

Brandon Planning Commission Meeting - Draft
November 6, 2023

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

Board Members via Zoom: Bob Foley

Others Present: Jeff Biasuzzi

1. Call to order

The meeting was called to order at 6:02PM 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 – October 16, 2023

A motion was made by Natalie Steen to approve the October 16, 2023, Brandon Planning Commission meeting minutes. **The motion passed unanimously.**

4. Zoning Administrator Report

Jeff Biasuzzi provided a written summary of permit activity to the Commission. Two applications involved changing a single-family house to a multi-family dwelling with non-conforming acreage. The BLUO indicates ¼ acre per single dwelling but this is overridden by the new State law. One permit was once a 3-family dwelling but prior owners changed it to a single-family home that extinguished the old permit. The DRB approved the applications and are examples of Act 47 at work. The most controversial application was for the old high school that had a DRB hearing to convert part of building to commercial space with 3 dwelling units mixed in. The architect and developer came up with a mixed-use family-style dwelling. The issue is that the hearing had to be rewarned as the applicant did not come prepared and will be continued at a later date. Jack Schneider stated there is resistance from the neighbors about parking, but with it being in the central business district the parking does not have to be at the building. There is parking on premise for five cars. Mr. Biasuzzi noted the owner had indicated they would not change the dog park. Cecil Reniche-Smith asked about a change of use for the spa on Route 73. Mr. Biasuzzi reported the property is being purchased and will be changed to a residential dwelling. Bob Foley asked if there has been a resolution to Dunkins sign compliance. Mr. Biasuzzi stated this is a work in process and they need to apply to the DRB for a variance on the signs they installed without permits. The menu board is considered a sign but a permit was not submitted. Mr. Biasuzzi noted there are choices that can be made but will not be approved unless the DRB provides a variance. Ms. Reniche-Smith noted Neshobe Café had put banners and a sandwich sign on the green. Mr. Biasuzzi stated there are a number of signage issues which could be due to new ownerships and he will be in contact with the businesses.

5. Energy Committee Report

Jack Schneider reported the BEC did a review of other towns' Energy committees to see what they have accomplished and whether the towns support them budget-wise. Brandon has a more active energy committee than some other committees. The BEC will be developing a report for the Town's Annual Report. A Button-up Brandon event is scheduled for Wednesday for homeowners. Prior Button-up events have been held for businesses and landlords. The BEC discussed the Energy Plan and have a draft Enhanced Energy Plan as an annex to the Town Plan. A meeting will be held with Jeremy Gildrien of the RRPC to discuss the Plan. There was a discussion of the ARPA funds for a town-owned solar array. Three bids will be obtained for the project that will be presented to the Select Board in December.

6. Public Participation and Comment

There was no discussion held.

7. Final Review of Draft Town Plan; Approval of Draft for Distribution to Statutory Parties

Cecil Reniche-Smith provided the Committee with a draft Town Plan for review. The Plan has a shorter internal Energy section to be supplemented with a separate annexed Enhanced Energy Plan. Natalie Steen asked whether the Enhanced Energy Plan has specific goals and strategies. Jack Schneider reported the BEC is working on a 24-page Enhanced Energy Plan that has goals, objectives, and pathways for thermal heating, electric and transportation. The draft still needs some work and the BEC will be meeting with Jeremy Gildrien of the RRPC this week regarding the Plan. Ms. Reniche-Smith noted the specifics and targets are in the Enhanced Energy Plan and incorporated by reference. Ms. Reniche-Smith advised the Town Plan and the annexed Energy Plan need to be submitted to the statutory parties by November 18th to review before the hearing. Mr. Schneider advised the Enhanced Energy Plan is a different style than the Town Plan but noted the Plan has the approval from Mr. Gildrien and Mr. Solomon. Ms. Reniche-Smith advised Mr. Solomon has provided a timeline for the approval process. Mr. Schneider will work with Bernie Carr regarding credits for the photos. It was noted that the flood resiliency photos were provided by the Town. With regard to maps, Mr. Solomon is to provide the required maps for future land use, facilities, and transportation. Mr. Schneider advised solar and wind power maps will be included in the Enhanced Energy Plan. Jeff Biasuzzi suggested downtown designation and natural resource maps are typically in town plans. Ms. Steen suggested a map should be included in the Conservation section. In the Energy section, there are maps for wind and solar potential, biomass and hydro energy, local constraints, and locally preferred locations. Currently there are no zoning or designated downtown maps. Flood resilience, natural resources and agriculture land maps were recommended. Ms. Reniche-Smith will have a discussion with Mr. Solomon regarding the additional maps. Ms. Reniche-Smith advised the timeline for the process is for the drafts to be distributed to statutory parties by November 18th. A public hearing to be scheduled for December 18th has to be posted by December 3rd. The Planning Commission needs to approve the Plan by January 6th to submit to the Select Board by January 7th. The deadline for approval of the Town Plan is February 22nd.

A motion was made by Natalie Steen to approve the draft Town Plan with the caveat of adding more maps and the addition of the reference for the Enhanced Energy Plan. **The motion passed unanimously.**

Cecil Reniche-Smith will work with Logan Solomon of the RRPC to ensure the draft is distributed to the statutory parties by November 18th.

8. Old/New Business

Jack Schneider noted the Planning Commission needs to do a report for the Town's Annual Report. Cecil Reniche-Smith advised she will be creating the report.

Natalie Steen questioned the status of the other grant for zoning. Cecil Reniche-Smith reported this is a 2-year grant and the Town has used some of the funds to date. Ms. Steen suggested a site visit should be done with the RRPC in connection with this grant. Ms. Reniche-Smith will discuss the next steps regarding this grant with Mr. Solomon of the RRPC once the Town Plan process is completed. Ms. Reniche-Smith noted Mr. Solomon advised there are not a lot of changes to be made regarding Act 47, however, there are other grant requirements to be done. Jeff Biasuzzi advised there are many tweaks that can be done and Act 47 is a new twist that has to be incorporated throughout the document. Ms. Reniche-Smith will provide a copy of the grant to all Commission members and suggested all members review the current BLUO for future discussion.

9. Date of Next Meeting

Monday, December 4, 2023 - 6:00PM – Brandon Town Hall.

10. Adjournment

A motion was made by Natalie Steen to adjourn the meeting at 6:51PM. **The motion passed unanimously.**

Respectfully submitted,

Charlene Bryant
Recording Secretary