

Brandon Select Board Meeting May 24, 2021

NOTE: These are unapproved minutes, subject to amendment and/or approval at the 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, Edna Sutton, Bernie Carr, Sue Gage, Bill Moore, Stephanie Jerome, Chris Brickell, Lee Kahrs, Matt Orchard, Justin McCoart, Jack Schneider, Keith Whitcomb

1. Call to order

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

a) Agenda Adoption

Motion by Tim Guiles/Tracy Wyman to adopt the agenda. **The motion passed unanimously.**

2. Approval of Minutes

a) Select Board Meeting – May 10, 2021

Motion by Tracy Wyman/Tim Guiles to approve the minutes of the May 10th Select Board Meeting. **The motion passed unanimously.**

3. Town Manager's Report

Dave Atherton provided a report for the weeks of May 10th and May 17th, 2021:

. The Segment 6 sidewalk repairs/replacement continue on Grove Street and Conant Square. Sidewalk milling will start in the downtown area this week. Crosswalk milling was done today. The final walk-thru is scheduled for June 21st for Segment 6.

. Shawn and Mr. Atherton met with the RRPC on the site at Long Swamp and Marshall Phillips Road to go over the ditch and drainage work that will be completed with MRGP grant funds. This work has to be done by October 23rd and is completely grant funded.

. Mr. Atherton attended the 5/18/21 Rutland Regional Planning Commission meeting. Discussion was continued on State Highway project rankings.

. Mr. Atherton attended the 5/18/21 VLCT webinar on ARPA funds.

. A pre-bid meeting was held for the Conant Square Park & Ride project on 5/21/21. The bid opening will be held on 5/28/21. There were 7 people who attended the prebid meeting.

. Mr. Atherton advised that work is being done on the FY22 wastewater budget.

Rec Department News:

. The Brandon Carnival is back. Miller Amusements called on May 20th to inform us that they have squeezed in Brandon for July 29th – August 1st for a midsummer treat. Stay tuned for all of the details.

. We are patiently awaiting the notification of the Summer Matters grant before releasing the summer camp schedule as it will greatly impact the pricing for residents. May 26th can't come fast enough.

. The school district has indicated interest in helping to underwrite summer programming with 20% of their ARPA funding mandated to be used for Summer and After-school programming. We are hopeful they will look to partner with the Rec.

. On June 5th Estabrook Park will host a craft fair to benefit the Brandon Dog Park from 10AM to 3PM. Spots are filling up. Please contact Karen Trayah with interest.

. We are partnering with the Brandon Area Toy Project to host a Job Fair at Central Park on Monday, June 7th from 5PM to 7PM. We encourage local businesses to connect with local job seekers. Contact Bill or Colleen Wright with any questions.

Stephanie Jerome reported she has had many businesses worried they can't find employees and asked about the outreach for the Fair. Bill Moore reported an advertisement is in the Brandon/Pittsford Reporter and he plans to call all businesses. The Chamber will also be reaching out and the school district has posted about the Job Fair.

Dave Atherton reported the flashing speed signs require breakaway poles and Shawn has ordered the poles and will be installed as soon as they are received. The location of the signs will be on the northbound side on Franklin Street and on the southbound side near the Stephen A. Douglas House.

Seth Hopkins asked if the bike racks are on the Segment 6 follow-up list. Bernie Carr stated the bike racks are not made to have cross pieces as he had posed that question to Casella previously. Mr. Hopkins thought they had drill holes and were possibly missing a piece. Dave Atherton will follow-up with Casella on this item.

Tim Guiles asked if others could be present for the June 21st Segment 6 walk-thru. Mr. Atherton advised that it will be just the Town Manager, Casella and VTrans, however, Mr. Guiles would be more than welcome to attend. The walk-thru will start at 10AM from the town office.

4. Public Comment and Participation

Stephanie Jerome thanked all who helped her throughout the session as it was good to be able to call and get advice and opinions about issues that were going on. She appreciated all the Town's staff and Bernie Carr from the Chamber. The legislature did some amazing work and the session has ended. The bills have been sent to the Governor and a couple of bills did not have time to move forward. They worked on unemployment insurance and funding for new businesses during the pandemic. They also worked on trying to bring new workers into Vermont with incentives for employers. She will be holding a constituent coffee hour at the Brandon Library and Pittsford Library next weekend.

