

Brandon Select Board Meeting
March 27, 2023

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

Board Members In Attendance: Seth Hopkins, Brian Coolidge, Cecil Reniche-Smith, Tim Guiles, Tracy Wyman

Others In Attendance: Bill Moore, Neil Silins, Marielle Blais, Doug Bailey, Jack Schneider, Steve Bissette, Ralph Ethier, Scott Schribner, Gail Cordner, Dorothea Langevin, Steven Jupiter, Sandy Mayo, David Snow, Brent Buehler

Others by Zoom: Keith Whitcomb, George Wetmore, Jan Coolidge, Bruce Jenson, Annie Stratton

1. Call to order

The meeting was called to order by Seth Hopkins – Board Chair at 7:02PM.

a) Agenda Adoption – Motion by Brian Coolidge/Tracy Wyman to adopt the agenda. **The motion passed unanimously.**

2. Approval of Minutes

a) Select Board Minutes – March 13, 2023

Motion by Tracy Wyman/Cecil Reniche-Smith to approve the minutes of March 13, 2023. **The motion passed unanimously.**

3. Town Manager’s Report

Bill Moore provided the following report:

The slowing down of winter weather has seen our highway department doing spring preparations. This time of the year that means much in the way of vehicle maintenance and operating the chipper to clear overgrowth and any larger branches that have fallen in the right of ways.

On March 21st, Assistant Wastewater Plant Operator, Tim Kingston, fielded a call after 5PM for an overflow at the manhole in Green Park. Dundons was called to vac out 4,500 gallons of grease, water and non-flushable wipes. This is a good time to remind wastewater connected users, both commercial and residential, to make sure that grease and non-toilet paper wipes are not entering the system. Businesses that have commercial dishwashers should have their required grease traps cleaned regularly.

A reminder that the Select Board will be holding a special meeting on April 10th (6:00PM) at the Wastewater Treatment plant to inspect the progress of the upgrade work being performed. This will be held prior to the regular meeting.

We will not be considering the Salt Shed request. While we do have a ballpark figure, Shawn is waiting for another quote for a different style building.

The Town was awarded a Municipal Planning grant in the amount of \$23,760, partnering with the Rutland Regional Planning Commission on a project to expand an interactive map of the region’s cultural, historical, and recreational assets to facilitate local tourism and support connected communities. This will also allow for a community calendar specific to Brandon as a part of this project. This was a grant applied for back in November.

Mr. Moore had a zoom call with Paula Jackson from Vermont Rural Water regarding their apprenticeship program and our need to start recruiting for another person to train for when our long-time current Chief Operator, Steve Cijka, retires in November of 2024. The training hours required are substantial and the time to start recruiting was yesterday. They can help us to advertise and train for the position. We are also considering cross training an employee from the Highway or Buildings and Grounds to help be a fail-safe, in case of an emergency.

The Brandon Free Public Library has begun the major portion of their move into the meeting room. They are opening on April 11th.

Rec Department News:

Registration for spring baseball/softball and T-ball registration has been extended to April 1st. Registrations received after the deadline are subject to a \$30 late fee.

Square dancing will be happening at 6:30PM on April 1st.

Brandon Idol 80's concert will be held on April 8th. Doors open at 6:30PM. \$5 admission.

April 14th is the ever popular Wildlife Encounter program and not to be outdone, April 15th WOH Wrestling will be hosting a full slate of matches.

Cecil Reniche-Smith asked if there is protocol for inspecting restaurant grease traps. Bill Moore advised the Town does not have protocol for inspecting but do occasionally remind restaurant owners about this subject. Seth Hopkins stated a food service annual inspection is done and that is part of the process.

Seth Hopkins asked whether the planning grant noted in the report was the Ramp grant. Bill Moore confirmed it was the Ramp grant and the Town is now spearheading this effort. Mr. Moore noted it is a way to have a community calendar specific to Brandon to showcase what is happening in the Town. Neil Silins questioned if with the Ramp grant whether Brandon is the only active town. Mr. Moore advised the RRPC will be responsible for bringing other towns on board.

