

**Brandon Select Board Meeting  
July 22, 2024**

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

**Board Members in Attendance:** Doug Bailey, Heather Nelson, Brian Coolidge, Ralph Ethier, Tim Guiles

**Others In Attendance:** Seth Hopkins, Bill Moore, Steven Jupiter, Stephen Cijka, Dennis Reisenweaver, Neil Silins, Jack Schneider, Olya Hopkins, Shirley Markland, Billy Bullock

**Others by Zoom:** Bruce Jenson, Tricia Welch, Cecil Reniche-Smith

**1. Call to Order**

The meeting was called to order at 7:11PM by Doug Bailey – Board Chair.

***a. Agenda Adoption***

**Motion** by Heather Nelson/Tim Guiles to approve the agenda, as amended. **The motion passed unanimously.**

Add second executive session in accordance with 1 V.S.A. 313(3)(1)(3) to include Olya Hopkins, set tax rate and appointment to the Otter Creek Watershed Insect Control District.

**Motion** by Tim Guiles/Heather Nelson to enter into executive session at 7:12PM regarding the appointment or employment or evaluation of a public officer or employee per 1 V.S.A.313(3)(a)(3) to include Shirley Markland. **The motion passed unanimously.**

**2. Executive Session**

The Board came out of executive session at 7:16PM. There was no action required.

**Motion** by Tim Guiles/Heather Nelson to enter into executive session at 7:17PM regarding the appointment or employment or evaluation of a public officer or employee per 1 V.S.A.313(3)(a)(3) to include Olya Hopkins. **The motion passed unanimously.**

**3. Executive Session**

The Board came out of executive session at 7:31PM. There was no action required.

**4. Recurring Matters**

***a. Approval of Select Board Meeting Minutes – July 8, 2024***

**Motion** by Brian Coolidge/Heather Nelson to approve the Select Board minutes of July 8, 2024. **The motion passed unanimously.**

***b. FY 2023/2024 Warrant – July 21, 2024 - \$65,803.70 and FY 2024/2025 Warrant – July 22, 2024 - \$111,364.42***

**Motion** by Tim Guiles/Heather Nelson to approve the warrant of July 21, 2024, in the amount of \$65,803.70. **The motion passed unanimously.**

Doug Bailey questioned the invoice for the survey preservation grant. Seth Hopkins advised this is the VHB grant for the Preservation Committee. The Town had approved \$5,000 in the prior year for the grant and the rest is matched by the State.

c. *FY 2024/2025 Warrant – July 22, 2024 - \$111,364.42*

**Motion** by Tim Guiles/Heather Nelson to approve the warrant of July 22, 2024, in the amount of \$111,364.42. **The motion passed unanimously.**

Doug Bailey questioned the invoice for Marble Valley Regional Transportation public transit. Mr. Hopkins advised this is the annual appropriation to The Bus and is in the budget under the inter-governmental section.

*d. Set Tax Rate*

Seth Hopkins advised the Town Clerk has received the information needed for the homestead education rate for taxpayers who are primary residents. Mr. Hopkins reviewed the calculation sheet that Ms. Gage had provided. The total town rate that included the town budget, appropriations and fire district is \$0.9970 that is a 4.21% increase. The homestead education tax rate is \$1.672, that is a 16.685% increase. The total tax rate is \$2.6691 and is an increase of 11.690% over last year. Doug Bailey asked the driving factor in the local agreement rate and it was noted that this is the exempt properties and veterans' exemptions and the reason for the large percentage increase is due to the increase in their taxes.

A motion was made by Tim Guiles/Heather Nelson to accept the tax rate as outlined by the Town Clerk. **The motion passed unanimously.**

**5. Town Manager's Report**

A Town Manager's report was provided by Seth Hopkins and is available for viewing in the Board packet on the Town's website.

Seth Hopkins highlighted from his report the tax sale progress is paused while the attorney assures the notices comply with Act 106. Mr. Hopkins reported the true-up for Green Lantern was a significant increase this year (\$23,127) and is the largest the Town has received and will be split between Wastewater and the Buildings and Grounds. Mr. Hopkins also advised there will be a public hearing on August 12<sup>th</sup> at 6:30PM regarding the accessibility grant for the Brandon Library. The public is invited to attend. The Otter Creek Watershed Insect Control District will also be holding a special meeting tomorrow at 7:00PM at the Salisbury Town Clerk's office.

