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**MINUTES OF DECEMBER 22, 2025**

**SELECTBOARD**

Selectboard Members Present: Doug Bailey, Cecil Reniche-Smith, Ralph Ethier, Brian Coolidge, Jeff Haylon

Others Present: Seth Hopkins, Bill Moore, Jan Coolidge, Barry Varian, Brent Buehler, Gerad Lowell, Wayne Rausenberger, Jeff Schumann, Jeff Whiting, David Kachajian (chief of police), Samantha Sumner. By Zoom: Bruce Jenson, Keith Whitcomb.

- 1 Chair Doug Bailey called the meeting to order at 7PM. All selectboard members were seated. Motion by Reniche-Smith/Haylon to adopt the posted agenda. Voted 5-0.
- 2 Bailey offered brief remarks to foster a smooth and courteous meeting. He then reiterated the Town's gratitude to Nifty Thrifty for their recent gift of \$50,000 to the Town for solar energy production. This has recently been highlighted in several news outlets, showing Brandon in a positive light.
- 3 Chief Kachajian introduced Samantha Sumner as the new administrative professional at the police station and highlighted her Vermont State Police training and employment. The chair and board welcomed Ms Sumner to the Town of Brandon professional staff with words of welcome and a round of applause. Our new police lieutenant Paul Samataro expects to be introduced to the community at a later meeting.
- 4 Jeff Schumann and Jeff Whiting of the Otter Creek Watershed Insect Control District gave an interesting and informative presentation on the District's organization and operation. Please see app-generated notes appearing below for topics covered. No votes were required.
- 5 Motion by Reniche-Smith/Haylon to consider items 5a through 5d as a consent agenda. Voted 5-0. Motion by Reniche-Smith/Haylon to approve the consent agenda. Voted 5-0.
- 6 Reports to the selectboard were provided by the town management team. Please see app-generated notes appearing below for topics discussed. No votes were required.
- 7 Public comment on other items was called for; the only query was about which property has had its tax arrearage cleared and so been removed from the tax sale. The property at 225 Furnace Road is removed from the tax sale.
- 8 Motion to adjourn by Coolidge/Haylon. Not debatable. Voted 5-0. 7:24PM.

Respectfully submitted,



Note: The recording is online at the Town's YouTube channel for those who require detail at the level of every word spoken. Below are notes taken by the Minutes AI app.

Notes on Selectboard Meeting Created on December 22, 2025 at 7:00 PM by Minutes AI

- 1 Meeting called to order.

Agenda

- Motion to adopt the agenda as warned.
- Seconded.
- Agenda approved.

2 Select Board Remarks

- The Select Board aims to treat everyone with respect and dignity.
- Nifty Thrifty donated money to the town for solar energy.
- The donation will help lower the town's costs.

- The money is designated for solar panels at the police station, town garage, and electric charging stations.
- The town anticipates saving roughly \$10,000 a year.

### 3 New Staff Introduction

- A new administrative assistant, Samantha Sumner, has been hired.
- Sumner previously worked with the Vermont State Police and the Middlebury Police Department.
- She will help alleviate the administrative workload for officers.
- The Select Board supports the police department.
- A new lieutenant, Paul, is sick and will be introduced in a couple of weeks.

### 4 Otter Creek Watershed Insect Control District (Jeff Schumann, Jeff Whiting)

#### Introductions and Thanks

- Jeff Schumann, chair of the board, thanks everyone for their support.
- Jeff Whiting, vice chair, is from Goshen.
- Wayne Rothnauer is a member of the select board.
- Seth has been a huge help, especially with keeping the meetings operating in line with Vermont statute.

#### This Year

- Started the year with the idea of hiring a whole new staff.
- Had to get everybody trained and licensed.
- Mosquitoes got ahead of them.
- 92 spray missions over the course of the summer.
- The drought hit, which helped a lot.
- Budget wise, things were looking bleak, but the drought helped stop the bleeding.
- Finished the year in pretty good shape.

#### Improvements

- Upgraded old trucks from the 1990s to early 2011 and 2012 models.
- Replaced three of the oldest trucks.
- Trying to build a fleet of Toyota Tacomas.
- Upgraded the lab with the help of the year's ending larvicide grant.
- New light traps, microscopes, and lab equipment.
- Hired two interns from Middlebury College and UVM.
- They ran the lab and did all the testing and field sampling.

#### Youth Employment

- Kerry White managed the youth, but they eventually did their own thing.
- Youth worked independently from 9:00 AM until Kerry's arrival.
- The organization replaced two old laptops with new ones, with the state helping to pay for them.

