

**Brandon Select Board Meeting  
August 22, 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, Tracy Wyman

**Others in Attendance:** Dave Atherton, Mat Clouser, Steffanie Bourque, Bernie Carr, Ralph Ethier, Jim Emerson, Bill Moore, Cecil Reniche-Smith, Jeff Haylon, Jack Schneider, Molly Kennedy

**Other In Attendance Via Zoom:** Isaac Wagner, Erica Politano, Marielle Blais, Neil Silins, Patricia Welch

**1. Call to order**

The meeting was called to order by Seth Hopkins, Chair at 7:05PM.

***a) Agenda Adoption***

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

Add two executive sessions: first session regarding the collective bargaining agreement for the Police contract under the provisions of 1 V.S.A. 313(3)(a)(1) and a second session to consider the letters of interest for the Select Board vacancy under the provisions of 1 V.S.A. 313(3)(a)(3).

**2. Approval of Minutes**

***a) Select Board Meeting Minutes – August 22, 2022***

**Motion** by Tracy Wyman/Brian Coolidge to approve the August 22<sup>nd</sup> Select Board meeting minutes as submitted. **The motion passed unanimously.**

**3. Town Manager’s Report**

Dave Atherton provided the following report:

The Highway Department has started work on Town Farm Road. Sections of the paved portion will be closed during the day for culvert replacement and asphalt removal and rebuilding of the gravel base. Today all of the asphalt was removed.

The Newton Road pump station rebuild is tentatively scheduled to start on September 1<sup>st</sup>. The concrete pad has been poured for the new generator and trenching has been dug for new pipe.

VLCT is offering a grant to update zoning by-laws. Mr. Atherton has passed the information on to the Zoning Administrator to present to the Planning Commission and it is hoped the Planning Commission will have something to bring forward to the Select Board.

VLCT has also asked municipalities to consider holding a legislative candidates forum prior to the November election. Mr. Atherton thinks this would be a great event to host at the Town Hall and has emailed Karen Horn at VLCT for more info.

The Town received the annual “true-up” check from Green Lantern Solar in the amount of \$13,507.96. This is in addition to the 15% of the total output received that helps with the electric bills for the year.

**Rec News:**

B-Rec Dance Lesson with Michaela are back, a longer session that will span fall, winter and spring starts on September 13. Classes for ages 3 – 17 will be held at the Town Hall and Otter Valley!

Slide out of Summer party at Estabrook is being held on Sunday, August 28<sup>th</sup> 3pm – 6pm. A massive slip and slide, Water Slide, karaoke, a bounce house, \$1 hot dogs, face painting, snow cones are all on tap. Say adios to a wonderful summer and hello to back to school! Free admission!!! This a collaboration with the Brandon Area Toy Project and Allie Mae Foundation.

Pick-up Basketball has returned to the gym at Otter Valley. Adults of all ages and abilities play on Thursdays @ 7pm and Sunday at 7am. Registration is free.

Seth Hopkins noted the Chamber has traditionally hosted candidate nights and asked if the Chamber would be interested in collaborating on this event. Bernie Carr stated the Chamber would be glad to discuss collaborating on this item.

Seth Hopkins asked if there was a response from VLCT regarding the application submitted for participation on the VLCT Welcoming and Engaging Communities Cohort. Dave Atherton has not received a response yet.

Mr. Hopkins asked what expenses would be incurred for the zoning update. Mr. Atherton advised there would be a match for the grant but it was not known what the amount would be. Bill Moore thought that an outside person was brought in the last time the by-law updates were done. Mr. Atherton stated the update to the zoning regulations is being done as there has been a lot of changes. The Town has changed some things, like the Sign Ordinance, but it is helpful to keep updating the document.

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

Erika Politano noted that she had met with Mr. Atherton in June with a concern about the condition of the sidewalk on Pearl Street and what the Town’s plan was to redo those sidewalks. There are areas where grass is growing through, and drop-offs and ankle-brakers. Ms. Politano noted that she has had people indicate they have fallen on the walks. She is concerned that if it is not taken care of, there could be incidents that would not bode well for the Town. She also noted that the street is quite dark at night and it is difficult to see when walking on the sidewalk. Dave Atherton advised Pearl Street sidewalk is not in the paving schedule for this year, but Shawn and he have discussed taking up the sidewalk and repaving these sidewalks and Carver Street’s sidewalks next year. He noted this is a capital project but there would not be time in this construction season to do them this year but could be added to the schedule next year. Mr. Atherton stated both Carver and Pearl Streets are bad and the Town can do a lot of asphalt sidewalk compared to concrete sidewalks. The Town is planning to do them next year but if there are some spots that are really bad, cold patch could be done. Ms. Politano also requested the lighting be looked at as well and she thought the cold patching would be a good idea as there are areas with a large drop off. Seth Hopkins stated the Board is aware the Town did not provide the attention to infrastructure for a long time and it is very expensive to rebuild sidewalks. There was some grant funding used to do the Union Street sidewalk and Mr. Hopkins thanked Ms. Politano for bringing this to light and was glad there is a solution for next season.

