

**Planning Commission Special Meeting – Draft
May 1, 2023**

Board Members Present: Jack Schneider, Natalie Steen, Bob Foley, Cecil Reniche-Smith

Others Present: Ed Bove, Jeff Biasuzzi, Neil Silins

1. Call to order

The meeting was called to order at 6:03PM 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 – April 3, 2023

A motion was made by Natalie Steen to approve the minutes of the April 3, 2023 Planning Commission meeting. **The motion passed unanimously.**

4. Zoning Administrator Report

Jeff Biasuzzi reported there were six permit applications, with the beginning of peak permit season starting. In other business, the Ultravation building is still available and the buyer of the distillery is still interested in changing it to multi-family housing. Seth Hopkins has been hired as the Town Manager, and Bill Moore has been appointed the Deputy Town Manager with each having a certain range of responsibilities. Mr. Moore will still be doing Recreation and Economic Development. Cecil Reniche-Smith noted each has specific strengths and this will be a good team for Brandon. Mr. Biasuzzi reported the permits were for two single family houses, boundary line adjustments, and deck and shed permits. Mr. Biasuzzi noted the VLCT now has an improved website. The legislative session is wrapping up. There is a telecommunications bill (H110) regarding transmission lines and alternative generation. Telecommunication has to be renewed periodically and the new regulations will take effect July 1st. One major item remaining, besides the budget, relates to reappraisals. They are looking for the best way to address this problem, with one solution being the State taking over all evaluations and standardizing them. There was one bill where the State would evaluate on a case by case, town by town basis and not just considering the coefficient of dispersion and CLA. Currently if a town is 15% out of range it dictates a townwide reappraisal. There is a suggestion to wait a couple of years to level out peaks and lows. Another approach is to address each town to determine why that town is out of the range. Mr. Biasuzzi noted there are not enough appraisers in the State to address the current issue. It was noted that Brandon is very close to that level, but Stephanie Jerome had indicated it will take time due to the lack of appraisers. Cecil Reniche-Smith reported Gourmet Provence is being sold and a wood-fire pizza restaurant will be taking its place. Mr. Biasuzzi stated this location is permitted as commercial 1 and will likely not involve zoning unless there is a change in the footprint. Mr. Biasuzzi advised there is also an appeal of a Zoning Administrator determination for a review of 12 – 14 Conant Square that is a commercial store and two dwelling units. A neighbor bought land and does not feel it is in compliance and the DRB will go through an appeal. Jack Schneider asked if there has been any movement on Act 250. Ed Bove advised there may still be something, but nothing major has happened yet. There may be some tweaks and there is a housing bill that may have some relaxed triggers. Mr. Biasuzzi noted the big push is to keep any properties in the designated business area out of Act 250, and it is thought that should be expanded to ¼ mile or the radial of the sewer and water lines.

A motion was made by Bob Foley to accept the Zoning Administrator’s report. **The motion passed unanimously.**

5. Energy Committee (BEC) Report

Jack Schneider reported a quorum was not available for the last BEC regularly scheduled meeting, with the meeting postponed to next Monday night.

6. BLUO/Town Plan Update Session

. Town Plan Review

Ed Bove of the RRPC was present to discuss the update process for the Town Plan to enable the Committee to hold a hearing in December. Mr. Bove broke down the Plan by chapters for the Planning Commission members to work on between meetings with the data intense chapters to be done in the summer once there is more census data received. At the last meeting, everyone agreed with the schedule to do Public Facilities and Recreation first. Mr. Bove highlighted areas to review. Cecil Reniche-Smith reported Bob Foley and Natalie Steen provided edits for the sections. Mr. Foley met with Bill Moore to obtain his vision on recreation and he provided a list to establish goals going forward. Ms. Reniche-Smith noted there has been discussion about the creation of a town recreational facility. There is a feasibility study being done by a non-municipal group who received a \$10,000 grant to look at doing this in various areas near town like the high school or Estabrook Park properties. Nancy Leary did a pod design that could be started small and then added to, as funds are obtained. Natalie Steen suggested one goal could be the creation of a multi-purpose, multi-recreational facility. Mr. Foley stated Mr. Moore has indicated there is a desire to connect the town to both Estabrook Park and Forest Dale and add trails for a more recreational site. Mr. Bove advised once the changes are agreed upon, he will do the update of the document.

A review of the Public Facilities was done: Page 14 - water supply - verify the numbers are accurate, Page 15 - Brandon water system - all numbers need to be checked for accuracy, Fire District #1 and #2 information updated (Natalie Steen will discuss data updates at the Prudential Committee meeting), Page 16 - revise information on sewer design, capacity and flow, Page 17 – update information on Town Office, Page 18 – update fire responses (Natalie Steen to handle), Page 18 – update police protection accuracy, Cecil Reniche-Smith to update Brandon Free Library circulation number, Ms. Steen to update BARS data for accuracy, Ms. Reniche-Smith to update information on Brandon Senior Center, Page 20/21 – school district – Ms. Steen will discuss with district’s business manager. Jack Schneider stated the Town would like to put in a statement about the diversity policy. It was suggested this may go in the introduction in the vision for the future. Natalie Steen will have Ray Counter update the water section. Under the wastewater plant, the current project should be included. FEMA recently approved the Town’s mitigation plan and was suggested to place this item in the flood resiliency section. Mr. Bove noted each town has their own LHMP that identifies all hazards and the date of approval would need to be updated on Page 60. It was suggested to change the title of this section to Flood and Hazard Resilience. Mr. Bove stated under Emergency Management, the local mitigation plan can be referenced. Jack Schneider noted there is a plan to hire a new SRO but no responses have been received. Ms. Reniche-Smith suggested creating a shared Google doc and will provide information to Mr. Bove. Mr. Bove will maintain a separate draft document. Mr. Bove will provide the Planning Commission with a copy of the adopted Energy Section.