Doug Bailey asked what the additional building for the Highway Department is for, as this had not come up on a wish list during the budget season and he sees this as a budget breaker. Bill Moore advised the Highway Foreman, who has 30+ years of experience has indicated this is a need for the department that will allow for more storage and mixing, and to keep the salt cleaner. This was an issue this year and it will allow for the Town to get bigger loads. Mr. Bailey stated the Department Managers need to be reminded that November/December timeframe should be the time to share this information. Tim Guiles stated it is important to get other people involved early as it is a matter of designing the entire space. Bill Moore reported part of Shawn's decision-making for placement of the salt shed took into consideration where a new town garage would be. Cecil Reniche-Smith asked if it would make sense to talk about the building of the shed as part of the new town garage construction as there could be cost-savings. Mr. Moore advised this would be a standalone building that has cement footings and noted he trusts the Department Head's judgement. Ms. Reniche-Smith asked if there are materials in common for bidding out an entire project. Mr. Moore advised this is a quonset-type structure that would not be similar to the town garage. Brent Buehler asked if this could be funded by the local option tax and Mr. Hopkins noted that could be a consideration. Mr. Bailey asked what was spent on the last hoop building and Mr. Moore thought it was around \$35,000 to \$40,000, however, this structure would have cement footings and asphalt for the salt to sit on. Dave Snow stated the Town ran out of salt because the supply chain is broken with only one vendor in the area and the idea of going to a larger structure is good. He noted the State takes priority and a building for the Town is needed as the salt could be obtained early and would save money.

4. Public Comment and Participation

Sue Gage reminded that dog licenses are due by Monday, April 3rd. She noted it is a good thing to do as the \$5.00 goes to the V-Snip Program and dogs are easier to find when they are lost.

Bill Moore reported the Rental Enforcement Officer and Health Officer have tendered their resignation for the end of the month and the Town will be advertising for these positions. Seth Hopkins noted this will be the first notice that the Town is looking for a local Health Officer, and a Rental Housing Code Enforcement Officer, which are both part-time stipend positions. There is a Deputy Health Officer available until a Health Officer is appointed.

5. Consider Vermont Gran Fondo Request to use Roadways for Cycling Event

Seth Hopkins reported the Town received a letter from the organization making this request. Bill Moore advised this event was held prior to the pandemic and is non-disruptive and provides some economic activity for the Town. The local emergency services have not had any issues. The route of the event will be Route 73 from Brandon Gap to Forest Dale and Route 53 to Salisbury on June 24th. Tim Guiles noted they are asking for an 8-hour timeframe.

Motion by Tim Guiles/Cecil Reniche-Smith to approve the Vermont Gran Fondo request to use the roads as outlined in their letter. **The motion passed unanimously.**

6. MPM Recommendation for Union Street

Bill Moore stated this is related to the Transportation Alternative grant that requires a municipal project manager. Mr. Moore advised the Town could bid out this position or appoint the Town Manager, as Mr. Atherton previously filled this position. The other options require hiring outside agencies that would require more time and a change in the timeline. Mr. Moore estimates the position would take about five hours per week and noted he is willing to take on the management of the project. Tim Guiles asked if the Town would save money if the Town Manager was appointed or if there would be additional payment for the position. Mr. Moore advised there would be no additional salary for this position and noted he would also be willing to do the management in his capacity as Economic Development Manager.

Motion by Tracy Wyman/Tim Guiles to appoint Bill Moore as the Municipal Project Manager for the Union Street project. **The motion passed unanimously.**

Dave Snow asked if the sewer lines would be replaced and Bill Moore reported it is the plan to do everything at once. Mr. Snow asked if that also included the water lines and Mr. Moore reported Dave Atherton had discussed this previously with Ray Counter, however Mr. Moore has not had a conversation with Mr. Counter to date. The water line was part of the plan, as well as the sewer lines for the project. Brent Buehler asked what salary would be paying for the municipal project manager's position. Tim Guiles noted that Mr. Moore would be doing the project management as part of his position, but if Mr. Moore did not get the town manager position, he would do this management as a town employee going forward and that would not affect the budget. Neil Silins stated if Mr. Moore is not successful in becoming the full-time town manager, it would be included as part of the economic development position and suggested assigning a dollar value. Cecil Reniche-Smith stated as interim town manager, Mr. Moore can do the work and whoever the town manager becomes, there could be a discussion of who would continue with this task. Mr. Moore noted he did not want to see a delay in this project.

7. Appointment of Rutland Region Transportation Council Alternate

Seth Hopkins advised that Dan Snow has expressed interest in this appointment. Tracy Wyman noted it is good that Mr. Snow is willing to take this appointment as he is part of the Highway Department.

Motion by Tracy Wyman/Tim Guiles to appoint Dan Snow as the Alternate to the Rutland Region Transportation Council. **The motion passed unanimously.**

8. Tandem Truck Funding Discussion

Seth Hopkins noted the Select Board had authorized on January 24, 2022 a purchase order for a tandem truck that is now ready for the Town to take delivery of. Sue Gage stated a year ago the tandem truck was approved for purchase and came to her desk for bids for leasing. She noted interest rates have increased and there is nothing budgeted. The Town can either add a new lease and go over budget. There is \$100,000 budgeted to pay down the current lower interest leases as the best interest rate is 5.17%. An option could be to use the \$100,000 and lease less or buy it outright with local option tax funds. Seth Hopkins advised the Town could use ARPA funds, the fund balance or the local option tax funds. Tracy Wyman recommended using 50% ARPA funds and 50% local options tax. Tim Guiles suggested using the \$100,000 for the lease, as he would prefer the ARPA funds be saved for a larger ARPA discussion. Mr. Wyman noted he did not have an issue with using the fund balance but would prefer to see the truck purchased outright. Mr. Hopkins reported the local option tax fund balance is \$574,514. Mr. Guiles stated the Town has little debt and the other leases have lower interest rates and the Town should not be in a hurry to pay them off and would prefer to use the \$100,000 for the purchase of the new truck. Cecil

