

**Brandon Select Board Meeting  
April 11, 2022**

**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, Michael Markowski

**Others in Attendance:** Dave Atherton, Bill Moore, Bernie Carr, Sue Gage, Mike Frankiewicz, Doug Bailey, Jim Emerson, Jan Coolidge, Trisha Welch

**Other In Attendance Via Zoom:** Angelo Lynn, Police Chief Kachajian

**1. Call to order**

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

***a) Agenda Adoption***

**Motion** by Mike Markowski/Brian Coolidge to adopt the agenda as amended. **The motion passed unanimously.**

Add Executive Session for the appointment or employment or evaluation of a public officer or employee per 1 V.S.A 313(3)(a)(1).

**2. Approval of Minutes**

***a) Select Board Minutes – March 28, 2022***

**Motion** by Brian Coolidge/Mike Markowski to approve the March 28, 2022 minutes. **The motion passed unanimously.**

**3. Town Manager's Report**

Dave Atherton provided the following report:

The BFD#1 and BFD#2 connection bid opening was held at the Town Office on April 5<sup>th</sup> at 2:00PM. The apparent low bidder was Jack Bowen at \$78,238.25. This covers the installation of new pipe and valves, as well as discontinuing the pump house. This project was done with ARPA funding that was approved by the Select Board.

The Town did not receive the TAP grant for the Carver Street sidewalk project. There was an unusually high number of applicants for this and only \$2.5 million available for 27 applicants.

Mr. Atherton attended the Regional Emergency Management Commission meeting on April 5<sup>th</sup>. They adopted by-laws and also had two guest speakers from the Vermont Department of Public Safety to discuss the roles of the Regional Commissions. This is a new regional commission that required guidance.

Mr. Atherton attended the April 11<sup>th</sup> Rutland Region Transportation Advisory Committee meeting. Discussion was had on project selection and prioritization for State highway roads and bridges within the County. The TAC updates this list annually and submits it to the State for project funding consideration. There is nothing on the State highways as Brandon have already done them all. They take the list as a recommendation to get the work done.

Shawn and Mr. Atherton have been preparing the roadwork list for the annual MRGP work. This work is funded by the grant the Town received last year for \$17,500. They will be submitting the list to the RRPC for approval and authorization to start the work. Shawn is looking at Wheeler Road and Town Farm Road mostly.

Mr. Atherton has received one of the three appraisals for the next round of property buyouts on Newton Road and hopes to receive the other two soon. He spoke to the landowner and they are excited to begin the work on this.

Mr. Atherton provided a letter from the Rutland Town Select Board regarding state dispatch. Mr. Atherton reached out to the State representatives and they noted that they are not too alarmed about this item. Mr. Shaw also noted that he would be happy to discuss this item further.

Mr. Atherton read the following email from Representative Shaw:

*“Hi Dave,*

*You should know the proposal from DPS to discontinue dispatching services immediately has hit a roadblock in the current budget bill. The bill sets aside \$11 million to support the transition from State dispatching to regional services but before that happens the Commissioner and others are to present a concrete plan for the transition to the Legislature next January. If this plan is not approved by the Appropriations Committee the money for the transition is not approved and therefore keeps services as is!*

*Yes, there is a group of emergency services folks moving forward to establish a regional dispatch center in Rutland County.*

*I would be happy to sit with you, the chief, and others to explain exactly what's happening. I've been working on this since 2013 so I do have some knowledge of what's happening and would be happy to share my knowledge! The important thing here is to not "jump off the bridge yet".*

*Best,  
Butch”*

Mr. Atherton will be on vacation the from April 15<sup>th</sup> through the 24<sup>th</sup>.

## **Rec Department News:**

Brazilian Jiu-Jitsu classes on Saturday at the Pilar Pilates Studio from 3PM to 5PM with Sensei David Belanger. Drop in \$10 per class. Ages 12 – 97.

We have partnered with OV and the Adaptive Martial Arts Association to offer the Monday after-school AMAA Kickin' Fit OV Program. 7<sup>th</sup> through 12<sup>th</sup> graders can sign-up for free for fitness and PE credit!

We have planned Safety Day to coincide with the Neshobe PTO's Kindness Day on May 14<sup>th</sup>. The Brandon Fire, Rescue and Police Departments will be at the Neshobe School starting at 10AM. The OMYA bike helmet program along with the Brandon Area Bike Association bike mechanic workshop serves as a perfect complement to the Safety Rodeo.

Wildlife Encounters returns to the Town Hall on April 15<sup>th</sup>. Come check out a fun animal show!

Tim Guiles appreciated what Representative Shaw wrote and requested a copy of the email. Mr. Atherton noted Chief Kachajian has been meeting with other police chiefs to discuss this item. Mr. Atherton noted this has been discussed for many years that the State is looking to move away from dispatch. This will be a future agenda item for the Select Board.

Mike Frankiewicz asked if the Town Manager was aware of beavers damming up the Neshobe River at the northwest end of Newton Road. Mr. Atherton advised the Town can contact the State so that River Management can handle this situation.

