

**Brandon Select Board Meeting
April 27, 2020**

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

All in Attendance via Zoom.

Board Members In Attendance: Seth Hopkins, Tim Guiles, Doug Bailey, Tracy Wyman, Brian Coolidge

Others In Attendance: Dave Atherton, Brent Buehler, Bill Moore, Barry Varian, Butch Shaw, Lee Kahrs, Chris Brickell, Stephanie Jerome

The meeting was called to order by Seth Hopkins – Chair at 7:00PM.

1. Call to order

a) Agenda Adoption – Motion by Tracy Wyman/Brian Coolidge to adopt the agenda, as amended. **The motion passed unanimously.**

Add Item: Consider Purple Heart Town Designation following Item 5.

Add a second Executive Session regarding the Appointment or Reemployment or Evaluation of a Public Officer or Employee under the Provisions of 1 V.S.A. 313(a)(3). The first session to include Margaret Kahrs and the Town Manager.

2. Approval of Minutes

a) Select Board Meeting – April 13, 2020

Motion by Brian Coolidge/Tracy Wyman to approve the minutes of the April 13th Select Board meeting. **The motion passed unanimously.**

3. Town Manager’s Report

Dave Atherton provided a report for the weeks of April 13th and April 20th, 2020.

Segment 6:

Work commenced today and will follow the VTrans guidelines that were sent out on April 20th. Mr. Atherton received protocol from Casella’s that he will share with the Board and he has a policy in place for social distancing.

Other happenings:

The Local Emergency Management Plan for 2020 has been approved by the RRPC and Vermont Emergency Management.

Had our first meeting with New England Woodcraft, Watershed Consulting and DEC to discuss moving forward with a design for dealing with stormwater runoff at the NE Woodcraft site on North Street. We should be able to get this project funded entirely by grants. This relates to the new 3-Acre Impervious Surface State regulation.

The Union Street Sidewalk Project will commence on the 29th.

Mr. Atherton held a Zoom conference with Ray Counter, Del Cook and Seth Hopkins to discuss how to move forward with the proposed joint water/sewer billing. We are looking forward to streamlining the meter reading and billing process. The goal is to have quarterly meter readings and place the billing on a 4-bill annual cycle. We will see that getting closer to completion in a couple of months.

The underground electrical service to the WWTP has started to deteriorate and one phase is completely out. GMP and Patch Electric will be there soon to set two new utility poles and run new 3-phase service to the main building.

Economic Development News:

Bill Moore made cold calls to many businesses about applying for the assistance available via the CARES legislation and the expanded unemployment benefits. That project has been on hold since it was revealed that the funding has been exhausted for the time being. The US Senate has passed some more funding and Bill Moore will continue to work with folks to make sure they are connected with the help they may need, as the bill is now headed to the House for the additional funding to support the Economic Injury Disaster Loan and Paycheck Protection Program loan funds.

Representative Stephanie Jerome forwarded an offer from VTel about free wireless hotspots that they are donating to towns. They are offering to pull fiber connections into large routers and provide free service through the end of the year (or beyond) as a way to help people that have to access telemedicine and distance learning. We replied in the affirmative immediately (we were actually the first town to contact VTel). Dave Atherton, Stephanie Jerome and Bill Moore had a conference call with the President of VTel the next day and we are on our way to having this service based here at the town offices. Fiber is being run by Eustis Cable into the town office on 4/23/20 and our only responsibility is providing power to the wireless router. This line will be separate from our existing network, so no security issues and our downtown will have free wi-fi and the advantage of existing infrastructure in place to continue to provide after post pandemic downtown wi-fi and possibly expand high speed access within the downtown and perhaps beyond.

We are working with Amanda O'Connor of the Rutland Regional Planning Commission on the 3rd round of Vermont Department of Public Service Broadband Innovation Grant. This is a planning grant for feasibility and business planning about expanding broadband access in underserved VT communities. The RRPC has been strongly encouraged with the help of Representative Jerome, Dave and I to apply. I am committing to help secure the letters of support for Brandon, Goshen, Sudbury and Pittsford.