Mr. Hopkins reported Jackie Savela, Sue Gage and he reviewed the FY24 budget today and noted it will come close to projections. Budget numbers should be stable by the first meeting in September as the Town Clerk is able to credit delinquent tax payments through August. In additional information submitted to the Board since the publication of the agenda, Mr. Hopkins noted with regard to paving, it was thought the Arnold District project would be around \$350,000 but cost \$250,000 and there is \$102,000 unspent funds that the Select Board had designated. The Town Clerk's recommendation is to hold the funds while the FY25 paving projects are out to bid in August and if bids are over what is set aside for paving, the funds would be available to meet the gap. Mr. Hopkins suggested rebalancing the utility lines due to the heat pumps in the town hall and the police station. The electric increase of \$10,000 resulted in a \$6,400 decrease in oil and \$4,500 in propane, which resulted in a savings with using heat pumps.

Tim Guiles stated with regard to the Green Lantern true-up, it seems like the estimate was off by a lot and it would be good to see that it is closer next year. Mr. Guiles suggested the \$23,000 should go into the electric line item to lower the electric budget, unless it is used for heat pumps or electric vehicles, rather than into the General Fund. Seth Hopkins advised that the Town shows it as revenue and then shows the full expense and one has to look at both lines. The true-up revenue is in the Buildings and Grounds and Jackie Savela has indicated that some years it has been zero and some years it is in hundreds. Mr. Hopkins noted the Energy Committee has requested information from Green Lantern. Brian Coolidge stated last winter was much warmer. Mr. Hopkins also noted there was a cloudier summer last year, which is another variation.

Doug Bailey noted Larry Stevens is now the Zoning Administrator. Mr. Hopkins advised Mr. Stevens is planning to be in the office Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday each week for zoning administrator duties. Mr. Bailey asked with the Class 2 Road grant, the appropriation for paving, and the \$100,000 of local options funds if there is a plan to do the same paving or

more paving. Mr. Hopkins reported there is some hot mix work planned for August that the town crew will do. Once the paving bids are received, the Town will be in a better place to know what is needed for the paving. Mr. Hopkins noted he had a discussion with one paving person and there may be a need for the \$100,000 from the Arnold District project. Mr. Hopkins stated the carry forward can be dealt with differently and suggested spending down the other options first.

## **6. Rec Director's Report**

A Rec Director's report was provided by Bill Moore and is available for viewing in the Board packet on the Town's website.

Mr. Moore reviewed the Rec Director's report submitted:

*"Summer is nearly over, in the rec world and we are planning on our fall offerings to be available for registration starting July 29<sup>th</sup>.*

*New for this year – The Vermont Principal's Association made the decision for middle school football to transition from strictly padded flag to tackle. The Brandon Rec 7/8 football program will likely be playing a hybrid schedule that sees our team playing both.*

*We are partnering with Pittsford Rec to host a Saturday morning soccer league where we will invite teams to play 3/4 level games at Estabrook and 5 /6 level games at the Pittsford Recreation Area.*

*Fall cheer is back, thanks to coaches Robin Douglas and Lexi Duby.*

*SolarFest and Otter Valley's Tech Ed program are teaming up to have a group of students perform the work to add solar panels to the Phoenix Feeds courtesy golf cart. That work will commence in September.*

*A couple of donors have stepped forward to help our October drive-in movie series. Titles and dates to be announced at a later date.*

*Punkstock is scheduled for August 3<sup>rd</sup> at Estabrook. We are partnering with Ex Mortis Management to sponsor; our sponsorship extends to allowing them to use the facilities and equipment we have at Estabrook. They have their own insurance and there is no money changing hands between the Town of Brandon and the organizers. I performed a site visit with them to talk about how they should orient their sound set-up, and discuss the limits of the facility power, the parking, requirements for safety and the need for them to not charge admission to the park.*

*Held a meeting with a group of volunteers interested in helping with the multi-use court upgrade at Estabrook. The discussion centered around future uses and funding sources for the proposed amenities."*

Mr. Moore noted as an aside, it was a good meeting regarding the multi-use court. The quote was in excess of the ARPA money. It included some work that the highway department could perform. VT Buildings and Grounds has a grant that will match up to \$25,000 and the work may be scheduled in the spring to leverage money for a match for this grant.