## **4. Public Comments and Participation**

Jim Emerson advised the Energy Committee would like to request to be added to the next Select Board meeting agenda to discuss a proposal for use of the ARPA funds. They will submit information to the Board prior to the meeting.

Doug Bailey stated the Highway Department did a great job this winter and on cleaning up this spring. They are doing a tremendous job and should be highlighted for that. Seth Hopkins asked the Town Manager to express the sentiments to the Highway Department staff.

## **5. Consider Irrevocable Decision to Elect Standard Allowance Approach for ARPA**

Seth Hopkins stated the final ruling for spending ARPA funds could be on certain types of projects or general services, and it was further determined to offer municipalities a standard revenue loss figure of \$10 million. If a municipality's funding is less than \$10 million, it is the assumption to use it for general services. The VLCT has suggested as best practice that all municipalities choose the standard allowance approach for ARPA that has the effect of giving the towns the ability to spend the ARPA funds on generally provided services and not limit it to projects like broadband, sewer, etc.

**Motion** by Seth Hopkins/Tim Guiles for the Town of Brandon to make the one-time irrevocable decision to elect the “Standard Allowance” approach for our ARPA award in the amount of \$1,116,488.75, to spend on the provision of government services throughout the period of performance of the grant.

Tim Guiles asked if there is a downside to do this. Dave Atherton noted it was confirmed by the VLCT that this standard allowance approach is the way to go.

Doug Bailey asked if there is a time limit when the ARAP funds need to be used. Seth Hopkins advised by 2024 they have to be designated for projects but then there is a period of two years when they have to be spent.

Trisha Welch asked if there is more money for paving. Seth Hopkins stated that could be a candidate for some portion of the funds once the projects are prioritized.

Bill Moore asked if this means the money can be given to groups outside the municipality. Mr. Hopkins noted combining BFD#1 and BRD#2 was an example of that type of funding.

Mr. Hopkins stated Brandon falls into the category whose award was less than \$10 million, the Town’s award being a little over \$1 million. Sue Gage stated there is a county and a town portion and to date have received half of each with another allotment to be received.

**The motion passed unanimously.**

## **6. Current Project List Discussion**

Dave Atherton provided a matrix of estimated costs for projects for the Town and suggested the discussion be done when the full Board is present. The report provided information on the funding received and what funding would be needed to complete the projects. Mr. Atherton suggested using ARPA for these projects as the entire Town would benefit from them. The listing included the Arnold District box culvert, the Union Street sidewalk and curb replacement, phase one of the Town Farm Road rebuild, a new salt shed for the DPW, the New England Woodcraft stormwater project and the Newton Road pump station. Mr. Atherton noted some money could be taken from the local options tax fund and also advised that the New England Woodcraft project is 100% funded through ANR and the funds have been approved for the Newton Road pump station. Mr. Atherton would like to use some of the ARPA funds to complete the projects and use local option tax for a new highway garage with the development of a five-year plan. Tim Guiles suggested the Union Street sidewalk could be funded with the local option tax and asked if there are other projects the local options tax could be used for. Mr. Atherton stated it is for capital projects but there are many sidewalks and roads to fix. Union Street is a bigger project and is the only one that was discussed to use the ARPA funds for. The Arnold District box culvert is a necessity and with this list being done, the Town would be in a much better position with its infrastructure. There has been discussion of doing a certain number of sidewalks per year. Jan Coolidge asked about a roof for the Town Hall. Seth Hopkins stated this will be put on the list for consideration. Bill Moore stated the tennis court condition at Estabrook has been discussed and \$80,000 would build a new tennis court and skateboard park.

He will be applying for more Rec grants this fall but is something to think about. Mike Markowski questioned the cost of the Newton Road pump station. Mr. Atherton stated we have been putting money away per USDA into a short-lived asset fund, which could potentially be used. Sue Gage advised the budget has been slimmed down and it is hoped to use those funds for smaller items. Mr. Markowski stated it had previously been agreed to fund half of the project. Mr. Hopkins advised the Board will discuss the previous ARPA matrix, the Energy Committee's proposal, and the Town Manager's project matrix at the next Select Board meeting, noting the Board should take a comprehensive view of everything and include both ARPA and other funds. Mr. Atherton advised the total for the Town's projects is over \$2 million with \$1.1 million funded that leaves \$815,000 left to fund between ARPA and the local options tax money. He does not like to see the Town go into debt if there is funding available to do the projects. Tim Guiles stated if the Energy Committee comes in with a solar project, it could be a revenue generator. Mr. Markowski asked what the current amount of ARPA funds are available. Sue Gage will provide a quarterly statement to the Select Board. Jack Schneider asked if the Town is receiving any payment from the Davenport solar array. Bill Moore advised there is an initial payment of \$100,000 for infrastructure and economic development, but he did not know if they have received their Certificate of Public Goods. Doug Bailey liked what Dave Atherton said about maximizing the funds to get the projects done as the Arnold District culvert has been talked about for 5 or 6 years. He noted the solar project would create income down the road but questioned what the cost would be. Mr. Atherton stated with a solar array, there are no numbers available and if there was a list of the costs, it would be easier to compare. Mr. Bailey stated all of these projects benefit everyone, but when doing sewer, it is based on a user-based fee. Mr. Atherton stated one of the problems with the Newton Road pump station is that it is in such disrepair that the State will fine the Town if something happens and advised this project serves all of the North Street area and is not far from the river and floodplain. Mr. Hopkins advised further discussion of the projects will be done at the next Select Board meeting.

