

**Brandon Select Board Meeting
April 28, 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, Barry Varian, Brent Buehler, Todd Nielson, Jan Coolidge, Barbara White, Mike Bailey, Gerard Lowell, Jack Schneider, David Martin, Steven Jupiter, Mary Cohen, Billy Bullock, Stephanie Jerome, Karen Rhodes

Others by Zoom: Adam Murach, Neil Silins, Cynthia Manning, Bruce Jenson

1. Call to order

The meeting was called to order by Doug Bailey at 7:00PM.

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

Add an executive session in accordance with 1V.S.A.313(a)(3) re: appointment/employment/evaluation of a public officer or employee.

Add Report from Representative Todd Nielson under Public Comment.

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. Seth Hopkins requested all who spoke during the meeting to announce their name prior to speaking.

3. Recurring Matters

a) Select Board Minutes – April 14, 2025

Motion by Cecil Reniche-Smith/Jeff Haylon to approve the minutes of April 14, 2025. **The motion passed unanimously.**

b) Warrant – April 28, 2025 - \$147,253.01

Motion by Cecil Reniche-Smith/Brian Coolidge to approve the warrant in the amount of \$147,253.01. **The motion passed unanimously.**

Brent Buehler questioned the invoice for chloride. Mr. Hopkins advised this is used for the unpaved roads to keep the dust down. There was an inquiry concerning \$1,540.00 for lab supplies and Mr. Hopkins reported this was for testing at the wastewater treatment plant. Jan Coolidge noted the same tag line was used for several items. Mr. Hopkins advised the concrete invoices were for the highway department as they had to build concrete weights for under the roadside mower to avoid having it tip over.

c) Unclaimed Property Warrant - \$1,412.49

Motion by Cecil Reniche-Smith/Jeff Haylon to approve the unclaimed property warrant in the amount of \$1,412.49. **The motion passed unanimously.**

Bill Moore advised this warrant is for items such as little league expenses, flag football refunds or people that have not picked up checks. An email was sent to the recipients with no response and the Town Treasurer would like to clean up the books as there is a requirement to return the funds to the Vermont Department of Treasury.

4. Presentation by Cornerstone Housing Partners for 30 Conant Square

Mary Cohen of Cornerstone Housing Partners advised this is a new organization made up of three affordable entities, Housing Trust of Rutland County, Shires Housing and Neighborworks of Western Vermont that provides more resources available with combining the entities. A portfolio analysis was done and part of the portfolio identified properties that need preservation. One identified property was 30 Conant Square, which is a historic building that needs refreshing. There will be funding from the Vermont Housing Board. Ms. Cohen provided information about Conant Square (See Attachment). It was built in 1820 and was used as a tavern with a stop on the underground railroad. There is an underground tunnel to Marble Street and a house on Pearl Street. Another addition was made to the house in 1850. In 1982 it was purchased by Frank Giroux and an addition was built on the back of the building and has been a subsidized property since that time. VHFA was the original financier and the HUD contract was 20 years. When Mr. Giroux decided to sell, VHFA contacted the Housing Trust of Rutland County who purchased it in 2006 and has been in existence ever since. It is time for another remodeling that will include a new heater and sprinkler, roof, cabinetry, painting, light fixtures, and a new sidewalk. It is hoped this project gets funded before the end of the year to start in 2025 and will take a year. Dan Caputo is the real estate developer at Cornerstone. Cecil Reniche-Smith asked if it would affect the current occupants rent and Ms. Cohen advised it would not affect their rent. Ms. Cohen also noted that it is a listed building in the historic registry and renovations will be taken into account to comply. There will also be historic tax credits received.

Vicki Disorda read a letter saying the tenants had to sign it if they want to move back into Conant Square when the repairs are done. It indicated during the months they were not there they would have to pay the rent. Mary Cohen stated they will continue to pay their rent during their relocation but they would not have to pay for their relocation space. Ms. Disorda asked if they are planning to do a similar presentation for the tenants and Ms. Cohen confirmed they were. Brent Buehler asked if there would be a covered area outdoors as he knows many residents like to be outside. Ms. Cohen stated a sloping shelter may be able to be added if funds are available for outdoor community space.

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. Mr. Hopkins provided the following highlights from his report:

With the start of the warm season, there is a reminder for vendors such as food trucks that regardless if one is on public or private property, an itinerant vendor permit will be required.