#### Larvicide Application with Drones

- The Lemon Fair district received a \$75,000 grant to explore larvicide applications with a drone.
- After attending a demonstration, they realized they didn't want to own a drone and preferred to hire someone for drone work.
- Lemon Fair will share the grant money with the OCW district and pay for half of any larvae sighting next year.
- OCW has chemicals ready, but the problem is finding the larva, which they believe are either deep in the swamps or up in the woods.
- Sampling indicates species that breed in vernal ponds or pools up in the woods, which are difficult to larvicide.

#### Facility Needs

- The facility lacks running water and a shower facility, relying on borrowed water and porta potties.
- They have obtained the necessary permits for water and a septic system but are approximately \$20,000 short of the estimated \$50,000 cost.
- They hope to fund the project with surplus from the bonds if they have a dry year.

#### Leadership Challenge

- The speaker, Jeff, and the treasurer are each putting in 25 to 30 hours a month, which is unsustainable.

- They need to find someone to run the organization, handling permits, treasury, and state-related tasks.
- The challenge is that it's a part-time seasonal job with no benefits, making it difficult to find a suitable candidate.
  - "We need someone for this to be their part time thing that they can give us."
- They are looking for a unique individual, possibly retired, who can fit the mold and run the organization to prevent burnout.

#### Part-Time Seasonal Position Details

- The position would start part-time in March, become solid in mid-April, and continue through September, with some work in October.
- They are willing to keep the person on retainer for about five hours a month during the off-season (October to February).
- Jeff Whiting starts the permitting process right after New Year, so they want the person around for that.
- During the summer months, the position requires 40 hours a week, with potential for overtime.

#### Permit Writing

- Jeff Whiting wants to turn over permit writing to someone with a science background due to limited time and age.

#### Water Line Extension

- An extension of the water line from Old Fox was discussed six years ago, but it is now a "dead end".
- They are looking at wells and have switched from a septic tank permit to a holding tank permit, which they believe will be cheaper in the short term.

#### 5 Consent Agenda

- A motion was made to adopt a consent agenda for:
  - Minutes from the regular meeting on December 8th.
  - Minutes from the budget workshop on December 9th.
  - The warrant.
  - The single special event liquor permit.
- The motion was seconded and approved.
- The consent agenda was then approved.

#### 6 Reports to the Selectboard

##### Town Manager's Report (Seth Hopkins)

- The Winter Village was successful, with positive feedback from residents, visitors, and merchants.
- The town received a \$26,000 payment to pull a property out of tax sale, covering principal, interest, and legal fees.
- The tax sale for other properties is still scheduled for February 26th.
- The 2016 cruiser sale fell through and will be relisted, with the auction running longer than two weeks due to the holidays.
  - The auction company said that it is extremely rare for auction winners to not complete the transaction.

##### Financial Report Update (Doug Bailey)

- The updated financial report shows the town is under budget on almost everything.
- Items exceeding 50% usage were expected, such as debt services.

##### Mr. Moore's Report (December 22nd)

- Celtics bus trip canceled due to low pre-registration; refunds issued. Tickets will be sold on StubHub to recoup costs.
  - The town will receive around \$90,000 from the Penny Estabrook estate for Estabrook Park.
  - Funds will be used for the multi-use court paving project in the spring.
- Brandon Idol registration remains open through December 31st with only three spots left.
- Diane Riberty donated a modern refrigerator for the town hall, installed upstairs with ice and water.
- A restored plaque honoring local graduates who died in WWII is installed downstairs near the ramp.
  - The Brandon High School alumni committee funded the restoration.
  - Dr. Kevin Thornton will present the historical context of each person listed on the plaque in June 2026 during the Brandon alumni weekend.

Questions for Mr. Moore

- Brett Bueller asked if the \$4,400 in the warrant for the basketball game was for tickets to be refunded.
  - Mr. Moore confirmed that it was.
- Brett Bueller inquired about the availability and affordability of fireworks for the upcoming Fourth of July.
  - The Brandon Independence Day committee found a solution through the Brandon Fire District's ability to purchase fireworks wholesale.
  - The fire department will set off the fireworks, resulting in significant savings compared to hiring a company.
  - North Star Fireworks was purchased by a larger company, increasing the minimum cost to around \$20,000.
  - Chief Kilpeck and the fire department are committed to making this happen.

7        Public Comment and Participation

- Open for items not on the agenda, to be answered later.
- Question about a removed property: Will it be listed in the minutes?
  - Answer: The Gerow property at 225 Furnace Road is no longer part of the tax sale.

8        Motion to adjourn, seconded, all in favor. Meeting adjourned.