

Brandon Select Board Meeting August 10, 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

Others In Attendance: Dave Atherton, Bill Moore, Butch Shaw, Brent Buehler, Janet Curry – Town of Castleton, Bill Moore, Chris Brickell, Shari Vacarella, Joan Ballen, Toni Mikula

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 4a – Purchase and Sale Agreement and 1061 Notice for 44 Prospect Street

2. Approval of Minutes

a) Select Board Meeting – July 27, 2020

Motion by Tracy Wyman/Tim Guiles to approve the minutes of the July 27th Select Board meeting. **The motion passed unanimously.**

3. Town Manager's Report

Dave Atherton provided a report for the weeks of July 27th and August 3rd, 2020.

Segment 6:

The concrete center pier has been poured and concrete cutting continues in preparation for the steel beams to be installed.

Park Street:

The box cut for the road base has been completed and finished up today. Work on the bio-swales continues.

Other happenings:

An Assistant Assessor, Karen Folger, has been hired. Ms. Folger comes with a lot of experience and has been working with NEMRC. She will be in the office on Tuesdays.

Attended the Regional Transportation Commissioners via Zoom on July 30th. There was discussion on the Emerald Ash Borer and Town Highway Reclassification.

The highway department has been prepping the site for the construction of the 40'x80' superstructure. They have been doing all of the site work in house, which also included tearing down the old structure, pouring a new concrete pad for the diesel fuel tank and repainting the existing white garage. He encouraged the Board members visit to see the work that has been done.

Rec News:

The Jack McKernon Drive-in at Estabrook Park hosted its inaugural film, Grease on Saturday, August 8th and Sunday, August 9th. A sell-out crowd enjoyed a beautiful night at our park thanks to a wonderful partnership with Eric Mallette from the Paramount Theatre. Plans are to expand offerings to Friday, Saturday. August 14/15 - Mamma Mia, August 21/22 - American Graffiti. Tickets are available online only at paramountvt.org.

The Brandon Rec will be offering fall youth programming in some capacity starting after the school year begins on September 8th. We are still crafting opportunities for fun programming that adheres to all safety regulations around COVID-19. The best way to stay up to the minute with offerings is to register for an account at our website brandonvt.myrec.com or to join the Fans of Brandon Recreation Facebook group.

The Town will be applying for a Recreational Facilities Grant for improvements to the doors at the Town Hall around making the downstairs more secure and the bathrooms open for public access.

Seth Hopkins thanked and congratulated Bill Moore for his work on the Drive-in at Estabrook Park. Mr. Moore also thanked Colleen Wright for her work on this offering.

4. Public Comment and Participation

Dave Atherton noted Stephanie Jerome was not able to attend this evening's meeting but wanted to advise people about the grant opportunities on the State's website. There are grants available for self-employed businesses and small businesses, forestry grants for economic stabilization, grants for childcare and after-school programs through the Agency of Human Services and grants that cities and towns can apply for COVID19 expenses. Seth Hopkins thanked Mr. Atherton and Representative Jerome for providing information on the grants available.

4a – Purchase and Sale Agreement on 44 Prospect Street and 1061 notice

Dave Atherton received the signed Purchase and Sales agreement from Mr. Buehler and requested the Board act on the 1061 Notice to authorize either Mr. Coolidge or himself to sign the notice to allow him to submit it to the newspaper to get the 30-day clock started.

Motion by Tracy Wyman/Tim Guiles to authorize the Town Manager or Select Board member Brian Coolidge to sign the 1061 notice requirement to appear in the paper for the sale of 44 Prospect Street. **The motion passed unanimously.**

