

**Brandon Select Board Meeting  
April 14, 2025**

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

**Board Members In Attendance:** Doug Bailey, Brian Coolidge, Ralph Ethier, Cecil Reniche-Smith, Jeff Haylon

**Others In Attendance:** Seth Hopkins, Bill Moore, Shirley Markland, Bernie Carr, Gerad Lowell, Barry Varian, Dennis Reisenweaver, Brent Buehler, Steve Bisette, Karen Rhodes, Billy Bullock, Jack Schneider, Vicki Disorda, Claire Astone, Arturo Mendiola

**Others by Zoom:** Adam Murach, Greg Smela, Tricia Welch, Neil Silins, George Wetmore, Jan Coolidge

### **1. Call to order**

The meeting was called to order by Doug Bailey at 7:06PM.

**a) Agenda Adoption – Motion** by Cecil Reniche-Smith/Brian Coolidge to adopt the agenda. **The motion passed unanimously.**

Item 4 - Presentation by Cornerstone Housing Partners for 30 Conant Square to be postponed to a future meeting.

### **2. Select Board Members' Remarks**

Doug Bailey requested anyone who wished to speak to come to the podium to speak for part of the recorded meeting and to enable people on Zoom to hear and asked all to be polite.

### **3. Recurring Matters**

#### **a) Select Board Minutes – March 24, 2025**

**Motion** by Brian Coolidge/Cecil Reniche-Smith to approve the minutes of March 24, 2025, as amended. **The motion passed unanimously.**

Correction to Mr. Manning's first name to Ken.

#### **b) Warrant – April 14, 2025 - \$280,630.04**

**Motion** by Cecil Reniche-Smith/Jeff Haylon to approve the warrant in the amount of \$280,630.04. **The motion passed unanimously.**

### **4. Presentation by Cornerstone Housing Partners for 30 Conant Square**

This agenda item was postponed to a future meeting.

### **5. 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.

Seth Hopkins reported the Town Highway crew has switched to the warm weather schedule and this week for those who live downtown, on Tuesday and Wednesday people are asked to park off-street for street-sweeping starting at midnight to 6AM. Mr. Hopkins sent a text message to the residents and posted the announcement on the Town's website. Mr. Hopkins reported the downtown lamps are not lit as a motorist knocked down one of the lampposts and the only fix would be to remove the post and tie off the connection. For safety, that entire string of lights have been shut off. Mr. Hopkins announced there is a

temporary part-time position as an administrative person at the police station due to a leave of absence. The town attorney has sent the collection letters and the Town has collected \$30,000 with additional payments received today. The audit has come in and has been given to federal and state agencies. It is clean and unmodified with no weakness in internal controls. Mr. Hopkins noted Jackie Savelle and Sue Gage worked with the auditors. Mr. Hopkins advised he attended a Capital Planning forum in Barre on Thursday that was very informative that will assist in creating a capital improvement program. Mr. Hopkins has submitted five grant applications in the last day totaling \$500,000 that are competitive grants. Mr. Hopkins has submitted a request for \$20,000 from the Trustees of Public Funds for wastewater sampling machines. Currently the wastewater treatment staff are doing this work by hand that has been an occasional 24-hour period, but the EPA is now requiring this sampling to be done once per week. This was not a foreseen expense and is part of the upgrade. The machines are not expensive and should last a decade. The other four grants are for Class 2 paving of McConnell Road, Union Street, Pearl Street, and High Pond Road. The grants have all been acknowledged as received. Mr. Hopkins noted he is trying to find as much funding as possible outside of property taxes.

## **6. Community Development Report**

Bill Moore provided the following Community Development Report:

*“Table Tennis @ OV North Campus has been suspended for the spring.*

*Congratulations to the 2025 Kids Idol winner, Owen Lewis. This second grader's impressive rendition of the song My Shot from the musical Hamilton earned him the title and the opportunity to perform at the Brandon Idol finale on May 16th.*

*Adult Pick-up Basketball on Thursdays will be moving from Neshobe to Otter Valley starting in May.*

*Summer planning has begun. Some new offerings:*

*Basketball clinic at OV, Cheer clinic at the Town Hall, Field Hockey, Disc Golf, Archery, and outdoor photography camp and more being planned for the slate of summer programming. Brochure is being made for distribution in May.*

*Town Hall News:*

*Colleen Wright Events is renting the town hall to present the always popular, Wildlife Encounters, on April 18th. \$5 tickets available at the door.*

*World of Hurt Wrestling returns to the Brandon Town Hall on April 26th 7pm. This is a rental; tickets are available at the door and on sale at their website.*

*May 2nd the town hall will host "Haunted House" as a part of the Colleen Wright Events "Halfoween" weekend. Tickets at the door and online.*

*May 10th The Brandon Town Hall will once again play host to the wildly popular Jeff Rapsis, silent Movie presenter, and the film "The Strong Man (1926). For years the Friends of the Brandon Town Hall (FOTH) would produce this unique monthly offering. With the FOTH completing their mission to renovate the town hall, their organization ceased operations BUT have worked to fund this time-honored late-spring to fall monthly offering. Free admission, donations accepted (donations will be used to fund the future year's silent movie series).”*

Bill Moore reported the Town received a FRCF application for 191 Newton Road for the buyout and are currently going through the process. The State was glad to fund it as this property could be used for more floodplain restoration and groundwork capacity to accept more flow of the Neshobe River.

