

Town of Brandon Select Board Meeting June 26, 2014 DRAFT

NOTE: These are unapproved minutes, subject to amendment and/or approval at the subsequent board meeting.

In Attendance: Devon Fuller, Blaine Cliver, Ethan Swift, Dave Atherton, and Maria Ammatuna

Also in Attendance: Sue Gage, Beth Carr, Tracy Wyman, June Bohler, Roger Bougor, Sharron Kenney, John Perry, Dennis Reisenweiver, Nancy Rowe, Nancy Jakiela, Art Doty, Donna Doty, Lindsay Genier, Mike Winkler, Adam Murach, Julia Varian, Nancy Fisher, Kathy Rausenberger, Wayne Rausenberger, Eugene Pagano, Phyllis Reed, Lisa Kenyon, Janet Coolidge, Bernie Carr, MeiMei Brown, Debbie Boyce Bill Moore, Sue Wetmore, Debra Jennings, Jeff Stewart, Linda Stewart, Jack Fillioe, Dick Kirby, Debbie Kirby, Linda Graziano, Phyllis Atchinson, Phil Keyes, Lee Kahrs, Brian Sanderson, Cindy Bell, Janet Mondlak, Mary Bagley, Peter Breen, Richard Baker, Charles Jakiels, Anna Scheck, Robert Kincher, Chris Brickell, and Robin Bennett.

The meeting was called to order by Maria Ammatuna at 7:00 PM.

1. Agenda Adoption – Motion by E. Swift and seconded by B. Cliver to adopt the agenda as stated. D. Atherton made the following amendments: move item 5) to 2 A) and move item 6) to 2 B) and adding the Brandon Free Public Library representatives to 1 B) **Motion passed unanimously 5 – 0.**

M. Ammatuna explained the purpose of the meeting as being a working meeting for budget purposes.

1 B) Janet Mondlak was present representing the Library Board of Trustees. There was a rumor about town stating that the library allocation of \$90,000 was part of the budget being cut, with the Senior Citizens Center. Following the rumor, the Library representatives were invited.

Ms. Mondlak explained that 52% of the library expenses are covered by tax allocations and the remaining 48% is covered by other fundraising revenue. There was a level funded allocation request submitted this year.

M. Ammatuna inquired the statistics from the endowment. Ms. Mondlak indicated that the 2013 actual and the 2014 statistics that were submitted were year to date information. M. Ammatuna inquired who owned the library. Ms. Mondlak indicated that the Brandon Free Public Library is the owner.

D. Fuller inquired if the Capital Improvement Plan was to repair the building. D. Fuller commended the folks who run the library and stated that there was never a thought to reduce the \$90,000, nor was the option discussed.

2. Municipal Operations

Ms. Bennett was asked to provide a statement of the essential vs. minimal operations. Currently, the administration is comprised of Town Manager (direct reports are the Police Chief, Recreation Director and the Department of Works Superintendent). The Finance Department is comprised of the Town Clerk and administration, the administration supports the entire organization.

Chief Brickell explained that currently, the Police Department provides 24 hour coverage/7 days a week. If there were to be cuts, the coverage would end at midnight and not be available again until 6:00 AM. Currently, the Vermont State Police discontinues coverage at 2:00 AM until approximately 8:00 AM and if there were any incidents, the Brandon Police officer on call would be contacted. D. Fuller inquired the cost for a call out. Chief Brickell explained that there is a 2 hour minimum call out, plus the time out.

M. Ammatuna inquired the percent of calls that occur between midnight and 8:00 AM. Chief Brickell stated 40% of all calls occur within this time frame.

M. Ammatuna explained the note that is being requested is for \$1.5 million for 90 days. Ms. Bennett stated that this would cover bond payments, lease payments and education. The information gathered was based on a historical cash need basis and would hopefully cover first quarter expenses, based on historical data. Town Clerk Sue Gage stated that the summary of expenses to be covered by this \$1.5 million was given to the Select Board and is based on expected pay-outs and a worst case scenario.

D. Atherton inquired if there was a separate school tax billing. Ms. Gage stated that the software system would become more error prone. D. Atherton stated that he would research this option with NEMRC and inquired if this was a successful option, would make the recommendation to send out separate bills for the education portion to have income for the education portion and not draw on the \$1.5 million line of credit that is being requested.

