

Brandon Select Board Meeting April 17, 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, Tim Guiles, Tracy Wyman

Others In Attendance: Bill Moore, Neil Silins, Steve Bisette, Bernie Carr, Stephen Jupiter, Ralph Ethier, Jackie Savela, Doug Bailey, Trisha Welch, Helyn Anderson, Brent Buehler, Jack Schneider, Jim Emerson, Judi Bunde, Vicky Disorda, Jan Coolidge, Ken Manning

Others by Zoom: Keith Whitcomb, Bruce Jenson, Annie Stratton, Marielle Blaise, Andrew Torizzo, Sandy Mayo

1. Call to order

Seth Hopkins reported the Select Board completed a site visit of the Wastewater Treatment plant just prior to the Select Board meeting.

The meeting was called to order by Seth Hopkins – Board Chair at 7:03PM.

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 27, 2023

b) Special Select Board Minutes – March 29, 2023

c) Special Select Board Meeting with Selection Committee Minutes – April 3, 2023

d) Special Select Board Meeting with Selection Committee Minutes – April 5, 2023

Motion by Tracy Wyman/Brian Coolidge to approve the minutes of March 27th, March 29th, April 3rd, and April 5th. **The motion passed unanimously.**

3. Town Manager's Report

Bill Moore provided the following report:

The Highway, Building and Grounds crew has been working on spring clean-up and vehicle maintenance. The downtown is looking great thanks to their efforts. In addition to the usual spring clean-up, they worked on cleaning up the parking area at Estabrook and assisted the Rec

Department in adding new dirt to the softball diamond. There have been some repairs to the chipper and Mack truck that are substantial in nature but needed for continued operation.

The Wastewater department has been busy fixing pumps. Newton Road pump station is operating but there is a pump that needed to be fixed. The influent pump at the plant is in need of a pump motor replacement or repair, the timing is poor, as the pump is scheduled to be replaced as part of the upgrade. Root X has been applied liberally to cut down root infestation in the main lines.

Spring fever has our Police department responding to a greater number of juvenile situations. This includes some vandalism at Seminary Hill Park with a port-a-let being knocked over by a small group of kids. In brighter news, a non-profit organization called Brady's K-9 Fund is donating a bulletproof vest to Guinness, a \$1500 savings that will help protect him when he is on duty.

The Town has been awarded a \$40,000 Transportation Alternatives grant for a scoping study regarding a Brandon-Forest Dale connector path. This was a grant applied for through the RRPC and will require a \$10,000 match. This was applied for in December with the Select Board's approval.

Rec Department News:

Summer planning is underway now that the Rec Department has the summer camp schedule from the school. Our camps will run at Estabrook and Branbury. Stay tuned for more details.

Brandon Idol 80's was a couple of weekends ago. The finals are on May 6th.

Some new community events will be popping up in May and June at the Gazebo, in Lot A and at Estabrook. Partnerships with the Fire Department and area businesses will see Brandon busier than ever this summer.

Mr. Moore apologized for not posting the Select Board agenda on time that required the meeting to be postponed to this week.

4. Public Comment and Participation

Jan Coolidge noted disappointment with the Select Board agendas no longer being emailed prior to the meetings and asked why this was eliminated. It was good to have this information, particularly with popup meetings. Bill Moore stated he made the decision in talking with Elaine Smith due to the convenience of the website that is available 24/7 but noted Ms. Coolidge's response was not the only one received and he has since discussed this item with the Select Board Chair, and this can be added back in. Tim Guiles suggested publicizing this option for all those who want to participate.

Jim Emerson of the BEC reported SolarFest is hosting an event on May 13th that has been initiated by a group from Woodstock who want to honor renewable energy with music and have chosen Brandon for their site. Mr. Emerson also noted two months ago, he came to the Select Board regarding a request to allocate ARPA funds for solar and noted the BEC continues their efforts in researching sites for a project and suggested the Town and Prudential Committee may want to do a combined site. The Committee would like to obtain bids for a project.

Judi Bunde noted that Vermont ranks #2 in the country for the highest percentage of electricity from renewable sources with 76% of all electricity in Vermont from renewable sources. South Dakota is #1 at 83%. It was noted that a lot of Vermont's electricity is from hydro power.

