

Brandon Select Board Meeting November 22, 2021

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

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

Others in Attendance: Steve Cijka, Wayne Rausenberger, Chris Brickell, Jack Schneider, Bernie Carr, Bill Moore

Other In Attendance Via Zoom: Neil Allen, Adam Murach, Jan Coolidge

1. Call to order

The meeting was called to order by Seth Hopkins - Chair at 7:02PM.

a) Agenda Adoption

Motion by Brian Coolidge/Tracy Wyman to adopt the agenda. **The motion passed unanimously.**

2. Approval of Minutes

a) Select Board Meeting – November 8, 2021

Motion by Tracy Wyman/Mike Markowski to approve the minutes of the November 8th Select Board meeting. **The motion passed unanimously.**

3. Town Manager's Report

Dave Atherton provided a report for the weeks of November 12th and November 19th.

Mr. Atherton has been working with Dubois & King on closeout documents for Segment 6. This includes confirming quantities, substantial completion certification, balancing change order and final pay rec (if needed).

Mr. Atherton had a Zoom meeting with BFD #2 and Otter Creek Engineering to discuss the possible merger with BFD #1. This has been brought up as a possible ARPA funded project. Mr. Atherton wanted to have a discussion about other possible options for BFD #2. He will be meeting with Jeff at BFD #2 again for further discussion.

The Staff has been working on budget numbers in preparation of the upcoming budget meetings. I am hoping to have a new draft version of the proposed budget sent to the committee by November 23rd.

Mr. Atherton attended the RRPC meeting on Nov. 16th. The meeting's hot topic was about new funding for the phosphorus TMDL mitigation projects within the Lake Champlain Basins. There are multiple funding sources for this work already. Mr. Atherton will be inquiring about the new program to see if it is beneficial for Brandon.

Mr. Atherton attended a joint Regional Transportation Council meeting with the Rutland and Addison County RRPC's to discuss the urgency of rebuilding the Route 22A corridor. This has been a constant topic at the RRPC, especially after the last fatal car crash. VTrans was present for the meeting and hopefully they fast track the project to make the highway safer.

The Park & Ride project has been completed. The lights were activated on Nov. 15th. The contractor has agreed to return in the spring to re-apply grass seed.

The bioswale project in the parking area behind Cafe Provence has also been completed. This was another 100% grant funded project through the Rutland Natural Resources Conservation District.

We had to replace some slate roof shingles on both the Town Office and Town Hall this week due to the high winds from the storm on November 12th.

Shawn and Mr. Atherton have been drafting a bid spec for a new tandem truck that will be sent out soon. Mr. Atherton will be presenting the bid proposals to the Select Board once they are received. Once a proposal is approved, we will order the truck that will be about 18 months out.

Mr. Atherton reported another local option tax payment has been received in the amount of \$68,706.86 that is up about \$6,000 from the last payment.

Rec Department News:

The Brandon Rec is partnering with Barb Opera to offer a showing of the Nutcracker on December 5th from Noon to 3PM, with cookies, cocoa, and a ballerina from the Vermont Ballet Company.

Brandon's Winter Wonderland will open on December 1st. The brainchild of Dennis Risenweaver and inspired by Austrian Christmas Markets. The 2 -concept sales 8'X8' sheds that were built by Pete Breen and Jeff Wallin are being placed in the park by our Public Works department. Karen Trayah of Estabrook Craft fame has found folks to rent the spaces for December days. Other weekend events, along with the Chamber's "Moonlight Madness" will pave the way to make Brandon the Christmas Village that people visit for holiday shopping and fun.

Town Hall Winter programming is coming along nicely. Brandon Idol, Wildlife Encounters, and Cabaret will be back with some new concerts/offering.

Seth Hopkins thanked the Town Manager for all the projects that he has overseen to completion.

Tim Guiles clarified that the 1% local options tax is a quarterly payment. Mr. Guiles asked when obtaining pricing for the tandem to also obtain a quote for an electric vehicle.

4. Public Comment and Participation

Tim Guiles reported there has been another meeting with the SolarFest people and they continue to show interest in Brandon. They are also interested in developing a community solar project and Mr. Guiles hopes to provide information on solar that might be of interest to the Board at the next meeting.

5. BLSG Insect Control District Resolution

Wayne Rausenberger reported the BLSG Board would like the Select Board to provide approval of the resolution if in agreement. Seth Hopkins noted all select boards in the BLSG district must sign off on any changes that are made to the district. The changes had been previously discussed with the Select Board and the BLSG is bringing it back to the Board for approval. Going forward, the district will be the Otter Creek Watershed Insect District.

Motion by Tracy Wyman/Brian Coolidge to approve the proposed amendment to the BLSG Insect Control District Resolution. **The motion passed unanimously.**

Seth Hopkins thanked Mr. Rausenberger for his work on the BLSG Board.

6. Grand List 2021 Errors and Omissions

Dave Atherton reported NEMRC presents this each year and this is the annual list that is brought before the Select Board for approval. Most of the amount is for a trial parcel that was inactivated and there is only about a \$70,000 change.

Motion by Seth Hopkins/Tracy Wyman to approve the 2021 Errors and Omissions to the Grand List. **The motion passed unanimously.**

7. Mask Mandate Discussion

Seth Hopkins reported the House and Senate passed a bill that had been agreed upon by Governor Phil Scott that would allow select boards of towns to implement a local mask mandate for their towns. Brandon's Select Board would be responsible for considering an in-door mask mandate. If a mandate was approved, the mandates would be reconsidered every 30-days through April. Dave Atherton reported schools are exempt and the first mandate would last for 45 days.