In review of the Recreation section, Mr. Bove confirmed items that included the continuation of free bike helmets to children, the golf course still privately owned, and the open action item for the Recreation Director to create a Recreation Master plan. It was noted there have been some action items that have been completed. Mr. Bove advised that in the Public Facility and Services section, there are action steps that should be reviewed. Natalie Steen suggested having the sequence be goals, policies, and action steps together and maintain consistency in each section. Ms. Steen will place her edits in a Google doc. Mr. Schneider suggested the document should be shared with departments heads to review.

Mr. Bove advised Transportation and Cultural Resources will be the sections for next month’s review. Mr. Bove stated those chapters will include the Segment 6 project and noted transportation is easier for him to update with the assistance of the RRPC’s Transportation Coordinator. Under highways and roads, those figures may change and he can also confirm the high accident locations. Mr. Bove will also do the bridges and bike/pedestrian paths data update. Everything else is qualitative language for the Planning Commission to review. It was suggested the Planning Commission review the action steps. Under Cultural Resources, Mr. Bove highlighted the background, with a review of organizations to be done for accuracy. It was suggested to include information about Thomas Davenport and the Barn Opera. A confirmation of the civic organizations under action steps to be done to assure they are still functioning or if there are any additions to be done.

Ms. Reniche-Smith has reserved the Town Hall for May 21st from 6PM – 8PM for a community event for input on what people’s vision is for Brandon. Ms. Reniche-Smith is currently working on refreshments to be served at the event and has spoken to Stephen Jupiter who will be doing an article in The Reporter. Ms. Steen suggested doing small group discussions. It was also suggested having other municipal members attend like the Rec Director, Water Department Director, and Fire Chief. Jack Schneider invited Ms. Reniche-Smith to the Chamber’s May 15th meeting that begins at 5:30PM at the Brandon Museum to obtain the businesses’ input. Ms. Reniche-Smith also noted the BEC has a booth for the July 4th festivities and the Planning Commission has been invited to share the booth to provide more information.

. *BLUO Review*

Ed Bove reported he has reviewed the first twenty pages where he thought most of the changes would be needed for the grant requirements to encourage more housing in areas where they want to see growth. The State wants planning commissions to revise zoning bylaws through setbacks, lot sizes, parking requirements and uses to get more out of the properties. Another reason is to make nonconforming uses conforming. Jack Schneider noted the DRB spends a lot of time approving setbacks. Ms. Reniche-Smith suggested with a change in the setbacks, the DRB would not need to provide so many variances. Mr. Bove stated if many variances are required, that is likely an issue with zoning. Mr. Schneider thought there may be issues with change due to the fact people have purchased property based on the exiting set-back requirements. Ms. Reniche-Smith advised that in going through the proposed changes, feedback will be obtained from the community. The State has a goal for housing and it needs to be clear why these changes are being made. Mr. Schneider noted there is a designated downtown but there is not a neighborhood development area that would allow building more walkable housing to the downtown. Mr. Bove stated with an NDA, the town would apply to go ¼ mile from the downtown, but in order to get the benefits one has to reduce the setbacks to enable four units/acre for all the districts within the quarter mile. An NDA would also require the town to have a land use ordinance, a town plan, and a designated downtown. Ms. Steen noted an NDA has to accommodate a denser growth. Mr. Bove noted he has highlighted items in the BLUO to discuss possible revisions like the minimum acreage required for each dwelling unit and changes to front setbacks. It was suggested some redistricting could be done. Ms. Steen also noted Forestbrook is a totally different type of district from the other areas of Forest Dale. Mr. Bove also noted high density, multi-use has a 40% lot coverage restriction that restricts development. Mr. Bove requested the Planning Commission review the highlighted areas for possible changes to discuss at the next meeting. Ms. Steen suggested an aquafer overlay could be done.

7. New/Old Business

Cecil Reniche-Smith noted that Neil Silins was present to observe the Planning Commission as he is considering submitting a letter of interest for an anticipated vacancy on the Commission.

8. Date of Next Meeting

Monday, June 5, 2023, at 6:00PM at the Town Hall.

Monday, July 17, 2023 at 6:00PM at the Town Hall.

Monday, August 21, 2023 at 6:00PM at the Town Hall.

9. Adjournment

A motion was made by Bob Foley to adjourn the meeting at 7:38PM. **The motion passed unanimously.**

Respectfully submitted,

Charlene Bryant
Recording Secretary