Helyn Anderson asked who is responsible for cleaning up from the sidewalk plow. Bill Moore noted Ms. Anderson can call him to discuss this issue.

5. West Seminary Stormwater System Design Presentation

Andrew Torizzo from Watershed Consulting was present to provide an update on the West Seminary stormwater system plan. They were contacted by Natural Resource Conservation Group to do a stormwater remediation project that originally came out of the Brandon Stormwater Master Plan. They identified the project as a priority and worked with Nancy Maguire of the Natural Resource Group to get funding for the project. They are 60% through the design phase that is an underground chamber system that sits off West Seminary near the park and manages runoff from Seminary Street to mitigate flooding. They are still working on the plan and the next step is to finalize the 100% engineering design and then the implementation and funding will be the next steps. Mr. Torizzo shared the design with the meeting participants. This is similar to a leach field type system that has a collection and runs down through a pipe that would flow back in the system and discharge near 28 West Seminary Street. The pipe outlet is being redone and there is a lot of storage and treatment. In order to do the project, there is encroachment on the basketball court and playground. To restore the basketball court, it would need to be resurfaced. There are no long-term impacts to the park after completion of the project. Seth Hopkins confirmed this would divert existing stormwater. Mr. Torizzo stated the exit would be in the same location and it would not be an everyday occurrence, but only after the collection area is filled. There is nothing being leached into the ground currently. Mr. Torizzo stated this project would address an issue where there is some erosion and would be credited toward the municipal roads. This helps to implement the Town's Master Plan. Jim Emerson asked the dimension of the chamber system. Mr. Torizzo stated it is 40 feet wide by 200 feet long. Bernie Carr asked if this would impact the main road during construction. Mr. Torizzo stated the catch basin would need to be set and the pipe trenched and would be a one-way type of impact with work staggered from one side to the other. Jan Coolidge asked if there would be a savings to close Seminary Street all at once instead of having a one-way open. Mr. Torizzo stated the level of detail has not been determined and the engineering and pricing is the next

phase of work. They will be producing a summary report and will provide some recommendations. Vicky Disorda asked what the estimated cost of the project will be. Mr. Torizzo stated originally there was an estimate but is outdated and they will be doing an updated cost estimate that will be part of the final package. Mr. Torizzo noted if the Town is interested, Nancy Maguire would help with trying to secure implementation funds. Mr. Torizzo will send Bill Moore the figure for the pre-pandemic estimate. Bill Moore reported he has spoken with Ms. Maguire and was advised there is money that is being invested for stormwater mitigation and there is money out there for this type of a project. Mr. Torizzo stated this could be a project for the next construction season if the Town wants to move forward. There is a lot of funding for non-regulatory projects and there would be a couple of different programs and this would be an attractive project to get funded. Seth Hopkins stated the design makes sense and asked if Board action required. Mr. Torizzo confirmed this was only for an update.

6. Municipal Energy Resilience Program Grant Funding

Jim Emerson stated this MERP grant is funding the State passed for allocation to towns for three opportunities that include a \$4,000 Community Capacity mini-grant that can be used for funding local projects like education opportunities and the BEC is proposing the Town apply for this grant. The BEC has talked with Barbara Noyes Pulling of the RRPC about the grant and it was noted there is no local match. Mr. Emerson stated the BEC needs approval from the Select Board to submit the grant application. The next set of grants related to renovation to municipal buildings with a potential of up to \$500,000 for a project renovation.

Motion by Tim Guiles/Tracy Wyman to approve moving forward with the Community Capacity mini grant.

Tim Guiles advised he has been to MERP training to assist with supporting the Town with the process for obtaining the \$500,000 grant. Jim Emerson stated this program is intended for energy conservation. The uses for the mini-grant will include energy information for the Brandon Library, an E-library, development of a Brandon scorecard that is an evaluation of how many heat pumps, E-cars, and solar that is in the Town, an evaluation of greenhouse gases and provide community education of where the Town wants to be in 20 years to achieve the State's goals for renewable energy. Funding would go towards a mailing that would advocate for energy conservation and advertise the Davenport Festival scheduled for July. Bill Moore stated a match for a grant could be the BEC and their volunteers work as an in-kind match.

The motion passed unanimously.

