

**Brandon Select Board Meeting
July 10, 2023**

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

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

Others In Attendance: Seth Hopkins, Bill Moore, Bernie Carr, Ralph Ethier, Janet Coolidge, Steven Jupiter, Dorothea Langevin, Doug Bailey, Susan Benedict, Steve Bessette, Matt Funk

Others in Attendance via Zoom: Jack Schneider, Brent Buehler, Marielle Blais, Sue Gage

1. Call to order

The meeting was called to order by Tracy Wyman - Board Chair at 7:38PM.

a) Agenda Adoption – Motion by Cecil Reniche-Smith/Tim Guiles to adopt the agenda. **The motion passed unanimously.**

2. Approval of Minutes

a) Select Board Meeting Minutes – June 26, 2023

Motion by Brian Coolidge/Cecil Reniche-Smith to approve the minutes of the June 26th Select Board meeting. **The motion passed unanimously.**

3. Town Manager’s Report

Seth Hopkins provided the following report and submitted the report in advance.

“FOR THE AWARENESS OF THE COMMUNITY

The Brandon Highway Department will close the portion of Arnold District Road from Hollow Rd and Adams Rd north to the Leicester town line for all or a portion of the following workdays:

Monday through Thursday, 10 - 13 July

Monday through Thursday, 17 - 20 July, and if needed

Monday through Thursday, 24 - 27 July

In preparation for paving later this season. Access to Park Village will remain unrestricted. This has been announced on the Town website and Front Porch Forum (27 June), and the School District, Fire, Police, and Rescue have been notified. Signage will be posted.

FOCUS AREAS DURING REPORTING PERIOD

*The town crew installed the bus shelter and bike rack at the Conant Square Park & Ride. We are in communication with the State about the requirements to close out this grant, which requires a 50% match. The project was estimated at \$185,000 (which would require a \$92,500 match from the Town) but current tracked expenses to date are on the order of \$80,000 (which would require a \$40,000 match from the Town). The two remaining components are the "wear course" of pavement (to be completed in conjunction with the completed redevelopment of the private Tenny Brook parcel with the car wash, gas station, and Dunkin'); and the line striping. ***Of note: the town crew was able to save the lamppost that was struck by a vehicle earlier this spring, and it will require neither replacement nor insurance claim.*

Congratulations to the Brandon Independence Day Committee for an amazing day celebrating our shared identity as Americans. Support from the incomparable Bill Moore and Colleen Wright, the Brandon Police

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Department, and Highway and Buildings & Grounds staff made the parade and related festivities memorable to Brandon citizens and visitors for all the right reasons.

I have had consultations from two different providers about integrating technology into public-facing town operations (permit applications, etc.). More to come on this possibility.

A grants-in-aid application has been submitted and awarded for work on portions of Wheeler Road and Richmond Road. This will require a \$5,250 Town match and draws a \$21,000 grant from VTrans. The Town's match will be in-kind (labor and materials within the HWY budget).

I completed collaboration with VHB to execute the contract for their consultant work on the Historic Preservation Commission survey (our match is \$5,000 written as a line item in this year's budget). VHB will execute the contract and undertake the work in the near future.

I submitted our stormwater inspection (relates in large part to the sand filters and other mitigation features installed as part of Segment 6); our submission is "deemed complete" on the State's progress checker. This will be an annual obligation on the Town's part and the State requires we obtain an engineer's approval to submit. Recurring cost to budget will be about \$2,500.

Our town bookkeeper Jackie Savelle is taking on Brandon's participation in the VLCT compensation and benefits survey. Prior results of this survey are available at the town office for any selectboard member or Brandon resident interested in the topic.

The fuel tank at Wastewater was to be picked up on Monday 10th by the successful bidder from Maine and the transaction completed. The successful bidder for the jetter expects to complete that transaction and pick up the jetter on 22nd July.

We held a highly productive meeting with town office staff and Brandon Fire District No. 1 water superintendent Ray Counter and treasurer Kristy Pinkham regarding the combined billing and other matters of concern to our two independent municipalities. We will follow up on 14 July and expect to undertake creation of some standard operating procedures by staff and after that a memorandum of understanding for consideration by the selectboard and prudential committee.

