

**Brandon Select Board Meeting
October 23, 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, Heather Nelson, Cecil Reniche-Smith

Others In Attendance: Seth Hopkins, Doug Bailey, Neil Silins, Steve Bisette, Ray Marcoux, Chief Kachajian, Sandy Mayo, Doug Bailey, Bill Moore, Steven Jupiter, Dorothea Langevin, Jim Emerson, Jackie Savela, Tom Kilpeck, Arlen Bloodworth

Others in Attendance via Zoom: Marielle Blais, Bruce Jenson, Keith Whitcomb

1. Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 7:02PM by Tracy Wyman – Board Chair.

a. Agenda Adoption

Motion by Cecil Reniche-Smith/Heather Nelson to approve the agenda as posted. **The motion passed unanimously.**

2. Approval of Minutes

a) Select Board Meeting Minutes – October 9, 2023

Motion by Heather Nelson/Cecil Reniche-Smith to approve the minutes of the October 9, 2023, Select Board meeting. **The motion passed with one no vote – Tim Guiles.**

3. Town Manager’s Report

A Town Manager’s report was provided by Seth Hopkins and is available for viewing in the Board packet on the Town’s website.

Mr. Hopkins reported he met today with personnel from Green Mountain Power about resilience. They have some ideas about battery-backup for the town office as this is the emergency center for the Town. They also have information about federal assistance for electric charging stations and a possible Level 3 fast charger for Brandon as they are trying to locate them in strategic locations around the State.

4. Rec Director’s Report

Bill Moore provided a review of the Recreation Report submitted to the Board.

Fall sports end this week. Big thank you to the following folks: Soccer: U6 Coach: Jonathan Fries U8 Coach: Justin Martelle, U10 Girls Coach: Nate Reitman, U10 Boys Coaches: Ron and Cassandra Coble, U12 Girls Coaches: Lily Bixby and Laura Miner, U12 Boys Coaches: Brent Wilbur and Miles Krans Sponsors: Pockette Pest Control and McGee CDJR; Football: 1st/2nd grade NFL Flag: Meghan and Bill Rose, 3rd/4th grade Flag: Joe Desabrais and Matt Mallory, 5th/6th grade Flag: Duke Whitney and Scott Quenneville, 7th/8th Grade Flag: Duke Whitney and Daniel Whitney

Basketball Season is coming. We have opened up a FREE skills and drills clinic for 5th/6th grade at Neshobe School starting this week as a filler for the November doldrums. Regular Season basketball registration is open as of 9am today. This is for grades 3 – 6 as their season starts at the end of November (5/6) and 2nd week of December (3/4). The PreK - 2nd grade will start at the beginning of January.

Pre-season meetings with the new (due to the retirement of Coach Greg Babcock) wrestling coaching team are happening this week.

The Brandon & Pittsford Rec are going back to see the Boston Celtics. Tickets for the December 29th game versus the Toronto Raptors are on sale starting this week.

Spooksville is back on Friday, October 27th @ Estabrook Park.

Bootified Brandon has seen 10 households register for the contest. Winners to be announced at Spooksville!

Brian Coolidge requested an update regarding Rec commissioners. Bill Moore reported he had a meeting with the Town Manager and will be meeting with someone tomorrow about a commissioner position for activities like dance and martial arts. If this works out this could be a good path forward for other sports. Mr. Moore stated it is hopeful it will be a nominal expense, noting it can be difficult to find volunteers and having an employer/employee relationship is easier.

5. Public Comment and Participation

Brian Coolidge reported he heard from some members of the primary/kindergarten classes at Neshobe School regarding the Police Department declining to visit the school to provide information to the students. He noted the Burlington Police Department visited with their canine unit.

Jim Emerson reported there is a Button-Up event scheduled for November 8th from 5:30PM to 7PM. The event will provide information on incentives. Food will be served. Mr. Emerson advised Goshen volunteered to participate in the BEC and the event has been opened up to residents of Goshen.

Chief Kachajian stated he had not received a request to visit Neshobe School as he and his officers are willing to visit schools. Chief Kachajian works Monday through Friday and did not speak with anyone from the school and will follow-up with the school regarding this subject.

6. Confirm Dates of FY 25 Budget Workshop Series (Brandon Town Hall Basement:

. Wednesday, November 8, 2023: 7:00PM – 9:00PM

. Monday, November 20, 2023: 6:00PM – 8:00PM

. Tuesday, December 5, 2023: 6:00PM – 8:00PM

. Monday, December 18, 2023: 6:00PM – 8:00PM

The Board agreed with the meeting schedule. Seth Hopkins stated the meetings will be warned as special meetings and they will be open meetings for the public, but there will not be zoom available.