Sue Gage stated one of the bills yet to be signed is about voting and general elections. The Secretary of State will mail ballots to all voters for general elections. Once the bill is signed, there will be rules and she will keep the Board posted on this bill.

5. Consider Reopening In-Person Meetings

Tim Guiles stated with the guidelines changing and the possibility of continuing with Zoom, there was discussion about possibly beginning meetings in person. Seth Hopkins asked if there is capability for a Zoom monitor and camera at an in-person meeting. Bill Moore reported equipment has been ordered and there is a plan in place. There is a TV that will be used as a monitor and the other equipment will be arriving this week. It will allow for participation for people from home, as well as allow for people to participate in person. Potentially by the next meeting on June 14th, the staff may be able to have the equipment up and running.

Motion by Tracy Wyman/Tim Guiles to go back to in-person meetings as of the June 14th meeting, following the then current State of Vermont guidelines with regard to mask wearing.

Seth Hopkins stated this is based on the information there is also Zoom capability for those who do not wish to meet in person. Tim Guiles suggested the Board may want to come up with guidelines for those that do plan to attend the meeting in person. Dave Atherton suggested people should wear masks if they are planning to be in-person. Mr. Guiles did not think people should have to wear a mask if they are fully vaccinated as it has been indicated any number of vaccinated people with no limit can gather inside according to what he has heard from the Governor's information. Mr. Atherton suggested seeing what information comes out by the 14th before deciding. Sue Gage stated the guideline for state employees is masks for unvaccinated people but masks are no longer required for state employees who are vaccinated. Mr. Atherton's concern is the Town has been good about following the guidelines and should respect the Governor's orders at the time of the meeting.

The motion passed unanimously.

6. Consider Ordinance for the Use of Town Parks and Recreational Areas

Seth Hopkins stated this was introduced at the last meeting and Mr. Atherton has made a few edits. Dave Atherton made some word changes and added more about definitions. The restrictions were discussed about congregating and not just walking through the parks.

Motion by Brian Coolidge/Tracy Wyman to adopt the ordinance for the Use of Town Parks and Recreational Areas as revised since the last meeting.

Tim Guiles asked if there are any parks not owned by the Town. Bill Moore stated it is good to have this information as some landowners have come to the Town to possibly have pocket parks that are not owned by the Town.

The motion passed unanimously.

7. Energy Committee Discussion

Seth Hopkins stated the Energy Committee has accomplished the major tasks of determining solar sitings and development of the Energy Plan and was present for a discussion of the Committee going forward. Jack Schneider advised the Committee has been on hiatus but they continue to be energy experts for the Town and have had discussion with the Planning Commission concerning the direction going forward as they are a sub-committee of the Planning Commission. One of the Energy Committee members is currently on the Planning Commission and Mr. Schneider asked if there should be another member added to the Energy Committee. Tim Guiles stated he is interested in this subject and he found Montpelier has the following website, <https://www.netzeromontpelier.org/> to help them achieve their energy goals and they also have an Energy Advisory Committee. Currently the State's energy goals are to meet 90% of Vermont's overall energy needs from renewable sources by 2050 and to reduce Vermont's greenhouse (GHG) emissions by 50% from the 1990 baseline level by 2028, and by 75% from the 1990 level by 2050. This is not just municipal numbers but is the entire state and it would be useful to have an energy committee to help in reaching the goals so that the state can be successful. Mr. Guiles stated data gathering is a big piece and the Committee has been doing some outreach events to promote energy efficiency and he thinks it is possible to parallel the Montpelier Energy Advisory Committee. Edna Sutton stated one of the good things of the Energy Committee was it became proactive in terms of raising the profile for energy efficiency. She thinks it would be a shame to lose that, however a lot of activity can happen but it has nowhere to go. The information that is gathered should not be kept in a vacuum and should be sent to the Select Board or Planning Commission. With regard to the EV Celebration, those types of events are a big benefit to Brandon. There needs to be a clearer steering for the Committee with regard to data gathering and where to provide the information. Seth Hopkins stated the Energy Committee has been a subcommittee of the Planning Commission and the concept would be the Committee would assist the Planning Commission in some way and perhaps make a report to the Select Board on a quarterly basis or at a milestone of actions. Ms. Sutton stated there has been amazing work done by the Committee and it would be a shame to lose all the valuable expertise and impact. Matt Orchard, also a member of the Energy Committee, recommended the Committee not be diminished as there are a large number of environmental challenges for the community and state. There has been advocacy work done to help the community be more mindful and he hopes the Committee can stay within its current size and given a mandate so that

