

**Brandon Planning Commission Special Meeting - Draft
January 9, 2023**

Board Members Present: Jack Schneider, Cecil Reniche-Smith, Bob Foley, Bill Mills

Others Present: Jeff Biasuzzi, Carol Bertrand

1. Call to order

The meeting was called to order at 6:06PM by Cecil Reniche-Smith - Chair.

2. Agenda Approval

A motion was made by Jack Schneider to approve the agenda. **The motion passed unanimously.**

3. Approve Meeting Minutes – December 12, 2022

A motion was made by Bob Foley to approve the minutes of the December 12, 2022, Planning Commission meeting. **The motion passed unanimously.**

4. Zoning Administrator Report

Jeff Biasuzzi stated with zoom, once the recordings are saved and given a name, anyone can retrieve them. He has requested instructions from another town to create this process.

Mr. Biasuzzi reported there has been a steady stream of applications between December and now. The DRB had three public hearings in December for the Wood Craft facility, the Brandon Public Library for its renovations and one for a set-back waiver. In January, there will be a conditional use application for a miniature golf course. The owner is moving forward and it will require an Act 250 review. There is also another set-back waiver application with a possible flood plain issue. Jack Schneider stated there was also a December 28th setback hearing and Mr. Biasuzzi noted it was a garage replacement, and there are some questions about the boundary. Cecil Reniche-Smith asked if there have been any decisions from the DRB meetings. Mr. Biasuzzi advised the decision written for the Woodcraft application that did not agree with the application and did not agree with the minutes. This item is being reviewed. The library project had no controversy. Mr. Schneider noted the garage application was for a setback on Route 7. Mr. Biasuzzi reported he is working on violations and some were worked out without having to go to enforcement. Mr. Schneider asked the date for the miniature golf hearing and Mr. Biasuzzi advised it will be warned for January 25th that will be for a project on Route 7 north, south of Cattails Restaurant building. Ms. Reniche-Smith asked if this is a small golf course and restaurant. Mr. Biasuzzi noted it is very simple and will be basically a clubhouse trailer that may sell some light refreshments. Mr. Biasuzzi stated it is hoped there will not be an issue with Act 250 with the consideration of the criteria, noting that Act 250 has more interest in golf courses due to run off. It was noted this will be a seasonal business.

A motion was made by Bill Mills to accept the Zoning Administrator's report. **The motion passed unanimously.**

5. Energy Committee (BEC) Report

Jack Schneider reported there was a presentation on the Inflation Reduction Act as it applies to potential projects that can be done in Town and he will provide a copy of the presentation to the Planning Commission members. Bill Moore was also present to talk about the availability of grants. Mr. Biasuzzi asked if Mr. Moore provided any feedback on the planning grants that have been applied for and it was noted that he did not. Mr. Schneider advised one project under consideration is a new municipal garage. There are many different uses and many different types of grants and Mr. Atherton and Mr. Moore are actively working on pursuing grants. The Education Working group will be training OV high school students on weatherization and a workshop for renters will be held on January 21st and one for landlords on February 25th. The RRPC is working with the State on getting updated numbers for all towns for updating the energy portion of the town plan. The BEC is going to work on that segment for a September submission to the Planning

Commission. The Davenport Electric Festival that is a town event supported by the BEC is on track and an invitation will be going out to senior politicians to attend the July 8th event.

A motion was made by Bill Mills to accept the BEC report. **The motion passed unanimously.**

6. Brandon Community Heart & Soul (Carol Bertrand)

Cecil Reniche-Smith introduced Carol Bertrand to talk about Community Heart & Soul. Ms. Bertrand provided the Planning Commission members a two-page overview of the program and noted they have films on their website from other communities that have started the program. They are seeing other communities that are doing this process have more people stepping up to volunteer and businesses are starting where services are lacking. She noted it is an amazing process and she is looking for people to get the program started. Kathy Mathis and Mellie Flynn have volunteered to assist with doing a network analysis. Ms. Bertrand is meeting with the high school as they have a club for community outreach and if the Planning Commission has other people that would like to help, there are many different positions to be filled. Ms. Bertrand noted the article in The Reporter about Mim Welton, she was the person who had contacts all around the community and knew who to reach out to and that is what this network would do in determining what matters most. Ms. Reniche-Smith asked if the Town gets involved, is there a buy in for the Town. Ms. Bertrand stated there is a coach that is typically hired at a cost of \$20,000 and Ms. Bertrand is trying to find ways around that if she takes the coach training, but noted she is not sure if it would be appropriate for her to be that person. The training director will also be attending the next meeting with the Planning Commission and it is yet to be seen what that might cost. Many projects hire a coordinator to coordinate volunteers, set up meetings, and make sure the supplies are available. Sue Gage and she had a conversation about funding but that is up to the Heart and Soul team and she is looking for people to be part of this team. A key item is the value statements that are created and those should be imbedded in the community, with one key place being the Town Plan. Some towns have plaques noting the value statements as a reminder of how to move forward with the town. Ms. Reniche-Smith stated determining what the town values are is in the process of revising the Town Plan. Ms. Bertrand stated this program will involve and include people from the surrounding towns as it about the people who live, work, and play here.

