

# TRUSTEES OF PUBLIC FUNDS

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**Trustees of Public Funds Meeting  
May 15, 2025 5:30pm  
1 Conant Square, Brandon, VT 05733**

NOTE: These are unapproved minutes, subject to amendment and/or approval at the subsequent meeting of the Trustees of Public Funds.

Trustees of Public Funds in Attendance: Courtney Satz, Laura Miner

Trustee of Public Funds Absent: None

Others in Attendance: Seth Hopkins, Bill Moore, Cecil Reniche-Smith, Jan Coolidge, Patricia Welch, Ralph Ethier, Karen Rhodes, Claire Astone, Lindsay Romano, Vicki Disorda, Stephen Jupiter, Brent Beuhler, Jack Schneider, Molly Kennedy, Keith Whitcomb Jr., Judy Bunde, Sandy Mayo, Brian Coolidge, Jim Leary. On Zoom: Faith Daya, MD, Tom Whittaker

## **1 Call to order**

The meeting was called to order at 5:30pm by Laura Miner.

Adopt Agenda as Posted or as Amended

Motion by Laura Miner to adopt agenda as amended. Second by Courtney Satz. The motion carried with a vote of 2-0. Amendments made were: to add discussion of Tanner Romano's resignation/replacement, add topic of Trust management, add discussion of applications previously on hold, and omit executive session.

## **2 Approval of minutes of previous meeting**

Motion by Laura Miner and second by Courtney Satz to modify the Trustees of Public Funds minutes of 05/01/25. The motion carried with a vote of 2-0. Modifications made were: to correct prior statement indicating Mr. Hopkins suggested accountability to the Attorney General, as this comment was made by a community member. Modification also included: adding Mr. Hopkins letter addressed to the Trust to the 5/01/25 minutes packet.

## **3 Trust Summary: Courtney Satz**

Trust Summary which had been prepared by Courtney Satz was read aloud. Summary is posted on Trustees page on Town website. Laura Miner approved the summary and agreed with Courtney Satz's suggestion to remove Tanner Romano's name in the text. Updated summary will be sent to Mr. Hopkins for replacement.

## **4 Q&A from Previous Meeting**

Trustees split the questions from public comment section of 5/1/2025 meeting and provided answers as shown here.

### **1. Where can information on the Trust of Public Funds be found?**

Information regarding the Trust of Public Funds, including agendas, meeting minutes, and applications, can be found on the Town of Brandon website, <https://www.townofbrandon.com> under the "Town Committees" section. Additional information can be found on our public Facebook page: "Brandon VT Trust of Public Funds". All meeting agendas and

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notice of public meetings are submitted to the Town Manager for posting at the town office bulletin board, the Town website, as well as on our Facebook page. Recently, notice of public meetings have also been posted on Front Porch Forum as well. Yearly Trust reports and disbursement summaries are submitted to the Town Manager and are included in the annual Town Report. Town Clerk (Sue Gage) also receives monthly bank statements and portfolio summary statements.

**2. What constituted the VCC award as being valid under the guidelines of the trust?**

The award to the Otter Valley Activities Association (not VCC) was approved by the Trustees because it fell under the guideline of text from the 1960 interpretation of Ms. Farr's will which stipulates that funds from the Trust may be applied "in the general improvement of the village in ways not sufficiently provided for by taxation." In review of prior disbursements over the last thirty years, *most* awards have fallen under this category of the Trust requirements.

**3. Why was the award to the VCC "done secretly"?**

To clarify, there was no award to the "VCC". The award was to the Otter Valley Activities Association for a feasibility study and was initially discussed at the public meeting that occurred on March 3, 2023. Meeting Agendas and Minutes can be found on the Town Website-- <https://www.townofbrandon.com> under the "Town Committees" section. Additional details regarding the 2023 OVAA disbursement can be found on page 37 of the 2023 Town Report.

**4. Can copies of the invoices for the feasibility study be provided?**

Jodie Keith (on behalf of the OVAA) provided the Trustees with an invoice the fall of 2023 indicating that they were moving forward and had begun to incur expenses. The Trustees released \$10,000 to OVAA on 10/4/2023. The invoice is from McLeod Architects for "Architectural Services".

**5. Please clarify the amount distributed to VCC. Was it \$10k or \$20k?**

\$20k was initially pledged to the Otter Valley Activities Association be dispersed incrementally over two years. Only the first \$10k has been dispersed since the project is in a holding pattern.

**6. Why have funds not been awarded to sewer-related projects?**

The Trustees review and vote on each application that is submitted. To date, as current Trustees, only one application was received related to sewer-related needs--It was received on April 14, 2025 from Seth Hopkins for the Town of Brandon.

**7. How will monies not distributed to sewer/sanitation be repaid to the Trust?**

There are several other categories of criteria for awards from the Trust, sewer/sanitation being just one. Each award during our tenure has fallen under a specific criteria for the Trust and is/was valid for the intended purpose.