7. Consider Naming Proposed Private Road Off Steinberg Road as Jupiter Lane

Seth Hopkins provided the Board with a memorandum, the Street Naming ordinance and a map showing the location. Since the packet was sent out there is a modification to the request that was cleared with the E911 Coordinator and Mr. Hopkins was advised there is no need to restart the process. The suggested name is Juniper Lane. The request is from an affordable housing group. Mr. Guiles noted he is part of the group and will recuse himself from this topic.

Motion by Cecil Reniche-Smith/Heather Nelson to approve the name of the private road off Steinberg Road as Juniper Lane.
The motion passed with one abstention – Tim Guiles.

8. Discuss Out-of-Town Police Response and Possible Sub-regional Policing Models

Seth Hopkins noted there was a request from the last meeting to warn this as an agenda item. A draft of what an outreach letter might look like, information regarding service that has been provided to Goshen, and a draft of an actual agreement was included for discussion.

Chief Kachajian stated law enforcement is expensive and the dispatching issue where the state police have been covering without charging will be changing in the near future. When consolidating resources, it is less expensive and there might be better chances for grants in applying for a district. The Town of Goshen is currently handled by the State police from New Haven and Rutland and this year there was a large increase in their need for service. The Goshen Select Board would be interested in considering additional policing services due to response times. Chief Kachajian suggested the Brandon PD could provide the services for a flat administrative fee of \$4,200, plus \$150 per emergency call. They are not looking for patrol or traffic enforcement. Going forward, when the dispatch issue comes up again, it would be less expensive to join communities around Brandon to combine resources to lower dispatch costs. For police, fire, and EMS, all will have to pay in the State. The Department can provide the emergency services, as Goshen is not looking for pro-active policing. If they wanted to do ordinance violation or patrol, there would need to be additional charges. Tom Kilpeck stated as soon as the legislation gets passed, there will likely be a charge for dispatching. Chief Kachajian would like to get ahead of the problem before this happens and suggested Brandon could possibly be the anchor department for Goshen, Leicester, and Sudbury. If other communities paid for services, it would help with Brandon PD's budget, but at the present time he would like to approach only Goshen regarding limited services for emergency calls. Heather Nelson stated at the last meeting, there was the comment that the Police Code of Conduct makes it the responsibility of the police to respond to calls. Chief Kachajian stated most of the time, the Department is responding to communities for life-or-death instances and are not doing calls for undue services. They deal with emergencies in Brandon first, and many times it is an agency assist. There have been 4 calls from Goshen this year. Sudbury is where one of the officers lives and most calls are requests for assistance from the State Police. He noted Pittsford and Brandon have a good working relationship and will call on each other for assistance, which is more of a mutual-aid type call, with 9 calls this year. Leicester has had several calls including a shooting and suicide that were assistance to the State Police. Chief Kachajian stated similar to the Fire Department and EMT, the Police Department assists one another as there is a moral obligation to serve and protect. Other agencies will also assist Brandon when there are additional services needed. The Department puts the Town as a priority and understands the cost when going into other communities. Tracy Wyman stated there was discussion about Sudbury and Leicester, but he wanted to clarify that it is just Goshen at this point. Tim Guiles stated the document indicates 25 incidents for Goshen. Chief Kachajian stated that is the total number of calls for Goshen for the State Police, not for Brandon. Chief Kachajian suggested there are different models that could be considered in charging per capita or per call. Mr. Guiles stated it implies that Brandon has a surplus capacity. Chief Kachajian advised the Department has the ability with Goshen's call volume to handle only emergency calls as it is not large, but if Leicester and Sudbury were to approach the Town for services, which would have to be done with a per capita expense as it would require an increase in officers. Moving forward with Goshen would provide a good test to determine if this program would be feasible. Heather Nelson asked if the Department has always covered the minimum calls in Goshen and Chief Kachajian advised they have assisted the State Police, but this would be a new program. Tracy Wyman asked if there were two officers in Goshen and a call came on from Brandon, what would be the procedure. Chief Kachajian stated it would depend on the nature of the call and noted this could also be a mutual aid situation.

Seth Hopkins asked whether the Board authorized pursuing this subject with the Goshen Select Board as they generally meet the same time as the Brandon Select Board. He cannot say they are interested, but there is interest in a discussion and he needs assurance this Board is in agreement.