Tim Guiles expressed concern with the Vermont Principals' Association (VPA) deciding to go from flag to tackle football as there is a growing awareness for health issues and asked Mr. Moore if there could be an insurance issue. Bill Moore advised he previously sat on a committee with the VPA and there was a decision to move to padded flag football. The VPA has seen teams not participate but create leagues of their own for middle school football in Vermont. Mr. Moore was advised by the Athletic Director at the school that the VPA reversed their decision to allow tackle football at the middle school in an effort to get the outlying programs under the management of the athletic directors. Padded flag and tackle football has been done correctly to assure that participants were trained properly. They will participate in a hybrid schedule and the Town is insured as the VLCT does insure rec programs that have tackle football. The leading sports organization has made the decision to assure that the greatest number of students remain safe to avoid the renegade programs. Doug Bailey also noted concern with the risk of injury and the financial liability and is surprised the VPA has gone in this direction. Mr. Guiles stated he is more interested in the safety of the children and this exists all through society. He noted the Town has ability to make decisions at a

local level on this important health issue and questioned if the padded football program could be continued. Mr. Moore stated if the Select Board were to advise the rec department not to participate, participants would choose to go to other programs that are not sanctioned. He stated the Town has the same coaching staff and commissioner and have been through concussion training and the idea of losing participants to play in programs that are not sanctioned is a concern.

Doug Bailey noted that Punkstock appears to be a good event but wanted to assure that the group was aware of the hours of restriction. Bill Moore advised they are aware of the regulations and where the speakers should be located to be kind to the neighbors.

Heather Nelson noted Camp Broadway was a success for families.

Brian Coolidge suggested a spigot would be a better solution for the fountains at Estabrook as it would show fiscal responsibility. He also thought that the fountains would invite vandalism and was not in favor of them. Bill Moore respectfully disagreed as it is a health hazard for children to be drinking from a spigot. The Town has had continuing donations and it was thought that a fountain would be good to have. Heather Nelson stated with regard to socio-equity and ADA compliance, it is a respectful and necessary item to have. She does not view it as a choice and accessibility is a right and it would not be correct if all could not access it. When it comes to vandalism, the more the park is used, the less opportunity there is, and she is glad the cost has been offset by donations. She understands multi-use and ADA compliance is important and she is glad that base is covered. Mr. Moore advised work is being done to make all parks ADA accessible. There will be a fountain in the play structure and one in the dog park. Mr. Moore noted that money had been invested in the park and there had been a spigot and the water had been left on. Doug Bailey stated the split rail fencing at Estabrook may be questionable. Mr. Moore noted that every couple of years the poles have to be repacked. Mr. Bailey suggested looking into the cost of new poles to change all of them, as he had heard that the fences are needing repair and noted he would be willing to help with the replacement of the fences. Ralph Ethier stated there needs to be wire between the split rail fencing as basketballs are going in the road. Mr. Moore advised that will be addressed.

## **7. Appointments**

### ***. Historic Preservation Commission***

**Motion** by Tim Guiles/Brian Coolidge to appoint Shirley Markland to the Historic Preservation Commission for an indefinite term. **The motion passed unanimously.**

### ***. Otter Creek Watershed Insect Control District***

**Motion** by Tim Guiles/Brian Coolidge to appoint Olya Hopkins to the Otter Creek Watershed Insect Control District until Town Meeting, March 4, 2025. **The motion passed unanimously.**

## **8. Public Comment and Participation**

Doug Bailey reiterated there will be a special meeting of the Otter Creek Watershed Insect Control District tomorrow at the Salisbury Town Clerk's office at 7:00PM.

Heather Nelson advised there is a Lego showcase near the Post Office and encouraged people to view the display.

## **9. Adjournment**

**Motion** by Brian Coolidge/Ralph Ethier to adjourn the Select Board meeting at 8:14PM. **The motion passed unanimously.**

Respectfully submitted,

Charlene Bryant  
Recording Secretary