RESIDENTS' CONCERNS

Tom Markowski of Markowski Excavating will take a look at the waterfall in the center of town on Monday 10 July. I hope to have his initial impressions to share with the selectboard.

One glass company has made their site visit to quote replacement of the three oversized plate glass windows on the town office ground level; two others have site visits scheduled.

I have no update from Ed Lowell about downtown trees or Sbardella about the Town Hall roof.

A conference call with DuBois & King Engineers is set for 12 July regarding implications of perhaps redesigning Union Street sidewalk project per previous board member suggestion and of incorporating water and sewer into the project.

I have met with a few citizens with concerns about sidewalks and distributed to the selectboard highway foreman Shawn Erickson's November 2022 estimates of \$63,000 for Pearl Street sidewalks and \$38,000 for Carver Street sidewalks.

In consultation with the chief of police and highway foreman, we marked pavement for No Parking along the north edge of Central Park near the monument and gazebo, from the easternmost crosswalk west to the

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fire hydrant. This is the narrow end of the lot, and there have been challenges for residents, visitors, and business owners due to lack of sufficient room to maneuver. Police will be able to exercise discretion for "standing" vehicles which are attended and briefly occupying that space for unloading or loading for farmer's market or other events in the park. This will also ensure access for emergency vehicles.

STAFFING

One of the town crew is out for the summer so there will be a contracted truck-and-laborer from M&M on the Arnold District Road work mentioned earlier in this report. This arrangement has worked for the town crew in the past, including last year's Town Farm Road work.

FOR AWARENESS OF THE SELECTBOARD (FUTURE/LONG-TERM)

Highway foreman Shawn Erickson advises that the lower portion of Carver Street is not suited to a shim-and-overlay resurfacing approach. The road will need roadbed reconstruction more along the lines of last year's Town Farm Road project. The road is also too high from a drainage point of view in relation to adjoining sidewalk and driveways to neighboring properties.

ADDITIONAL UPDATES:

Brandon appears to be weathering the rainfall well and has been spared the destruction of many of our neighboring communities to the south and east.

Tom Markowski's waterfall site visit has been postponed one week due to inability to view or access the dam due to high flows.

Likewise, the fuel tank auction winning bidder prudently postponed his travel from Maine to complete the transaction and pick up the tank, which was to be today.

We received a revised quote on the woodchipper engine replacement.

The town office and town clerk's office will close ½ hour early at 3:30 tomorrow afternoon for a staff meeting.

We did finalize the VHB contract for the historic property survey and the Brandon Historic Preservation Commission will begin scheduling work with them.

The State of Vermont grant administrator for the Conant Square Park & Ride called and informed me on Friday that this grant had expired October 23, 2022. They gave us a few options and are able to grant a 9-month extension without going to the Designated Downtown Board, which is the option we selected. The 9 months is from the expiration date of the original grant, so the extension ends later this month. We need to get the wear course of pavement down and the lines striped. This will be done in conjunction with the adjoining parcel redevelopment, which is very near completion.

(Jenni Lavoie. Other options were close grant with work done prior to 23 Oct 2022 but all other work is non-participating; or request one-year extension but we would be asking for an extension of an already-expired grant and that seemed inadvisable to her.)

Lastly, I would respectfully suggest that the board's designation of ARPA money and 1% money over the last few meetings is most appropriately viewed not as new spending of money, but as taking a comprehensive look at previously-agreed grants and purchases, and rather being careful to assign funds to those so that the Town and the board do not find themselves in a position of not having funds needed to match a grant due to no systematic tracking of those obligations and assigning funds to meet them."

Mr. Hopkins stated for additional awareness to the community, the Arnold District Road may be closed Monday through Thursday for the next 3 weeks.