7. BLUO Amendments Update

Cecil Reniche-Smith reported she went through all Planning Commission meeting notes from the last two years and found all times the Commission talked about updating the BLUO and found red-lined copies for updates. She then went through the BLUO and pulled out all words that needed to be defined. She also reviewed the West Rutland definitions that had most of the words that the BLUO does not have definitions for that can be cut and pasted. They had many definitions that would be good to have and possibly items the Town may need to have ordinances for, like campgrounds. She noted that the BLUO does not currently have anything about campgrounds. Mr. Biasuzzi stated different towns have different approaches, but good definitions make for good zoning. He does not believe a zoning document can resolve all issues but having the right tools that are up to date can be more enforceable. Mr. Biasuzzi provided Ms. Reniche-Smith with a word version of the Town's BLUO. She is doing some grammar corrections and adding the new definitions that she hopes will be made available to the Planning Commission in a red-lined version at the next meeting. She has requested a word version of just the definitions of the West Rutland ordinance from Mr. Biasuzzi to be able to cut and paste. Jack Schneider asked the purpose of the bylaws moderation. Jeff Biasuzzi provided an example of West Rutland, indicating they received an \$8,000 grant with the first \$3,000 used for reviewing their zoning document. There is going to be a follow-up regarding flood plain regulations. In that town, there are very few commercial sites that are impacted by flood zones. In the past they were able to get variances from flood plain regulations. They need the grant support to allow them to address the flood plain issues. They are going to have a cover-to-cover review of the flood plain regulations and will be adding the river corridor regulations.

Jack Schneider asked if Brandon needs to change anything about flood plains in the BLUO. Cecil Reniche-Smith did not think this needed anything done and Mr. Biasuzzi noted Brandon's regulations are very thorough. Ms. Reniche-Smith noted many parts of the BLUO do not need to be changed, but there are some areas to discuss to make it easier like multi-family homes and subdivisions. Mr. Biasuzzi provided the Committee information on a guidance document that is available both on-line and in print form. Ms. Reniche-Smith noted at the State level, they are discussing how to change regulations on affordable housing, but this change also needs to be done at the local level.

Mr. Schneider stated Brandon does have a designated downtown and he is not sure how that perimeter was determined. Mr. Biasuzzi noted Bill Moore is the person to discuss this subject and noted it is a good program for old buildings that need work, as it does not subsidize the work but provides tax credits to the owners. Mr. Schneider stated Act 250 also has fewer impacts in this area. Mr. Biasuzzi stated it had been proposed that if a project were in the designated downtown, Act 250 would have minimal impact.

8. Old/New Business

Jack Schneider asked what is needed for the Town Plan renewal process. Cecil Reniche-Smith had suggested the BEC should have the energy section to the Planning Commission by October at the latest. Jeff Biasuzzi stated the key element will be whether the State adds new elements, like a habitat portion. Ms. Reniche-Smith noted there were actions items that have been accomplished and do not need to be in the plan and there will be new action items to be added. There were some things that were goals that because of things that have happened would likely not need to be accomplished but it will be a process of going through the Plan section by section. Dave Atherton stated the RRPC can assist with this process and suggested reaching out to them to get the ball rolling. It was noted the Town Plan is updated every 8 years and the last update was 2016, with the addition of the Energy section as an amendment in 2019 but that did not restart the clock. Mr. Schneider advised the BEC reached out to the RRPC and are getting a statistical update from the State that can be used. Ms. Reniche-Smith stated if the Town doesn't have an updated plan, it would interfere with receiving grants. Carol Bertrand suggested the Planning Commission may want to start the Heart and Soul program earlier. Ms. Reniche-Smith noted perhaps the Heart and Soul plan could be done the next time around. Ms. Reniche-Smith advised the more action items that have been completed, the more it is advantageous for the renewal and noted most of the actions items indicated in the current plan have been accomplished. Dave Atherton stated the plan is designed for thinking ahead about what the Town wants to do in the next 8 years and the Planning Commission, Select Board, and Mr. Atherton are involved in the process. Carol Bertrand stated if it could be coordinated with what Heart and Soul could do, it could be embedded in the Town Plan as it is the idea of hearing from more people than just the municipal committees. Mr. Schneider stated the current plan had a couple of items that were either wish list or needs that have not been fulfilled like public parking. He stated the biggest thing is how to build more affordable housing and felt there is still work that needs to be done on the Plan. Mr. Atherton stated the Town has dealt with some of the public parking issues and it needs to be determined what else needs to be done. Ms. Reniche-Smith stated the more that can be indicated has been done and provide information on even bigger plans will be good for the Town. Mr. Schneider asked what the next steps will be for the Planning Commission. Ms. Reniche-Smith requested the Planning Commission members familiarize themselves with the current Town Plan, check what has been accomplished, pull out action items that have not been accomplished or partially accomplished, highlight anything that should either be removed or expanded, and start a wish list. Mr. Atherton stated the last version had Hannafords still being called the Grand Union and suggested making these types of changes. Ms. Reniche-Smith stated it is better to have multiple people review it, as there are inconsistencies in the BLUO and much gender language needs to be changed to neutral. She agreed that nothing is more horrifying than seeing blatant errors once it is finalized. Mr. Schneider suggested adding commissioner feedback as an agenda item for the next meeting. An additional Heart and Soul presentation will also be added to the February 6th agenda.

9. Date of Next Meeting

Monday, February 6, 2022, at 6:00PM at the Town Hall.

10. Adjournment

A motion was made by Bill Mills to adjourn the meeting at 6:57PM. **The motion passed unanimously.**

Respectfully submitted,

Charlene Bryant
Recording Secretary