there is a direction into the future of how to best act and best support the community. Mr. Hopkins stated there is a quorum of the Energy Committee this evening and the Board has heard from the committee members that are present. The one other member of the Committee is Lowell Rasmussen. Mr. Hopkins stated the Committee is looking for direction and are volunteering their time and expertise and the Board needs to determine a process or reporting regime where they will know what the Select Board is asking them to do. Tim Guiles volunteered to draft something for the Select Board's next meeting. He will research out to a couple of energy committees in the state and put something for the Select Board's consideration. Edna Sutton stated they have a good model that could be used as a base and additional information would be great to obtain. Tim Guiles and Jack Schneider will collaborate and come up with a proposal to the Select Board for a future meeting to discuss goals, actions, and a reporting structure. Mr. Hopkins thanked the Energy Committee for taking the initiative to request this discussion and wanting to engage with the Planning Commission and Select Board in a useful way. He appreciates people who wish to volunteer and serve the community.

8. ARPA Fund Discussion

Dave Atherton attended a webinar on the ARPA funds that provided guidelines for what the funds can be used for. A couple of the criteria that was helpful to hear were related to water and wastewater upgrades. The Clean Water Project would be one that ARPA funds could be used for. Mr. Atherton has talked with Wayne Elliott regarding the evaluation report that was used to get the bond money as there are some lines that are taking infiltration in and a pump station that could potentially receive funding as the funds can be used for water and sewer. Seth Hopkins thanked Mr. Atherton for attending the webinar and the direction he is taking as it is important the widest possible section of the community should benefit from the funding. Mr. Atherton advised the Town also wants to look at funds for shovel-ready projects that have been evaluated. The performance evaluation that A & E did will be helpful in obtaining funds. Tim Guiles asked if the ARPA money can be used for the wastewater project and Mr. Atherton advised the Town has already received the funding for that and this funding cannot be used as a match. Mr. Guiles liked the idea of getting money for water infiltration. Mr. Atherton stated there are areas where some houses are close to rivers and the water level is high and there is also the wet land area near the police station where there is infiltration. The sewer line north of Town was slip lined, but there is still a lot of infiltration. Mr. Guiles noted cyber security was also mentioned and is something the Town likely could do better at and possibly use some of the money in that way. He stated there is a statement that it indicates the Select Board needs to appoint a representative.

Motion by Tim Guiles/Seth Hopkins to authorize the Town Manager as the Representative for the ARPA funds. **The motion passed unanimously.**

Tim Guiles stated this level of money is a huge opportunity and is something that everyone should feel they are benefiting from. They make a point that there should be public engagement to possibly lay out a menu of options to see what the priorities should be and Mr. Guiles thought it would be a good opportunity to engage the public. Seth Hopkins would want to be sure what the dollar amount is and what it could be spent on. He would like to be sure there are parameters to give people. Stephanie Jerome stated at one point there was county money versus town money. Dave Atherton heard this is being distributed in two installments, but they are trying to

use the regional planning commissions like project managers. This will be helpful for small towns who do not have a town manager. Mr. Atherton stated this does not cover paving projects and if a water or sewer project were done, it would not cover the paving that would need to be torn up. Ms. Jerome advised there are strict guidelines and the Town has to be careful about how this is going to be spent and it needs to be sure to meet the criteria for the funds. Ms. Jerome stated Vermont has been cautious about spending the money in the appropriate way to avoid having to pay it back. It is about 3.5 years before it has to be spent and it is good to take it slow to assure things are done right. Mr. Guiles stated it seemed to be a great seminar that Mr. Atherton attended and they had mentioned May 2021 and Mr. Guiles wants to be sure the Town is deliberate but would hate to miss out if the request was not made. Mr. Atherton advised he is set up through treasury.gov and he checks the site frequently to determine if the submit button works. Mr. Guiles encouraged some kind of public outreach to determine what parts of the community were harmed during the pandemic. Mr. Hopkins stated this is currently in the under advisement stage and he thanked all for the initial discussion.