Motion by Tim Guiles/Brian Coolidge to not pursue this program at this time.

Cecil Reniche-Smith suggested it would be worth investigating. Heather Nelson agreed that she would like to start the discussion. Tim Guiles noted concern with the Police Department getting larger and Brian Coolidge was also not in favor of this move at this time. Sandy Mayo asked what would be added to the police department by doing this. Chief Kachajian stated the \$4,200 would be charged annually, even if there were no emergency calls made. These funds could go towards lowering the budget or put towards other things that taxpayers would not need to pay for. There could be years when there would be no calls and other years when there could be several. Mr. Guiles clarified the Department has a canine unit, drone capability and a motorcycle unit, questioning how much the motorcycle was used. Chief Kachajian stated with Goshen being mountainous, it would likely not be a good use for the current motorcycle. This is used mainly for traffic enforcement, but

due to the weather it has not been used frequently this summer. Tracy Wyman noted he would need more information before considering this.

The motion passed – 2 no votes – Heather Nelson and Cecil Reniche-Smith.

Seth Hopkins provided per capita information to the Board noting the Police Department is \$850,000 and with 4,000 people in Brandon this would equate to \$209/per person. With a contract of \$4,200 and 172 people in Goshen, it would equate to \$24/per person. Mr. Hopkins noted two things that have not been discussed are that the Town has been talking for years about its role as the subregional hub for this area and is the market town for this area. The Brandon Library has agreements with other towns, and the Fire District provides mutual aid, and this appears to be a natural conversation to have with Goshen. In talking about Brandon's PD budget, the figure would be \$2,000 every day, and Goshen would be contributing 2 days out of the year. Mr. Hopkins attended a VLCT seminar on subregional approach to services and noted that dispatch is going to happen and his takeaway about policing is that it is something that is going to happen and the Town is positioned with resources that adjunct communities do not have. Chief Kachajian has indicated there will always be a desire to extend a helping hand. Cecil Reniche-Smith asked Chief Kilpeck if Brandon is charging other towns that Brandon has offered fire protection for. Fire Chief Kilpeck advised the Fire District has a contract with Leicester for services provided and he is currently working with Goshen on a contract. Traditionally, Brandon has provided fire protection to Goshen on a per call basis, but the new contract will be a flat rate contract versus a hybrid flat fee plus billing. Chief Kilpeck noted volunteer or career services are continually losing people and regionalization is happening country-wide and mutual aid agreements are strong in Vermont. For EMT services, Middlebury and Rutland Regional ambulance services also assist with calls, with Brandon Rescue a volunteer service. Doug Bailey stated providing services on a contract basis does not assist with the cost for equipment that is in the budget and suggested a contract with Goshen is a losing proposition as a contract service. Tracy Wyman did not think \$150/call was sufficient. Cecil Reniche-Smith stated to charge per capita, it would be \$36,000. Heather Nelson is interested in doing this, but they would have to pay more. Chief Kachajian stated in regard to the contract, it is flexible and there are multiple models. For regional and county agencies around the country, they do it differently and the Town could look at a different financial model.

Motion by Heather Nelson/Cecil Reniche-Smith to allow the Town Manager to pursue a formal contract with Goshen that would be per capita, taking into consideration what Brandon residents are paying per capita.

Tim Guiles opposed increasing the police department and was not in support of the police covering more areas. Cecil Reniche-Smith stated the Department was not being enlarged, but suggested taking into account the realities of policing in a rural state and noted she supported the idea of exploring this. Heather Nelson stated with being a moral obligation to do this, it is happening anyway due to mutual aid and this would allow the Town to be compensated for what the police officers have been doing. It has been made clear that Brandon takes priority. Ms. Reniche-Smith stated it is important to keep in mind that Brandon serves a role as a subregional hub that draws and gives back to the region. For smaller towns, it is important to offer them to be as safe as we are.

The motion failed with 3 no votes – Brian Coolidge, Tracy Wyman, and Tim Guiles.

9. Vermont Community Development Program MP1 Form Approval

Bill Moore advised the approval of this item is to enable the Town to obtain VCDP grants, similar to the current one for the Brandon Public Library. This is the newest version of the document that had previously been approved in April. If the Town wants to remain eligible for grants and assure the Library gets its funds, the Board will need to sign off on this document.

