

Brandon Planning Commission Meeting - Draft
April 7, 2025

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

Board Members Present via Zoom: Natalie Steen, Lisa Peluso

Others present: Larry Stevens

1. Call to order

The meeting was called to order at 6:05PM by Jack Schneider - Chair.

2. Agenda Approval

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

3. Approve or Amend Minutes from March 3, 2025 Meeting

A motion was made by Natalie Steen and seconded by Sara Stevens to approve the March 3, 2025 meeting minutes. **The motion passed unanimously.**

4. Public Participation and Comment

There was no discussion held.

5. Zoning Administrator's Report

Larry Stevens reported that currently there have been construction permits for sheds and decks, and one permit for the Humane Society that will be going through Act 250 and have done everything to satisfy the needs of the permit. There have been no permits for new houses. Claire Pate's house is a new construction house, but they had not included the deck in the original construction permit. All permits are submitted online. Jack Schneider asked if Mr. Stevens is receiving many questions. Mr. Stevens reported he has received some general questions. There was a question about a shed in the aquifer district and Mr. Stevens noted there are no setbacks outlined in that district in the BLUO. Jack Schneider advised there is an aquifer overlay that is part of the neighborhood districts and the setbacks would be applicable to the underlying district they are in.

Neil Silins advised he received an email from the VLCT regarding Act 181, the new land use legislation. It is two one-hour webinars regarding the changes to Act 250.

6. Update on Historic Preservation Committee Revision of Town Workbook

Jack Schneider reported that the Historic Preservation Committee has been working with Seth Hopkins to obtain grants to assist in updating the Town Workbook. All photos need to be updated and a graphic designer and copywriter is needed. Natalie Steen provided suggestions and Mr. Schneider will also provide them with the person that worked on the Town report. Mr. Schneider will attend the Preservation Committee's next quarterly meeting tomorrow night. The grant will not be sufficient to do the job, but they will print fewer copies and it will be available digitally. The Workbook has historic photos of the early 1800s and photos taken in 2021. Because this is a workbook on architectural design, they have photos to show the different types that exist in the Town. There is a goal to expand the Workbook to include Forest Dale and other structures like the observatory that were not in the previous Workbook. Sara Stevens asked if there is a list of photos to be updated. Mr. Schneider stated it would be all photos in the current Workbook and the additional structures will be

determined by the Preservation Committee. Information regarding the Park Street restoration and Segment 6 changes will be added. Mr. Schneider stated he will offer the Planning Commission's assistance and noted the BLUO has no architectural designs and the Workbook could be a reference point. Mr. Schneider will update the Planning Commission following the Preservation Committee's meeting.

7. Discuss Zoning Fee Schedule

Jack Schneider provided a draft of a proposed fee schedule. Mr. Schneider advised he reviewed the surrounding towns' fees and has copies of the schedules. Brandon is consistent with the nearby towns and reviewed towns as far north as Vergennes and south to Killington. Mr. Schneider suggested the Planning Commission members review the fees to determine if the Town is undercharging or overcharging. The Town wants new houses and does not want to make the fees too onerous. Larry Stevens stated the Town is in close population to Pittsford and Brandon is comparable in pricing. Mr. Schneider will continue to work on this comparison and asked the members to provide comments. The last revision of the fee schedule was January 2021. Sara Stevens stated it does not seem unreasonable to look at increases if the Planning Commission chooses to go in that direction. Mr. Schneider did not know what changes were made in 2021 and suggested the Planning Commission determine if changes should be made and submit proposed changes to the Select Board. Neil Silins suggested that some should be raised and asked if there could be a different cost between an interior versus an exterior sign. Mr. Silins thought an exterior sign should be a more costly permit. Natalie Steen suggested the rates should be consistent with towns in the area, suggesting Pittsford or Castleton's fees for comparison. Mr. Schneider advised some towns do not have a rate for commercial. One goal would be to ensure the Town is competitive but also allow the Zoning Administrator to be able to say that the fees are in line with what other towns charge.

With regard to signage, Mr. Schneider advised that there were signs allowed during Segment 6 and questioned whether Mr. Stevens has asked businesses to comply in accordance with the updated BLUO as some exceptions have been allowed. Mr. Stevens stated there are many signs in the businesses in Town that need to be updated, noting there are many feather signs. Mr. Stevens stated according to the BLUO businesses are not supposed to have any neon lit signs and all stores would have to remove those signs. Natalie Steen asked if the fee schedule includes fines if the ordinance is not followed. Mr. Schneider advised some towns specified penalties for being out of compliance but the Town's current fee schedule does not include penalties. Mr. Stevens reported the prior Zoning Administrator would double the fee if someone started construction before the permit was approved or before the 15-day timeframe. Neil Silins suggested a warning followed by a fine would be appropriate. Sara Stevens stated this would be a question for the Town Manager and Select Board. Lisa Peluso suggested a public announcement regarding the new ordinance that will be enforced in the future. Mr. Schneider stated the Select Board had allowed temporary signs during the Segment 6 construction that were to be removed at the completion of the project and the prior Zoning Administrator started the process but was not able to complete the enforcement. Mr. Stevens stated the enforcement part is difficult to do with his duties for rental code and health. Mr. Schneider suggested Mr. Stevens discuss the signage issue with Mr. Moore and Mr. Hopkins. Mr. Stevens advised he has discussed the lit signs with Mr. Moore and Mr. Hopkins and it was suggested a time be determined when the signs need to be turned off. Mr. Stevens suggested a general letter to the businesses could be done regarding the newly approved BLUO ordinance.

8. Other Business

Larry Stevens advised at the last DRB meeting; an applicant talked about four exterior signs plus a free-standing sign. In Section 904b it indicates a total of 4 signs, except as specified in Section 905a. One free standing sign is permitted per lot. Mr. Stevens noted some of the signs were directional signs. Natalie Steen clarified the limit is four signs, with the types of signs outlined in Section 905a. There can be four signs but one cannot have multiples of specific types of signs with an example that a business cannot have three feather signs. Mr. Stevens will pull the permit to review.

9. Date of Next Meeting

Monday, May 5, 2025 - 6:00PM – Brandon Town Hall

9. Adjournment

A motion was made by Sara Stevens and seconded by Natalie Steen to adjourn the meeting at 6:45PM. **The motion passed unanimously.**

Respectfully submitted,

Charlene Bryant
Recording Secretary