7. Consider Adoption of Annual Update of Local Emergency Plan

Seth Hopkins reported he was appointed the Director and Tim Guiles the Coordinator as the Local Emergency Committee. They have been working with Maggie O'Brien in going through the first update of Brandon's Local Emergency Management Plan. Annually, the Select Board needs to approve the information that is on the 1st page, checklist, and NIMS adoption. Mr.

Hopkins stated this document is the Executive Summary of the Plan. The Plan has been developed and is very substantial and comprehensive. When going through the Plan with the RRPC, they were surprised with the detail of Brandon's Plan. This process will make sure that everything is current as far as contact information.

Motion by Seth Hopkins/Tim Guiles to adopt the Local Emergency Plan as presented.

The Plan is currently on the EOC website that the State furnishes and is the first year that it is available online. Once it is signed off, it will get approved at the State level and will be publishable. There is a copy in the Town Manager's office, but will be available on the website after the approval process. It was asked in the interim if there is already a plan. Mr. Hopkins stated there is an existing Plan that could be viewed at the Town Office. Tim Guiles stated there has been discussion of having an open community meeting to discuss how we will respond as a community and to provide information about the emergency planning. Mr. Hopkins stated there is a desire to have a local emergency plan committee that could commit to checking on neighbors, like the elderly. It was noted that Mr. Hopkins and Mr. Guiles see ways to develop and make it more of a communitywide effort. It was asked if this Plan would cover the a wide variety of emergencies. Mr. Hopkins advised NIMS is a framework and is designed to be a structure for managing an emergency of any type, any scale, and any proportion, and would provide information on what the responses would be. Mr. Guiles stated there are people the Town is connected with and they are very responsive. There is training framework for even house fires, with the Red Cross being able to respond in 2 hours and are capable of housing much larger numbers.

Neil Silins stated most phones are internet-based and in case all cell service is dropped are there means of communication. It was noted that the Town has landlines and there are ways of communication and there has been a discussion of how to alert people in case of emergencies. There is a Vermont Alert System that everyone can subscribe to and local people can get a message out to the community that the State is paying for and furnishing.

Vicky Disorda stated there used to be a siren in Town and asked if it was functional. It was not sure if the siren was still operational and it was questioned if the siren was sounded, what that would mean. Mr. Hopkins stated the system the State has is very good and there will be redundancies with land lines. There is discussion of having districts in the Town where there could be volunteers who could check on neighbors.

Ken Manning noted that there was a hoax call at Middlebury College that resulted in a delay. Vicky Disorda also asked if there is a plan for the elderly. Mr. Guiles stated this population is identified and is the most extensive list for the vulnerable population, and noted he is working on a telephone plan. Ms. Disorda asked if there will be any type of outreach to the community regarding the Plan. Mr. Hopkins stated a local committee will be a good avenue and at the state level, there will be a drill in 2024 that will include simulated hazards. Mr. Guiles stated there are tabletop meetings that can be done, as well as community events. Emergencies will happen but the Town needs to focus on preparedness and resilience. There will be discussions about vulnerable populations and other items to put things into place.

The motion passed unanimously.

8. Consider Appointments

a) Health Officer

Seth Hopkin advised this is a required position. The Deputy Health Officer is not a requirement and Mr. Hopkins declined this position that he previously held and noted the position is open for anyone interested in submitting a letter of interest. The Board thanked Mr. Stevens for his interest in the Health Officer position.

Motion by Tracy Wyman/Tim Guiles to appoint Lawrence Stevens as the Health Officer. **The motion passed unanimously.**

9. Discuss Scheduling and Signing of Payroll Warrants

Tim Guiles stated the process with warrants is the bills come to the Select Board for approval and then checks go out. With payroll, this process does not align with the Select Board meetings all of the time, but the Board wants the employees to be paid on time. The suggestion was made to come up with a way for the Board to appoint a subset of the Board to come together to sign warrants in time for payroll to go out. Mr. Hopkins stated the Board may vote to authorize and sign payroll per 24 V.S.A. subsection 1623.