Doug Bailey asked when the roof work would be done for the Town Hall. Seth Hopkins reported they are expected to be here sometime in May to do the roof.

## **7. Designate Board Chair or Vice-Chair to Sign Payroll Warrants Between Meetings**

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Doug Bailey advised this item was discussed at the last meeting.

**Motion** by Cecil Reniche-Smith/Jeff Haylon to appoint the Board Chair and Vice-Chair to sign payroll warrants between meetings per 243 V.S.A.1623. **The motion passed unanimously.**

### **8. Certify Compliance for Town Road & Bridge Standards and Network Inventory**

Seth Hopkins advised this is an annual certification required by the State. The Town has standards for roads and bridges and an up-to-date highway report. Mr. Hopkins noted this compliance is required for participation in the Class 2 paving grants.

**Motion** by Jeff Haylon/Cecil Reniche-Smith to sign the Certification of Compliance for Town Road & Bridge Standards and Network Inventory as presented. **The motion passed unanimously.**

### **9. Approve Annual Financial Plan for Town Highways**

Seth Hopkins reported this Plan is for State aid for Class 1, 2 and 3 roads. The \$1300 is fees for overweight permits and the \$100,000 is the local option tax that had been discussed. The Plan totals \$797,655. The State asks for a breakdown between winter and summer maintenance and asks the Town to sign the certification to raise taxes to spend a minimum of \$300/mile and the Town's Plan will spend \$797,655 or \$13,643 per mile.

**Motion** by Brian Coolidge/Cecil Renich-Smith to approve the annual financial plan for the town highways. **The motion passed unanimously.**

### **10. Consider Purchase Order #12401 for Used Case JX65 Tractor for Roadside Mowing**

Seth Hopkins noted that during the budget planning the figure was \$35,000 necessary to replace the roadside mower. Since that time, Jeremy Disorda has investigated and has discussed with other towns about their mowers. Mr. Disorda would rather buy a used case tractor for \$16,500 and put an offset mower on the back so the tractor does not get tied up. Two additional quotes were received and Mr. Disorda is comfortable with the condition and price. A new one would be twice the money. Mr. Hopkins recommended funding from the Capital fund as the Town has realized \$16,500 from the sale of the rusted dump truck the Town could not use so the purchase would be a wash. Doug Bailey was in favor of the purchase as this item was removed during the budget workshop but this would allow the purchase without dipping into the funds.

**Motion** by Brian Coolidge/Ralph Ethier to approve P. O. #12401 for the used Case JX65 tractor for roadside mowing in the amount of \$16,500 with funding from the sale of the dump truck. **The motion passed unanimously.**

Doug Bailey asked the Town Manager to thank Mr. Disorda for his work on this item. Seth Hopkins reported this was Mr. Disorda's idea and he presented a good plan for the replacement.

### **11. Consider Road Closure Request Tabled at Previous Meeting (Park Street, May 2, 5:45PM – 6:30PM)**

Bill Moore noted this request was presented at the last meeting and Colleen Wright and Bernie Carr were invited to attend the meeting to answer any questions. Colleen Wright advised this would be a 15-minute closing where everyone would meet on Dave Roberts' lawn and parade down Park Street to the Brandon Inn. Cecil Reniche-Smith asked if vehicles would be part of the parade. Ms. Wright stated there would be golf carts but no vehicles. Doug Bailey stated the questions were insurance, security and whether all residents affected have been advised. Ms. Wright stated her business has an encompassing insurance and a rider would be added for the specific event. There will be two people from 4 Seasons Flagging that will stop traffic at 5:55PM and end at 6:30PM. All residents were notified six weeks ago.

Brian Coolidge stated he is not in favor of it as the sidewalks could be used. Colleen Wright stated there were other events where the street was closed and there are dogs on the street and Ms. Wright has concerns with using the sidewalk. Mr. Coolidge did not think it a good idea to stop traffic. Ms. Wright stated the walk is planned for 6:00PM to 6:15PM, after which the participants will go behind the Brandon Inn for more activities. Doug Bailey has concerns with Park Street being overused and after the Air Stream issue he wanted to assure all residents are in favor of it. Mr. Bailey noted in the future it

would be good to know all the details in advance. He was more worried about a 5:00PM start due to traffic. Ms. Wright advised Barbara Scribner is part of the event planning and she lives on Park Street. Cecil Reniche-Smith understands about the dogs, but all of the dogs are behind fences and there is a wide swath of grass that people could walk on. Ms. Wright stated for the impact of the event, she would like to use the street and she understands the Airstream issue. This event had been discussed early and is only 15 minutes.

**Motion** by Cecil Reniche-Smith/Jeff Haylon to approve the road closure request for Halfoween for Park Street on May 2, 2025 from 6:00PM to 6:30PM.