Thanks to Neil Silins and the group that implemented the Caring for Canopies grant and planted several trees in the downtown. Thanks also to Brian Kilpeck for preparing the sites for planting on a non-workday.

Green Up is May 3rd and thanks to Jim Leary, Brandon's Green Up Coordinator for spearheading this effort for many years. Mr. Hopkins noted a colleague of his at the State Archives provided photos from Vermont's first Green Up Day in 1970 with Governor Deane Davis visiting Brandon. Photos can be found on the Town's website or in his report.

On May 13th at 6PM at the town hall, the Brandon Planning Commission will be hosting a planners forum with RRPC regarding Act 181. Brandon can avail itself of the provisions of Act 181 tiers and the Town's desired designation will be considered by the Select Board at the May 26th meeting.

Thanks to a suggestion from Selectboard Member Ralph Ethier, the Town has connected with the Vermont Department of Labor for posting jobs through them. This was not a previous practice.

There is a change in location for the Trustees of Public Funds meeting that was warned for Thursday at 8:30AM at the Naylor/Breen office. The meeting will now be held in the Town Hall and a new agenda will be posted tomorrow. Mr. Hopkins has also asked the Trustees to post on FPF about the change in location.

6. Community Development Report

Bill Moore provided the following Community Development Report:

“Youth Cheer camp scheduled for kids in grades 3 - 8 July 23rd - 26th. This skill building camp will include some tumbling practice time at Head Over Heels!

Pee Wee Cheer mini-camp for kids in K-2 will be held July 28th -August 1st with a public performance being held at Pittsford Day (August 2nd)

Ex Mortis Entertainment is renting the town hall for a metal music concert on May 31st. This event will be privately ticketed and will run 7 -10pm.

We are partnering with Otter Valley and Pittsford Rec to offer a field hockey camp. July 14th - July 17th. This is a great way for kid in grades 3 - 7 to work with current OV players and coaches.

The Brandon Idol Finale is being held on May16th. This will be an amazing concert featuring the 10 finalists and former Brandon Idol winners. Tickets are \$5. Drink service provided by Mae's, Concession by Dallas Ladd. Doors open at 6:30pm.

Spring Baseball-Softball is in full swing. 155+ kids on 12 teams!”

Bill Moore reported on Saturday that the Randy Adams Youth Baseball League will be having a dedication of the field at the Pittsford Recreation area in honor of Randy Adams. Mr. Moore noted Mr. Adams has been an advocate for recreation and youth activity in Rutland County and encouraged the public to attend to honor him.

7. Update from SolarFest on August Festival

Mike Bailey of SolarFest thanked the Select Board for allowing him to present at the meeting. It has been 4 years that SolarFest has been part of Brandon and they are grateful to Tim Guiles, Bill Moore the Energy Committee, and the Select Board. They have made good progress this year on Steinberg Road. The solar array on their property has produced over 270,000 kilowatt hours in March. Their array has been permitted and GMP has done their portion and volunteers will start doing racks and panels on June 16th. They have also been working with the Agency of Natural Resources for the walkway to connect downtown to Estabrook Park. They did not receive the State-wide grant but did receive another grant and funds from the Trustees of Public Funds. Approval was received from the State and Town for the demolition of the dilapidated barn. For the first time in 10 years, there will be a 3-day Solar Fest held in Brandon on August 8th – 10th. With the assistance of Celebration Tents there will be 50 covered exhibit spaces for vendors. There will be dozens of national performers coming to Brandon that will include Donna the Buffalo and the Herd, Blue Grace, the New England Brass Band, and the Ray Vega Band. They are very excited about all the music performers, exhibitors, and vendors. The Brandon Chamber will be sponsoring a large display of the Best of Brandon. Kids are free and there will be a large Kid’s Corner with activities. Sunday will be entirely free and there will be an expo on sustainability. Anyone interested in the latest updates of the event can go to solarfest.org where one can purchase tickets, sign up as a volunteer, sign up for an exhibit space or provide a workshop. SolarFest is also excited to be part of the July parade including the solar-powered golf cart.

Karen Rhodes asked if the funds received from the Trustees of Public Funds would be repaid with the revenues. Mr. Bailey advised the funds received from the Trustees is not for the event, but for the walking/biking path for the Town that SolarFest will maintain for public use.