M. Ammatuna inquired of Ms. Scheck the timing of the billing cycles. Ms. Scheck stated that the bills traditionally go out on July 15 and are due on August 15, giving the taxpayer 30 days.

D. Fuller stated that there is no need to “rush” another budget vote, as this would cause mistakes in the communication. B. Cliver inquired if it was necessary to have the vote happen on a Tuesday.

D. Fuller asked about the line of credit. Ms. Gage stated that this would be a “draw down” loan. D. Atherton stated that if the 2 separate bills were produced, there would be no interest paid on the amount that is payable to the schools.

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M. Ammatuna inquired what time period the loan would cover, whether it be the proposed current first quarter or the final quarter of the 2013 – 2014 budget year. Ms. Gage stated that the proposed amount was based on the proposed budget year.

E. Swift inquired if this was a 3 month actual expense. Ms. Gage explained that this was last years' expenses "bumped" to the proposed levels. D. Atherton inquired if this loan was required to be repaid by September 30, 2014. Ms. Gage stated that the repayment date was September 30, 2014, however, the only amount to be repaid was the amount that was actually borrowed and not the entire \$1.5 million, which is in accordance with the State Statute.

M. Ammatuna inquired if the \$1.5million included the school requirements. Ms. Gage stated that there is no state education rate set as yet. D. Atherton felt that the school bills should be sent.

M. Ammatuna stated that the current budget year expenses were \$758,000 for the first quarter and the current proposed amount is \$805,000. Ms. Scheck stated that the current budget year vote did not pass until July 7, 2013, and did not need a loan.

Ms. Bennett stated that a loan would be necessary this year as there is no cash flow and payroll is necessary. Ms. Bennett also stated that the Town takes the risk of school taxes not being paid by the taxpayer.

E. Swift inquired when the first payment of the allocations was payable. Ms. Scheck stated August 20, 2014.

Ms. Gage stated that she has contacted both local banks and Lake Sunapee has approved the loan, however, the National Bank of Middlebury has a Loan Committee that reviews these loans and does not meet until July 9. B. Cliver inquired the interest rates. Ms. Gage stated that the interest rate at Lake Sunapee is 1.75% and the National Bank of Middlebury is 1.25%.

M. Ammatuna read the resolutions and inquired what would occur with the appropriations and the school as these are separate budgets. Ms. Gage stated that this was for an "over-all" loan and not broken down.

E. Swift inquired the school appropriations. D. Atherton felt it was necessary to do a separate billing to cover the school expenses. M. Ammatuna stated that the fire department also needs their portion of funds. E. Swift stated that the resolution needs to be revised to include the appropriations. Ms. Bennett and Ms. Gage will revise the wording.

M. Ammatuna inquired if the \$805,000 would be necessary as this past year amount spent was \$758,000 and the amount borrowed needed to be tangible. D. Fuller stated that the resolution wording needed changing. M. Ammatuna stated that the numbers need to be tangible before deciding on the loan. B. Cliver inquired if interest would be paid on

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the amount borrowed. E. Swift inquired if there was more reporting available on actual expenses. Ms. Scheck stated that there was information that could be made available. Ms. Gage and Ms. Bennett will be setting up a system to do the accurate reporting.

M. Ammatuna inquired if the bills included the school, fire and appropriation allocations. M. Ammatuna reported that \$215,615 in allocations were passed by the voters. These allocations include: Brandon Area Rescue Squad - \$20,735; Brandon Area Chamber of Commerce - \$1,000; RSVP & Volunteer Center - \$406; Rutland Area Visiting Nurse Association - \$10,200; Brandon Independence Day Celebration - \$6,000; Southwestern VT Council on Aging - \$2,400; ARC – Rutland Area - \$3,500; Rutland Mental Health Services - \$6,624; Community Health Service of Addison County - \$750; Foxcroft Farm - \$15,000; Union Street - \$125,000; and Wheeler Road Bridge - \$24,000. The fire department allocation is \$234,431.

Ms. Scheck stated that the first payment to the school is adjusted.

The current expenses, including operating is \$1.335 million plus the school allocations.

D. Atherton inquired of Ms. Scheck the percentage of taxpayers that pay their tax bills on or prior to the due date. Ms. Scheck stated that the Grand List has not been received, therefore, tax bills cannot be sent to the tax payers.