Tim Guiles reported he has been going around to businesses to see what they think of this action. He noted the pandemic is as bad as it has been, but we have vaccines and for the most part people are responsible. He believes personal choice is preference to a government mandate,

however the job of a public body is to be responsible for guiding public policy. In the case of Covid he is of the mind to suggest a mask mandate. The reason he is willing to suggest that is people he has talked to have indicated they would do it and he thinks it would be seen as a positive action.

Seth Hopkins advised a mandate would be a requirement but he thinks it would be difficult to enforce as there would not be mask police. Mr. Hopkins spoke with Representative Shaw and it was noted during the state of emergency State police were available to enforce. Bernie Carr stated from the business community, he knows many of the businesses wear masks in their businesses due to the interaction with many people. Mr. Carr has continued to wear masks in other stores and he has seen others wear them, but there is no standard thing going on with the businesses. Mr. Hopkins stated a mandate would make it standardized and he has seen some of the businesses placing a sign at their door. Over the course of time the businesses have developed their own protocols and he feels it has been successful and has been a cooperative type of action. His personal view is that people are adults and people are aware of the benefits and the risks. He does not think a mandate would change the behavior of people who are not inclined to wear a mask. Tracy Wyman agreed with Mr. Hopkins and felt it should be up to the individual businesses. He is not in favor of a mask mandate currently.

Bill Moore reported the Rec Department, due to most activities being held in the schools, has adopted a mask mandate. Seth Hopkins stated this does not include school situations that are directed by the State. Tracy Wyman suggested that town events could potentially have a mask mandate. Tim Guiles stated sometimes a mandate from a government authority could take the pressure off the businesses. Mr. Hopkins felt that when no one had a vaccine it made sense to wear a mask.

Motion by Tim Guiles for the Select Board to initiate a mask mandate. **There was no second and the motion failed for a lack of a second.**

Motion by Brian Coolidge/Mike Markowski to declare there will be no action on a mask mandate.

Dave Atherton reported the Town Clerk's office has required people to wear a mask over the last month. In the upstairs offices, there is not as much interaction with the public and masks are worn if people coming into the office are wearing a mask. Mr. Atherton stated there are some businesses the State is still requiring masks be worn. Seth Hopkins recognized there are people in those lines of work that are doing their job in a professional way and it is not without cost or inconvenience and everyone owes them appreciation.

The motion passed with one "no" vote – Tim Guiles.

8. Fiscal

a) Warrant – November 22, 2021 - \$1,280,212.01

Motion by Brian Coolidge/Tracy Wyman to approve the warrant of November 22, 2021, in the amount of \$1,280,212.01. **The motion passed unanimously.**

Dave Atherton reported the warrant was mostly the school district and fire district.

Seth Hopkins thanked all who helped decorate the downtown and town hall. Tim Guiles noted the tree in Central Park looks very good. Bernie Carr reported there will be a list of events for the coming month to be advertised.

The Board recessed at 7:32PM.

Motion by Tracy Wyman/Brian Coolidge to enter into executive session at 7:39PM to discuss the appointment or employment or evaluation of a public officer or employee, to include the Police Chief and Town Manager per 1 VSA 313(3)(a)(3). **The motion passed unanimously.**

9. Executive Session

The Board came out of executive session at 8:09PM.

The Select Board Chair to draft a farewell statement in response to Chief Brickell.

Motion by Tim Guiles/Brian Coolidge to find that premature general public knowledge of a pending or probable grievance, to which the public body is or may be a party will clearly place the Town at a substantial disadvantage. **The motion passed unanimously.**

Motion by Tim Guiles/Brian Coolidge to enter into executive session at 8:09PM to discuss the pending or probable grievance to include the Town Manager, under the provisions of 1 VSA 313(a)(1). **The motion passed unanimously.**

10. Executive Session

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

11. Adjournment

Motion by Brian Coolidge/Tracy Wyman to adjourn the Select Board meeting at 8:18PM. **The motion passed unanimously.**

Respectfully submitted,

Charlene Bryant
Recording Secretary

Mr. Hopkins added the following letter for the minutes:

Let's Beat this thing!

The Rutland region has been running an elevated number of COVID cases. It has never been more important that we all pull together to reduce spread and end this pandemic. It is essential for our health, well-being, and our economy.

As we write this, the legislature and Governor are discussing plans to allow municipalities to have the option to institute their own mask requirements. Aside from this, let's look at what WE can do as a community to help.

You know the drill:

1. Get the vaccine or a booster if you are eligible. It may not be foolproof, but it has been shown to reduce risk of serious illness and death.
2. All of us should wear a mask when visiting indoor public places. It doesn't take a mandate to follow commonsense. When shopping or visiting public places indoors, wear a mask to help protect yourself and others. It's that simple. We give credit to stores and other places that ask all visitors to mask with large and clear signs at their entrance and make available masks to those that forgot one.
3. Take extra precautions on all gatherings, especially with the upcoming holidays. Limit large group activities and observe social distancing.
4. If you develop COVID, check with your health care provider to see if you should be taking monoclonal antibodies, which can reduce the probability of hospitalization.
5. Get tested if you believe you have been exposed or experience symptoms.

The sooner we all practice commonsense mitigation measures, the sooner life as we knew it some 20 months ago, will return. We can beat this!

Rep. Jim Harrison
Rep. Bill Canfield
Rep. Larry Cupoli
Rep. Peter Fagan
Sen. Cheryl Hooker
Rep. Mary Howard
Rep. Stephanie Jerome
Rep. Pattie McCoy
Rep. Logan Nichol
Rep. Butch Shaw
Rep. Linda Joy Sullivan
Rep. Kirk White