

**Brandon Planning Commission Meeting - Draft
February 5, 2024**

Board Members Present: Jack Schneider, Natalie Steen, Sara Stevens, Neil Silins

Others Present via Zoom: Jeff Biasuzzi, Logan Solomon – RRPC

1. Call to order

The meeting was called to order at 6:01PM by Jack Schneider.

2. Agenda Approval

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

3. Approve Meeting Minutes

. Brandon Planning Commission Special Meeting – December 20, 2023, and January 15, 2024

A motion was made by Sara Stevens and seconded by Natalie Steen to approve the December 20, 2023, and January 15, 2024, Brandon Planning Commission meeting minutes. **The motion passed unanimously.**

4. Public Participation and Comment

There was no discussion held.

5. Elect New Chairperson and Vice-Chairperson

A motion was made by Natalie Steen and seconded by Sara Stevens to elect Jack Schneider as the Chairperson of the Brandon Planning Commission. **The motion passed unanimously.**

A motion was made by Sara Stevens and seconded by Jack Schneider to elect Natalie Steen as the Vice-Chairperson of the Brandon Planning Commission. **The motion passed unanimously.**

6. Review Comments and Feedback from January 29th Select Board Public Hearing on draft Brandon Town Plan

Jack Schneider reported Cecil Reniche-Smith, prior Chair of the Planning Commission will be making the changes to the draft Town Plan that were received at the Select Board hearing of the Town Plan. Logan Solomon stated if the Select Board had to make any major changes with regard to context, it will require another Select Board hearing. It was noted there were no substantive changes from the Select Board hearing.

7. Develop Timeline and Action Steps for BLUO (Brandon Land Use Ordinance) update in Accordance with Grant and RRPC Assistance

Logan Solomon of the RRPC provided information to the Commission members regarding a timeline and action steps for the BLUO update. Mr. Solomon advised that in order to get the 10% match back on the grant, the bylaws have to be adopted by the Select Board before the end of the year. The first steps will be factoring in the State requirements. There will be public hearings required and it was suggested to have a draft amendment completed by the end of October to provide an ample timeframe for the hearings to assure the bylaws are completed prior to the deadline of December 31st to obtain the match. Mr. Solomon stated the timeline included a review of the various articles each month to determine what needs to be changed and what can remain. There could potentially be additional special meetings scheduled if needed. It was suggested to hold a walking tour in the April/May timeframe to include public engagement. Mr. Solomon also suggested doing written publications to provide additional information to the community. By the end of October, there

would be a draft that could then go through the amendment process. Mr. Solomon advised one of the requirements of the grant is to review the publication, Enabling Better Places Guide, which talks about primary recommendations for modernizing zoning. He noted it was an extensive effort in developing the booklet with the idea of promoting density within villages that is categorized by setbacks and other themes. Jack Schneider asked if there are changes required for flood hazard and river corridors. Mr. Solomon stated there is a grant through ANR for this, however, Brandon is one of the few towns that does not need updates in these areas. Mr. Schneider advised there is a Local Hazard Mitigation plan that was approved by FEMA. Mr. Solomon noted Articles 2 and 3 will be the most time-consuming sections to review in promoting density. Mr. Schneider suggested inviting the DRB to be included in the discussions. Mr. Solomon suggested reaching out to the DRB early in the process to determine their concerns and obtain their feedback to allow the Planning Commission to incorporate it in the revisions. It was noted that Ms. Steen had suggested making the aquafer an overlay district with having the underlying districts, and then the additional limitations for the aquafer. The Neighborhood Residential district, if part of the aquafer, would have additional requirements.

Jack Schneider requested all Committee members review Articles 1, 2 and 3 for a discussion at the next meeting. Natalie Steen suggested there needs to be community input on the issues they have had with the BLUO. Mr. Schneider noted the Zoning Administrator has indicated one of the issues is with Act 250 in being a one-acre town. Logan Solomon stated there are many qualifiers depending on being a one-acre or 10-acre town and noted Brandon is one of two towns in the region that have this regulation. Mr. Schneider stated the Town had decided they wanted to keep control over the town's services and schools. Mr. Solomon noted a one-acre town is a trade-off and ensures there is not a huge burden on the town's services. Mr. Schneider also requested the Committee members review the Enabling Better Places document prior to the next meeting. Information will also be requested from the Zoning Administrator with regard to changing from a one-acre town. Mr. Solomon will provide an example of an overlay, and information and a checklist of provision by provision. It was noted that the Town's water is through a Fire District, but the sewer is a municipal entity. Mr. Solomon advised due to the Town's water being a Fire District, some of the statute will not apply.