8. Police Fleet Status & Replacement Plan

Seth Hopkins provide the Select Board with a review of the police cruisers the Town currently has and recommendations. It was recommended to sell the 2014 Taurus that is not inspectable and the 2016 Explorer that is inspected through January 2026 and keep the 2020 F150 and 2022 Explorer and undercoat them. Mr. Hopkins proposed using the FY2025 police budget rather than looking for a capital fund as the Police budget will still be below the authorized amount due to the insufficient

staffing. When selling on Municibid, it is questioned if a vehicle is inspectable. Brian Coolidge asked why the canine unit was sold. Mr. Hopkins stated it was altered to be a canine vehicle and would have cost a lot to retrofit it back to a regular cruiser, as the back seat had been discarded. Doug Bailey was in favor of selling the two oldest vehicles and replace one from the leftover police budget. The newest vehicle is already three years old and it makes sense to upgrade. There had been discussion of needing to purchase two cars during budget discussions. Mr. Hopkins stated this would be a reasonable size fleet and if there is a staffing increase, a capital lease could be considered. Mr. Coolidge asked if the 2016 Explorer would pass another inspection and it was unknown. Mr. Coolidge was in favor of selling the Taurus and keeping the Explorer. Mr. Hopkins noted that the oldest car in the fleet, if a new one were purchased, would be 5 years old rather than 10 years old. Jeff Haylon stated for the Town to attract police officers; a newer fleet will be more appealing. Mr. Hopkins stated the 2016 Explorer is likely over 100,000 miles.

Brian Coolidge noted Gerard Lowell repairs the Police Department's vehicles and requested his opinion. Mr. Lowell stated mechanically the 2016 Explorer is in decent shape, but it has over 100,000 miles. He noted when cars go out in the salt and then into a heated garage, it accelerates the salt erosion. These vehicles can corrode faster and year by year if they are not undercoated, those areas would get tender. The last cruiser undercoated was in 2015. The Taurus was inspected in 2023 and it has been 16 months and has seen two full winters. It has accelerated rusting and has really been 2 years uninspectable. For the 2016 Explorer, it could be fixed but it has over 100,000 miles and is 10 years old and is probably not a good gamble to put a lot of money into it. He was not sure how it fared over this past winter and perhaps the rocker panels on that are tender, but he has not accessed it. The water pump had been replaced on the 2016 Explorer. Cecil Reniche-Smith asked if a car has not been undercoated and shows tenderness, can undercoating prolong its use. Mr. Lowell stated it can to a certain extent and could slow it down, but if it is already tender, it is probably at the end of its life. Doug Bailey noted the Town is likely not going to get much more use out of the 2016 Explorer. Mr. Lowell stated the rocker panels are the major concern and these are accelerated corrosion conditions and recommended having the vehicles undercoated and keeping them undercoated.

Motion by Cecil Reniche-Smith/Jeff Haylon to retain the 2020 Explorer, 2020 F150 and 2016 Explorer and sell the 2014 Taurus and authorize the Town Manager to go out to bid for a new cruiser using the FY2025 police budget.

Mr. Coolidge asked if the budget will be under enough. Mr. Hopkins stated the pace of spending is pale and it is forecasted the line might have another \$10,000 to grow and another \$70,000 in that line. The cost is about \$70,000 for a new cruiser. Mr. Hopkins reported the equipment being sold is put into a Unified Capital Fund. Currently that fund consists of surplus vehicles and equipment sold that totaled \$33,000. At the last meeting, \$16,000 was drawn for the tractor and leaves \$17,000 in this fund. Ralph Ethier suggested the 2016 Explorer be kept in the event of a new hire.

Motion by Ralph Ethier/Doug Bailey to amend the original motion to keep the 2016 Explorer. **The motion passed unanimously.**

Cecil Reniche-Smith did not have a problem retaining the 2016 Explorer as long as it is inspectable and drivable. At the moment it is not costing anything except for insurance to keep it. Brent Buehler asked how long it takes to get a new car. Mr. Hopkins advised the bid process would take a month and then there could be an extended delivery time.

The original motion, as amended, passed unanimously.

