

**Brandon Select Board Meeting
January 9, 2023**

NOTE: These are unapproved minutes, subject to amendment and/or approval at the subsequent board meeting.

Board Members In Attendance: Brian Coolidge, Ralph Ethier, Tracy Wyman, Seth Hopkins (Joined 7:33PM)

Board Members in Attendance by Zoom: Tim Guiles

Others in Attendance: Dave Atherton, Cecil Reniche-Smith, Steve Cijka, Jan Coolidge, Neil Silins, Jack Schneider, Marielle Blaise, Steven Jupiter

Other In Attendance Via Zoom: Bruce Jenson, Ryan Woods, Adam Murach

1. Call to order

The meeting was called to order by Tracy Wyman, Vice-Chair at 7:10PM.

a) Agenda Adoption

Motion by Brian Coolidge/Ralph Ethier to adopt the agenda as presented. **The motion passed unanimously.**

2. Approval of Minutes

A: Approval of Minutes

a) Select Board Meeting Minutes – December 12, 2022

b) Local Hazard Mitigation Plan Hearing Minutes – December 19, 2022

c) Select Board/Budget Committee Minutes – December 19, 2022

d) Select Board/Budget Committee Minutes – December 22, 2022

Motion by Brian Coolidge/Ralph Ethier to approve minutes noted above. **The motion passed unanimously.**

3. Town Manager Report

Dave Atherton reported the Town has done a big clean up from the storm that happened around Christmas. In Forestdale and Forestbrook there were severe storm damages. Due to an issue with the Neshobe School generator, the Town Hall was opened for a warming shelter. Forestbrook was out of power for 3 days and GMP and the Highway Department had a lot of clean up. A better plan will be developed to get Red Cross certification for the Town Hall to be open for over nights for possible future issues, though there is not a kitchen or shower available. The generator

at Neshobe School is being rebuilt and will be back in service and ready for any future event. There was a 3-day clean up that could have been a lot worse. There had to be a temporary access road made for Forestbrook. Other than the pump station at the Country Club condos, everything else has been pretty quiet. The Town is awaiting notification for grant awards. Mr. Atherton noted 211 is the number to call for shelters in the State and there are also shelters to house pets. Mr. Atherton stated the Police Department was also helpful during this time. Tracy Wyman thanked the Town Manager for all the Town staff's efforts during this time.

4. Public Comment and Participation

There were no public comments.

Item 5 was postponed until Seth Hopkins arrived.

6. Shade Tree Preservation Plan Discussion with Tree Warden

Neil Silins stated shade trees are the trees in the public right of way in the municipality. He knows of the Segment 6 trees but as far as the other trees it is not known who planted them. There are two ways to remedy this with a Shade Tree Preservation plan or a Shade Tree ordinance. Mr. Silins had discussed this matter with Seth Hopkins who suggested an ordinance. A preservation ordinance or preservation plan are very similar with the difference being the way they are approved and the way that they are administered with one having penalties involved. Mr. Silins had drafted a Shade Tree Preservation plan that was drafted from other plans and made specific to Brandon. Mr. Silins asked how the Board would like to move forward with this item. Tim Guiles suggested the Plan be provided to the Board members for review and placed on a future agenda to take action. Dave Atherton stated previously a group led by Laura Peterson had drafted a Tree ordinance plan and it might be beneficial to review that document for information on some unknown areas that may have been surveyed. Mr. Silins advised he had a copy of that plan but did not see any indication of a preservation plan. Mr. Atherton also suggested speaking to Elaine Smith for possible additional information. This item will be added to the agenda for the next Select Board meeting.

7. Approve Certificate of Highway Mileage

Dave Atherton advised this certification is done every year and is identical to last year. All Select Board members needed to sign off on this document for VTrans.

Motion by Brian Coolidge/Ralph Ethier to approve the Certificate of Highway Mileage. **The motion passed unanimously.**

8. Approve Certificate of Adoption for 2022 Local Hazard Mitigation Plan

Dave Atherton reported this is the plan that was brought the Select Board and has now been approved by the State and needs to be sent to FEMA for the final approval. It is to be adopted by the Select Board to address the hazard mitigation strategies, pending approval from FEMA. The Board Chair would sign off on this certification.