5. Brandon Swamp Wildlife Management Area Discussion

Joan Allen, an independent consultant, and Toni Mikula of the Department of Fish and Wildlife were present for a discussion of the Brandon Swamp. Ms. Allen stated the Department of Fish and Wildlife and Nature Conservancy are focusing on Brandon, Cornwall, and Leicester swamps. Ms. Allen will be working with Ms. Mikula on this project and would be the primary contact with the Town. She is familiar with both of Brandon's swamps and completed a number of acquisitions. The Brandon swamp in the west corner is 184 acres of conserved land and it is hoped to work with the Town and landowners to transfer swamp parcels to the Vermont Fish and Wildlife. There are many benefits to preserving this area that is large in size and in good condition. It is the largest swamp complex in New England. In Brandon there are several parcels that have been owned by the Town for a long time when she first started doing conservation in 2010. NRCS permanently conserved a number of parcels in the swamps that are under federal easement. The parcels under discussion as a group provide a good conservation purpose, will get them on the Town's tax roll and would be State owned. Ms. Allen noted wildlife management areas owned by the State are open for recreation and public access for fishing, hunting and bird watching. Toni Mikula stated this is part of a vision to eventually connect Brandon and Cornwall swamps to have a habitat for Otter Creek. There are 4 town-owned parcels that range from 7 to 24 acres. If transferred to the State, the same municipal taxes as a private owner would be paid, less the education portion. Ms. Mikula did not have the tax assessment data but did an estimate of what the payment would be, and it is just under \$60. The parcels do not have legal access to a road and would not be appealing for anyone to build on. Seth Hopkins asked what the desired action was for the Board, or whether this was just educational information at this point. Ms. Allen stated this is the start of the conversation to determine the interest of the Town in exploring this. Tim Guiles stated the Sale of Town Assets policy is in flux, but it appears it would be an offer to come from the State. Ms. Mikula advised the State is looking for a donation of the 4 lots from the Town to the State. Mr. Guiles noted when talking to the Nature Conservancy, it was discussed that there could be compensation from \$100 to \$200 per acre. Ms. Allen could check to see if the Nature Conservancy has funds available. For the State to purchase the land, Ms. Mikula stated the money would have to come from the Duck Stamp Fund that is already being stretched and in acquiring the lots, it would be required to survey the lots. If the Town is interested, the State might be able to discuss a nominal fee, particularly if the lots were a package deal. Ms. Mikula could not make an offer at the meeting. Seth Hopkins stated the Town has sold a number of swamp lots to other landowners in the past that have gone through the Town Manager. Mr. Hopkins suggested the Board take the usual role in having the Town Manager as the agent for the sale. Mr. Atherton could continue discussions with Ms. Allen and Ms. Mikula. The Board agreed. Mr. Hopkins thanked Ms. Allen and Ms. Mikula for presenting this information to the Board.

6. Fiscal

- a) Warrant FY2019/2020– July 1, 2020 - \$121,658.40**
- b) Warrant FY2020/2021– August 10, 2020 - \$442,189.49**

c) *Route 7 Construction Warrant – August 10, 2020 - \$195,012.56*

Motion by Brian Coolidge/Tracy Wyman to approve the July 1st FY19/20 warrant in the amount of \$121,658.40, the August 10th FY20/21 warrant in the amount of \$442,189.49 and the August 10th Route 7 Construction warrant in the amount of \$194,012.56. **The motion passed unanimously.**

Butch Shaw reiterated Ms. Jerome's comments on the expansion of grants for self-employed individuals and single person companies. The reason the Administration expanded the grant funding is because they did not get enough applications from businesses to spend all of the money provided to the State. Mr. Shaw encouraged people to apply for these grants, to determine eligibility and noted that many people are eligible. The State has a large amount of federal money to expend that has a December 20th deadline and they want to get the money out to the individuals that are in need. Mr. Shaw also encouraged people apply for the agriculture, forestry, and other grants if they think that they might be eligible. Agriculture has a large amount of money and he encouraged people to apply. Seth Hopkins noted that Bernie Carr and Bill Moore are on the Zoom meeting and they will get the word out that the State has funding that can make a meaningful difference to businesses.

Dave Atherton requested the Board members come to the town office to sign documents tomorrow.

The Select Board recessed at 7:27PM.

The Select Board reconvened at 7:37PM.

Motion by Brian Coolidge/Tracy Wyman to enter into executive session at 7:37PM to discuss the appointment or employment or evaluation of a public officer or employee under the provisions of 1 V.S.A. 313(a)(3). **The motion passed unanimously**

7. Executive Session

The Board came out of executive session at 8:15PM. There was no action required.

8. Adjournment

Motion by Brian Coolidge/Tracy Wyman to adjourn the Select Board meeting at 8:15PM. **The motion passed unanimously.**

Respectfully submitted,

Charlene Bryant
Recording Secretary