

## **Brandon Select Board Meeting October 10, 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, Ralph Ethier

**Others in Attendance:** Dave Atherton, Mat Clouser, Bernie Carr, Neil Silins, Jack Schneider, Gail Cordner, Paula Ashley, Susan Benedict, Lyn DesMarais, Jim DesMarais, Marielle Blais, Sandy Mayo, Jim Emerson

**Other In Attendance Via Zoom:** Neil Silins

### **1. Call to order**

The meeting was called to order by Seth Hopkins, Chair at 7:32PM.

#### ***a) Agenda Adoption***

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

### **2. Approval of Minutes**

#### ***a) Select Board Meeting Minutes – September 26, 2022***

**Motion** by Brian Coolidge/Tracy Wyman to approve the September 26<sup>th</sup> Select Board meeting minutes. **The motion passed unanimously.**

### **3. Town Manager's Report`**

Dave Atherton provided the following report:

Mr. Atherton attended the Rutland Regional Emergency Management Committee meeting on September 28<sup>th</sup>. There was some conversation about dispatch but there is no direction at this point. He has also talked with Representative Shaw about this subject and there are a couple of scenarios for dispatching. The Sheriff's Department has expressed interest in it and has applied for a grant. The State will cover the cost for three years. As Mr. Atherton obtains more information, he will report to the Select Board.

Mr. Atherton attended the VLCT annual meeting and Town Fair on October 6<sup>th</sup> & 7<sup>th</sup>, and also attended the PACIF annual meeting and a couple of seminars on D.E.I.

The Arnold District culvert project has been pushed out due to delivery of the structure. It now looks like it is coming the week of October 24<sup>th</sup>.

Bill Moore and Sue Gage attended the first VLCT IDEAL cohort meeting that was held during Town Fair.

Mr. Atherton will be attending a Town Manager conference in Middlebury on October 13<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup>.

Mr. Atherton reported on behalf of Sue Gage that ballots have been mailed and if one has not received a ballot to contact the Town Clerk. The voting will be held on November 8<sup>th</sup> from 10AM to 7PM. Work on the audit will likely delay the first quarter financial report. Ms. Gage, Bill Moore, and Dave Atherton will be working with Jude Smith Rachele of Abundant Sun regarding DEI. There will be a series of remote meetings following the VLCT IDEAL cohort. Mr. Hopkins thanked the Town Manager for his attendance at all of the external meetings as they are important to the Town. Mr. Atherton reported there may be a reduction in premiums on some of the insurances through Passive but noted health insurance premiums will be increasing.

#### **4. Public Comment and Participation**

Tim Guiles reported he attended the segment on affordable housing at the VLCT meeting and noted it was very interesting. Some notes of interest are that Vermont has the second oldest housing stock in the country, 17% of the housing are second homes, and 70% of Vermont households are 1 or 2 people. Mr. Guiles noted this provides information on what types of housing to create for affordable housing and he looks forward to helping to assist with the affordable housing concept. Sandy Mayo asked whether the single housing is co-housing. Mr. Guiles advised this was an introduction on this subject from the different departments in the government that talked about the importance of multi-use housing, but there were not specifics like that. Mr. Guiles offered to share the information he obtained. Ms. Mayo stated with regard to low-income housing and co-housing, it would make sense to connect houses in a way that they become a small village to be more efficient.

Sandy Mayo read the following letter addressed to the Human Rights Commission and Vermont League of Cities & Towns:

*To whom this may concern,*

*Much thought was given to this situation before deciding to send it to a professional organization that might be of help to me. I recently had a terrible and intimidating experience w/chair of the Brandon Selectboard, Seth Hopkins.*

*I put the ball in motion when I sent a note to Brandon's Town Manager David Atherton expressing my interest filling a vacancy on the Development Review Board. I included a general outline of my experiences w/boards and committees in Vermont.*

*I must say that I became a bit nervous after attending a selectboard meeting when an appointment of a new board member led to a heated discussion.*

*Apparently two women had volunteered for the position and were voted down. In open discussion audience members mentioned the Declaration of Inclusion statement signed and dated in Jan 2021. They suggested to the board that it was not being followed. That it was time for the board to be made up of a diverse cross section of people. The general comment was that the Selectboard was not paying attention to what the declaration was saying. Instead the board was doing things in the same way which was filling the board w/men only. As Tim Guiles stated when he turned to Ralph Ethier, and said, 'I'd like to say, thank you, Ralph for being willing to be on the select board. I think that getting lost in this conversation is that you're very qualified to do a good job despite the fact that you're a white man.' It was unclear to me then why he made a racist/ sexist comment like that. Still I had applied for a seat on the Development Review Board and would stick with it.*

