

MINUTES OF JANUARY 26, 2026

SELECTBOARD

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

Others Present: Seth Hopkins, Bill Moore, Barry Varian, Billy Bullock, Brent Buehler, Gerad Lowell, Todd Nielsen, Steve Bisette, Ray Marcoux. By Zoom: Jan Coolidge, Bruce Jenson, Chris Powers, June Kelly.

- 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 a reminder of the Pre-Town Meeting this coming Saturday at 11AM downstairs in the Town Hall. There will be a Zoom attendance option; use the regular selectboard Zoom sign-in details. This is a special selectboard meeting and the agenda is posted on the selectboard page and the bulletin boards. The purpose of the Pre-Town Meeting is to present the proposed FY27 budget before early voting starts.
- 3 Rep. Todd Nielsen spoke to the meeting on legislation he has been involved with in Montpelier. The two bills he focused on concerned emergency housing / homelessness and immunization recommendations. He took questions from the public present.
- 4 Motion by Reniche-Smith/Coolidge to consider items 4a through 4f as a consent agenda. Voted 5-0. Motion by Reniche-Smith/Haylon to approve the consent agenda. Voted 5-0.
- 5 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.
- 6 Motion by Coolidge/Reniche-Smith to approve the certificate of highway mileage. Voted 5-0.
- 7 Motion by Coolidge/Haylon to approve the certificate of no appeal of 2025 Grand List. Voted 5-0.
- 8 Motion by Haylon/Ethier to approve official warning for Town Meeting as presented. Voted 5-0.
- 9 After discussion, the board took no action on any selectboard position regarding the budget committee articles to be voted on the floor of Town Meeting. Reniche-Smith noted that 17 VSA §2646 (18) speaks to creation of an advisory budget committee and 24 VSA §1147 sets forth their duties.
- 10 Public comment on other items was called for; Hopkins stated the police fleet size was an open question.

The board recessed at 7:39. The board reconvened at 7:49.

- 8 Motion by Haylon/Reniche-Smith to enter executive session per 1 VSA §313(a)(3) regarding the appointment or employment or evaluation of a public officer or employee, to include the town manager. Voted 5-0. The board entered executive session at 7:49. Motion by Reniche-Smith/Coolidge to exit executive session at 8:00. Voted 5-0. No action required.

- 9 Motion to adjourn by Coolidge/Haylon. Not debatable. Voted 5-0. 8:00PM.

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 January 26, 2026 at 7:00 PM by Minutes AI

1 - Agenda adopted as warned.

2 Opening Remarks

- The pre-town meeting will be on Saturday, January 31 at 11:00 a.m. in the same room. If the room is too crowded, the meeting will be moved upstairs.
- The pre-town meeting will use the same Zoom setup as the select board meeting.

3 Representative Todd Nielsen's Remarks

- Todd Nielsen states that traditional funding is uncertain, so it is important to focus on the issues that can be controlled.
- He discusses H594, an act related to establishing the Temporary Emergency Housing and Accountability Program and the Return Home Program in fiscal years 2027, 2028.
 - In fiscal year 2027, \$30 million will be spent. In 2028, \$25 million will be spent.
- He discusses H545, an act related to issuing immunization recommendations.
 - He voted no because he didn't like how they didn't have a schedule for children.
 - He states that he has constituents that feel strongly about the bill's integrity.
 - He believes in consumer protection to notify patients specifically of their assumptions of liability in this case.
 - "Our state should care enough about the patient to inform them and require their consent when they are assuming all liability for the outcome of receiving a state recommended immunization. And then they have no legal recourse if something goes wrong."
- Everything is live streamed on Vermont Gov under committees.

Questions for Todd Nielsen

- Billy Bullock asked why Rep Nielsen voted no for H545.
 - Nielsen responded that if the vaccine is bad from the manufacturer, there's no recourse.
 - He stated that he is unvaccinated for COVID.
- Bullock stated that Nielsen's vote was a shame and that the bill is important to the health and welfare of children, adults, and the homeless.

4 Consent Agenda Vote

- Motion to adopt a consent agenda for recurring matters, including:
 - Minutes of January 12
 - Warrant liquor license renewals
 - Tobacco and tobacco substitute license renewals
 - New liquor license for the Amateur Sports Bar
 - New tobacco and tobacco substitute licenses
- Motion seconded.
- All in favor, say aye. Opposed? None.

Questions on the Motion

- Question about the Amateur Sports Bar LLC: "I have never heard the name of the Amateur sports Bar llc. So tell me who that is."
 - Believed to be the bar opening in the former Ripton Mountain Distillery space by Andy Doaner.
- Ralph's questions:
 - BMI fee for Town Hall answered by Bill Moore: Yearly fee for music licensing.
 - Bill to The Reporter answered by Seth Hopkins: From the previous fiscal year, for an Energy Committee flyer in The Reporter. Being paid from Energy Committee funds but hitting this fiscal year.

Vote on ABCDEF

- All in favor, say aye. Opposed? No.

5a Town Manager's Report — Mr Hopkins

- No updates to the published report, except for the long duration snowstorm.
 - Town crew working hard, trying to work safe.
 - No phone calls about road conditions.