#### **5. Brandon Energy Committee Report and Brief Presentation**

Jim Emerson, Energy Committee Chair, thanked for Board for allowing the Brandon Energy Committee (BEC) to exist. The BEC has been successful in bringing SolarFest to Town, assisted with the Davenport Electric Fest and participated in the July 4<sup>th</sup> parade. A routine article is submitted to The Reporter and the Committee had provided the Town information about electric police vehicles. The Committee has evaluated solar installations for the Town and for community solar. Mr. Emerson advised the Inflation Reduction Act will provide opportunities that include a 30% tax credit that used to be for businesses and homeowners but is now also available for non-profits and municipalities. The BEC is researching how it could be used for a solar project for the Town. The Committee is also working to evaluate the Town with regard to greenhouse gas emissions for both the municipality and businesses. The BEC now has 7 committee members with sub-committees for Conservation, Generation, Transportation and Education that consist of committee members and volunteers. Outside groups have been invited to future BEC meetings that include BROCC, the Heat Squad and Efficiency Vermont. The Committee had 20 goals last year and achieved 8 and are now up to 38 goals. The Conservation working group met and will be organizing a “Button-Up” campaign with SolarFest assisting with training on how to do this

campaign regarding insulation, lightbulbs, etc. It is hoped to support local landlords with supplying some of the supplies to do the buttoning up at no cost. The Transportation group just recently met and the Generation group will be meeting this week. Mr. Emerson and Jack Schneider have been providing assistance to SolarFest with their September 10<sup>th</sup> day-long event. SolarFest would like to extend an invitation for Town staff and the Select Board to attend the event at no charge.

Brian Coolidge asked how many residents the BEC has spoken with to date. Mr. Emerson reported there are articles placed in The Reporter that speaks to the town residents concerning their work. It is hoped to do a door-to-door survey that will be launched in the spring to obtain information and also provide residents with information about energy conservation. Jeff Haylon advised the Committee will introduce themselves to as many people as they can in Town and it is hoped to do this survey every 5 to 8 years. Jack Schneider reported the BEC was also at HarvestFest last year and Mr. Moore has indicated that they can participate in this year's event. The Committee provided information from all the outside groups that included Neighborworks of Western Vermont, BROCC, and Efficiency Vermont at these events. Mr. Emerson advised that one of the goals of the BEC is to educate people. Dave Atherton advised the Mission Statement should be revised due to the number of people now on the Committee. He also noted that there could be many people in Town that could benefit from weatherization to save on energy costs and noted that one of Bristol's Energy Committee goals was to reach out to 20 households per year to do weatherization and suggested it would be great for this Committee to do that. Mr. Emerson reported that is in the BEC's plan for the fall to provide information about the outside entities like Efficiency Vermont and will start with the landlords. Mr. Atherton also suggested talking with Stephanie Jerome as there are specific funds for landlords with many incentives and a large pot of money. Mr. Emerson advised he will also be bringing grant information to the Select Board's attention. It was noted that all the agencies are trying to coordinate as they do have some overlapping and Barbara Noyes-Pulling of the RRPC will develop a document that provides the information on all the agencies. Mr. Atherton suggested Bill Moore, Stephanie Jerome, and he would be glad to meet with the agencies to facilitate something at the town office. Bill Moore suggested the BEC provide energy efficient items at the events like lightbulbs. Mr. Emerson will contact Efficiency Vermont to see if they can provide these items. Seth Hopkins thanked Mr. Emerson and the BEC for their work and noted it is impressive that people care about this subject and that people are willing to serve on the Committee and also be volunteers. He thinks the model is admirable and thanked the Committee for finding ways for people to help.

## **6. Consider Joining IDEAL Vermont**

Seth Hopkins stated the Town has received an invitation to participate in a new initiative - IDEAL VT. Dave Atherton reported this acronym stands for inclusion, diversity, equity, action and leadership and the initiative will be a coalition of municipalities that are dedicated to advancing racial and other equity forms across the state through shared learning and actions. Brandon has been identified as one of the communities to participate on this committee. Mr. Atherton noted with the Town applying to participate in the VLCT Welcoming and Engaging Communities Cohort, participation in this initiative will help the local DEI committee. Tim Guiles thought this is a step in the right direction. Mr. Hopkins noted this is separate from the VLCT Cohort and there might be a slightly different orientation from this group. Mr. Atherton advised that 15 communities are represented on the Equity Committee and 20 schools are known to have an Equity Coordinator on staff in the State.