D. Fuller stated that there needs to be cuts and conservative spending.

M. Ammatuna stated that the proposed vote date is the same as the Chamber Auction. Chief Brickell stated that the auction is at 4:00 PM and the polls open at 7:00 AM, therefore, sees no conflict. The Select Board agrees to leave the date as July 22.

Dennis Reisenweiver inquired what budget the Select Board is referring? M. Ammatuna stated that April 9 budget. Mr. Reisenweiver inquired what the \$1.5 million is based on? Ms. Ammatuna stated that the amount is based on actual dollars spent.

MeiMei Brown stated that the Police Department is essential and should not be cut. D. Atherton stated that this would not be a desired cut. Janet Coolidge stated that Chief Brickell attended the Budget Committee meetings and reported that 40% of all calls received occur in the overnight hours. Deb Boyce, a Brandon Area Rescue Squad member, stated that it is beneficial for the Police Department to be on duty overnight as there are times that their response is necessary prior to the rescue squad personnel arrival.

M. Ammatuna stated that the police cars housed at the officers' residence increases response time and are better maintained as the officer shows pride in maintaining the car.

Chief Brickell stated that possible savings within the Police Department could be reducing the Officers' hours from 43 to 40 per week; not replacing the cruiser, which is included in the Capital Improvement budget, however, the cruiser that is due to be replaced is 8 years old and if the officers share a cruiser, it decreases the value; insurance

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costs, which is a union contract negotiated item; not filling the vacant officer position would save \$70,000, however, Lt. Pulsifer has experience in Rental and Health Code and is willing to fill these positions, in addition to the police duties, if the 8th officer is hired; cutting shifts from midnight until 9:00 AM would save \$17,000 in 3 months.

The 24/7 coverage allows for coverage in the event of illness, vacation, injury or training.

The police department monitors sex offenders in Brandon; monitors probation and release and it is not safe when an officer is working alone.

Chief Brickell reported that prior to 2007, there was less than 24/7 coverage, and when 24/7 coverage was implemented, the burglary rate decreased by 66%.

D. Fuller inquired who would perform the checks on probation cases. Chief Brickell stated that Probation and Parole would be responsible and there are only 2 officers in the County to cover that function if Brandon police did not monitor.

Mary Bagley inquired if hours or employees could be cut in the union positions? Ms. Bennett stated that the employees would need to agree to the changes. D. Atherton inquired why there was no union representation present. M. Ammatuna stated that there was contact and the representative had prior commitments and was not able to make the meeting.

Tracy Wyman inquired who would be liable if there were cuts in staffing and something were to occur while waiting for back-up. Chief Brickell stated that safety is the first priority.

M. Ammatuna stated that residents would like to see the officers out more as she is hearing that there are 2 officers sitting side-by-side. Chief Brickell stated that there are times that the officers meet to exchange information on a situation, transfer prisoner, and various other circumstances. Also, Chief Brickell stated that the Pittsford Police Department has similar vehicles.

E. Swift stated that social media should be considered to see where residents want cuts.

D. Fuller stated that on July 1, there should be a lay-off with minimum coverage at the Town Office, Police Department and Department of Public Works; cut work week to 4 days per week, except in the Police Department – E. Swift stated that this would require contract negotiations – D. Atherton stated that the Union contract will not allow for a cut from 40 hours to 30 hours (as an example), however, will allow for a cut from 40 hours to 0 hours.

Richard Baker stated that since the union contract ends at midnight on June 30, there is no requirement to award a raise until a budget is approved.

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Tracy Wyman inquired what would happen on June 30 if there is no union contract. Ms. Bennett stated that there was a provision to the contract and there would be no increases.

Cindy Bell inquired if there would be cuts to the Police Department at night. Chief Brickell explained scenarios to cutting "where ever". E. Swift stated that there are daytime requirements that would not necessarily allow for cuts during the day. Chief Brickell stated that training, court and other circumstances are daytime functions.

Peter Breen stated that the Select Board has the ultimate decision as to where and what to cut, however, the Departments should be consulted for recommendations on the cuts. Judy Bunde stated that there is no more money to find for cuts.

Mr. Reisenweiver stated that the Budget Committee made recommendations that were declined and others were considered and none were implemented. Mr. Reisenweiver agreed that the departments should be making the cut recommendations.