Motion by Cecil Reniche-Smith/Heather Nelson to adopt the new version of the Vermont Community Development Program MP1 form as presented. **The motion passed unanimously.**

Tim Guiles questioned if this would supersede the Town's personnel policy as it is quite involved. Cecil Reniche-Smith noted the Town would need to make sure its personnel policy is consistent with this policy to assure that it is at least as robust. This version is not significantly different from what was approved in April, and if not approved, the Town will not be eligible for grants from this particular resource.

10. Consider Financial Projections Received for Proposed Town-Owned Solar Array

Seth Hopkins provided information with two scenarios pursuant to the Select Board allocating ARPA funds to the BEC. There are two sites for the Select Board's consideration, with one site requiring a lease payment and the other site would not disturb any prime soils. Mr. Hopkins recommended the Board move in the direction of the Industrial Park site model. There are efforts by the BEC to have a couple of developers provide projections for the Board's consideration.

Motion by Tim Guiles/Cecil Reniche-Smith, to pursue the Industrial Park site model per the Town Manager's recommendation and bring information back to the Select Board for consideration.

Tracy Wyman stated it appears this has turned into a Town project and asked about the collaboration with the other groups. Tim Guiles advised the final composition of the deal is not finished but the ARPA funds are to pay for research of a site and for the exploratory fees. Once a finished project is created, there will be discussion of whether it is going to be just the Town or in cooperation with the school. Mr. Wyman was concerned with the decommissioning cost as nothing has been explored and no one can give a good figure for that. The environmental people he has talked with can't give a good figure but have provided him with several web sites for research. Mr. Wyman will share the information he received on decommissioning with Mr. Guiles. Mr. Guiles noted when decommissioning is done, there is something of value in the equipment. Mr. Wyman also noted concern with a large percentage of the solar array ending up in a landfill, and questioned how this is considered green energy when only a percentage is recyclable. He has also read about the possibility of having to replace the panels halfway through their life expectancy. Cecil Reniche-Smith advised there is a secondary market for used solar panels, but there are things that can be recycled and there is not a creation of brown fields with the land immediately reusable. Mr. Wyman agreed the land can be reused but is concerned with the material to be removed if 50% ends up in landfill. Tim Guiles suggested he provide information to the Board members on this subject. Sandy Mayo stated panels are being developed that are greener and will possibly be able to be recycled and suggested waiting until those are available to create a better system of recycling and repurposing. She has information that she can provide to the Board. Jim Emerson stated solar panels are changing dramatically with costs coming down and becoming more recyclable. The industry standard is that they degrade ½ percent each year that is a very generous allowance for panel productivity and there is not the level of degradation seen. There is a longer timeframe the panels are lasting that would go beyond 40 years. Mr. Emerson stated the Town has a chance to save \$1 million over the life of the panels and this is a huge opportunity. There are 18 other towns that did this type of project and they are saving taxpayers money. He encouraged the Board to consider this request. Brian Coolidge asked why companies are not pursuing this type of project. Seth Hopkins advised the Town can borrow money at half the cost that a private company can borrow at market rate. If the Town borrows at 2% or 3.8% and a private company borrows at a range above, they are not going to make \$1 million over the life of the project.

The motion passed with 2 no votes – Tracy Wyman and Brian Coolidge.

11. Planning for Electric Car Charging

Seth Hopkins stated the information was brought forward by a Select Board member. Cecil Reniche-Smith asked about the information provided for federal funding as it appears these funds are available now and are only for ones that are not working. Mr. Hopkins stated there was discussion of what happens when the warranty expires and this was provided only as information for the Board. Mr. Hopkins spoke with Green Mountain Power and was advised there is awareness at the State and Federal levels that stations will have a life cycle and there will be interest in creating programs for repair or replacement. Heather Nelson was comfortable with an increase in the rate but not charge more than neighboring communities. She stated a middle ground would make sense and would provide funds to replace or repair them if needed. Brian Coolidge stated whether there is a warranty cost or the Town assumes the cost of repairs, there will need to be funds paid out. Tim Guiles did not think continuing the warranty made fiscal sense.

Motion by Cecil Reniche-Smith/Tim Guiles that when the warranty ends, it will not be renewed. **The motion passed unanimously.**

Sandy Mayo stated there was no discussion of maintenance, lighting or plowing previously. The Town has two charging stations and only 1% of Vermont has electric cars and noted concern with what the Town will be paying 10 years from now. Ms. Mayo suggested changing the price as there should be funds in place for the future. Tim Guiles stated the plowing and lighting happens in all areas of town and for maintenance, he would like to see the demonstrated costs, noting there are no moving parts to the equipment and if it is damaged by someone backing into it, insurance would cover that. He does not think it should be increased since it has not incurred costs. Ms. Mayo asked if the Town owns the parking lot and who plows the lot. Mr. Hopkins advised the Town owns the parking lot behind Dunkins and had installed lighting for that lot through a grant. The charging stations were also obtained by the Town through another grant and this lot was to serve events at the town hall and general parking for the downtown and the lot will be maintained whether the charging stations are there or not.