Reniche-Smith stated a town's bond rating is based on debt management, but when a town pays off debt in chunks it is a negative credit rating and it is preferred that a town pay what is due. Ms. Reniche-Smith agreed with Mr. Guile's recommendation to use the \$100,000 and local option tax funds. Ms. Gage noted concern that the only lease payment in the budget for next year is the grader and if the lease payments earmarked for the \$100,000 are not paid, the Town may be over budget. Doug Bailey agreed with keeping the low rate leases in place and questioned if the Police Department may still be understaffed this year and suggested those funds could be used. Bill Moore advised the Police Department intends to be fully staffed by 2024.

Motion by Brian Coolidge/Tracy Wyman to use the local option tax funds to purchase the tandem dump truck, after exhausting the excess from the pay-off of the two leases.

Jan Coolidge asked where the current budget stood and where it will be by the end of June. Sue Gage noted that she could have something for the Select Board by the next meeting regarding these figures. Tim Guiles stated the local options tax is not bottomless and there could be other things the Town could do with the funds and suggested if there is a way to fund the truck within the budget, it would be best to use the \$100,000. He would rather see the Town weather the lease payments and possibly use the local option tax funds at the end of the year. Cecil-Reniche Smith noted the lease payments are around \$67,000 and suggested using the budgeted funds to pay off the leases since the budget had been worked around these, and use the remainder of the funds plus the local option tax to purchase the truck. Sue Gage stated the lease quotes have to be acted upon before the next Select Board meeting and the delivery would be 3 to 4 weeks. Ms. Gage advised when using the local option tax and using everything planned as before, by November, that amount would be replenished.

Motion by Cecil Reniche-Smith/Tracy Wyman to amend the original motion to include: after exhausting the excess from the pay-off of the two leases. **The motion passed unanimously.**

The amended original motion passed unanimously.

Seth Hopkins noted he was distressed that the Select Board needed to have this discussion and recommended for the future when signing a purchase order, a line is inserted in the operating budget as a placeholder as a reminder. Mr. Hopkins stated the Town's financial situation is strong and has a lot of borrowing authority and is healthy. Doug Bailey stated if is fortunate the Town is in a strong financial spot, but it is distressing that there have been a couple of things that have come to light after the budget season.

9. Fiscal

1) General Fund Warrant – March 27, 2023 - \$204,220.02

Motion by Brian Coolidge/Tracy Wyman to approve the warrant in the amount of \$204,220.02. **The motion passed unanimously.**

The Select Board recessed at 7:50PM.

Motion by Brian Coolidge/Tracy Wyman to enter into executive session at 7:57PM for the appointment or employment or evaluation of a public officer or employee per 1 V.S.A.(313)(3)(a)(3) to include Interim Town Manager, Bill Moore . **The motion passed unanimously.**

9. Executive Session

The Board came out of executive session at 8:28PM.

There were no actions required.

Motion by Tim Guiles/Tracy Wyman to enter into executive session at 8:30PM for the appointment or employment or evaluation of a public officer or employee per 1 V.S.A.(313)(3)(a)(3) without Seth Hopkins or Bill Moore in attendance. **The motion passed unanimously.**

10. Executive Session

The Board came out of executive session at 9:41PM.

The Board discussed the next steps to be taken in the town manager hiring process. The results of the conversation are as follows:

- 1) There were 12 applications received and 1 was withdrawn so we now have 11 applicants. Each of the 4 remaining select board members now has a copy of each applicant's cover letter and resume.
- 2) On Wednesday, March 29th the remaining 4 select board members will meet in a duly warned executive session at 7pm at the town office to narrow the 11 applicants down to 4 who will be interviewed. The board will determine which questions they want asked of each applicant.
- 3) The inclusivity committee is being organized by Sue Gage. They will meet sometime this week to determine which questions they want to have included in each interview.
- 4) The interviews will be held on 2 evening duly warned executive sessions next week, Monday April 3rd and Wednesday April 5th.

12. Adjournment

Motion by Brian Coolidge/Tracy Wyman to adjourn the Select Board meeting at 9:45PM. **The motion passed unanimously.**

Respectfully submitted,

Charlene Bryant
Recording Secretary