- No phone calls for emergency warming shelters over the weekend.
- Bill Moore streamlined telephone, Internet, and fax services with Comcast.
 - Estimated savings of \$500 a month.
- Shirley Markland resigned from the Historic Preservation Commission, creating a vacancy.
- Vacancies on boards and commissions:
 - Development Review Board (alternate)
 - Planning Commission (alternate)
 - Energy Committee (member)
 - Rutland County Solid Waste District (member representing Brandon)
 - Historic Preservation Commission (member)
- Budget summaries and tax estimators sent to the Herald, the Independent, and Lakeside News.
- Cecil Reniche-Smith highlighted that Historical Preservation Committee member qualifications are in the town policy/ordinance on the website.
 - Includes architecture, history, archaeology, and land preservation.
 - Members do not all have to be from Brandon if needed to find qualified individuals.

Comments for Mr Hopkins

- Kudos to the highway department for their long hours.

Questions from the Public for the Town Manager

- Brent Buehler: Running low on salt again.
 - Downside to stockpiling: Must keep it dry.
 - Salt shed is undersized.
 - Hoop building could be used for salt storage, but then nothing else due to corrosion.
- Congratulations on Comcast relationship initiated by Bill Moore.
 - Guaranteed state pricing.
 - Contract is at least two years, maybe five years.

5b Community Development — Mr Moore

Town Events and Announcements

- Vermont's Agency of Natural Resources will be in the meeting room on January 27th for public meetings regarding rulemaking amendments to Vermont's use of public waters rules.
- Laura Dlugolecki will lead a meeting on February 6th at 5:30.
- The Brandon Town Hall will host a trivia competition fundraiser for the Brandon Independence Celebration Committee on February 6th.
 - Food by Maes Mobile, adult beverages by Red Clover, soft drinks and popcorn available.
 - Quizmasters: Bill Moore and Molly Kennedy.
- One Room Theatrics, directed by Mike Mitrano, will use the town hall for practice and performance space from February 8th-14th.
 - Performances of "All I Really Did Need to Know I Learned in Kindergarten" on February 13th and 14th.
 - Tickets at oneroomtheatrics.com.
- Spring sports and summer camp ideas are being accepted.

Union Street Easements

- Working slowly through questions about Union Street easements.
- V Trans has offered assistance with the easement process.

6 Certificate of Highway Mileage

- There are no changes to the certificate of highway mileage.
- This determines the amount of payment the state makes to the town for state aid to town highways.
- The town has 71 miles of roads that receive some aid.
 - Class 1 (Route 7 and 73 inside the village): most aid.
 - Class 2 (16 miles, roads between Brandon and other towns): good amount of aid.
 - Class 3 (40 miles, roads inside Brandon): very little aid.
 - Class 4/legal trail: no aid.
- Motion to approve the mileage certificates was made, seconded, and approved.

7 Certificate of No Appeal or Suit Pending

- This certificate for the 2025 grand list, provided by the assessor, means nobody is suing the town and there are no appeals in process.
- Motion to approve was made, seconded, and approved.

8 Official Warning for Town Meeting

- Town meeting is scheduled for Monday, March 2nd at 7pm.
- The warning was prepared by the town clerk.
- All appropriations requested this year were requested last year, with no increased appropriations.
 - \$1,000 from the Chamber of Commerce is not being requested this year.
 - \$50,000 for capital funding, approved last year, is not being requested this year.
- Motion to approve the warning for town meeting was made, seconded, and approved.

9 Select Board Position on Budget Committee Articles

- There will be two floor votes at town meeting:
 - Whether to have a budget committee.
 - If so, whether members should be appointed or elected.
- If elected, the election would be in August.
- The Select Board will not take a position on the budget committee articles.
 - "Personally I, I don't think the select board should take a position on it. It's kind of like putting a thumb on the scale. I'd like to let it be."
- There will be no opportunity to vote online, must be present at the meeting.
- Clarification was requested on the guidelines and protocol the budget committee should fall under.
- The board prepares a budget and presents it to the committee for review and comment.
- Statute states that if a municipality creates an advisory budget committee, the committee evaluates the municipality's budget and makes recommendations to the select board.
- In the past, the budget committee worked in conjunction with the board, attending budget meetings and voicing opinions.
- Public was invited to attend meetings, with participation from Barry, Brent, Jan Coolidge, Karen Rhodes, and Pat Welch via Zoom.
- Earlier in the year, it was believed that having members of the budget committee at each meeting fit into the ambiguous language of the statute.
- Concern that the statute casts the budget committee as a review board rather than a collaborative one.
- It is argued that the previous method of operation still fits the statutory language.
- The nature of the budget committee will be determined by whoever is elected or appointed to it.
- The current approach seeks common ground and consensus between the board and additional members.
- Jan Coolidge stated that the budget committee was initially separate, but after a few years, they recommended coordinating with the select board to avoid duplicating the process.

10 Public Comment and Participation

- Mr. Bueller asked if there was a consensus on the police car fleet.
 - The answer was to be determined.
- The police budget is under year-to-date figures by about \$255,000.
- Recognition of Liz Beth Alvarado, Brandon resident and former Rec director in Pittsford, for her work.
- A recess will be taken before going into executive session.

11 Executive Session

- Motion to go into executive session per 1 VSA 313 (a) (3).
 - Appointment or employment of an evaluation or evaluation of public officer employee to include the town manager.

12 Motion to Adjourn. All in favor.