9. Consider Downtown Wi-Fi Network

Bill Moore stated there has been discussion of a master plan for a downtown wireless network. Justin McCoart from Up and Running Information Technology was present to discuss this subject. Mr. Moore has been working with Mr. McCoart about creating Wi-Fi for the downtown and there has been a review of the downtown for a wireless network. Mr. Moore shared the proposal for this program that included wireless access points at the Brandon Congregational Church, Brandon Library, the pole in front of Conant Square, Brandon Museum, the Town's charging station, Foley Taco & Bean, and the Town Hall. Mr. Moore received money from the economic development budget and he strongly encouraged the Select Board fund it and use ARPA money to help pay for the network. Stephanie Jerome asked if it is the designated downtown and it was confirmed that it would be. Ms. Jerome reported there is \$150 million in the State budget for broadband and thought that a portion may be able to be used for this. Mr. Moore stated the money is for the entire communication district and they have applied for grant money to fund high level design and to get the business plan complete. Consolidated plans to come into Brandon with fiber for people who are underserved. Ms. Jerome stated this is a step in the right direction as far as economic development. Tim Guiles asked what kind of speed can be expected. Justin McCoart stated all of the access points are gateways and would be connected directly to the internet host and quality of service rules could be segmented. In the case of the Brandon Library, they would be sharing whatever bandwidth they have, but others would need to protect the bandwidth for those businesses that are providing the access. In order for this to be value add, there would need to be sufficient bandwidth available. Downtown is what people will want and it will need at least 15 to 25 megabits of bandwidth. Mr. McCoart stated the ISP was concerned with losing market share and there are ways to filter protocols. Typically, in the downtown there is some overlap for those who live in the downtown area but is usually used by visitors. There is a dashboard that is cloud managed and one can see what and where the traffic is, but one can't look into people's computers. Mr. Guiles stated Bristol has public Wi-Fi that is very bad and they do not use it. He noted many airports have great Wi-Fi and he is curious what it is going to cost to have good internet. Mr. McCoart stated if the Town could subsidize the internet of the people who will be supporting the network, it would create a robust network. In between the access points there could be phenomenal internet. Mr. McCoart advised he has put

access in 195 towns and the problem is getting a source of internet and this is the question the Town may want to look at. Mr. Guiles thought it needs to be part of the conversation as having the charging station available, people will want to have full-speed internet. Mr. McCoart advised it will depend on what the Town has for supply. There could be dedicated sources for the public versus sharing some of the bandwidth to local businesses. It is up to the Town as to how much they want to fund the project. If the Town were to purchase bandwidth from a gigabit level, they could provide high speed internet. Mr. Guiles asked how soon it could be installed and Mr. McCoart stated late-July would be an optimistic guess as connectivity has been extremely busy due to Vermont being very underserved. The planning is what matters but it could be built in about a week. Each access point has a license and can be purchased per year or multi-year with the access points decreasing in cost depending on the number of years purchased. Mr. Guiles noted concern with the ongoing cost of bandwidth. Mr. McCoart noted if done correctly, one of the access points could be a repeater but it was designed to spread out the bandwidth required. Bill Moore stated there are negotiations happening for service with VTel. Consolidated will be providing fiber to the curb by this time next year.

Motion by Tim Guiles/Seth Hopkins to accept the estimate and move forward with the purchase and installation of the hardware and support for the Wi-Fi network.

