general look at what is provided for the community's children. She is not against a recreation director, but she wants more balance and she feels it is too much for a small town and some thought has to be done as to who we are as a town, as there are retirees as well as young families. Mr. Fuller stated it appears the amount of the budgetary increase is the major concern and if there was a full-time recreation director that could provide more for all people in town; he feels it would be worthwhile. A recommendation was made to have concessions at the recreation events, as businesses would likely donate for the concessions and they could be run by volunteers. It was noted that the baseball fields in Proctor are completely self-funded from the concession revenue. Another suggestion made was to do fund-raisers and solicit for sponsorships for the teams. Without a recreation director and active recreation department, organization of these types of activities could not be done. Priscilla McKeighan stated bus trips could be planned that could include participant contributions and it could be become an activity department for the entire town.

Norm Milot is not against the recreation department and suggested one way to save money would be to reduce the amount of salt and sand distributed in town. He stated there are some towns that advertise “low salt” or “no salt” areas. Devon Fuller stated that would be a safety issue and would require discussion with the public works manager.

Brian Fillioe stated the Rutland City’s business district hires someone to do their sidewalks and the business owners, as well as the residents could be responsible for their own walks. Mr. Fillioe felt the sidewalk grant that has been discussed should be included in the budget, as this is a matter of public safety. Mr. Fillioe does not like the idea of taking money from the sidewalk budget, as it will likely increase in the future.

Mr. Reisenweaver stated it is important to work to increase the tax base and get more businesses, rather than relying on tourism. Dave Atherton stated he has been a small business owner in Vermont and retail is not like it was 10 years ago, as the internet has changed this. Mr. Atherton stated tourism can increase the tax base. Mr. Reisenweaver asked why the town cannot get some of the good, clean industries in the town, noting that Brandon is not a Woodstock. He questioned how many businesses the economic development department has brought into Brandon and how many grants have been written. Devon Fuller stated the economic development director has written several grants. He has assisted in the loans for Chef Robert, who now has three businesses in the downtown. There had been discussion about a bio-mass heating system, which is now being considered for the heating system for Neshobe School. Blaine Cliver stated Mr. Reisenweaver has a very good point and it is necessary to attend events that will encourage business for the town. Devon Fuller stated better broadband needs to be created to assist in internet businesses. Mr. Reisenweaver stated with no jobs available, people will not move here without something to draw them to the area. If the tax base is not built up, the town cannot expect the townspeople to pay more.

Wayne Rausenberger also suggested departments go through their salary-associated costs and other costs to determine if there are areas that can be trimmed. Bernie Carr questioned what Shawn Smith’s position entails, as he was under the impression the field mowing is being contracted out. Mr. Fuller advised that there are areas that the contractor cannot do.

Bill Orth stated there needs to be a vision to guide a budget and if the town is going to be a “bedroom community” then there is a certain group of actions that need to be adopted to move the town in that direction such as competitive taxes, a recreation department, good schools and good facilities. There needs to be an agreement on where the town will be in five or ten years. He noted that every town he has lived in has certain funds that are used to provide the needed flexibility for the town; i.e. a health budget, funding for things like the library, and as a voter, he would like to know what the total obligation is and what all the components of the budget are. The town’s portion of the total cost is very small and the town budget is not the problem, but is the last piece that gets voted on. It is necessary to show the total components of the budget.

Select Board Discussion:

Blaine Cliver suggested review of all items in the budget to consider reductions. Devon Fuller stated there are certain areas, such as salaries and health insurance that cannot be changed. The

American Federation of State and County Employees is a yearly union contract. Mr. Fuller stated staffing is what costs the most and it is difficult that there are no reductions that can be made at this time; however, this item will be negotiated next year. Dave Atherton stated the department heads should review their budgets again for further reductions. There are some tax exempt properties that are coming up for renewal and this will be another area to consider. Mr. Atherton noted there has been a lot of new businesses that have moved into the Arnold District area in the past few years, however, the entire economy has changed and new types of businesses are being developed. Lynn Orth stated though it is not the select board's responsibility, it would be helpful for the public to have a summary of information on what is the budgets for OV, Neshobe and the town. Shawna Lee stated that investing in the future of community keeps the young professional families here. As a young parent in an amazing school system, she would like to see the activities flourish; noting the select board should keep in mind that there are young families that could be lost, if there is not a strong program. Dave Atherton stated there had been an earlier discussion of having a committee to deal with this type of information. Blaine Cliver suggested talking to some of the new businesses in town to determine how to grow the employment in the area. It is not felt that large businesses are the future, as the transportation of product from this area is difficult. Richard Baker questioned whether there is a target number to achieve. Mr. Fuller stated the board will work to create the vision of the direction the town will be moving in and will review what the town has to offer and determine whether the board's vision of a full time recreation director would be beneficial for all. The board will need to look at places to cut and noted that some of the part-time positions may need to be reduced and there may need to be a cut-backs in some other areas. It was suggested the public be provided information on how the various reductions will affect the taxes. Mr. Fuller stated on average, the original increase was \$70/year per \$100,000.00. He noted the impact will be shown once it is determined. Mr. Atherton stated it would be helpful to have legislators present at the meetings to enable them to bring concerns to Montpelier. Dick Kirby felt that people that receive the town services are getting their money's worth. For taxpayers in the outlying areas, there are no sidewalks and the roads are plowed by the state, however, he will gladly pay his taxes as he does not know of a better place to live than Vermont. It was questioned why the school budget does not include a portion of the recreation funding and it was felt that it would equate to the same tax burden for the taxpayers. There was a suggestion to growing business in town by adding activities such as a bowling alley or movie theater to provide local recreation for the town. Mr. Fuller stated there will be a tax sale coming up for those who are not paying their taxes and there could potentially be logging of the forests considered to generate revenue. He noted this will not fix this budget, but will help in the future.

5. Consider Process for Vacant Select Board Seat Selection

Devon Fuller advised the select board has received several letters from citizens who are interested in filling the vacant select board position. The select board will review and discuss the merits and pros and cons of each individual in making a decision. The board members wished to thank everyone who has sent a letter of interest. The term would be from the current time until voting in March 2014. It is hoped to have someone selected in the near-term future. Mr. Fuller advised this would require an executive session discussion. Mr. Baker advised the posting for the vacancy had not been posted for the appropriate amount of time in accordance with 24 VSA 961

and therefore cannot be discussed during executive session this evening. The next meeting is scheduled for next Monday.

It was noted that the fire chief had requested the select board vacate the communication room during a discussion at the last select board meeting. The fire district provided a notice to the town select board that they will either be out of the office by Friday or the fire department will move them out of the office.

6. Possible Executive Session

12. Adjournment

Motion by Blaine Cliver/Dave Atherton to adjourn the select board meeting at 8:10PM. **The motion passed unanimously - 3 to zero.**

Respectfully submitted,

Charlene Bryant
Recording Secretary