

**Brandon Planning Commission Meeting - Draft
October 16, 2023**

Board Members Present: Jack Schneider, Cecil Reniche-Smith, Natalie Steen, Sara Stevens, Bob Foley, Neil Silins - Alternate

Others Present: Bill Moore

1. Call to order

The meeting was called to order at 6:04PM by Cecil Reniche-Smith – Chair.

2. Agenda Approval

A motion was made by Sara Stevens to approve the agenda. **The motion passed unanimously.**

3. Approve Meeting Minutes – October 2, 2023

A motion was made by Bob Foley to approve the October 2, 2023, Brandon Planning Commission meeting minutes. **The motion passed unanimously.**

4. Public Participation and Comment

No discussion was held.

5. Town Plan Update Session (Formulate Goals, Strategies and Action Items for sections on Economic Development, Flood Resilience and Future Land Uses)

Economic Development:

Cecil Reniche-Smith reviewed the draft goal noting it is a combination of the current Plan's goal and added information. Ms. Reniche-Smith reviewed the current policies. ***Suggested Addition:*** Add Forest Dale to bullet point for targeting economic development. Neil Silins asked what kind of development there would be to Park Village. Bill Moore stated there needs to be support for more housing. Ms. Reniche-Smith stated economic growth in Park Village could include both residential growth and business growth. ***Suggested Policy:*** Create a welcoming environment for economic development that preserves the character of Brandon but allows for growth. Ms. Reniche-Smith reviewed the current action steps. Mr. Moore stated there has been discussion about possibly creating tax incentives. The action item to encourage commercial growth and support appropriate growth in all neighborhoods was moved to policies. Mr. Moore advised the Town is working with Regional initiatives to have increased marketing from a regional approach. ***Added Action Item:*** Partner with regional municipalities to market Brandon and the surrounding area for recreational, cultural, and historic tourism and economic development. Mr. Silins asked if one needs to distinguish between Brandon, Forest Dale, and Park Village. Ms. Reniche-Smith stated the only separate area is the designated downtown as there are no incorporated villages and the remainder is the greater Brandon area. Mr. Moore suggested adding a workforce development piece as there are funds available at the State level and the Town should be collaborating with the school to create internship programs with Brandon businesses to encourage students to remain in the area. ***Added Policy:*** Ensure a strong workforce in Brandon. ***Added Action Item:*** Partner with local schools to create internships with local businesses for entry level positions. ***Added Action Item:*** Access State programs to support workforce development. ***Action Item:*** Support opportunities in the trades for students to obtain practical experience such as school to work programs in local businesses. Natalie Steen suggested keeping the wording similar to what is in the Education section of the Plan. Footnotes were removed from the section. ***Additional Action Item:*** To continue to offer financing to businesses through the Revolving Loan Fund and research and implement strategies to endow the Fund to allow for future benefits. Ms. Reniche-Smith stated the overview indicates Omya Inc. owns several properties in the Town and questioned if this is to remain in

the Plan. Mr. Moore advised they do own properties in Town but was not aware if they still maintain permits. Jack Schneider noted they own the mineral rights.

Flood Resilience:

Cecil Reniche-Smith stated the Flood Resilience section is to be reviewed by the Regional Planning Commission. Ms. Reniche-Smith reviewed the goal, policies, and action steps of this section. It was noted that the All-Hazard Mitigation Plan was just readopted in 2023. This section is statutory-based and technical. Jack Schneider stated all hazards are covered in the local Hazard Mitigation plan. Ms. Reniche-Smith advised flood resilience is specifically required in the Town Plan. Natalie Steen advised some towns do not allow development in the 100-year floodplain. Bill Moore stated when there is new construction, the Floodplain Manger has to weigh in and provide an approval. Jack Schneider stated the BLUO has an entire section and floodplain maps are available from the RRPC. Ms. Reniche-Smith will speak to Logan at the RRPC concerning this item. Ms. Steen stated there should be good guidelines for development in those areas, which would be in the BLUO. **Added Action Item:** Review and amend the land use ordinance as necessary to control development in areas at risk of severe flooding. Ms. Reniche-Smith noted there is reference about the FEMA buy-out programs and noted there was discussion about using the FEMA-buyouts as green spaces. For areas that are prone to severe flooding, development is not wanted as that would cause the Town to have to repair or replace. Ms. Steen suggested developing guidelines in certain flood hazard areas that would allow for a floodplain overlay in zoning. **Added Action Item:** Create guidelines for development in floodplain areas.

