

Brandon Select Board Meeting August 9, 2021

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

Board Members In Attendance: Seth Hopkins, Tim Guiles, Tracy Wyman, Brian Coolidge, Michael Markowski

Others In Attendance: Dave Atherton, Chris Brickell, Richard Russ, Neil Silins, Mike Frankiewicz, Wayne Rausenberger, Jack Schneider, Matt Orchard, Steve Bissette

Others in Attendance via Zoom: Keith Whitcomb, Will Ariadne, Adam Murach

1. Call to order

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

a) Agenda Adoption

Motion by Tracy Wyman/Mike Markowski to adopt the agenda. **The motion passed unanimously.**

Add Request to Consider Closing a Portion of Park Street Extension on September 11th from 5PM to 7PM

Add Request Changing the 3-Way Stop to a 4-Way Stop at the Park/Marble/High Streets Intersection

2. Approval of Minutes

a) Select Board Meeting – July 26, 2021

b) Special Select Board Meeting – July 21, 2021

c) Select Board Meeting – June 28, 2021

Motion by Brian Coolidge/Tracy Wyman to approve the minutes of the July 26th Select Board meeting, July 21st Special Select Board meeting and the June 28th Select Board meeting. **The motion passed unanimously.**

3. Town Manager's Report

Dave Atherton provided a report for the weeks of July 26th and August 2nd, 2021:

. Mr. Atherton met with Aldrich & Elliot on the 4th for a design review and status meeting. Discussions were held on design, proposed new equipment, environmental review, and schedule. Construction is tentatively scheduled to start the Spring of 2022.

. Mr. Atherton has scheduled the first Shade Tree Plan/Tree Inventory meeting with Joanne Garton from ANR Department of Forests, Parks and Recreation, Urban and Community Forest Program. Neil Silins will be joining the meeting and possibly Laura Peterson.

. The Governor is planning a visit on August 25th to hold a press conference on the 10-year anniversary of tropical storm Irene and to discuss the Town's flood mitigation successes.

Rec Department News:

. 2021 Brandon Carnival Days were a smashing success. Big thanks to sponsors Heritage Family Credit Union, Rutland Regional Medical Center, Nifty Thrifty, Smoke Rise Campground and Omya. Many thanks to our wonderful volunteers and shout out to the Brandon Fire Department for providing lights for our parking lot.

. Estabrook Rockfest was held on August 7th.

. Pre-season soccer camp with the OV Girls' Soccer team is on August 16th – 18th. Only \$10.

. Flag football registration is open for 1st through 8th grades.

. Youth Soccer Registration for PK through 6th grades is open.

4. Announcements

a) Memorial Service to Honor Vermonters Lost to COVID-19

Seth Hopkins reported there was a request to announce that there will be a memorial service to remember the Vermonters lost to COVID 19 that will be held on September 19th at 3PM at the Statehouse lawn in Montpelier. All are invited and will include the reading of the names of those lost. This announcement is for the benefit of the community and those who would like to participate in this event.

5. Public Comment and Participation

Brian Coolidge has received complaints about bad traffic flow through Town and asked if something can be done different. Dave Atherton stated cars are waiting too long coming off the side streets. When the intersection was built it was for the people on the sides streets to get out to Route 7 and for pedestrians. The southbound traffic is backing up at certain times of the day and Mr. Atherton has talked with the vendor but it is not sure what can be done. In changing the timing, it could create more of an issue. The traffic that comes to the light from the side roads is what triggers the lights on Route 7. Mr. Atherton stated he can ask the vendor to look at this again. Tim Guiles is pleased the way he can get on Route 7, but if the cycles were longer for the

Route 7 part, he thinks it would be the rational point as it would increase the thru-put for going south. Mr. Atherton stated when the cycle comes on from Carver and Union and then Route 7, the north bound lane opens first, and that is where the difference is. He will look to see if it can be tweaked a bit. Bill Moore agreed with Mr. Guiles and does not think it should be changed. The traffic issues are not that long and he thinks that people are still getting used to the lights. Chief Brickell stated initially when the lights were started, there were complaints from people on Carver and Union and the timing was changed to affect that. The north bound lane does go quicker than the south bound, but he thinks it is a short wait time with everything that is going on in Town. Tracy Wyman suggested placing a sign at the end of Park Street to indicate right turn on red, as it would help with the triggering of the light on Route 7. Seth Hopkins thanked all for the valuable input and noted there are some limitations but it is much safer now to regain access from Carver and Union. Mr. Atherton will look into this item further.