## **7. Consider New Cruiser Purchase**

Seth Hopkins noted three quotes were received and a recommendation provided from the Police Chief. Chief Kachajian reported the Town is in need of a cruiser with the older one being almost 13 years old. He priced at different dealerships and noted there is an availability issue. Of the three quotes, two are unable to deliver a car until 2023. G. Stones was able to guarantee a car could be here by August. Their price came in a little higher, but the other quotes did not include lighting. Ford has a Ready-for-the-Road package, with exception of the police radio and a radio could be used from one of the other Town cruisers. Tim Guiles stated the Green Fleet policy calls for researching an electric vehicle. Dave Atherton stated the Chief did do research on this option. Chief Kachajian spoke with the Police Chief from Richmond about the Tesla they have. The cost was \$58,298. Their Chief noted there are pros and cons to this vehicle and he thought right now the technology is not there for a practical police vehicle. It is an all-wheel drive vehicle, but they are extremely small and cannot fit a lot of equipment or a prisoner cage in them. It will get 318 miles in warm weather, but only 150 miles in the winter. He also indicated the ground clearance is low and several times it could not be used due to dirt roads. Chief Kachajian also reached out to the Ann Arbor Police Department. When speaking with their Lieutenant, it was noted it does not have enough power for police equipment and a prisoner cage could not be installed. They said that for patrol purposes, they liked it, but did not feel that the vehicle is there

yet. Ford is looking to create a police-specific vehicle, but it may be a couple more years. Chief Kachajian would like to pursue an electric vehicle but needs to be sure it can do what the Department needs it to do. The technology is changing, but right now it is not a feasible option. Tim Guiles stated there are many police departments that have Teslas and have had them for more than 4 years. He has a Tesla and gets more than 250 miles in the winter and he never bottoms out in the steep dirt roads in Ripton that he travels. He would like to see the Town do a lot more research on an electric police car, as all research he has done indicates they are more than sufficient and save police departments money. He noted the Tesla Model 3 comes with a camp mode where one can sleep in it. He tested one and spent the night in northern Maine and only lost 20 miles with keeping the temperature all night long, and his electronics did not diminish the power. Mr. Atherton stated we have an Energy Committee that could do the research as the Police Department does not have the time to do more research. Mr. Guiles agreed the Energy Committee could produce information on a police car. Mr. Atherton advised there are two cruisers that are around 13 years old and the Town is in need of a vehicle. He would like to move forward with the vehicle from G. Stones. Mr. Guiles suggested it should be replaced with a sedan and not a larger vehicle and questioned if an Explorer should be purchased. Mr. Atherton advised a new Explorer will be more energy efficient than the Charger the Town currently has. Mr. Atherton stated this should be a task for the Energy Committee but thought the Town should move forward with a new cruiser this year. Mr. Atherton advised the Union contract allows an officer to take a vehicle home and there could be an issue if the Department has more people than cars. Chief Kachajian suggested the quote should be good for a while. Jack Schneider stated the Energy Committee has done some research and could do more. Doug Bailey stated during budget discussion it was thought the Town has too many police cruisers and suggested getting rid of both Dodges at the same time. Mr. Atherton advised the Town only gets \$2,000 for a trade in on one. Jan Coolidge thought the Board was not going to fund a vehicle. Mr. Atherton advised the Department has enough funds for a cruiser from the last couple of years and this purchase would not require funding from the budget year that is about to commence as there are funds set aside from the last three budget cycles. Trisha Welch would hope the research is done comparing apples to apples, due to the unique needs of a police cruiser in Vermont.

## **8. Fiscal**

### ***a) Warrant – April 11, 2022 - \$128,622.69***

**Motion** by Brian Coolidge/Mike Markowski to approve the April 11, 2022, warrant in the amount of \$128,622.69. **The motion passed unanimously.**

The Select Board recessed at 8:02PM.

The Select Board reconvened at 8:12PM.

**Motion** by Seth Hopkins/Tim Guiles to enter into Executive Session at 8:12PM for the appointment or employment or evaluation of a public officer or employee per 1 V.S.A 313(3)(a)(3). **The motion passed unanimously.**

## **9. Executive Session**

**Motion** by Tim Guiles Mike Markowski to come out of executive session at 8:18PM.

**Motion** by Tim Guiles/Mike Markowski that no conflict of interest arises in the matter of the library project being considered for partial funding by the Trustees of Public Funds. **The motion passed unanimously.**

#### **10. Executive Session**

It was the decision of the Board to postpone this executive session to the next Select Board meeting when the full Board is present.

#### **11. Adjournment**

**Motion** by Seth Hopkins/Brian Coolidge to adjourn the Select Board meeting at 8:20PM. **The motion passed unanimously.**

Respectfully submitted,

Charlene Bryant  
Recording Secretary