Seth Hopkins stated there is hardware to purchase and the carrying costs and questioned if the Town Manager had information on where this would fall in the budget and whether it is a good fit. Dave Atherton is concerned about where the funds are coming from and he would like to have a conversation with Bill and Justin to go over the hard costs going forward. Bill Moore advised the Town currently has Xfinity and Comcast and this proposal would increase the town office to the one gig service and would be robust enough to supply the entire network. People would have a landing page that could bring them to the Chamber and the Town's webpage. The difference would be the \$250/month the Town is currently paying Comcast to \$600/month to have the gigabit as the backbone. Mr. McCoart stated things could change in the future, but the Town needs to consider what the connections are. He stated with some being repeaters and some gateways there is some flexibility to minimize the costs. Mr. Moore stated the proposed hosts have had discussions about this subject. Tim Guiles stated the nature of the motion is important as there is the internet connection, but also the basic hardware infrastructure and he promotes getting on Mr. McCoart's list to get the basic backbone and then have further discussion about how much the Town is going to put into bandwidth. Mr. McCoart noted people appreciate being able to come into a town to check emails and from an economic development point of view, it is helpful to be able to direct people to businesses and promote events that are going on. It makes a huge difference in people's lives with just one access point, but he understands that there is an expense with the internet part of it. Mr. Hopkins had concerns and he did not feel a sense of urgency to jump on the hardware and then figure out the bandwidth. Mr. Hopkins asked from a user point of view if it is not like cell phones where it is beneficial to have higher up rather than lower locations. Mr. McCoart stated there is no benefit to have it at a higher level as they do operate at a fair distance. Mr. Hopkins requested the Town Manager discuss this with the DBA and Chamber to determine if there is an interest in collaborating on this project. Brian Coolidge was not in favor of the motion at this point as he believes it will get more expensive every year and there are too many unknowns. Tracy Wyman also was not in favor of it at this point in time as most of the Town's constituents are not in the downtown area and he needs to consider it

more. Tim Guiles considered this an economic development necessity for the downtown. Mr. Wyman stated there is a lot more to the Town of Brandon and he is not prepared to vote on it until he can do more research. Mr. McCoart stated he installed one in Bethel that gets a lot of use from people in the area and considers it something that puts a good face forward for the town. Mr. Hopkins thinks it would be useful for the Town and he would support something of this nature but would like the Select Board to have more information and in terms of providers, the Town may be in a position to change internet providers. If that is the case it should be determined what that service will be and whether it is sufficient. Mr. Wyman thinks it is something that is needed for economic development but was not ready to vote on it.

Bill Moore suggested this could possibly fall under the ARPA funding. Seth Hopkins stated the Select Board would like more information about funding sources and ongoing maintenance. Justin McCoart stated due diligence would be a good idea and there is a component of the licenses that offers support. It allows for people who don't have IT backgrounds to troubleshoot and they are very user friendly and very manageable. His company warranties the hardware for life and they have never had one destroyed by an electrical issue. He stated it would be prudent to discuss this project further.

Tim Guiles withdrew the motion on this item.

Seth Hopkins looks forward to getting more information on this subject and noted he is sure that Mr. Atherton will foresee many of the Board's questions. He thanked Bill Moore and Justin McCoart for providing the presentation this evening.

10. Consider Swamp Lots Bid Results

Seth Hopkins advised there are two lots, #6-01-23 for 7.31 acres and #6-01-32 for 10 acres up for bid. Dave Atherton reported there was a bid opening last Friday and two were received for the lots that were originally going to be purchased by the Nature Conservancy. The bid amounts were \$1,300 from H. Chancy Wallace and \$690 from Lynn Des Maries.

Motion by Tracy Wyman/Brian Coolidge to accept the \$1,300 bid from H. Chancy Wallace for the two swamp lots that were referenced above. **The motion passed unanimously.**

11. Fiscal

a) General Fund Warrant – May 24, 2021 - \$1,101,045.25

Motion by Brian Coolidge/Tracy Wyman to approve the warrants of May 24, 2021 in the amount of \$1,101,045.25. **The motion passed unanimously.**

Dave Atherton advised that \$1,000,000 of the warrant was for the OVUU school district.

13. Adjournment

Motion by Brian Coolidge/Tracy Wyman to adjourn the Select Board meeting at 8:41PM. **The motion passed unanimously.**

Respectfully submitted,

Charlene Bryant
Recording Secretary