Mike Frankiewicz said there used to be a geographical marker in the park and asked if it is going to be reinstated. Dave Atherton has asked Aldrich and Elliott about this item and they were not aware of it. Mr. Frankiewicz stated it was moved during Segment 6. Seth Hopkins asked Mr. Atherton to look into a replacement for the geological marker. Mr. Frankiewicz also noted there was a zero marker near the Congregational Church that was a mileage marker between Brandon and Rutland and requested another one be put back. Mr. Atherton will also look into that marker.

6. BLSG Resolution Discussion

Wayne Rausenberger stated the Select Board has been provided an agreement to create the BLSG district and the proposed amendments to the agreement. The BLSG is looking for feedback from the Board with suggestions of what they would like to see. The Select Board can forward suggestions to the BLSG Board and they will take all the suggestions from the towns and determine the best solutions. Mr. Rausenberger stated the next BLSG meeting is scheduled for August 19th. Seth Hopkins questioned the statement regarding 2/3rds approval. Mr. Rausenberger stated first the BLSG will meet and will discuss the input from the towns and will propose the changes. It will require 2/3rds of the select boards to sign off on the changes. The BLSG is looking for input on the proposed changes with some being clerical and others are more significant changes such as a change of the district's name. Mr. Hopkins noted he received the resolution and by-laws, but the Board did not have the agreement and advised that the Board could not weigh in until they receive the agreement. Mr. Rausenberger will provide the agreement for the Board to submit comments prior to the BLSG meeting.

7. ARPA Funds Discussion

Seth Hopkins stated at the last meeting, there were 17 projects considered for the ARPA funds with a few eliminated that were not eligible. The Board received an additional two-page document from the Energy Committee. Mr. Hopkins questioned if the Town has received information from the VLCT on when the county allocations are going to be disclosed. Dave Atherton advised the first payment was received today for \$190,000. Mr. Hopkins suggested the Select Board could keep gathering the information but is hesitant to commit to a decision until it is known the full extent of the funds. Currently it is known that the Town will receive \$390,000, but the county allotments will now be distributed to the towns so the Select Board is hesitant to

eliminate or designate a project when the Town may be able to do more projects or bigger projects.

Matt Orchard provided additional information from the Energy Committee (*See attachment*). Dave Atherton asked where the proposed solar site would be built. Mr. Orchard stated the increased size could be at the original location. Tim Guiles noted the state-owned land between the old training school and the current town solar panels is about 100 acres. It is right near the industrial park and there is access to the power line. Mr. Guiles stated Jim Emerson of the Energy Committee has been exploring the land for Solarfest and the 100 acres has potential for their needs and a possible future site for a solar array. Mr. Emerson has talked to Butch Shaw and was advised that it is hard to get the State to sell land, but it would be easier to do a 99-year lease and Mr. Shaw suggested the possibility of leasing the land. Mr. Atherton asked how far from 3-phase power it would require and Mr. Guiles advised Mr. Emerson is exploring these details. Mr. Atherton stated there are two lots left that can be used in the Brandon Industrial Park. Mr. Guiles stated this idea of using the ARPA funds could create a cash flow for the Town to use for such items as a new town garage for equipment. Mr. Atherton stated he has been talking with the Shawn and there could be savings created in building a new town garage and incorporate solar in the area as well, as the Town already owns the land. Mr. Hopkins stated it might not need to be an either/or decision as the Town does not know what the final funding amount will be. Jack Schneider, an Energy Committee member, provided additional information on the recommendation for affordable housing. Mr. Schneider stated Brandon has a lot of older inefficient housing and in an assessment of Vermont housing needs, more than a third of households in the State pay 30% or more of their income to cover housing costs. The suggestion is to use the ARAP funds as seed money for a revolving loan fund and create a Brandon Housing Coalition (BHC). If we were to renovate houses to be energy efficient, Neighborworks of Western VT has indicated it could save families an average of \$900/year. It would save money and make a safer, cleaner environment for the households. It was noted that 81% of Brandon's homes are heated with oil or other fossil fuels and the State's goal for the next 30 years is to reduce fossil fuels with electrically powered devices like heat pumps and weatherization would be a large part. Mr. Schneider has reviewed the rules for the revolving loan fund and used Mr. Hopkins' matrix for the ARPA funds and noted ARPA permits funding of affordable housing as qualifying under climate change and resilience. Mr. Schneider stated the guidelines also encourage the use of the funding to increase affordable housing through the purchase and retrofitting of abandoned and severely deteriorated homes. The BHC would create a housing inventory and create an unbiased rating system. There are other houses that are owner or renter occupied that could be renovated and funds could be used to make the changes. It was noted that other parts of the State have been successful with this type of program and the Energy Committee would like to renovate the existing housing stock. The first step beyond the development of the BHC would be to create an inventory of houses that would be good candidates and do the research on the situations. This would help to provide more affordable housing and place currently abandoned houses on the market with the money going back to the revolving loan fund to continue the program and would bring the houses to a more livable standard. Mr. Schneider stated this would be all existing housing but he has not determined the details before determining if the Board would be interested. For owner occupied properties, there would be an income test. He stated we would need to determine if we want to renovate abandoned houses or retrofit the occupied houses. Mr. Atherton asked if the proposal is for the

