

Brandon Select Board Meeting January 11, 2021

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, Brian Coolidge, Doug Bailey, Tracy Wyman

Others In Attendance: Dave Atherton, Shari Vaccarella, Butch Shaw, Bill Moore, Brent Buehler, Chris Brickell, Stephanie Jerome, Sue Gage, Lee Kahrs, Jan Coolidge, Barry Varian, Margaret Kahrs

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

1. Call to order

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

2. Approval of Minutes

- a) Select Board Meeting – December 14, 2020**
- b) Select Board Budget Workshop – December 15, 2020**
- c) Select Board Special Meeting – December 30, 2020**

Motion by Tracy Wyman/Tim Guiles to approve the minutes of the December 14th Select Board meeting, Select Board Budget workshop of December 15th, and Select Board Special meeting of December 30th. **The motion passed unanimously.**

3. Town Manager's Report

Dave Atherton provided a report for the week of January 4th, 2021.

Other happenings:

Dave Atherton has been working with Dubois and King on finalizing the design for the Conant Square parking area. They are looking at construction in the late spring/early summer and are planning to do the majority of work in-house except the electrical work.

The project closeout documents have been completed for Park Street and Union Street.

There has been work with the Bond Council to prepare documents for the bond vote on the wastewater treatment plan upgrades.

Mr. Atherton has received a purchase and sales agreement from the Nature Conservancy for the two swamp lots. He has reviewed it and forwarded it to the town's attorney for review.

Rec Department News:

The new year rec programming will kick off with our Brandon Free Public Library collaboration, Quiz Night. Starting January 9, we will be hosting Trivia via Zoom.

Colleen Wright is helping the Rec to partner with the American Legion and local Chef Dallas Ladd to create Get It and Go. With the sun setting on the Vermont Farmers Food Center/the State of VT's Everyone Eats program; we are working on a Brandon-based solution. A monthly, donation funded, grab and go meal will be available for anyone who may need the food. The first meal will be available for pick-up on January 18th at 5pm. 100 meals will be prepared and distributed at the Legion. Get it and go!

We are working on a Brandon Mascot Competition, keep an eye out for the contest.

The Rec Director has been working with the OVUUSD to find a workable solution for indoor sports. Bill Moore, Neshobe School Principal Judi Pulsifer, along with the SOAR After-school Coordinator (and former superstar Brandon Rec Director) met with Superintendent Jeanne Collins to brainstorm solutions based on the current restrictions and health guidance. The Agency of Education, in their efforts to mitigate the spread of COVID-19, are not allowing outside groups to access local schools. The Vermont Department of Health guidance requires much in the way of space, masking, and limitations on what types of activities in which people can be engaged indoors. Unfortunately, there was not a workable solution to be found. The pod-based nature of the school's education delivery, limited gym space (only half the gym is currently available), the limit on who can use the space (they even considered hiring the Rec Director as a part-time employee and running activity as a part of the state licensed SOAR program), the restrictions around co-mingling with other groups outside of the school proved to be too much to overcome for this 2021 winter season. A survey of other Vermont "gym-less" rec programs that act as the de facto athletic departments for their area schools confirms our district was unique in their willingness to entertain some creative approaches to creating indoor programming for their communities' students and families.

4. Public Comment and Participation

Seth Hopkins reported the Board received the equalization study from the State and the Town's CLA is 98.56, with a 5.54% co-efficient of dispersion. Sue Gage confirmed the staff did receive this information. The Board also received information from Comcast who is currently offering high speed internet for \$10.00 per month for those that have had difficulty obtaining service. This will help families who have students at home. The following link was shared: <https://www.internetessentials.com>.

Sue Gage stated the Brandon Fire District cancelled their in-person meeting and will vote by Australian ballot on March 2nd with the Town. Ms. Gage had an extensive meeting with the town clerks and the Secretary of State's office regarding House Bill 48 that allows municipalities to alter elections during COVID-19. There will be legislation built this week that allows the municipalities to decide the date of their town meetings and whether to mail ballots to all active voters. There are three groups; the Town, Brandon Fire District and the OVUU school district that will require coordination because it is possible that OVUU may decide the ballots be mailed to all active voters due to the number of towns in their district. The act allows for the Secretary of State to alter the process slightly and it will be okay to combine municipal ballots. It may serve best to combine the Town and Fire District that will save printing and mailing costs if it is decided to mail ballots to all active voters. There is no action to be taken at this point, but Ms. Gage encouraged cooperation between municipalities so that we are all on the same page.