Mr. Solomon advised both the Planning Commission and Select Board will be required to hold two public hearings for the amendment process and will confirm which interested parties will require mailings. It was suggested to do a walk around in late April to discuss dimensional items. Mr. Solomon suggested a survey could also be done. Mr. Schnieder noted Article 3 includes the setbacks, plus new State requirements that will need to be included in the discussion. Mr. Solomon noted he has been providing information to the towns in the region on what is needed with the new laws. He also noted there are random provisions that indicate rules that DRBs have to follow.

Natalie Steen also suggested a Route 7 overlay district from Estabrook Park to the high school that would be for aesthetics as the gateway for the Town with more specific rules. Logan Solomon noted there had been prior discussion about the Housing Resource Navigator. Mr. Solomon stated there was concern with time constraints but suggested there may be ways that it could complement the BLUO amendment process. Mr. Solomon advised it is free assistance from the RRPC in looking to promote housing. The legislature provided a broad purpose and it was found that housing surveys provide information on where housing should be in a town. It would show all types of ways that one can have 2-to-4-unit buildings and the idea is to get information on what types of buildings fit the character of the town and if there are specific lots that could be utilized. If there are specific items the Planning Commission would want to know, they could be included in the survey. Mr. Solomon will provide the Commission with a Rutland Town survey that was done as a template to review. Mr. Solomon noted the State legislature provided regional planning commissions funding to do these surveys. He sees this as a bottom-up type of program and Brandon is one of the towns that has water and sewer. This survey could also speak to private landowners in identifying lots and the private landowners can reach out directly to the RRPC to connect with developers. It is part of a larger initiative in identifying lots and it would be a larger regional connection. Mr. Solomon advised the RRPC will be putting out a regional development guide that will outline available funding resources, project management supports with the idea of providing people the resources they need. In addition, it will also provide information on other resources like BROCC and Neighborworks that have support systems to provide assistance. The Town could post the guide and with a survey the Town can get data from the public on what the housing needs are. This could provide information as a larger picture for the region but it would also help the Town with knowing what the public would like to see for housing. Mr. Solomon stated it could serve as a launch point for a larger conversation about housing and could complement the bylaw modernization.

8. Old/New Business

Jack Schneider noted the Zoning Administrator had provided his report that had been included in the annual town report. Though the fiscal year begins July 1st, Mr. Biasuzzi provided information for the calendar year 2023. There was more activity than in the past couple of years with a few new houses being built. Mr. Biasuzzi has sent letters to all businesses with temporary signage that was allowed during the Route 7 project that included banners or feather flags. There was a DRB meeting that was postponed until the BLUO update is completed as the signage section should be one of the first items to be addressed. Natalie Steen suggested if there is a Select Board ordinance and a sign ordinance in the BLUO it should be addressed to have only one to avoid a conflict. Mr. Schneider advised there is Section 407 - Sign Regulations in the BLUO, but there is also a separate Business District Sign ordinance. It was suggested there should only be one. Mr. Schneider noted there should be a clearer sign ordinance as the Zoning Administrator has to forward many requests to the DRB as the ordinance is not clear. Ms. Steen stated sign regulations can be a separate section as currently they are in accessory structures. Ms. Steen offered to assist in the rewrite of this section. Mr. Schneider advised the temporary ordinance that the Select Board had approved no longer exists and is why Mr. Biasuzzi sent the letters to the businesses. Mr. Schneider noted the sign ordinance is vaguely written and needs to be better defined. Ms. Steen noted that limitations can be specified for both inside and outside signage. Mr. Schneider advised the Zoning Administrator also provided information about definitions.

9. Date of Next Meeting

Monday, March 5, 2024 - 6:00PM – Brandon Town Hall.

10. Adjournment

A motion was made by Natalie Steen and seconded by Sara Stevens to adjourn the meeting at 7:27PM. **The motion passed unanimously.**

Respectfully submitted,

Charlene Bryant
Recording Secretary