Dorothea Langevin stated she travels a lot and depends on charging stations, noting charging takes longer than filling up a car. In doing that, she goes into towns and spends time in the towns, which is possibly done by others as well. Neil Silins asked if there are charging stations at every highway rest stop as there must be statistics regarding how long they last. This would be a more typical cost for public use, rather than comparing information from private use and it would be worthwhile obtaining that information. Tracy Wyman noted he does not expect the Town to buy his gas and as a taxpayer, he does not expect to fund charging other's batteries. Everyone needs to pay their share and the Board needs to come up with a fair, reasonable rate that will work. Ms. Langevin stated many stations are not in great locations where one would like to stay and she appreciates where the Town's station is. It was noted the Town is not losing anything and the rate was set by ChargePoint to break even or make a small amount, which was \$120 last year. Cecil Reniche-Smith asked if the rate from Chargepoint would change if the Town was to charge more. Mr. Hopkins stated the user pays Chargepoint and they hold back 10% and it is not thought the percentage for Chargepoint would increase. Heather Nelson was agreeable to increase the fee as a middle ground to have more income so that when there is a need for replacement, the Town is covered.

Motion by Brian Coolidge/Heather Nelson to increase the rate to 25 cents per kilowatt hour and \$1.25 for plug in.

Tim Guiles did not expect people to have to pay more just because they are in Brandon. The program is breaking even and the current rate being charged is an equitable rate. It was noted that the money from the charging stations would go into the General Fund. Mr. Hopkins stated this is not a capitalizable expense and did not think that a sinking fund should be created for it. It was noted the proposed increase would be \$5.80 for a 2-hour charge and Mr. Guiles stated that is twice the current cost.

The motion passed with one no vote – Tim Guiles.

12. Fiscal

a) Purchase Order 45158 for Grant-Funded Police Motorcycle - \$18,318.00

Motion by Tim Guiles/Brian Coolidge to not accept the grant, with a friendly amendment by Cecil Reniche-Smith/Heather Nelson to not accept the purchase order and hold off on the grant until receipt of information from Senator Sanders office.

The motion passed unanimously.

Tim Guiles stated the Town does not need another motorcycle and in talking with Senator Sanders office they want the funds to be used responsibly and for the best of the community. An electric motorcycle will not replace a police car and the Town is in need for an electric police car. He noted there are many times that a motorcycle is not good and it would be a mistake to purchase one. Cecil Reniche-Smith asked if Senator Sanders office had indicated there is the ability to use the money for other items. It was noted they thought there is a possibility of doing this and will get back to Mr. Guiles to advise if the grant funds could be used more appropriately. Chief Kachajian talked with the Department of Justice and the original grant was for updating the current police fleet. He was awaiting a response as the funds may be able to be put towards an electric cruiser, but the budget currently does not allow for the purchase of one. Cecil Reniche-Smith suggested tabling this item until further information is received from Senator Sanders. Tim Guiles noted concern as he had not previously had a conversation about a police motorcycle and what was spent on the recent purchase of a gas-powered cruiser could have purchased an electric car. Chief Kachajian stated though Teslas are used as police vehicles, they are not considered good uses as police vehicles. Chief Kachajian noted he would not mind going to an electric police vehicle but when obtaining prices, an electric vehicle was

\$72,000. He also noted concern that this would not be a police-certified vehicle that could be a liability for the Town. Major dealerships have advised against purchasing a vehicle that is not police certified. Chief Kachajian thought it a good idea going forward but wants to be sure that the vehicle is appropriate for the police officers and not a liability for the Town. Mr. Guiles will provide Chief Kachajian with information on this subject. Chief Kachajian also noted some police departments are going to hybrid models that are certified police vehicles.

b) Warrant – October 23, 2023 - \$103,170.89

Motion by Brian Coolidge/Cecil Reniche-Smith to approve the warrant of October 23, 2023, in the amount of \$103,170.89. **The motion passed unanimously.**

13. Adjournment

Motion by Brian Coolidge/Tracy Wyman to adjourn the Select Board meeting at 9:00PM. **The motion passed unanimously.**

Respectfully submitted,

Charlene Bryant
Recording Secretary