

**Brandon Select Board Meeting
February 12, 2024**

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

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

Others In Attendance: Seth Hopkins, Janet Coolidge, Steven Jupiter, Steve Bissette, Ray Marcoux, Doug Bailey, Bernie Carr, Jack Schneider, Barry Varian, Dorothea Langevin, Karen Rhodes, Jacqueline Carrigan, Vicki Disorda, Aমেয়সা Disorda, Jim Emerson, Ralph Ethier, Chris Conlin, Susan Benedict, Kenneth Manning

Others in Attendance via Zoom: Bruce Jenson, Marielle Blais

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/Tim Guiles to approve the agenda as presented. **The motion passed unanimously.**

2. Approval of Minutes

a) Select Board Meeting Minutes – January 22, 2024

b) Select Board Special Meeting Minutes – January 29, 2024

c) Select Board Public Hearing Minutes – January 29, 2024

Motion by Cecil Reniche-Smith/Heather Nelson to approve the Select Board minutes, items a through c. **The motion passed unanimously.**

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 there was a discussion with FEMA today. They are reviewing the materials regarding the July 2023 flood damage and will be coming to a conclusion and a decision is expected soon.

Mr. Hopkins advised there was a wastewater line failure on River Street. The Fire District has been contacted as some of their equipment was involved.

Mr. Hopkins stated the Town was not selected for the Preservation Funding grant. They gave \$626,000 against \$3.5 million and only funded 18%. The two criteria highlighted in the letter were looking at new economic activity and new life for a structure. The town hall has already proven itself as being active and would be a hard case to expand on the economic activity criteria. They did provide some other avenues to secure gap funding that the Town is seeking.

Brian Coolidge received a call about a lamppost on Franklin Street that was damaged from being hit in December. Seth Hopkins advised the Town is aware of this issue and will respond as parts become available. Mr. Coolidge stated the speed limit sign on Franklin Street has a light out in the bottom area. Mr. Coolidge also had a resident ask when the Christmas decorations on the lampposts will be removed. Seth Hopkins stated the decorations were done by the DBA and he will ask them when they will be removed. Mr. Coolidge stated there is \$251,230 in appropriations and if all pass, it will be over a 6% increase in the tax bill and noted people should be aware of that when they go to the polls. Cecil Reniche-Smith stated these

are the individual appropriations that were submitted to the Town to be placed on the ballot and are the same as last year. Seth Hopkins advised most of the appropriations were approved last year and the Board had changed how to phrase the appropriation requests and all questions indicate they are to be raised by taxes. Tracy Wyman stated the point is if all appropriations are approved the same as last year, the tax rate would have a 6% increase. Mr. Coolidge questioned the ballot that he thought was going to press. Tim Guiles advised that what was approved was the budget ask. Seth Hopkins stated the motions were to approve the ballot for the town meeting and approve the ballot for the bond question. There is no approval for the elections on the ballot as any candidates are allowed to withdraw up to 5PM after the filing deadline. The bond question had to be approved by the Select Board and the new bond council the Town has recommended the bond question be included on one single ballot rather than a separate ballot.

4. Rec Director's Report

Bill Moore submitted a Recreation Report to the Board and is available for viewing in the Board packet on the Town's website.

5. Public Comment and Participation

Chris Conlin asked if the flood plain map has been revised. Seth Hopkins advised currently there is a void in the map where the river is heavily managed from the waterfall through the bridge. The prior town manager had worked on this and everyone in Brandon and at the State level agrees there is an issue. The Town believes a change is warranted as the culvert eliminated the danger but there still needs a case to be made. Susan Benedict stated there has been a study done by First Nation and their map is available online noting her property was not in the flood zone 25 years ago but is now in the flood map. Ms. Benedict stated it was announced that FEMA is using First Nation's mapping.

Vicki Disorda stated there was discussion about a conflict-of-interest policy for Brandon and asked where it stands. Cecil Reniche-Smith stated the Town has a conflict of interested policy. Seth Hopkins advised the conflict-of-interest policy was adopted in May 2019 that replaced the previous policy adopted in 2010. The current policy is based on the VLCT conflict of interest policy. It can be found on the Town's website under Resources-Policies and Ordinances-Ethical Conduct.

6. Consider Appointment to Fill Vacancy on Energy Committee

Seth Hopkins reported there is a vacancy on the Energy Committee with the departure of Claire Babyak-Schick who indicated she appreciated the opportunity to participate on the Committee. The vacancy was announced and a letter of interest was received from David Martin.