Cecil Reniche-Smith asked if the match for the Park and Ride grant is a 50% match and that was confirmed. She noted it was on track for \$80,000 with the Town having to come up with \$40,000. Mr. Hopkins noted the painting and striping will be done by the town crew. This grant was presented to the Board at town meeting in 2020 just before Covid. It was presented as a grant and the Select Board had agreed but no funding source identified. Sue Gage stated everything has been paid for so far, but it will need to be earmarked where the money will come from. Seth Hopkins stated with reimbursable grants, there is a fund established to pay out until receiving the refund from the State and then determining where the other funds will come from. Ms. Reniche-Smith asked if this is something that should have been budgeted for. Mr. Hopkins stated the source of the match should have been planned. When Mr. Hopkins presented the Board with a matrix, this item was not on the matrix. Ms. Reniche-Smith noted this is a good learning experience in terms of making sure where money will come from. Brian Coolidge noted concern the Board has been spending the money down and Mr. Hopkins stated the Town is limited to those pots of money. Mr. Hopkins suggested ARPA money is most appropriate for new spending but taking a comprehensive look and being careful to assign the funds is important. What is being done is good management and it may seem that the Town has spent \$500,000, but the Town overextended itself to do a lot of great projects to make the community a better place.

Doug Bailey stated there was a lot of ARPA discussion and a lot of money was spent but he understands that money was allocated that needed to be assigned to grants and there are always funds that are needed. Everything was positive and hard decisions were made and the Board worked hard through the meetings that included \$223,000 for a new DPW truck with the money to be allocated. As a former Board member, he was surprised that this item did not come up during the budget meetings. The budget process needs to be better followed and the process starts with the Town Manager and Bookkeeper meeting with department heads and then bringing the information to the Budget Committee. Mr. Bailey noted there were 8 meetings and the missing piece was that the Town Manager was not present and he does not want the Board to be criticized for not having the information. The information asked for was a project tracker as there had been previous problems with items missing. He likes the idea of a project tracker as well as a grant tracker. Mr. Bailey stated the Town is fortunate to have the 1% Option fund and ARPA money as there are other towns having issues right now. Mr. Bailey reminded the Board to have all the facts and to be financially careful. Brian Coolidge clarified that there were 6 meetings and the Town Manager was there for some of them and suggested not to lay blame. Brent Buehler applauded the transparency and discipline that is happening right now. Janet Coolidge stated the Select Board has the final decision on the budget and the Town Manager only presents it. She suggested using this as a learning experience and going back and looking at the data. Ms. Coolidge asked what departments were over or under budget and requested a final copy of the budget be sent to the Budget Committee. Mr. Hopkins will send the final budget and the numbers discussed. In the context of reducing the shortfall, Mr. Hopkins was pleased with help from the Town Treasurer and was reminded there are adjustments that need to be made with some items that will be added to the revenue side to reduce the \$300,000. This number will fluctuate before the final fiscal year funding gets done and will then be the time to speak about where the budget lands. He will send the final budget to the Budget Committee at that time. Doug Bailey stated he was not talking about the budget but about the truck and it should have been discussed. Tracy Wyman noted when the truck was ordered, it would have been good to determine the funding at that time. Seth Hopkins reported some of the overages for buildings and grounds in the budget were for heating fuel, the electric bill, and a notice from GMP of a 5% increase in electric rates. He will take responsibility for the ADA openers at the Town Office. Outside of buildings and grounds, the highway department overages included \$28,000 for fuel, \$4,000 for signs and posts, \$12,000 for fluoride and \$5,000 for winter sand totaling \$50,000. It was noted the Town has been underfunding the highway department in the past. Cecil Reniche-Smith asked about the excess fuel cost. Mr. Hopkins talked with Shawn and it was due to the Town consuming more, as more jobs have been done in-house. Mr. Hopkins stated when writing budgets close, it has been flat for 7 years but it means there could be a risk for overages. Tim Guiles will provide a report on propane, electricity and #2 heating fuel when the fiscal year data is received. Janet Coolidge noted the town hall is being used a lot more and it is difficult to plan for the expenses. With the heat pumps, there will be savings in both the heating and cooling.

4. Rec Director's Report

Bill Moore thanked all who helped make the Brandon Independence Day a success. Mr. Moore advised last weekend the 2nd Annual Davenport Event was held and special thanks to Nate Doty, Emily Eckert, David Hammond, Kevin Thornton, and Jack Schneider. Also, thanks to the sponsors; GMP, Stone CDJR, go! Vermont, Positivenergy, SolarFest and Oliver

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Subaru. It was a great day and the move to the OVUHS campus made it a nicer event. The total attendance was over 400 with 300 in attendance last year. The Town partnered with SolarFest who provided solar trucks. There were a number of food vendors at the event. The SolarFest event will be happening this weekend. There will be a new event held on August 19th, For the Love of Dogs. Fall event planning is underway and the Rec Department will be creating a program for stipend commissioners who will help with coordinating soccer and football. Cecil Reniche-Smith stated the August 19th event will be a car show for the benefit of the Rutland County Humane Society.