Town to purchase unoccupied buildings as the Town has a process for acquiring property that requires a lot of hearings. One way to acquire property is through the property tax sale and is the way the Town has to do it, but if someone wants to sell a property to the Town, it would have to be voted on at town meeting. It was noted that ARPA allows towns to designate agencies and one way would be to form the Brandon Housing Coalition and the funds would not be under the town's umbrella. Mr. Guiles stated like the solar power suggestion, it would generate future opportunities for future improvements. Neil Silins suggested there could also be a program to train people on weatherization that would also increase the number of trained workers in Town. Bill Moore reported he has also received information from Vermont Adult Learning indicating concerning weatherization training. Mr. Atherton stated there have been a lot of programs available that people are either not aware of or are afraid to take advantage of. Mr. Hopkins noted when people are struggling with energy poverty it is difficult to think about energy conservation. Mr. Silins also noted there may be a lot of people looking for housing. Mr. Atherton stated there are vacancies for housing right now and there are already options available.

Mr. Hopkins stated the first five items on the previous chart have been tied in together. With regard to the Union Street improvement, Mr. Atherton had to submit to VTrans for the sidewalk and is trying to use one of the engineering firms to get it to a design. The Town can use the sidewalk design to complete the rest of the street design, similar to the Park Street project. Mr. Atherton stated there would be the sidewalk grant and whatever could be used for the 700 feet with the ARPA funding. Mr. Guiles stated regarding the town wi-fi suggestion, he talked to Mr. Moore's vendor. Mr. Guiles believes that we owe people high speed wi-fi and hopes the communication district that was formed will do a more comprehensive process. Mr. Atherton and Mr. Moore have been talking with communication people to schedule a meeting. Mr. Guiles suggested removing the wi-fi from the listing as there might be internet access development from current providers. Mr. Atherton stated there is also going to be a separate pot of money for wi-fi expansion. Mr. Hopkins stated he is excited about the ideas that have wide and long-term effects and suggested removing the purchase of electric police cars and equipment. Mr. Guiles stated an electric police car costs the same as gas powered and when it is time to purchase another car will be the time to consider this change. Mr. Hopkins stated this is something the annual year to year budget can accomplish. Mr. Atherton and Shawn met today and he will measure things out and additional information can be developed for the town garage. Tracy Wyman would also like to see how much acreage there is for an addition. Mr. Atherton stated there is not a lot of additional land but thought there would be room for expansion and there are some possibilities that can be done. Mr. Guiles stated from an ARPA discussion, like the police car, the town garage is clearly a need and there is support from the Board for a replacement town garage, but whether it serves everyone and actually would be a long-term benefit would be good to compare to the other suggestions. Mr. Hopkins stated the breadth of benefit is there as everyone lives on roads that have to be maintained and it would be a benefit to everyone. Mr. Atherton has done town garage tours and some towns have spent as much as \$2 million for their garage. Mr. Hopkins noted the Select Board has 3 or 4 strong candidates for consideration.