Motion by Cecil Reniche-Smith/Tim Guiles to appoint David Martin to the Brandon Energy Committee. **The motion passed unanimously.**

The Board thanked Mr. Martin for his interest in serving on the Committee.

7. Consider Road Posting

Seth Hopkins advised the seasonal notice is available and nothing has changed from last year. It will need to be determined when the Select Board would like to begin the road postings. Tracy Wyman suggested leaving that decision to the road foreman. Tim Guiles noted recently someone drove up the Syndicate Road and was a rough ride. He noted there is a road closed sign placed during flooding and suggested it might be a good idea when the road is impassable to post this sign. Mr. Hopkins noted in Brandon it is Carver Street and stated there is a sign that indicates road not maintained during winter at the Brandon end, but there is likely not a sign at the other end, but the signage at the south end can be improved.

Motion by Heather Nelson/Tim Guiles to approve the road posting as presented with the date to post at the discretion of the highway foreman. **The motion passed unanimously.**

8. Adopt New Town Plan

Cecil Reniche-Smith reported the Select Board held a public hearing on January 29th with discussion of the contents. The only change made was the percentage of the general poverty rate. The 2022 census is 10.9% with a 5.3% margin of error that is not a reliable indicator. It means the poverty rate is between 5.6% and 16.2%.

Motion by Heather Nelson/Tim Guiles to approve the Brandon Town Plan and submit it to the State for approval. **The motion passed unanimously.**

Vicki Disorda stated there is still nothing in the plan about the disabled population. Ms. Reniche Smith stated there are not statistics available on this population, but there are places in the Plan that indicates where things can be made accessible. Janet Coolidge asked about the laundromat. Ms. Reniche-Smith stated the Plan is about the big picture. She noted the Town management has been working on this item but one of the issues is finding someone willing to spend money to build a laundromat in a way that is cost effective. Ms. Disorda asked if there are incentives for water and sewer being considered and Seth Hopkins noted there are not at this time. Mr. Hopkins noted the Town encourages businesses but to incentivize certain businesses is fraught with danger. If the Board wants to go down that path, it can be considered. Tim Guiles noted he would be amenable to someone making a suggestion and if someone came to the Board with a plan, he would be open to discussing it. Bernie Carr asked if a laundromat was needed, noting there has not been a laundromat in Town for a long time and the Chamber has received only one inquiry about this. Mr. Carr noted the realtors had advised him that laundromats are not as important now as many rentals have this equipment or there are common areas in the building with this equipment. Mr. Guiles stated at some point, it is an amenity to have in the community. Vicki Disorda stated she would not think to call the Chamber and she finds that people needing help are the least likely to ask for it. Karen Rhodes stated people bring their laundry to either Rutland or Middlebury and she does not think they would know to call the Chamber. Mr. Carr stated he was not against a laundromat. Heather Nelson agreed the laundromat is an issue to support but is not for the Town Plan discussion. Tracy Wyman stated there needs to be someone who wants to invest in a laundromat and if someone were interested, between economic development and the management team, a location could be found for one. They would be eligible for the Revolving Loan fund. Cecil Reniche-Smith noted the Town's Economic Development officer has had conversations with potential investors in both Brandon and Forest Dale, but it has not come to fruition. Susan Benedict suggested there could be a small one located in Brandon and Forest Dale. Tim Guiles suggested postings could be done on Front Porch Forum. Bernie Carr noted these conversations need to happen but not for the Town Plan. Mr. Guiles thanked Ms. Reniche-Smith and the Planning Commission for their work on the Town Plan.

9. Fiscal

a) Warrant – February 12, 2024 - \$494,874.21

b) Warrant – Account Transfers – February 12, 2024 - \$1,885,000.00

Motion by Tim Guiles/Heather Nelson to approve the warrant of February 12, 2024 in the amount of \$494,874.21. **The motion passed with one abstention - Tracy Wyman.**

Motion by Tim Guiles/Heather Nelson to approve the Account Transfers of February 12, 2024 in the amount of \$1,885,000.00. **The motion passed unanimously.**

Seth Hopkins reported the account transfer is the Town's move of its operating bank account from the Bar Harbor Bank to the National Bank of Middlebury.

10. Adjournment

Motion by Brian Coolidge/Cecil Reniche-Smith to adjourn the Select Board meeting at 7:34PM. **The motion passed unanimously.**

Respectfully submitted,
Charlene Bryant
Recording Secretary