

Brandon Select Board Meeting May 25, 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, Tracy Wyman, Brian Coolidge, Doug Bailey

Others In Attendance: Dave Atherton, Barry Varian, Bill Moore, Sue Gage, Brent Buehler, Lee Kahrs

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

Seth Hopkins requested a moment of silence for Roman Wdowiak, Brandon’s Fire Chief from 2012 to 2020, who left us last week. He was a good public servant to Brandon and a leader of volunteers and will be missed in a big way.

1. Call to order

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

Following Item 5 - Add Discussion of Select Board Meeting Format

2. Approval of Minutes

a) Select Board Meeting – May 11, 2020

Motion by Tracy Wyman/Brian Coolidge to approve the minutes of the May 11th Select Board meeting, as amended. **The motion passed with one abstention – Doug Bailey.**

Remove Linda Stewart from the meeting attendees list.

3. Town Manager’s Report

Dave Atherton provided a report for the weeks of May 11th and May 18th, 2020.

Segment 6:

Casella has finished the tree and shrub planning and continues to topsoil and mulch. All of the pavement milling for the crosswalks and medians has been completed and will be paved and

painted this week. Mr. Atherton is still waiting for approval of additional funding from VTrans for the bridge slab repair.

Park Street:

The new sewer line installation has been moving along quickly. The sewer line and service connections are currently scheduled for completion by June 20th. They will move on to water after that.

Union Street Sidewalk:

Completed, just need to line the road.

Other happenings:

The Town has requested an early start for the Churchill Road culvert project with River Management. The contractor (Hutchins) is sending information to them to get this approval. It is hoped to start the project next week.

The Town is continuing to keep the upstairs of the Town Office closed to the public. The Town Clerk's Office has opened to the public by appointment only.

Work will be starting on the Union Street rail crossing. The Railroad will be continuing a concrete sidewalk through the crossing to connect to the Town's new sidewalk and end at the Church Street intersection. This is something that was discussed, and the railroad had indicated they wanted to do their own.

Rec Department News:

Brandon Rec is working on creating short enrichment camps for kids that are within the COVID-19 regulations. Starting June 1st, groups of less than 26 can get together. This will hopefully allow for the start of adult activities like cornhole and volleyball. The Governor's order still prohibits organized games that are likely to draw spectators; once that turn of the spigot comes, we will be able to run a baseball season.

Tim Guiles asked what criteria would be used to open the upstairs of the Town Office. Dave Atherton stated currently it is not advisable to have the public coming into the office and it has not been a problem so far. The downstairs office sees more people, but Sue Gage is meeting with people by appointment only. It is preferred to do things by Zoom or phone, which has not been a problem. There is not a plan in place at the current time to open to the public. Seth Hopkins stated this is a managerial decision, and unless there is an issue that comes to the Board, he is inclined to leave it up to the Town Manager. Dave Atherton stated 90% of his job can be done from another location and the office does not get a lot of foot traffic. Mr. Guiles stated for the few people that may want to come to the office, it may be in the realm of what the Governor is allowing at this time. Mr. Atherton stated the office was never closed and everyone has been

working and have been doing everything that needs to be done. The staff is still providing the same service as we always have. Mr. Atherton does not think that people should be allowed to show up in the office. Doug Bailey confirmed that if someone wanted to make an appointment they were able to contact the staff. Bill Moore stated he has set up appointments to meet people outside, but he will not be hosting anyone in the office, and he would require people to wear a mask. Mr. Bailey also asked when the bridge slab project will be done. Mr. Atherton stated Casella is anxious to get it done, but there has not been an answer from VTrans yet. Mr. Bailey asked if Park Street Extension and the Country Club Road are going to get done. Mr. Atherton stated we probably won't get to Park Street Extension.

Bernie Carr asked if there will be a white side at either side of the imprinted crosswalks. Dave Atherton confirmed the crosswalks are going to be delineated.

4. Public Comment and Participation

Barry Varian stated the School Board is doing a scenario process for the return to school in September that includes a return in person, remote learning, or a hybrid in between with considering what the benefits and the cost will be. Seth Hopkins thanked Mr. Varian for the update, noting there is not enough information at this point to allow decisions to be made.

5. Discuss S344 Legislation

Seth Hopkins advised this was discussed at the last meeting and would allow the Select Board to make changes to the property taxes. Sue Gage provided the Select Board an update on the collections and stated there is not much difference between last year and this year. Some delinquencies were the people who are usually late but is not a large percentage of people paying late. The total was \$25,627 that were delinquent this year from last year that represented 0.41% over the previous years' dollar amount. Mr. Hopkins stated the number of taxpayers was not a large increase and noted the warrants reflect the transfer to the school district that the Town was able to cover.

Tim Guiles stated from all the stories he has heard, the full damage of this pandemic is still yet to be seen and it looks like S344 allows the Select Board to make a change anytime up to January 1, 2021. He stated it is important to pay attention to the economy and this would allow the Select Board to make a change. Mr. Hopkins confirmed it is a tool that was created for the towns, but for the fiscal year that is ending it would not be needed but is something the Board could keep in its tool box to potentially use depending on the coming tax payments. There was an extension for filing tax returns to July 1st that will delay the education tax. It is hoped to get the next bills out by August 1st with a due date of August 15. Barry Varian suggested if the Town needs any detail from the school district that Brenda Fleming would be the person to be in touch with. Ms. Gage noted she is in contact with Ms. Fleming on a regular basis. Mr. Hopkins thanked Ms. Gage for providing the updates and also for all the work she has done to position the Town, cash flow wise, to meet its obligations. Mr. Guiles questioned whether Ms. Gage had any sense of needs that might be coming up. Ms. Gage thought that some people used the money received from the federal government to pay their taxes and suggested that perhaps if it is going to get bad, it will

get bad later. She does have lots of conversations with people and will keep the Board updated if anything comes up.