7a) Request to Consider Closing a Portion of Park Street Extension on September 11th from 5PM to 7PM

Seth Hopkins advised that Jenny Beck has submitted a request from Point Counterpoint for the Select Board to consider closing Park Street Extension on September 11th from 5PM to 7PM for an outdoor music event behind the Fuller's house just past Celebration Rental. Chris Brickell stated the information is for a closure from the intersection of Marble street past Celebration Rentals. He noted there would be a lot of people with disabilities that would need assistance. The Town would need to advise the properties owners of the event to allow them the opportunity to leave their residents.

Motion by Brian Coolidge/Tim Guiles to approve the closing of Park Street Extension on September 11th from 5PM to 7PM from Marble Street to beyond Celebration Rental.

Seth Hopkins asked if signage could also be placed at the end of the road near Country Club Road. Chief Brickell stated they could post that the road would be closed. Mike Markowski noted concern that there would be a clear lane for emergency access, noting that five to seven minutes for emergencies could be the difference between life and death or the loss of property. Tracy Wyman agreed with Mr. Markowski, noting he is all for closing it down but would need more details. Tim Guiles advised Celebration Rentals is allowing for parking and they want to be able to allow the blind and visually impaired people the opportunity to attend the event. Mr. Hopkins suggested that there could be a condition to have someone man the entrances to allow for potential emergencies. Mr. Atherton suggested no on-street parking to be allowed. Mr. Hopkins requested that Ms. Beck be advised that the Board is inclined to allow this request, subject to more details on the event. Tim Guiles noted that this is an auditory event with 24 upright basses.

7b) Request Changing the 3-Way Stop to a 4-Way Stop at the Park/Marble/High Streets Intersection

Neil Silins noted that he does not have any hard data, but residents in the area have indicated there are a lot of accidents and close calls and a 4-way stop would relieve some issues instead of the current 3-way stop. Seth Hopkins advised the most recent time this had been discussed, the solution was to put signs at the intersections and the Select Board made the decision based on the VTrans Traffic Study. Dave Atherton stated this is a Class 1 highway and there have been studies done with findings that there is nothing abnormal. The Town tried to get a 4-way stop when doing the Park Street project but it was not possible. Wayne Rausenberger stated there used to be a lot of bushes on Marble Street and Park Street that are not there now and this has been an improvement. Mr. Atherton noted he can call VTrans to discuss because it is a Class 1 highway and the Town gets State funding for maintaining the road. Mr. Silins asked if there is a state requirement for no stop sign, why is there a sign for the north bound lane. Mr. Atherton advised it is because of crossing lanes. Mr. Silins stated the issue for the southbound traffic on 73 is more a speeding issue rather than whether they stop or not. Chief Brickell stated there is data on limited traffic accidents, though he is sure there are some close calls, and the majority of the issues are likely people who are not from around here, but the additional signage does pop out as it is a different color and alerts people. Officers have sat on High Street gaging people from Marble Street, but the reality is that for the amount of people that drive through that intersection, it is a safe intersection.

9. Fiscal

a) Warrant FY 2020/2021 – August 9, 2021 - \$58,625.19

b) Warrant FY 2021/2022 – August 9, 2021 - \$60,331.72

Motion by Tracy Wyman/Brian Coolidge to approve the FY 2020/2021 warrant of August 9, 2021, in the amount of \$58,625.19 and the FY 2021/2022 warrant of August 9, 2021, in the amount of \$60,331.72. **The motion passed unanimously.**

Seth Hopkins questioned the invoice on the website redesign. Dave Atherton advised the redesign is in the initial stages. Mr. Hopkins suggested if publishing the tax maps to not draw the boxes around lot line dimensions as it is difficult to read and previous maps did not have the boxes. Mr. Atherton reported it is a different company that is doing the maps and he will make this suggestion.

Tim Guiles advised VLCT sent him information about a cyber security survey but did not receive the unique link indicated in the email. Mr. Guiles questioned whether the Town has completed this survey. Mr. Atherton will follow-up with Jackie on this item.

10. Adjournment

Motion by Brian Coolidge/Tracy Wyman to adjourn the Select Board meeting at 8:32PM. **The motion passed unanimously.**

Respectfully submitted,

Charlene Bryant
Recording Secretary