



6 December 2022

JOINT MEETING OF THE SELECTBOARD & BUDGET COMMITTEE

In attendance:

Selectboard: Seth Hopkins (chair), Brian Coolidge, Ralph Ethier, Tracy Wyman.

Budget committee: Barry Varian, Jan Coolidge, Neil Silins, Doug Bailey, Peter Werner.

Others: David Kachajian, Jackie Savela

By phone: David Atherton

Town of Brandon
49 Center St
Brandon, VT
05733

SELECTBOARD

Seth Hopkins
Chair

Tracy Wyman
Vice-chair

Brian Coolidge
Clerk

Tim Guiles
Selectman

Ralph Ethier
Selectman

1 Meeting was called to order by Seth Hopkins, chair, at 7PM. On motion of Brian Coolidge and second by Tracy Wyman the agenda as warned was adopted for the meeting, 4-0. Public present sat around the large tables with the board & committee.

2 Jackie Savela highlighted changes made to the budget since our previous workshop. Seth Hopkins provided a one-page summary of the status of the ARPA fund, the Local Option (1%) tax fund, the unrestricted general fund reserve, and obligations of those funds which had been approved by, or recommended to, or requested of, the selectboard. He also made a number of suggestions about funding sources for various projects. The one-page summary and suggestions may be found attached to these minutes.

The group had a thorough discussion of pros and cons of the board chair's five recommendations (which did receive the endorsement of the town manager), leaving some to be addressed at the 19 December workshop. There was broad consensus to accept suggestion #1 to fund the half-a-cruiser at \$20,000 each year from Local Option (1%) revenue rather than from the operating budget, as the 1% tax was represented to the voters as a way to take pressure off the property tax for capital expenditures. There was also broad consensus to accept suggestion #3 to remove the \$72,350 line item for sidewalks from the operating budget to be paid for by cash-on-hand in the Local Option (1%), for the same reasoning. There was concern expressed about the impact on future years' budgets of the amount of money suggested in #5 for bringing down the amount to be raised by taxes; the board chair indicated that was the maximum he was comfortable with and a lower number may be prudent. All agreed to consider and come back ready to decide next time.

The inflationary economic climate and low labor participation rate were identified as key challenges in retaining skilled and dedicated staff.

3 On motion of Brian Coolidge and second by Ralph Ethier a not debatable motion to adjourn passed by a vote of 4-0.

Adjournment came at 9:20PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Seth M. Hopkins.

Seth Hopkins, chair of selectboard

From Selectboard Chair for Consideration of 6 Dec 2022 Selectboard-Budget Committee Workshop

ARPA			
Meeting of	Purpose of ARPA expenditure	Cost	Board Action
30 March 2022	Town Treasurer Sue Gage reported the total award to the Town of Brandon as		\$1,116,488.75
10 Jan 2022	Otter Creek Communications Union District	Match requested \$56,000	Discussed
14 Feb 2022	Fire District 1 & Fire District 2 connection	Not to exceed \$125,000	VOTED
14 Feb 2022	Newton Road Pump Station rebuild	Fund half NTE \$365,350. Total \$226,537	Amended+VOTED
?	Computer upgrades	\$4,035	?
26 Sept 2022	Library Renovation & Expansion	\$100,000 requested*	Under consideration
	(Reporter says 8% is being asked of all towns which would be \$89,319 for Brandon)		
	Arnold District Culvert	\$123,935	Town Manager recommendation
Apparent unassigned balance of fund if all above items are approved/funded in full:			\$480,981.75

LOCAL OPTION TAX (1% Fund)			
5 Dec 2022	Town Treasurer Sue Gage reported the FY 2021-22 year-end balance of this fund as		\$409,427
30 Nov 2022	Tax receipts and bank interest		+138,721
30 Nov 2022	Pre-owned excavator		- 45,000
?	Town Farm Road Summer 2022 Rebuild		-120,000
?	Union Street Sidewalk Replacement		-300,000 (in 2024 or 2025)
Apparent unassigned balance of fund:			\$83,148.00

UNRESTRICTED GENERAL FUND (Net of surplus of previous years' budget[s])			
1 Dec 2022	Town Treasurer Sue Gage reported the FY 2021-22 year-end balance of this fund as	\$784,157.14	General
		\$152,100.07	Highway*
*NOTE CHANGE OF STATE LAW (Act 157 of 2022) no longer requires Highway and General fund balances to be kept separate.			
30 Nov 2022	Heat pumps for Town Hall and police station	-40,400	VOTED
Apparent unassigned balance of fund:			\$895,857.21

Personal observations and suggestions:

- LOT (1%) was represented to the voters as being a way to take pressure off the property tax. Now that Seg6 is closed out we can start doing that.
- LOT (1%) is running about \$208,000 per year on the five-year average but was \$272,935 in most recent fiscal year (trend is steadily slightly upward).
- Suggestion 1: Reserve \$20,000 of LOT per year (10%) for half-a-cruiser program (LOT is restricted to capital expenditures).
- Suggestion 2: Fund \$150,000 of paving from unrestricted general fund balance-on-hand for FY 2022-23 (exhaust previous HWY carryover[s]).
- Suggestion 3: Remove \$72,350 of Sidewalks from operating budget; fund from LOT balance-on-hand, revenue to replenish for 2024-25 Union Street work.
- Suggestion 4: Revise proposed 7% staff raise to 5% raise with a 2% inflation acknowledgment one-off payment.
- Suggestion 5: Expend \$200,000 of unrestricted general fund balance-on-hand to bring down amount to be raised by taxes. The remaining balance of \$543,757 would still fall within the selectboard's fund balance policy.

Respectfully submitted, *Seth Hopkins*