Motion by Ralph Ethier/Brian Coolidge to approve the Certificate of Adoption for the 2022 Local Hazard Mitigation plan. **The motion passed unanimously.**

9. Fiscal

a) Warrant – January 9, 2023 - \$387,948.38

Motion by Brian Coolidge/Ralph Ethier to approve the warrants in the amount of \$387,948.38. **The motion passed unanimously.**

It was noted that all wastewater warrants go through the Town budget and these warrants are paid by funds coming from loans and grants and are not taxpayer-funded.

The Select Board recessed at 7:25PM.

5. Adopt Budget Proposal Produced by Workshop Series

The Select Board reconvened at 7:33PM.

Seth Hopkins thanked the Budget Committee (Neil Silins, Doug Bailey, Peter Werner, Barry Varian, and Jan Coolidge) for their assistance with the budget development. The Committee, Select Board, and Town staff held four budget workshops to decide on big picture funding from other funding sources. Thanks to a number of years of stewardship of the operating funds, it was decided to use \$100,000 of the unrestricted General Fund Reserve to reduce the amount to be raised by taxes. From that same source, another \$100,000 was approved to be used toward paying off municipal leases that would include the sidewalk machine and an F150 truck that would be a savings to this year's budget. There was discussion about infrastructure and the highway projects to be done this year. There is a Class 2 highway paving grant and \$150,000 of Highway Department fund carry forward that will be used for paving projects. There is a 5% wage increase for the Town staff. Mr. Hopkins stated the budget of \$2,737,260 is less than a 1% increase from this year to be raised by taxes.

Motion by Tracy Wyman/Brian Coolidge to adopt the FY23/24 budget in the amount of \$2,737,260. **The motion passed 4 to 1.**

Jan Coolidge asked the rate that the taxes will go up. Mr. Hopkins advised they will increase 0.9% due to the \$200,000 that was taken out of the Reserve Fund. The increase would have been approximately 7% if that were not done. Mr. Hopkins also noted there are two groups of Town employees that have negotiated contracts that have their own salary and all other Town staff will receive the 5% increase that includes the Administration, Highway staff, one Wastewater Treatment person and Bill Moore's department.

Mr. Hopkins noted the development of this budget involved about 14 people over the course of four 2-hour meetings to consider and deliberate the budget for Brandon. This is a 2-month-long

process to try to make a plan that will work out 18 months in advance. This will go to the voters in March and will start in July.

Mr. Hopkins advised that the \$200,000 from the Unrestricted Reserve will not be available every year but the Select Board had set a Fund Balance policy for prudent fiscal backstock. It is hoped to have between \$450,000 and \$900,000 and due to a number of years of surpluses on the expense side there are funds that are in the \$700,000 range. It was determined that it would be prudent to use \$200,000 with the remaining fund still within the acceptable range. The Local Option Tax fund stream has been replenishing at a faster rate than anticipated and the Town is realizing \$240,000 per year on sales, rooms, meals, and alcohol. The third source of additional funding is around \$1 million of ARPA funds. There are a number of partner agencies that this has been used for grant matches and the Select Board is getting to a point of determining where the remaining ARPA funds will be used.

Mr. Hopkins noted the Budget Committee does great work and are willing to test the Select Board and there is also a measure of public participation during this process. A lot of towns would find this an enviable position with last year providing a net decrease. It is hoped that the raise for the Town's staff will assist with the increased inflation. The Town is able to do capital projects through the Local Options tax, ARPA funds, and other grants and are asking the voters to provide money to fund plans with only about a 1% increase. It is a budget that is thoughtful to taxpayers while still providing the services.

Mr. Hopkins noted that Brandon Idol starts this Saturday and the first edition of The Brandon Reporter was published since the change. Mr. Hopkins was pleased that the Town still has a local paper and expressed best wishes for making it a community-based newspaper.

10. Adjournment

Motion by Brian Coolidge/Ralph Ethier to adjourn the Select Board meeting at 7:52PM. **The motion passed unanimously.**

Respectfully submitted,

Charlene Bryant
Recording Secretary