Future Land Uses:

Cecil Reniche-Smith reviewed the goals, policies, and action items for this section. Natalie Steen stated there is a comment that is encouraging cluster development and PUD could have mixed use with commercial and residential in it. Neil Silins questioned how to specify unless it is indicated in zoning. Ms. Reniche-Smith advised the Town Plan is what zoning is encouraged to follow and the Plan allows these actions to be encouraged and the zoning is where the rules are mandated. Ms. Reniche-Smith stated in other sections of the Plan land conservation is encouraged to create open spaces. Bill Moore stated the Zoning Administrator has suggested that Brandon should be a ten-acre town rather than a one-acre town. Ms. Reniche-Smith stated being a one-acre town allows for more regulation. Jack Schneider noted this could discourage businesses from moving here in having to go through Act 250 review, with nearby towns having a ten-acre regulation. Discussion was held concerning the comment relating to the prevention of sprawl near the intersection of McConnell Road and Route 7. Mr. Moore noted this area is a high density, multi-use area. Natalie Steen stated the area is the welcoming area to Brandon and suggested doing a Route 7 overlay district. Mr. Schneider stated there are also other multi-use areas in Town with some residences in those areas as well as commercial. **Added Action Item:** Develop a vision for future development of Forest Dale. There was a question about the Park Village utility corridors and Ms. Reniche-Smith will research this item. There was a question about the reference to the Vermont Economic Resiliency Initiative (VERI) report and a capital budget plan. Mr. Moore advised this report was developed after Hurricane Irene and many things have been done without a capital budget plan from the VERI Report, but it would be good to maintain the action item to develop a capital improvement plan. A change in the number of churches in Brandon will indicate several churches. There is a reduction of stores in Forest Dale. Natalie Steen suggested the aquafer become an overlay district and, in that district, there would be more robust regulations for those areas. **Added Action:** Consider creating an aquafer overlay district for zoning to allow for greater protection of our water. Ms. Steen suggested there may be other areas to be looking at that would be clarified by the Water District. With regard to the paragraph regarding future development, it was suggested to revise the paragraph to encourage in-fill development of Park Village and work together with the residents of Forest Dale to develop a village designation. Under Neighborhood High Density and the Rural Development District, the figures will need to be removed to allow for adjustments. The Regional Planning Commission will provide a new Land Use map. Ms. Reniche-Smith advised Ray Counter will be providing information for the Water section and Tom Kilpeck will be providing additional information for the Fire District. Ms. Steen will obtain information regarding the Rescue section. Bill Moore asked if the Commission needed more information from the Police Chief. Ms. Reniche-Smith noted additions to the Police section would include police services are provided to the towns of Leicester, Sudbury and Goshen when requested and the Department has added a canine officer, Guinness. Ms. Reniche-Smith advised she will do the final tweaks to the draft and obtain the outstanding information. With regard to the Energy section, there was a meeting with Jeremy Gildreon of the RRPC and there is a plan for the bulk of the Energy section to be removed from the Town Plan and to create an Annex. The minimum requirement for this section will remain in the Town Plan to satisfy the State

requirements and the remainder of the information will be in the Annex and referenced in the Plan. Jack Schneider suggested the Energy section for the Plan could include 3 or 4 pages with reference to view the entire Energy Plan on the Town's website. Mr. Schneider stated biomass and wind power do not need to be in the Plan. The RRPC will do revised maps for hydro and solar that will be in the Annex. Ms. Steen noted the Energy section will need action items. Ms. Reniche-Smith stated the Energy Committee will be working on this section. Once all information is received, Ms. Reniche-Smith will submit the draft Plan to Logan of the RRPC for review. It is hoped to have the draft Plan available for review and approval at the November 6th meeting. There needs to be resolution by November 8th and by November 18th mailings to all statutory interested parties completed. It is planned to schedule a Planning Commission public hearing for December 18th and between that time and January 6th, revisions could be made and submitted to the Select Board by January 7th. If there are any comments from the interested parties, those will be added to the draft Plan prior to submission to the Select Board. The deadline for readoption of the Plan is February 2024.

6. Old/New Business

There was no old/new business discussed.

7. Date of Next Meeting

Monday, November 6, 2023 - 6:00PM – Brandon Town Hall.

10. Adjournment

A motion was made by Natalie Steen to adjourn the meeting at 7:59PM. **The motion passed unanimously.**

Respectfully submitted,

Charlene Bryant
Recording Secretary