Brian Coolidge stated it will back up traffic on Route 7 in not being able to turn up Park Street. Bernie Carr stated it worked successfully for the Zombie Walk and is less time. The traffic will be able to bypass the event and this will be doable during the scheduled time. The Chamber supports these events to maintain Brandon as a talking point in the State and beyond the State. The Town worked hard through Segment 6 and Hurricane Katrina and has come out of that and the tourists that come through here are amazed at what Brandon has become. Mr. Carr noted the Town needs to keep building on successes and for events like this, Ms. Wright makes them work. The Brandon Carnival has people attend from all over and it is attention for the Town. The fact we are making this happen, is what makes us what we are and we need to keep moving forward positively. Mr. Bailey asked where the group will be together. Ms. Wright stated it will be on Steven Jupiter and Dave Roberts side lawn with no one on Marble Street or High Street. Ms. Wright appreciates the Select Board's concerns and noted this will be the least invasive event.

Arturo Mendiola suggested if there is an issue with the road closure, the closure could be one-half of the road. Many people will have golf carts and it would be better to be on the road. The event would rather have the entire road and it would not be detrimental to the vehicle traffic. Mr. Mendiola noted with the uncertainty in the U.S. now it is important to bring people together and it will bring business and will be good recognition for the Town. Cecil Reniche-Smith would not be in favor of closing one-half of the road and would prefer closing the entire road.

Jan Coolidge was not in favor of closing Park Street and asked why this was the first option when Estabrook Park could be used so that the road would not be closed. Ms. Wright stated the reason for the parade to be downtown would be to encourage business for the local downtown. She noted she could get vendors to be at Estabrook Park, but it would help the downtown businesses.

Vicki Disorda asked if this is for children. Colleen Wright advised children are welcome and the event is expecting 75 people but is not just for children. After the walk there is the Monster Mash, karaoke, and the bar at the Brandon Inn will be open. This is a free event to come and listen to music. Brent Buehler asked what the residents think about the event as the Town just had 700 people in Central Park and roads were not closed. Ms. Wright stated they are happy and excited about something different. She did not talk to all residents of Park Street but hard copies of the event have been given to all and she has received no negative calls. Ms. Disorda asked if this is an event where people can stand along the street to watch and Ms. Wright confirmed that would be the case.

Barry Varian stated it sounds like a low impact event that has value for the Town and it can be strategic with traffic control. Mr. Varian suggested some signage be added. Doug Bailey stated his concern was informing the residents as two residents were disappointed in the other event and he has talked to them and both had been notified and were not upset or in favor of it. He has had no one contact him about the event. Cecil Reniche-Smith stated one resident had concern about insurance. Jeff Haylon stated he talked with a dozen Park Street residents and no one had an issue.

**The motion passed with one no vote – Brian Coolidge.**

## **12. Authorize Formation of a Working Group to update the 2002 Brandon Workbook**

Seth Hopkins advised the Brandon Workbook has been used to assist the Town in planning and designing of the downtown and has not been updated for 20 years. The Brandon Historic Preservation Committee met and the Select Board has received a request from the Committee's Chair to appoint a working group for this project. The Select Board would need to authorize a working group, designate membership and identifying roles for the committee.

Dennis Reisenweaver, Chair of the Historic Preservation Committee, reported the Committee was asked to update the Workbook and had a meeting and voted to do this. The best way to complete this project is for a working group to be formed to bring others in to obtain more information. The Committee applied for a grant from the Lake Champlain Fund for \$7,500. It is thought that the project would be around \$15,000 to pay for graphics and architects. A list of 7 people have been suggested for a working group.

Cecil Reniche-Smith stated when reading through the Workbook, it seemed there are some things that need to be updated. Mr. Reisenweaver stated the last update was done before Segment 6 and it was suggested to also include Forest Dale as a study was done and there are a lot of historic interests in Forest Dale. Ms. Reniche-Smith asked if a working group is approved whether the Committee would come back with applications of who would like to participate in the working group. Seth Hopkins stated this would be an advisory committee and they are not spending public funds but would be spending a grant. They have applied for one grant and there is another grant found for \$125,000. Mr. Reisenweaver stated the project would be less than \$15,000 as it is hoped to enlist some volunteers who may be a graphic person or architect.

**Motion** by Cecil Reniche-Smith/Ralph Ethier to approve the formation of an adhawk committee to include up to eight members as set forth in the memo from the Brandon Historic Preservation Committee Chair. **The motion passed unanimously.**

### **13. Public Comment and Participation**

Claire Astone thanked the Town for selling the equipment that was not used and using the funds for purchasing the equipment that is needed. She noted that as times are getting tougher, it is what everyone wants to see and thanked the Select Board.

Shirley Markland thanked the Town Manager for the text that she received when Chef Robert was stabbed. Being updated on the information was very important to receive. Doug Bailey noted the State Police did an excellent job and the Town has protection while still short-handed in the Police Department.

### **14. Adjournment**

**Motion** by Brian Coolidge/Cecil Reniche-Smith to adjourn the Select Board meeting at 7:56PM. **The motion passed unanimously.**

Respectfully submitted,

Charlene Bryant  
Recording Secretary