Tim Guiles stated a couple of meetings ago there was discussion of Carver Street being included in the road postings and asked if it was posted as a road not to travel. Dave Atherton reported it was added to the posting list, but the signs will be coming down this week. Mr. Guiles asked how much of the downtown will be covered by the wi-fi. Bill Moore stated they have run the fiber into the town office and the Town is waiting for VTel to send the router that was given to the Town. It is not sure what the reach will be until the wi-fi is in place. Mr. Guiles congratulated all involved in this effort on the great work. Mr. Guiles stated with the new fiscal year upcoming, he would like to get a list of town vehicles that use fuel to develop a Green Fleet listing. Mr. Atherton stated Elaine could provide a printout of this information. Mr. Guiles requested the information be email to him.

Doug Bailey questioned with the startup of Segment 6, when the Park Street project will begin. Dave Atherton reported he has talked with Markowski and Aldridge & Elliot and they are concerned that they do not want to burn up construction days due to the limitation on the number of workers. It is hoped to get back to work in a week or so, but they do not want to burn their time up if they cannot get the work done that they need to. Mr. Bailey asked if the Leicester Hollow project is moving forward. Mr. Atherton stated the Town is providing the Forest Service figures on what the charges would be based on FEMA reimbursement. Mr. Atherton noted the culvert has to be put in first.

Lee Kahrs questioned the status of the Dunkin Donuts and Mobil Station. Dave Atherton suggested Ms. Kahrs contact Jeff Biasuzzi, the Zoning Administrator, to discuss.

4. Public Comment and Participation

Butch Shaw stated our constituents are having trouble putting claims in for unemployment. Last week he has able to get a few of the people compensated. Over the weekend, a help site has been set up that legislators can access to submit requests for assistance for their constituents. Mr. Shaw encouraged anyone with questions on unemployment to contact him at 483-2398 or bshaw@leg.state.vt.us. He has posted this information on his Facebook page. The site will hopefully help to move these issues along. The new site allows the legislators to work with the Department of Labor to help move things along.

Barry Varian thanked Lee Kahrs for the article in The Reporter that laid out the schools' plan. Mr. Varian read the following message he received from Jeanne Collins, Superintendent of OVUU:

“School buildings are closed but learning is open for business! We have begun distance learning and have sent the first round of packets home last week. For the remainder of the school year, students will receive work either by mail or bus delivery or digitally and will be able to finish their work for the year.

One concern we have with distance learning is the inability to reach every student through the internet. We have loaned out over 350 Chromebooks. However, lack of broadband access in parts of our community is a concern. About 24% of our students lack access. For those students, we are creating paper packets.

We have started weekend meal delivery as of last Friday, April 24. On Friday we delivered over 4500 meals to cover three days of food. Monday through Thursday we deliver about 1500 meals. We are still in need of cooler donations. If anyone has a cooler they are willing to donate, please bring it to the Markowski Field House behind OVUHS and leave it there.

Child Care for children of Essential Employees is still happening, thanks to our private partner A.R.K.

All of our employees are working, whether it be meal delivery, custodial work, delivery of education or making of packets for education. Schools are closed and we are working remotely. Email or phone messages are the best ways to reach the schools.

Board meetings are held virtually. Information on how to access a board meeting is found in the calendar invite on the district web page. As it changes each meeting, that is the best way to track down information on how to access it. We are recording meetings and giving them to PEG TV to air, but we are not streaming live (at least not at this time). Minutes are posted within 5 days on the district website board page.

Next week is Staff Appreciation Week for the schools. We appreciate the support the community has given us, as our school buses drive around the district to drop off meals. We are in this together and will keep figuring things out!”

Seth Hopkins thanked Mr. Varian and said that it is good that everyone is still getting an education. Mr. Varian stated they are doing all they can with the equity of opportunity being the main issue for education and are providing paper material as well as the virtual learning.

Brent Buehler asked if it is known how many COVID19 cases are in Brandon and whether the Select Board has considered an extension on property taxes for those that have been laid off. Seth Hopkins stated it was his understanding the legislature is discussing enabling the select boards to change due dates for property taxes. The select boards cannot do this until the legislature allows them. Butch Shaw confirmed that was correct. Dave Atherton has not heard of any COVID19 cases in Brandon yet. Tim Guiles stated the Governor had made a point to say that it would not be possible to identify individuals due to HIPPA. Lee Kahrs stated she has been asking for town by town information and the Governor had indicated the information would be available today. Mr. Hopkins stated it would be available but not for towns with less than 6

cases. Chris Brickell advised that he checked the State's database and Vermont is reporting by town and Brandon is below the reporting level.