**Motion** by Tim Guiles/Tracy Wyman to approve joining the IDEAL Vermont initiative. **The motion passed unanimously.**

## **7. Local Hazard Mitigation Plan Draft Presentation/Discussion**

Steffanie Bourque of the RRPC was present for a discussion of the draft Local Hazard Mitigation plan. Ms. Bourque noted she was representing the local Hazard Mitigation team as this represents the work they did on the working draft. The Team consists of Dave Atherton, Ray Counter, Shawn Ericson, Tim Kingston, and Abbey Spiegelman. Ms. Bourque has been working with them to update a five-year plan to identify the Town's vulnerabilities and risks to natural hazards and to develop a mitigation plan. In terms of an emergency management focus plan, that plan is a response-focused plan and this plan's focus is on mitigation. This is a five-year plan that requires FEMA approval. The Team is at a critical junction in the plan development process, as the plan should be shared with the local officials and public for comment. Ms. Bourque noted this work is at the half-way point. There is a full Table of Contents but there is content only through Section 5. There is an introduction that lays out the hazard mitigation purpose i.e., the benefits of mitigation planning, and

indicates this is not a legally binding contract but is a document to outline goals and actions to prevent future loss of life and property from natural hazards. This is not an all-hazards plan that would include hazards like cyber issues, transportation, or traffic hazards. Section 3 provides a description of the characteristics of the Town. The goal is not to reproduce the Town Plan but choose some key characteristics for this plan's focus. The planning process is Section 4 and there is a need to document all steps in order to do the update. This is the roadmap of the steps to get across the finish line and the work will be accelerated once comments are received to complete the final draft by December. The area for public comments is for the hazard identification and risk assessment in Section 5. The Team did a review and provided a range of hazard impacts and the probability of the happenings, life, local economy, and natural environment. They have identified high winds, different types of flooding and extreme cold and ice as the highest natural hazard risks. Section 5 has profiles that describe the impact at State and Regional levels and Brandon-specific impacts. The impacts are supported by the map that shows the geographic locations. There is a vulnerability summary that will serve as the foundation of the mitigation strategy. The public comment process that will extend through the September 12<sup>th</sup> Select Board meeting. Ms. Bourque requested this item be added to the meeting agenda for people to share comments. Comments can also be submitted to Mr. Atherton. The Team will then evaluate the comments and button up this section of the document and continue with the mitigation section. After this evening, there will be public notice postings that will include a digital copy of the map and a final working draft. This information will be placed on the RRPC and Town's website and on Facebook. Seth Hopkins advised the draft is also in Board packet link on the Town's website and the only thing missing is the digital map. Ms. Bourque noted the Team is looking to make sure the risks and vulnerabilities are identified to be addressed in the mitigation strategies. Mr. Hopkins noted it is a great process and he felt that it is sensible and reveals what the meaningful risks are. Mr. Hopkins stated if anyone has comments, they can send the information to the Town Manager. Mr. Atherton stated having this local hazard plan keeps the Town's ERAF high so there are funds connected to this process. He noted for the Newton Road project, the ERAF funding was significant for a \$600,000 project where the Town's portion was \$49,000. Mr. Hopkins thanked the Team and Ms. Bourque for all the work that has done on this document.

## 8. Fiscal

### *a) Warrant FY 2022/2023 – August 22, 2022 - \$58,882.51*

**Motion** by Tracy Wyman/Brian Coolidge to approve the August 22, 2022 warrant in the amount of \$58,882.51. **The motion passed unanimously.**

The Select Board recessed at 7:52PM.

The Select Board reconvened at 8:00PM.

**Motion** by Tracy Wyman/Seth Hopkins to find that premature general public knowledge of the proposed modification of the ratified collective bargaining agreement with the New England Police Benevolent Association Local 422 would place the Town, the Select Board, or a person involved at a substantial disadvantage. **The motion passed 3 to 1 – Tim Guiles.**

**Motion** by Seth Hopkins/Tracy Wyman to enter into executive session at 8:00PM to consider a side letter to the Police Union contract under the provisions of 1 V.S.A. 313(3)(a)(1) to include the Town Manager. **The motion passed 3 to 1 – Tim Guiles.**

## 9. Executive Session

The Board came out of executive session at 8:34PM.

**Motion** by Seth Hopkins/Tracy Wyman to authorize the Board Chair to sign the side letter. **The motion passed 3 to 1 – Tim Guiles.**

**Motion** by Tim Guiles/Tracy Wyman to enter into executive session at 8:36PM 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.**

## 10. Executive Session

The Board came out of executive session at 9:05PM.

Board deliberations on the open Select Board seat to continue and the Board Chair will check with the Secretary of State regarding guidance on this subject.

## **11. Adjournment**

**Motion** by Brian Coolidge/Tracy Wyman to adjourn the Select Board meeting at 9:12PM. **The motion passed unanimously.**

Respectfully submitted,

Charlene Bryant  
Recording Secretary