9. Accept No-match Grant for Replacement Town Vehicle

Seth Hopkins advised the Town was invited to apply for a grant with no match as part of the Energy Efficiency & Conservation Block Grants (EECBG). The \$62,000 grant will be for purchasing an all-electric minivan that will help to meet the goals of the Town's Energy Plan and Town Plan. It will replace the minivan the Rec Department previously had. This minivan has seating capacity for 6 passengers and the Rec Department would be its primary use. If there is capacity, after insurance and screening of volunteer drivers, it would then be proposed to be driven by volunteers to assist Brandon residents to connect from their homes to the bus stops and if that is successful, there is the possibility of offering a Run-about Service to help Brandon residents run errands. There is no cost to the Town and it would be a 2025 7-passenger van. The Town would attain a GMP charger and there may be capacity in the grant for the charger. The van will not be used by staff for personal use. Mr. Hopkins recommended the Select Board waive the Purchasing Policy provision and approve the purchase of the van with the grant. Cecil Reniche-Smith thought this is a wonderful idea as it is no cost and replaces a vehicle that

received good use in the past. Doug Bailey also liked the idea and agreed it should be done. Mr. Ethier also suggested it could be used for staff attending conferences to avoid paying mileage.

Motion by Cecil Reniche-Smith/Jeff Haylon to accept the “no-match” grant and waive the Purchasing Policy to purchase a van from a Volkswagen vendor in Vermont for the replacement of a Town vehicle. **The motion passed unanimously.**

Barbara White asked if it would be for all people with mobility issue. Mr. Hopkins advised it would not have a chair riser. Brian Coolidge stated it would not be free but would be a minimal cost. Jeff Haylon stated it is considerably cheaper to fuel. Mr. Hopkins stated he has spoken with both the Highway Department and Wastewater Treatment Plan regarding the location for the charging station.

10. Approve Renewal of Rutland Regional Public Works Mutual Aid Agreement

Seth Hopkins advised this is an annual agreement that the Town has not had the opportunity to use in the past but provides a framework of understanding. Jeff Haylon requested an example of when it would be used. Mr. Hopkins stated if there was a flood the Town could potentially borrow from another highway department that subscribes to the agreement.

Motion by Cecil Reniche-Smith/Ralph Ethier to ratify the renewal of the Rutland Regional Public Works Mutual Aid Agreement. **The motion passed unanimously.**

Seth Hopkins stated for future discussion the Town of Goshen has approached the Highway Department concerning some sharing of services between the two towns. Doug Bailey stated most towns are hesitant to lend equipment but would rather lend their equipment with their driver. Mr. Hopkins noted it would not make sense to go in with Goshen on equipment purchases, but perhaps Brandon could do some tasks for Goshen as they are trying to hire some of their equipment.

11. Appointments to Rutland Regional Boards Through June 30, 2026

a. Regional Planning Commission

Seth Hopkins advised all four individuals have been consulted and agreed to serve on the boards.

Motion by Brian Coolidge/Cecil Reniche-Smith to appoint Jack Schneider to the Planning Commission with Lisa Peluso as the Alternate. **The motion passed unanimously.**

b. Regional Transportation Advisory

Motion by Brian Coolidge/Cecil Reniche-Smith to appoint Jeremy Disorda to the Transportation Advisory Board with Brian Kilpeck as the Alternate. **The motion passed unanimously.**

12. Resolution Retaining Legal Counsel for Tax Sale

Seth Hopkins advised the resolution is from the Town’s attorney of many years standing. They are requesting a resolution saying that Carroll, Boe & Kite, P.C. will conduct the Town’s tax sale and the fees will be against the taxpayers at no more than 15%. The Town Manager can bid at the tax sale. Mr. Hopkins reported the Town has collected \$65,000 in taxes and \$51,000 in penalties and interest and noted that every day someone has been coming into the Town Office to arrange payment of their taxes. Cecil Reniche-Smith noted the rates are very reasonable as she was charging more than this rate 20 years ago.

Motion by Jeff Haylon/Cecil Reniche-Smith to authorize the Town Manager to sign the resolution to retain Carroll, Boe & Kite, P.C. as legal counsel for the tax sale. **The motion passed unanimously.**

13. Close Park Street for Memorial Day Parade, Monday, May 26th from 10AM

Seth Hopkins spoke with the American Legion about the Memorial Day parade and recommended the parade route start on Park Street and step off Park/Marble/High and proceed down Park Street. In the past it has been from the Post Office but

noted that the block from the post office to downtown has very few spectators and it would be preferable not to close Route 7. Cecil Reniche-Smith asked if the residents of Park Street are okay with the closure. Bill Moore advised that the past closures have included Park Street. Mr. Hopkins stated the travel portion will be closed for ½ hour.