*What happened at the next meeting really threw me for a loop. The Chair publicly announced my application to go on the DRB. This was after Seth made the statement to the public that he did not post names of applicants publicly until after the board made their decision. I was shocked, here he was calling me out in front of everyone. It was intimidating to me to be singled out like that. He then asked if I would agree to an interview in an executive session after the meeting. In the executive session the Chair asked whether I thought I was a contentious person? This was the 'only question' he asked. I was appalled at the lack of interest he and the whole Selectboard had in the interview, not questioning anything about me other than implying I was a contentious person.*

*Having read the Declaration of Inclusion and other human rights laws I felt his actions prejudiced, intolerant, biased, intimidating and mainly based on my gender. I left then sent the board a note withdrawing my application.*

*Later, quite by accident I discovered a statement Seth made when running for reelection. He commented that' he was a 44 year old balding white man. There it was again, another comment by another selectboard member using the term 'white' man. I am more convinced now than ever that the Selectboard will not appoint me because I am NOT a white man.*

*The second part of my complaint concerns my application. Under the Policies on filling vacancies on Boards & Commissions & of Appointed Officers & Delegates, signed a month after the Board accepted the Declaration of Inclusion statement and presented, it signed, dated, and registered it with the Town Clerk, another week might have to pass before my application would be accepted.*

*Seth then passed out a Cover Sheet, w/no board signature or date, and told everyone that it would be used for people applying to fill vacancies on boards, commissions and committees. I have no idea what he was doing asking people to follow this than follow something else.*

*I submit this complaint against Seth Hopkins and request that it be signed, dated and filed with the minutes of tonight's meeting. I further request that a legally qualified person review the process or no process that was followed in regard to my application to volunteer for the Development Review Board.*

*I was treated unfairly. By filing a complaint this type of treatment of women will stop happening and women who want to serve as members on boards, commissions and or committees are treated equally and fairly by the Brandon Selectboard. Sandy Mayo, PhD”*

Ms. Mayo stated she could read the policy for filling vacancies. Seth Hopkins stated he has never denied people from addressing the Select Board and encouraged Ms. Mayo to read the policy. See policy attachment.

Seth Hopkins thanked Ms. Mayo for her comments.

## **5. Appointments**

### ***a. Development Review Board (DRB) (Remainder of Term ending June 30, 2023)***

Seth Hopkins reported the Board received a letter of interest from Jim DesMarais to serve on the Development Review Board.

**Motion** by Tim Guiles/Ralph Ethier to appoint Jim DesMarais to the Development Review Board for the remainder of a term ending June 30, 2023. **The motion passed unanimously**

Dave Atherton will advise the Board Chair of the appointment and they will be in contact with Mr. DesMarais.

### ***b. Energy Committee***

Seth Hopkins reported the Board received a letter of interest from Eve Beglarian to serve on the Energy Committee. Tim Guiles noted gratitude for people willing to volunteer for the committees. Mr. Hopkins thanked Mr. Emerson for his work as Chair of the Energy Committee.

**Motion** by Tim Guiles/Tracy Wyman to appoint Eve Beglarian to the Energy Committee for an indefinite term. **The motion passed unanimously.**

## **6. Fiscal**

### ***a) Warrant- October 10, 2022 - \$376,780.776***

**Motion** Tracy Wyman/Brian Coolidge to approve the October 10, 2022, warrant in the amount of \$376,780.76. **The motion passed unanimously.**

Brian Coolidge requested information on the heat pump invoice. Dave Atherton advised this company has been servicing the heat pumps for the last three years that include the four outside units and six inside units.

The Select Board recessed at 7:55PM.

The Select Board reconvened at 8:01PM.

**Motion** by Tracy Wyman/Brian Coolidge to enter into executive session at 8:01PM 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.**

## **7. Executive Session**

The Board came out of executive session at 8:52PM.

There were no actions required.

## **8. Adjournment**

**Motion** by Ralph Ethier/Tim Guiles to adjourn the Select Board meeting at 8:53PM. **The motion passed unanimously.**

Respectfully submitted,

Charlene Bryant  
Recording Secretary