**8. Should the operational procedures of the TOPF be reviewed by the Attorney General or an Attorney who specializes in trusts in the state of Vermont?**

Based on initial review, The Attorney General does not provide legal opinions except to the State or its agencies. The Trust of Public Funds has implemented many additional measures to improve transparency based on feedback received regarding operational procedures.

**9. Why doesn't the TOPF notify and hold meetings in a public place and at a time more convenient to the entire public?**

The Trustees have agreed to hold all future meetings in the Town Hall location. "Convenient" time of day is subjective. The nature of The Trust of Public Funds historically has not required regular

meetings, and meetings were scheduled around receiving new applications. There is no regular schedule for which we receive applications. Meetings have always had a Zoom or Teams option for anyone to join.

**10. Other than cemetery storm damage, can you explain how the other awards fall in line with the trust?**

The Trustees award for cemetery storm damage was approved because it fell under the guideline of text from the 1960 interpretation of Ms. Farr's will which stipulates that funds from the Trust may be applied "in the general improvement of the village in ways not sufficiently provided for by taxation." In review of awards from the past thirty years, *most* awards have fallen under this category of the Trust requirements.

**5 Tanner Romano's Resignation and Replacement**

Trustees announced the resignation of Tanner Romano from the TOPF. His resignation letter had been printed in The Reporter as well as quoted in the Rutland Herald. Mr. Hopkins has posted a FPF request for applications of interest to fill the vacancy. Trustees inquired if they would have any involvement in the interviews and respectfully requested involvement in the process. Mr. Hopkins clarified that it is restricted to Select Board only. There was discussion as to whether it had ever been done like this before as the Trustees were always involved in appointment of new members. Mr. Hopkins clarified it has likely been mismanaged in the past.

**6 Trust Management**

Laura Miner discussed the proposal from Mr. Hopkins at the 5/01/25 meeting. She referenced materials stating that Trusts of Public Funds are to be managed by three elected trustees as per state guidance. Courtney Satz was in agreement that the TOPF should proceed as it is has been functioning since establishment in 1958. Trustees rejected Mr. Hopkins assertion the Town manage applications and allow only Town of Brandon applications to be approved. The board determined it was unnecessary to seek additional legal review, as the last legal review indicated the board was in alignment with how the original Will was written.

Laura Miner also read a document from a 1975 Select board meeting where Town officials were requesting to use funds to offset the expenses of the Brandon Sewer Project and the current Trust of Public Funds did not turn over the entire Trust for that purpose.

**7 Applications Previously on Hold**

Trustees brought back the two applications that were tabled at the 5/1/25 meeting. The first application was from Seth Hopkins from the Town of Brandon for Wastewater Vacuum Sampling equipment. Trustees agreed this falls within stipulations of the fund and agreed to pledge \$20,000 as requested. Since funding for FY 24-25 is at maximum, pledge could be paid out July 1, 2025 to Town of Brandon. Motion by Laura Miner to approve request and second by Courtney Satz in favor.

The second application was from Jeff Cathcart of Brandon United Methodist Church for restoration of the bell tower which has become unusable and unstable. The church is on the State Historical Buildings Record and requests \$10,750 from the Trust. Open discussion raised concerns from community members that this was a Church vs. State decision that should not be supported. Community member stated that the church offered community-building events including food shelf. Courtney Satz was in favor of supporting the request from a viewpoint of town historical restoration. Laura Miner made a motion to pledge \$5,000 towards this request in FY 25-26, available July 1, 2025. Motion second by Courtney Satz and approved 2-0.

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### **3 Public Comment and Participation**

Judy Bunde suggested asking applicants for financial statements when applying for funds. Tricia Welch suggested inquiring what applicants are doing for their own fundraising. Jan Coolidge asked how to get more people on Trustees board. Cecil Reniche-Smith confirmed State statute designates 3 Trustees on the board, no more, no less. Vicki Disorda recommended a specific period to accept requests, rather than accept them all year. This would allow the Trustees to look through everything together and decide where funds fit best according to the stipulations, as well as a way to not use up all funding at the beginning of the FY. Trustees agreed this could be a good idea moving forward. Seth Hopkins challenged the Trustees to ask if they would be in favor of all “proceeds” of the Trust being given to sewage items annually. Laura Miner replied she would consider. Courtney Satz asked if there would ever be a year where the full amount would not be requested, which was answered no. Claire Astone questioned the funding distributed in FY 23-24, which was clarified to include “pledged” monies that were not yet distributed. Brent Beuhler challenged the Trustees again on the OVAA award and requesting the funding back based on an invoice from architects that he felt did not fall under expenses for a “feasibility study”. Past funding for the Brandon Free Public Library was questioned given they request an appropriation from the Town and also have a Farr Trust. Molly Kennedy clarified that the Farr Trust for BFPL is restricted for books only and that past funding received from Trustees of Public Funds was for the Renovation project, which was completed with private donations/grants and no tax dollars.

### **5 Next meeting**

No next meeting has been scheduled.

### **7 Adjourn**

Motion by Laura Miner and second by Courtney Satz to adjourn. The motion carried with a vote of 2-0.

Meeting adjourned 6:52pm.

Respectfully submitted,  
Courtney Satz