Bill Moore stated the Town has to issue payroll within 6 days of the end of the pay period and asked if there is a mechanism to dispute payroll. Mr. Guiles stated it is the responsibility of the Board to have due diligence in signing the bills. The bills are often for work that is being done, but if there is work that is not satisfied, it might be appropriate to not pay a bill until satisfaction is reached. He stated most falls under standard payroll, but he finds a need for this process. Mr. Moore stated this is just regular payroll, not contractors. Jackie Savela stated the payroll has always come to the Board to be signed. The Department of Labor indicates payroll has to be cut within 6 days after the end of the payroll period. Mr. Guiles stated he is requesting warrants are signed in a timely fashion and stated the theory of the warrant is to sign it before checks are sent out. Mr. Wyman stated when hiring an employee, they are going to do the work and if the process is not broken it doesn't need to be fixed. Mr. Guiles provided an example of Daryl's pay. Ms. Savela stated that his payment was not issued from payroll. Mr. Guiles stated he is not suggesting the warrant is not going to be signed, but thinks the warrant needs to be signed before the checks are written. Doug Bailey stated most payroll is a recurring payroll, except for overtime and agreed there be a way of approving the checks before being distributed, but that will mean one or two people assigned as there needs to have someone to fall back on. Mr. Hopkins stated this will allow the Board to have an exception to authorize one member to sign a warrant for payroll. Ms. Savela stated the process for payroll is the supervisor signs off, Ms. Savela then reviews it, followed by a Town Manager review, and then the Clerk signs off on the transfer of funds. The Select Board then needs to sign a warrant. Ms. Savela is concerned with the timeframe. Mr. Guiles stated there are times the checks have been written without a warrant,

and the Town is not supposed to write a check unless the Select Board signs a warrant. This will guarantee the same thing will happen but will be proper. Ms. Savela noted the Town Manager is authorized to sign a check up to \$10,000. Stephen Jupiter asked if there are a lot of checks that have to be signed. Ms. Savela noted they are all electronic but expressed concern with the timeframe as they are not done until Wednesday afternoon, and she has to have them at the bank by 3PM which is a very tight window. Mr. Jupiter asked if a board member can actually adhere to the limited window to assure that this process is not late. Bernie Carr asked if all Select Board members could be authorized to sign the warrant, as opposed to one person. Mr. Guiles noted the Board needs to follow the intention of what the warrants are. Mr. Bailey asked if the warrant could be approved electronically and Ms. Savela confirmed that it could be done but would be a list of gross wages, as specifics cannot be included. Mr. Wyman stated this procedure has been working this way for a long time.

Motion by Brian Coolidge/Tracy Wyman to table this item until the full board was present. **The motion passed with one no vote – Tim Guiles.**

10. Fiscal

Seth Hopkins reported the warrants were approved during a special Select Board meeting last week.

The Select Board recessed at 8:11PM.

The Select Board reconvened at 8:15PM.

Motion by Tim Guiles/Tracy Wyman to enter into executive session at 8:15PM for the appointment or employment or evaluation of a public officer or employee per 1 V.S.A.(313)(3)(a)(3) excluding the Select Board Chair for a second interview with Town Manager Candidate A. **The motion passed unanimously.**

11. Executive Session

Seth Hopkins joined the executive session at 8:26PM.

The Board came out of executive session at 8:42PM.

There were no actions required.

Motion by Tim Guiles/Tracy Wyman to enter into executive session at 8:43PM for the appointment or employment or evaluation of a public officer or employee per 1 V.S.A.(313)(3)(a)(3) excluding the Select Board Chair and including Bill Moore for a second interview with Town Manager Candidate B. **The motion passed unanimously.**

12. Executive Session

The Board came out of executive session at 8:52PM.

There were no actions required.

Motion by Tim Guiles/Tracy Wyman to enter into executive session at 8:53PM for the appointment or employment or evaluation of a public officer or employee per 1 V.S.A.(313)(3)(a)(3) including the Select Board Chair and Bill Moore. **The motion passed unanimously.**

13. Executive Session

Seth Hopkins and Bill Moore left the executive session at 9:03PM.

The Board came out of executive session at 9:21PM.

The Select Board offered Seth Hopkins the Town Manager position and Bill Moore will be part of the Management Team.

14. Adjournment

Motion by Brian Coolidge/Tracy Wyman to adjourn the Select Board meeting at 9:22PM. **The motion passed unanimously.**

Respectfully submitted,

Charlene Bryant
Recording Secretary