5. Public Comment and Participation

Tracy Wyman reported as of July 6th, the State has announced there will be grants available for charging stations. It would be for places like Hannafords or public buildings with \$7 million that will be awarded for charging stations for EVs. Mr. Wyman noted grant information is available through the Rutland Region Planning Commission. Tim Guiles stated perhaps some of the businesses in the downtown would also be interested. Bill Moore reported he sent this information to the schools and noted there is only a 5% match with the possibility of getting a Level 3 charging station. Bernie Carr stated if there is a committee for this process, the Chamber would like to assist. Brent Buehler asked what the future of charging is and will it evolve into something else. Tim Guiles stated Tesla is just the receptacle and noted some states are moving to the Tesla handle and many vehicles can charge with either one. It is a small thing to do in putting the handle on the charging system.

Janet Coolidge stated the July 4th parade brings a lot of business to Brandon but she was disappointed in the parade because it used to be that candy could not be thrown from the floats due to safety. Ms. Coolidge requested a copy of the guidelines and Bill Moore advised he will provide a copy. Mr. Moore encouraged Ms. Coolidge to join the Parade Committee as they are in need of volunteers. Ms. Coolidge suggested having someone at the beginning of the parade to remind the participants of the rules.

Tim Guiles reported he had just received information from the Energy Committee that the RRPC has indicated for the charging station grant there is a 5% match for government, 10% match for commercial and that Brandon does not qualify for Level 3 charging. Mr. Guiles noted the Level 2 charger is good for the community as it allows people to stay in town and take advantage of what the Town has to offer. Mr. Guiles was not sure if the Tesla chargers are free as that was more than 4 years ago.

6. ARPA Discussion

Cecil Renice-Smith stated she would benefit from having a discussion of where the Town wants to go with the funds rather than specific line items for the \$500,000 uncommitted ARPA funds. One thing she would like to think about, after speaking with Devon Neary of the RRPC, is ways to leverage the money through grants. This would be a way to increase the money, but the Town needs to make sure that it is being strategic. She suggested one item would be the Union Street sidewalk. There is a \$300,000 match and suggested possibly using part of the ARPA funds for this project and use the rest to leverage some other larger project.

Heather Nelson stated it is good to be strategic in getting grants. If using the money for normal budget items, it may get people accustomed to spending this amount of money.

Brian Coolidge stated the salt shed would not take a lot of ARPA funds and agreed with doing sidewalks. Ms. Reniche-Smith asked if there are other grants available for the salt shed. Bill Moore advised he has not looked into this, as they would be straight forward expenditures.

Tim Guiles noted there is \$559,061 of ARPA funding remaining and his goal with ARPA spending is the greatest good for the greatest number of people and he would like to do a legacy project. Mr. Guiles encouraged the Board to bond items like the salt shed and town garage as it makes sense for those projects. Mr. Guiles suggested using the funds for a solar project that produces income going forward.

Tracy Wyman thought there were beneficial projects like the salt shed and windows for the town buildings and the roof for the town hall. Sidewalks are a big thing that need to be discussed. The ARPA funds have to be assigned by the end of 2024 and spent by 2026. Mr. Wyman noted that as far as coming up with the actual projects, he is open to suggestions of how to handle them. Tim Guiles stated it would be appropriate to put something in the Reporter to solicit information from the community for discussion at the next meeting.

Cecil Reniche-Smith stated there had been discussion about what people might like to see in Town and there were projects brought up at a Planning Commission meeting and those minutes are on the Town's website. Ideas like the connecting path to Forest Dale, purchasing the old barbershop and turning it into public restrooms, recreation ideas, sidewalk improvements and a swimming pool were the most talked about. She would like to solicit ideas and have them mailed to Mr. Hopkins to compile and then present to the Select Board at a subsequent meeting. Susan Benedict asked the Select Board to think about the town hall roof and using something other than slate. It is a beautiful building and Ms. Benedict suggested good roof tiles or standing seam and solar panels as this would provide energy for the building. She also suggested going with NASA squares and suggested talking with Stephanie Jerome.