Motion by Cecil Reniche-Smith/Ralph Ethier to approve the closure of Park Street on May 26th starting at 10AM for the Memorial Day Parade. **The motion passed unanimously.**

14. Public Comment and Participation

Barbara White read the following:

“On May 1st from 4pm-6pm there will be an event in town at Central Park called National Day of Action. It is part of a National Day of Mobilization for those Americans who are angered by the actions of the President, Congress, and the billionaire Elon Musk.

In disagreement and frustration with the unconstitutional actions taken by this administration, people will be gathering in Central Park on the 1st as a group known as Indivisible Brandon.

This group is one of several hundred groups under the national group Indivisible. Go to Indivisible.org for more information.

A core principle behind all Indivisible events is a commitment to nonviolent action. We expect all participants to seek to de-escalate any potential confrontation with those who disagree with our values.

A de-escalation zoom training is available for all participants at Indivisible.org. At our weekly Brandon meetings we emphasize this opportunity to learn about how to and how not to engage with those people holding different views. Press releases will be appearing in the local papers as well as on Front Porch Forum.

For more information google National Day of Action; you may also email me at: barbara@indivisiblebrandon.org”

Barbara White noted they are not expecting as many people as Castleton, Middlebury and Rutland will also be having a group. This will be held on public grounds only and with past events, she has not heard any negative, only positive comments.

Todd Nielson, Representative for Brandon, and Forest Dale reported he is on the Human Services Committee and advised he and his partners have worked to double the money for Meals on Wheels and raised payment to the nursing homes. Mr. Nielson noted he has never seen so much money in his life and is trying his best, learning a lot, and is doing his best for the community. He also noted that Theresa Wood and Ann Donahue are great.

Brent Buehler thanked Cecil Reniche-Smith for posting on FPF and Seth Hopkins for requesting funding from Trustees for sewer and for adding the signs for public parking. Mr. Hopkins stated there is a meeting of the Trustees that will be in the Town Hall rather than at Naylor/Breen. Mr. Buehler asked when the first request for mosquito spraying was made. Mr. Hopkins noted he will have a conversation with the Trustees about Ms. Farr’s provision as interpreted by Jim Leary. He is more inclined to advocate for additional funding for the sewer rather than mosquito funding. He feels the largest asset is the wastewater treatment and collection and the Town would like the bequest from Ms. Farr to be available to the Town when improvements are needed for that system. Mr. Buehler stated in past meetings mosquito spraying was the only request and he knows they have denied funding sometimes. Charles Powell asked for the working papers on the VCC funding for the feasibility study and Mr. Buehler would like the Town to request that paperwork to include the demographics, sustainability, and demand. He noted the Trustees granted the Town \$15,000 for the dog park. Mr. Hopkins advised the Town asked for a grant to match another grant, and they said they could lend it to us. The Select Board asked to procure the additional land without calling on tax dollars. Mr. Hopkins noted the Town Farm Fund was something he was aware of and asked the Select Board to authorize to match the grant. Mr. Buehler hoped that many come to the Trustees meeting on Thursday and encouraged the Sewer Commissioners to apply to run for Trustees. Mr. Hopkins reported he looked up incompatible officers and advised the Select Board can be a Trustee of Public Funds.

David Martin reported Sunday, May 4th there will be a Repair Fair held at the library on the lawn. He wanted to thank Jeff Haylon, one of the Select Board members who will be present to assist. Repairs will consist of small appliances, lamps, furniture, etc.

Brent Buehler asked if pending business could be added to the Board's agenda. Cecil Reniche-Smith was hesitant to put things on the agenda that do not have comments for and suggested during public comment, the public can inquire. Mr. Hopkins asked if the Select Board would like a tracker for pending items. Jeff Haylon stated that it could be a task list to ensure that something does not get left by the wayside and could be something that is available but not on the agenda. Mr. Hopkins stated the last project-tracker was done after the town meeting and noted the waterfall listed is going out for proposals for solutions that could be offered in the area of water. The roof repair for the Town Hall is still scheduled for May.

The Board recessed the meeting at 8:27PM.

Motion by Cecil Reniche-Smith/Brian Coolidge to enter into executive session in accordance with 1V.S.A.313(a)(3) re: appointment/employment/evaluation of a public officer or employee. **The motion passed unanimously.**

15. Executive Session

The Board came out of executive session at 9:00PM. There were no actions required.

16. Adjournment

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

Respectfully submitted,

Charlene Bryant
Recording Secretary