Stephanie Jerome stated there was a concern about mailing costs and the Fiscal Committee has allocated \$2 million to help offset mailing costs that will help towns. Ms. Gage stated the CARES act is set up to pay for the mailing of ballots if the towns so choose. Ms. Gage noted the Select Board will need to decide whether they want to retain the date of the town meeting and mailing to voters. Ms. Gage advised there are some towns that are not mailing ballots, but all clerks in the OVUU district need to help each other out. Barry Varian reported there was a discussion at the last OVUU meeting, but no decisions were made. There will be another OVUU meeting this Wednesday. Ms. Gage would like to see the ballots mailed, but there will still be a polling place that is open from 7AM to 7PM. Mr. Varian will bring this up at the OVUU meeting and noted the situation is more complex with the OVUU district having six towns. Butch Shaw stated the current bill is yet to be acted on by the House or the Senate. This is an example of what may happen but suggested action by the Board would be premature but cautioned everyone to be prepared for what the Legislature ends up doing. Mr. Shaw asked with the Fire District and the Town on the same ballot, is everyone in the Town a member of the Fire District. Ms. Gage advised that according to Ray Counter everyone is a member of the Fire District. Dave Atherton stated this would be a town wide vote due to the Fire Department, which is what most of the services cover. Ms. Gage stated there will likely be information placed with the ballots. This year the Fire District is changing their year-end to June 30th, from October 30th. The budget they are proposing is the tax that has already been assessed and they are hoping to meet again in May in order to vote on the budget that will affect the taxes next year. This budget will bring them from November 1st to June 30th, which will have an explanation provided in the ballot if mailed. Stephanie Jerome reported the Legislature has convened and all took the oath of office and were sworn in. The Governor has extended the State of Emergency to March 9th and the legislators will be working from their home offices until that time. The tri-partisan groups in the State House signed a joint resolution to portray their disappointment with the behavior for those who invaded the Capitol and have requested the resignation of the President. It was signed by 130 members and was a union of the almost the entire body in Montpelier and she was proud that everyone could come together for this statement to the President. Ms. Jerome has been reassigned to the Committee for Economic Development and Commerce. She is the ranking member of that Committee and is pleased the work from the last session was recognized by the leadership. This Committee will have much

responsibility for distributing the next CARES funding. Butch Shaw reported he is Vice-Chair of the Transportation Committee and was assigned to assist the new chair of the Committee.

5. Approve Certificate of Highway Mileage

Dave Atherton advised this is the annual certificate that is done every year. Last year the Segment 6 and Park Village changes were made. This document confirms the class highways and mileage.

Motion by Tracy Wyman/Brian Coolidge to approve the Certificate of Highway Mileage. **The motion passed unanimously.**

6. Approve FY 2021/2022 Proposed Budget & Paving Appropriation

Seth Hopkins thanked Barry Varian and Jan Coolidge for their ongoing service on the Budget Committee. It has proven useful to have other sets of eyes on the budget and the Budget Committee's advisory role is appreciated. Barry Varian appreciated being on the Committee and enjoys seeing what drives the operation of the Town. Mr. Varian thanked the town manager, department heads and town office staff for providing top notch information. Jan Coolidge agreed with Mr. Varian's comments and noted she was impressed with the final product. Mr. Hopkins noted the staff was well prepared and that was very useful.

Motion by Seth Hopkins/Doug Bailey to approve a budget for fiscal year 2021/2022 in the amount of \$3,244,020.00 with an amount to be raised by taxes of \$2,744,135.00. **The motion passed unanimously.**

Mr. Hopkins advised the overall spending is down 0.6% and the amount to be raised by taxes is up less than 1% (0.09%).

Motion by Seth Hopkins/Brian Coolidge to have a \$100,000.00 paving appropriation that would include the Florence Road, High Pond Road, and other paving projects to be determined by the highway foreman. **The motion passed unanimously.**

Mr. Hopkins noted this is the same amount requested last year and would not raise or lower property taxes for paving from last year.