Doug Bailey stated both the town office and town hall have to be done in compliance with historic preservation and with all the work the Friends of the Town Hall have done, he suggested the roof should be done. He noted Mr. Buehler had indicated there is composite material that looks like slate.

Brian Coolidge asked about the smaller town office windows upstairs when replacing the windows in that building. Seth Hopkins reported the Town had already bought and paid for the second-floor windows that would be a permanent installation and would become sealed. He noted there is not a lot of window-opening due to the noise, and the Town had already paid for the windows. Brian Coolidge stated the windows should be used if they have already been paid for.

Seth Hopkins read the following from the 1961 Town of Brandon history: *"On May 22, 1947, the ... Town Farm was sold by the town together with all livestock and equipment ... This money was deposited [and] ... had great potential for good in town government affairs. However, by 1948 it became apparent that unless a positive policy was established for the handling of this fund it would be wasted piecemeal on current expenses of insignificant value instead of performing notable service for the town."*

Mr. Hopkins thought this process will avoid piecemealing the ARPA funds.

Tim Guiles stated there was information in the Town Manager's report about closing out a grant and asked if the Board needed to find the matching funds for the close out. Seth Hopkins suggested waiting until the final figure is determined.

Heather Nelson suggested using the payment drop box for the community to provide suggestions regarding the ARPA funds. Mr. Hopkins suggested the drop box in front of Neshobe School and Town Office could be used for suggestions.

7. Appointment: Development Review Board Alternate – 2 seats (3-year terms ending June 30, 2026)

Mr. Hopkins reported a letter of interest has been received from Ralph Ethier for the Alternate position on the Development Review Board.

Motion by Tim Guiles/Brian Coolidge to approve the appointment of Ralph Ethier as an Alternate to the Development Review Board for a 3-year term ending June 30, 2026. **The motion passed unanimously.**

8. Set Property Tax Rate for Year Ending June 30, 2024

Seth Hopkins reported the calculation is based on the grand list and components of tax rate and is before the Board to be approved.

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Motion by Tim Guiles/Brian Coolidge to accept the tax rate as presented for the coming year. **The motion passed unanimously.**

Tim Guiles noted there were four years of tax rates provided and this year the rate is going up by .0001% and is something to be proud of.

9. Fiscal

a) Warrant – July 9, 2023 – FY 2022/2023 - \$177,410.50

b) Warrant – July 10, 2023 – FY 2023/2024 - \$89,179.83

Motion by Brian Coolidge/Tim Guiles to approve the warrant of July 9, 2023, in the amount of \$177,410.50. **The motion passed unanimously.**

Motion by Tim Guiles/Cecil Reniche-Smith to approve the warrant of July 10, 2023, in the amount of \$89,179.83. **The motion passed unanimously.**

It was noted the warrant for the chairs related to the DBA purchasing the café sets for the downtown.

Bernie Carr reported the Chamber Auction was a success and thanked the Town for the use of the town hall. Mr. Carr noted it is good to have a permanent home for the auction going forward to be more successful. There were over 300 bidders and the town hall got a lot of exposure and people loved it. Dennis Marden and the Friends of the Town Hall have been very helpful.

The Board recessed at 8:47PM.

Motion by Cecil Reniche-Smith/Brian Coolidge to enter into executive session at 8:49PM regarding the appointment or employment or evaluation of a public officer or employee, to include the Town Manager, per 1V.S.A. 313(3)(a)(3). **The motion passed unanimously.**

10. Executive Session

The Board came out of executive session at 9:17PM. There were no actions required.

Motion by Brian Coolidge/Tim Guiles to enter into executive session at 9:18PM regarding the appointment or employment or evaluation of a public officer or employee, to include the Town Manager, per 1V.S.A. 313(3)(a)(3). **The motion passed unanimously.**

11. Executive Session

The Board came out of executive session at 9:37PM. There were no actions required.

12. Adjournment

Motion by Brian Coolidge/Cecil Reniche-Smith to adjourn the Select Board meeting at 9:38PM. **The motion passed unanimously.**

Respectfully submitted,

Charlene Bryant
Recording Secretary