Stephanie Jerome asked if the School District has provided information from Comcast on low cost internet for the schools. Barry Varian was not sure whether this has happened.

Ms. Jerome sent the following email due to technical difficulties with Zoom:

"She is happy to help people with their Unemployment Insurance and Pandemic Unemployment Assistance applications. There have been significant problems associated with Social Security numbers and PIN numbers. The Legislature has developed a form that Representatives can complete and send forward to the Department of Labor, so that each issue can be addressed quickly. Too many people have been waiting over six weeks to receive unemployment insurance and are in desperate need of help. Please reach out to Ms. Jerome at 683-8209 or sjerome@leg.state.vt.us. She will continue to forward opportunities, such as the VTEL Wi-Fi router, on to the Town of Brandon. She appreciates that Bill Moore and Dave Atherton saw the benefit in accepting this programming. This is one step closer to our town getting widespread Wi-Fi. Ms. Jerome provided some helpful links in response to Mr. Varian's School District report for reduced fees for internet service:

<https://publicservice.vermont.gov/content/new-connectivity-resources-support-you-during-covid-19-state-emergency-vermont>

Additional resources for assistance: <https://publicservice.vermont.gov/content/resources-help-during-covid-19-pandemic>"

Ms. Jerome followed up with another email with the information below:

"Over the past few weeks, I have been helping constituents with their problems in accessing unemployment insurance (UI) or accessing benefits for self-employed or independent contractors through the Pandemic Unemployment Assistance Program (PUA). The backlog at the Vermont Department of Labor is unacceptable and people are not receiving the money they need. The House has launched a tool where we can collect constituent UI/PUA issues - and send the information to the VT Department of Labor for a resolution.

I want to help! Please contact me at sjerome@leg.state.vt.us or 683-8209 to provide me with the information listed below:

First Name

Last Name

Phone number

Last 4 of SSN#

Email address

Have you received a UI/PUA or stimulus check yet?

When did you apply for UI?

What issue are you experiencing?

If regular unemployment insurance (UI):

- *Have not received a benefit yet*
- *Did not receive the \$1200 check*
- *Need PIN reset*
- *SSN error*
- *Eligibility*
- *Believe you were wrongly denied*

If Pandemic unemployment assistance (PUA)

- *Cannot access the system to finish the application*
- *Made an error, need to update application*
- *Have not received a benefit yet*
- *SSN error*
- *Believe you were wrongly denied”*

Brent Buehler stated the quarterly payroll statements are due and advised that he tried to file his statements with the Department of Labor but there are issues with the website. He printed and mailed them but was advised that they are required to be filed on-line and there is a penalty for not filing. He has had a conversation with the Department on the issues with the website. Butch Shaw appreciated Mr. Buehler’s efforts in trying to file his report. Mr. Buehler stated there is no outcome yet and he tried three different times today to try to access the website. He has not paid the penalty and will continue to try to file on-line. Butch Shaw noted that Representative Jerome’s Committee will be working on those issues.

5. Schedule Public Hearings re: Proposed Brandon Land Use Ordinance (BLUO) Amendments

Seth Hopkins stated there are some BLUO amendments recommended by the Planning Commission and it had been the consensus of the Select Board at the last meeting to wait a little longer with the hope that the hearings can be scheduled in-person on these changes.

6. Consider Purple Heart Town Designation

Seth Hopkins stated there has been consideration for the Select Board to do a proclamation for Brandon Vermont to be a Purple Heart Town. Mr. Hopkins read the following:

“WHEREAS the people of Brandon, Vermont, hold in highest regard the selfless service of the men and women of our Nation’s armed forces; and

WHEREAS military veterans have paid a high price for our freedom by leaving their homes and families, dedicating prime years of their lives to defend the U.S. Constitution, and every community and every citizen of the United States; and

WHEREAS the contributions of citizens of Brandon who served in the armed forces have been vital in securing the way of life we may take for granted; and

WHEREAS a number of combat veterans suffer wounds or even death in battle, a singularly meritorious act of patriotic service, and

WHEREAS the Purple Heart medal, the Nation's oldest military decoration in current use, was created by George Washington in 1782, and is presented to servicemen and servicewomen who have been wounded in action, or whose death has proven the ultimate sacrifice, and

WHEREAS the Town of Brandon is home to a substantial, active, and highly decorated population of veterans, including a number of courageous Purple Heart recipients, to whom it especially wishes to render respect bought at a costly price, now, therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED that the Brandon Selectboard proclaims the Town of Brandon, Vermont, to be

A PURPLE HEART TOWN

AND BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Selectboard encourages Brandon residents of all ages to show their gratitude this upcoming Memorial Day for the sacrifices of those who merit the Purple Heart, and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Selectboard offer this proclamation to Brandon's American Legion Post #55 in appreciation, and that a copy be spread upon the Town records."