7. Town Report and Town Meeting Discussion

a. Discuss Including School Report in Annual Town Report

Tim Guiles reported he has been having discussions with Jeanne Collins and Melinda Piper from the RNESU supervisory union about including the school report with the Town's annual report. This would save both entities half the mailing costs and it is possible for this to work as the school's statutory deadline is a week earlier than the town's. If the Select Board is agreeable, the school's information would be added this year, with the hope of also including the Fire District

in next year's book to have all entities in one book. Doug Bailey stated by combining this information, it saves both entities money and if the Fire District is added, it could be a three-way split in some manner and could be an even more savings to the taxpayers in the Town. Sue Gage thought it is a great idea and also shows the taxpayers that entities are saving tax dollars especially if the Fire District is added and it will show where their tax dollars support. Seth Hopkins stated this year's town report is a transition year and this addition would make sense and to look to next year to have all three entities. It was the consensus of the Board to proceed in this direction.

Tim Guiles stated it is the intent to make the town report more inviting and streamline and to make the format easier. It was found that Derby had a nice layout, and the person that did their book will be used to layout this book. It is hoped the book will be a reference tool for people to find information such as contact information or information on services that the Town provides. Seth Hopkins thanked Tim Guiles for his extensive work and Doug Bailey as part of the working group, which the Open Meeting law allowed. Mr. Hopkins noted it has been a good project that will come to fruition this year. Doug Bailey also wished to thank Jackie, Elaine, and Dave for the information that they have provided. Mr. Bailey stated Mr. Guiles has done an amazing amount of work. Mr. Bailey noted he listened and provided comments, but Mr. Guiles has worked hard on the book and he and Mr. Hopkins should be recognized for all the work they did. Mr. Hopkins advised that he has submitted the draft of the Select Board report to the Town Manager and requested Board members to provide any edits or additions regarding the report to Mr. Hopkins as soon as possible. Bill Moore asked if the draft of the town report includes the school information. Mr. Guiles advised the school information will be received on January 18th and their material will be added to the end of the book and will be found in the table of contents. Mr. Hopkins stated in the event of a town meeting via zoom, there has historically been a copy of the town report provided to dedication honoree of the report. Mr. Hopkins advised the honoree has been selected, but not announced at this point and suggested brainstorming a meaningful way to present the report.

8. Discuss Bond Vote for WWTP Upgrades

Seth Hopkins reported this is the result of work by the Sewer Commission. Sue Gage and Dave Atherton have been working with Bond Council and have some requirements that will need to be done. The vote will take place on the March ballot. A draft of the Warning of the Special Meeting, Official Ballot, Resolution Certificate, Certificate of Posting and Declaration of Initial Intent was provided to the Select Board. Dave Atherton advised this is done with every bond vote and will be for the wastewater upgrades. The entire Town gets to vote on this bond, though the costs will be incurred by the sewer users.

Motion by Tim Guiles/Doug Bailey to move forward with the bond documents noted above regarding the bond vote for the WWTP upgrades. **The motion passed unanimously.**

Seth Hopkins noted this is a timely vote and is a great project. This item will be mentioned in the town report.

Sue Gage advised the ballot will likely be included on the town-wide ballot and will not be a separate ballot.

9. Fiscal

a) *Warrant – January 11, 2021 - \$52, 915.24*

b) *Route 7 Construction Warrant – January 11, 2021 - \$8,831.61*

Motion by Brian Coolidge/Tracy Wyman to approve the January 11th warrant in the amount of \$52,915.24 and the January 11th Route 7 Construction warrant in the amount of \$8,831.61. **The motion passed unanimously.**

Tim Guiles reminded the Board members to visit the Town Office tomorrow to sign documents relating to this evening's meeting.

The Select Board recessed the meeting at 7:45PM.

The Select Board reconvened at 7:47PM.

Motion by Brian Coolidge/Tracy Wyman to enter into executive session at 7:48PM 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) of the Vermont Statutes to include the Town Manager to include the Town Manager and Animal Control Officer. **The motion passed unanimously.**

10. Executive Session

The Board came out of Executive session at 8:28PM.

Motion by Brian Coolidge/Tracy Wyman to end the Animal Control Officer's appointment. **The motion passed – 3 to 2.**

11. Adjournment

Motion by Brian Coolidge/Tracy Wyman to adjourn the Select Board meeting at 8:30PM. **The motion passed unanimously.**

Respectfully submitted,

Charlene Bryant
Recording Secretary