Brent Buehler thanked the Select Board for all of the updates.

6. Meeting Format Discussion

Seth Hopkins stated the Zoom meetings were started in March with the restrictions of public gatherings. The Governor has indicated by June 1st, the framework will change to up to 25 people. Tim Guiles stated we are receiving new information and the Governor is cautiously opening up the State. Mr. Guiles is impressed to see more stores opening up and he is interested in having a conversation about how the Town mirrors the efforts of the State to get back to normal. Mr. Guiles noted the Pittsford Planning Commission is starting in person meetings with only the Board and the recorder, and public has to call in.

Tracy Wyman asked if there is a problem with the way the Select Board is doing the meetings. Mr. Guiles stated we are trying to move towards normalcy and as the State moves in that way, he thinks it is reasonable. Doug Bailey would prefer to have some in-person meetings, as the upstairs of the town hall could potentially be used with the option of people also using Zoom. Sue Gage stated the reason the town office has opened is due to the Governor opening up for realtors and lawyers and they were looking for records from the town office. Records have to be scanned, but Ms. Gage's inclination is that she is going to keep the door locked until next spring and meet by appointment only. She stated people that come in have to do a health survey and if anything happens it is a point of contact tracing. There are a lot of steps to letting anyone come in as the staff has to clean before and after. She is not comfortable with a lot of people in the office. Mr. Atherton is not in favor of opening up the town hall for a gathering, as the Town needs to set a precedent and there could be an agenda item where several people want to weigh in. He does not think it is a good idea and prefers to keep holding the meetings via Zoom. Mr. Wyman is also not in favor of this and will likely use Zoom if there is an in-person meeting. He can do everything that needs to be done in person via Zoom. Tim Guiles stated at some time the State will be opening up. Barry Varian stated he has been coming to most Select Board meetings, but his comfort level is not there and would likely not come to an in-person meeting. Brian Coolidge thought things should stay this way, as things are still getting done. Seth Hopkins is not sure the Select Board would be in the spirit of the open meeting law, if the Board met face to face and only allow the public to call in. Mr. Hopkins stated he was quite disappointed at an event he was at yesterday with how few people left their masks on and he felt subjected to other people's health choices that put him in an uncomfortable place. He is not in a hurry to open up to the public. Ms. Gage stated the Governor is opening up the State, but the state staff are working from home with no date being given to return. Bernie Carr stated the pandemic is going to change business that has happened in the past. People are becoming more technical and it saves gas, reduces the carbon footprint and possibly going forward, there may be more Zoom meetings due to convenience. Mr. Carr stated he misses his friends and family, but he feels it is a very low price to pay to continue with the way Vermont is working. He agrees to stick with the Zoom meetings to feel safer. It was the consensus for the Select Board to remain with meetings held via Zoom.

7. Consider Purchase of Storage Building for Highway Department

Dave Atherton provided information on a proposed storage building for the Highway Department. Mr. Atherton stated there is an issue with one of the buildings that VLCT has deemed uninsurable. Building a new town garage would be out of the budget and Shawn has been researching various sizes and prices of Quonset huts. One company has a 20-year warranty, is moveable, could be used as a salt shed and is fairly inexpensive for storing equipment. The 40' x 80' structure is the preferred model as all of the outside equipment, signs, etc. could be stored in it. Seth Hopkins confirmed with Mr. Atherton that the building that is uninsurable is on the left side when coming in the driveway along the property line. Mr. Atherton stated the location for the proposed building would be in the area near the trailers. There would be the new structure, the main highway barn near the road and the salt shed next to it. There was discussion of whether the red portion of the uninsurable building would be able to be insured if the white portion was removed. Mr. Atherton stated the proposed structure is like the building that Lawes installed and would be for storage but could be recycled later. Doug Bailey thought it is a good building and questioned if the Town has the money to purchase it now. Mr. Atherton thinks that funding will be available in the budget. Tracy Wyman questioned if the bad part of the building will be removed and Mr. Atherton advised this is being researched. Sue Gage thinks there will be some savings in the budget that will cover the purchase from the various departments that could be combined to purchase the structure in the current budget. Mr. Atherton stated if the funding is not found in the budget, the structure will not be purchased. Brent Buehler asked if some of the operations are being moved to the Arnold District Road. Mr. Atherton stated the Town does not own any land in that area except where the solar is and it would require a public vote to purchase land. Mr. Atherton stated the funding for this structure would need to be encumbered as it would likely not be done during this fiscal year.

Motion by Tracy Wyman/Brian Coolidge to approve the purchase of a 40' x 80' storage building for the Highway Department from Greg Lussier in the amount of \$36,901 subject to an encumbrance from this year's budget. **The motion passed unanimously.**

Dave Atherton stated the Town will have to provide the concrete blocks and the Public Works Department will be installing it. Mr. Atherton thanked the Select Board for acting on this item. Seth Hopkins stated sometimes capital planning does not account for all contingencies.

7. Fiscal

a) Warrant – May 25, 2020 - \$1,110,008.59

Motion by Doug Bailey/Brian Coolidge to approve the May 11, 2020 warrant in the amount of \$1,110,008.59. **The motion passed unanimously.**

b) Route 7 Construction Warrant – May 25, 2020 - \$14,708.65

Motion by Tracy Wyman/Doug Bailey to approve the May 25, 2020 Route 7 Construction warrant in the amount of \$14,708.65. **The motion passed unanimously.**

8. Adjournment

Motion by Brian Coolidge/Tracy Wyman to adjourn the Select Board meeting at 7:59PM. **The motion passed unanimously.**

Respectfully submitted,

Charlene Bryant
Recording Secretary