Mr. Hopkins stated this means it is going on the record and does not incur much by way of cost or responsibility to the Town. He provided samples of road signs that would be placed at each end of Town. Mr. Hopkins noted that he spoke to a Purple Heart veteran who was honored by this idea and felt that the respect from a proclamation would be well received.

Motion by Seth Hopkins/Tracy Wyman to approve the Brandon Purple Heart Town Proclamation.

Tim Guiles read the following statement:

"War is a tragedy. It is a tragedy for those civilians who are thrust into harm's way. It is a tragedy for the death and destruction that spreads throughout communities on both sides of the conflict. It is a tragedy for the wounded soldiers who return to lives filled with physical, emotional, and psychological suffering.

I respect these wounded veterans for doing what they thought was the "right" thing to do. Today I believe that the best way to honor their sacrifices is to do everything I can to prevent the next war. I believe that all wars are ultimately ended through diplomacy. I believe that there will come a time when we will refuse to accept war as a conflict resolution strategy. I believe that war monuments and public memorial signage is one of the ways that war is glorified and perpetuated into the next generation. Thus, in doing everything I can to prevent the next war, I oppose any glorification of war. In closing, I respect our wounded veterans, but I oppose having Brandon become a Purple Heart Town."

Doug Bailey appreciated Mr. Guiles' viewpoint, but having family members in the military he was more in favor of the proclamation.

Brent Buehler stated there is no right side to the argument as war is hell, but we need to honor the people that serve their country.

The motion passed. Brian Coolidge, Doug Bailey, Seth Hopkins, Tracy Wyman “yes” votes; Tim Guiles “no” vote.

7. Fiscal

a) Warrant – April 27, 2020 - \$41,750.76

Motion by Brian Coolidge/Tim Guiles to approve the April 27, 2020 warrant in the amount of \$41,750.76. **The motion passed unanimously.**

Tracy Wyman asked what had to be done to the 2011 International. Dave Atherton reported there was quite a bit of work that had to be done.

Doug Bailey asked if the warrant for the uniforms is for the new Police uniforms. Dave Atherton confirmed the warrant is for Police Department and the staff are now wearing them.

b) Route 7 Construction Warrant – April 27, 2020 - \$2,971.00

Motion by Tracy Wyman/Tim Guiles to approve the April 27, 2020 Route 7 Construction warrant in the amount of \$2,971.00. **The motion passed unanimously.**

The Town Manager has reviewed the warrants.

The Select Board recessed at 7:41PM.

The Select Board reconvened at 7:46PM.

Motion by Doug Bailey/Brian Coolidge to enter into executive session at 7:46PM regarding the appointment or reemployment or evaluation of a public officer or employee under the provisions of 1 V.S.A. 313(a)(3) with the session to include the Animal Control Officer and Town Manager. **The motion passed unanimously.**

8. Executive Session

Motion by Doug Bailey/Brian Coolidge to leave executive session at 8:16PM. **The motion passed unanimously.**

There were no actions required.

Motion by Doug Bailey/Brian Coolidge to enter into executive session at 8:20PM regarding the appointment or reemployment or evaluation of a public officer or employee under the provisions of 1 V.S.A. 313(a)(3). **The motion passed unanimously.**

9. Executive Session

Motion by Tim Guiles/Doug Bailey to leave executive session at 8:53PM. **The motion passed unanimously.**

Motion by Tim Guiles/Doug Bailey to authorize Seth Hopkins to deliver the Town Manager's evaluation. **The motion passed unanimously.**

10. Adjournment

Motion by Tim Guiles/Brian Coolidge to adjourn the Select Board meeting at 8:55PM. **The motion passed unanimously.**

Respectfully submitted,

Charlene Bryant
Recording Secretary