Nancy Jakiela stated that she supports the Police Department and cuts in that department are scary.

M. Ammatuna inquired the increase in health insurance for the Police Department. Ms. Bennett stated that the expense is based on personnel situations.

Ms. Bennett stated that if there were to be cuts in the Department of Public Works, there would be a saving of \$168,172 if 3 positions were cut.

Brian Sanderson stated that he contacted Ripton and Rutland Town officials regarding the contracting of winter services. Ripton has 23.3 miles of road (or 3.3 times less than Brandon) and they pay \$85 per hour for large dump truck and plow and \$75 per hour for small dump truck and plow. Rutland Town has 46 miles of road (or 1.7 times less than Brandon) and they pay \$249,900 to contract winter road services for 6 vehicles.

Currently, there are 4 staff that cover 76 miles of road with 4 part-time drivers that work the night shift.

Mr. Sanderson stated that safety is important and if there was a lay-off, it would leave Mr. Sanderson and 1 employee.

Mr. Baker stated that a lay-off would result in payment of accrued vacation time. B. Cliver stated that a RIF (reduction in force) would result in pay as well. Ms. Bennett stated that the Union would need to be involved prior to any RIF.

D. Atherton inquired what staff members were not union employees. Ms. Bennett stated that the Town Manager, Police Chief, Police Lt., and Department of Public Works Superintendent are not union employees.

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Ms. Bagley stated that a working foreman could have a union contract. Ms. Bennett stated that that would cause a potential issue.

D. Fuller recommended that the union be contacted regarding the 4-day work week.

D. Fuller recommended that the Recreation Director be cut to a 4 day work week. Ms. Bennett stated that the Recreation Director is a union employee, however, is a salaried employee.

Bill Moore stated that there are 11 planned programs from July 7 through August 30 with a net income of \$7,170, if all programs are full. There is a potential of losing \$4,050 of projected revenue.

The budget indicates that there is an income projection of \$41,000 and an expense projection of \$119,645.

The Assessor's office was discussed. Ms. Bennett stated that this is a contracted service and the Assessor Assistant works 2 days per week.

M. Ammatuna stated there could be a termination for convenience.

Ms. Bennett stated that there are payments due for equipment. Ms. Scheck stated that these are state loans that are due and payments are being made.

B. Cliver stated that the line of credit keeps the town running efficiently. D. Fuller stated that spending is the issue. D. Atherton stated that there needs to be cuts made to get the budget to the taxpayers. B. Cliver stated that running the town on a decreased level may cost the town more than "running as is".

D. Atherton stated that the union contract is an issue with the insurance costs and salary increases and it is difficult to discuss with no union representation. The union contract "housekeeping" was opened and not accepted.

Kathy Rausenberger stated that changes are necessary. B. Cliver stated that there may need to be a cut in services as the FY 13 budget income was \$858,000 and \$609,000 was received and the FY 14 budget income was \$816,000 and \$814,000 was projected. The FY 15 budget proposal is a 9.2% increase (\$605,000).

Ms. Bennett stated that the \$148,000 FEMA grant was not included in the budget as it is a non-repeat grant. Mr. Baker stated that it should not be included in the General Fund. E. Swift stated that there are still project with no budget.

Motion by B. Cliver and seconded by D. Fuller to approve the line of credit as proposed by the Town Clerk. E. Swift stated that the resolution should be modified to include appropriations. Motion passed 4 – 1 – 0. D. Atherton stated that the tax bills should be sent to include school, fire and appropriations.

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D. Fuller inquired what would be saved if the non-police employees were to be decreased to 4 day work weeks. Ms. Bennett stated \$31,000 would be saved. B. Cliver inquired if this was legal with the union contract. E. Swift indicated that this would have to be part of the union negotiations. B. Cliver stated that the cut in the work week is unrealistic until a budget is passed.

Ms. Bennett stated that the Police Department costs \$172,000 as is, however, this would change with Lt. Pulsifer working as Health Officer and Rental Code as well as police duties. The savings would be \$7,800. M. Ammatuna stated a stipend should be offered to Lt. Pulsifer for taking on these extra duties.

Mr. Baker agreed with Mr. Cliver and no lay-offs should occur until after the next vote.

Cindy Bell stated that the Budget Committee recommended union negotiations as the average person is not treated fairly.

B. Cliver stated that there should be a cut in the insurance portion. Ms. Bell stated that the union representative should be contacted first.

Phil Keyes inquired if negotiations would be affected if there was a proposal of cutting the insurance contribution from the town, reduction in hours or lay-offs. D. Fuller stated that there is not a complete union over-haul and the union would probably rather keep employees working and the town is borrowing the funds to keep these employees working.

Motion by D. Fuller and seconded by B. Cliver to move forward and pay as is on July 1, 2014. Motion failed 1 – 4 – 0.

D. Fuller would like the union contacted to check interest in negotiations. Ms. Bennett stated that she has made initial contact, however, a specific proposal and consequence of denial is required prior to meeting. D. Fuller stated that the community feels that there is “foolish” spending and an attempt needs to be made to build community trust. B. Cliver stated that there is 3 weeks to negotiate with the union. D. Atherton inquired the availability of the union representatives. Ms. Bennett stated that she does not know availability beyond “the next day or so”, however, the representatives understand the July 1 deadline. Ms. Bennett will be meeting with the Shop Steward to begin the discussions. D. Atherton stated that the discussions should have started in March. Ms. Bennett took responsibility of the discussions not starting in March and felt that Town Meeting needed to be finalized.

Bernie Carr inquired if there would be negotiations during the 3 week period prior to the next vote. M. Ammatuna stated that this would be revisited on June 30, 2014.

Chief Brickell stated that he is in need of a decision on the 8th police officer as he has a prospective employee who has accepted the position and start the academy on August 4. The prospective employee would need to move to the state. D. Atherton stated that there

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is no budget and it is difficult to give an answer. D. Fuller stated that in order to keep the police department “whole” it needs to happen. Ms. Bennett will call the union representatives and have an answer for Chief Brickell prior to the close of business on June 27, 2014. Mr. Carr inquired the net savings of Chief Brickell performing the Rental and Health Code positions. D. Fuller stated \$7,500 would be saved.

Cindy Bell inquired if the Town would go forward. M. Ammatuna stated that the town would be “in limbo”.

Linda Stewart inquired if the proposed 4 day work week was going to happen. Ms. Bennett stated that she would be contacting the union and the power is in the union hands.

Mr. Baker stated that, assuming the union was present, the employees are dedicated and an unsuccessful budget would wreck the workforce. D. Atherton inquired where Mr. Baker would like to see cuts. Mr. Baker stated the Select Board stipend. D. Atherton stated that residents don’t attend the meetings to express their wishes.

Beth Carr stated that the National recession has been the result in no money and people are resentful.

Tracy Wyman inquired what the next steps would be, to which Mary Bagley stated “mediation”. Mr. Wyman stated that the union is telling “us how to run the town.”

Brian Sanderson inquired if thing were “as is” until June 30. M. Ammatuna stated that nothing has changed.

Motion by B. Cliver and seconded by D. Atherton to adjourn. Motion retracted by M. Ammatuna.

Motion by D. Fuller and seconded by E. Swift to contact the union representative and inquire the reduction in hours to a 4 day work week for the next 3 weeks. B. Cliver stated that the line of credit would continue the town “as is” and consult the union.

Ms. Bennett inquired what would happen if there was no budget in 3 weeks. B. Cliver stated “lay-offs”. M. Ammatuna stated that there would be no lay-off until the union contacts are complete.

D. Atherton stated that there are 3 weeks to check for possible cuts to see if the budget passes. E. Swift stated that it is fiscally prudent to have Lt. Pulsifer fill in the positions and hire the 8th person.

Dick Kirby spoke that he feels that the union would be more inclined to accept the proposal for shorter work week instead of lay-offs.

Ms. Gage stated that residents have expressed an interest in cutting the police force from a 24/7 coverage as they feel that this coverage is not necessary. Judy Bunde stated that

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the residents needed to be educated as the burglaries have decreased 66% and 40% of the calls occur after midnight.

3. Debt Service Ms. Bennett stated that there is 1 debt that is due on July 1 that was not voted on at the last meeting. M. Ammatuna tabled this item and instructed Ms. Bennett to not release the payment.

Motion by E. Swift and seconded by B. Cliver to adjourn at 9:45 PM. Motion passed unanimously 5 – 0.

Respectfully submitted

Kelly Giard
Recording Secretary