

**Brandon Select Board Meeting  
October 28, 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, Tanner Romano, Karen Rhodes, Jack Schneider, Steve Bisette, Neil Silins, Barry Varian, Billy Bullock, Steven Jupiter, Jan Coolidge, Judy Bunde, Tom Kilpeck, Helyn Anderson

**Others by Zoom:** Keith Whitcomb, Tricia Welch

**1. Call to Order**

The meeting was called to order at 7:20PM by Doug Bailey – Board Chair.

**a. Agenda Adoption**

**Motion** by Brian Coolidge/Ralph Ethier to approve the agenda as amended. **The motion passed unanimously.**

Add an executive session regarding the appointment or employment or evaluation of a public officer or employee per 1 V.S.A.313(3)(a)(3)

**2. Select Board Remarks**

Doug Bailey stated all in attendance are neighbors and encouraged all to be respectful with their comments.

**3. Recurring Matters**

**a. Approval of Select Board Meeting Minutes – October 14, 2024**

**Motion** by Brian Coolidge/Ralph Ethier to approve the Select Board minutes of October 14, 2024. **The motion passed unanimously.**

**b. Select Board & Budget Advisory Committee Minutes – October 15, 2024**

**Motion** by Brian Coolidge/Ralph Ethier to approve the Select Board & Budget Advisory Committee minutes of October 15, 2024. **The motion passed unanimously.**

Doug Bailey advised next Monday night will be the next Budget Advisory Committee meeting.

**c. Warrant – October 28, 2024 - \$140,459.04**

**Motion** by Heather Nelson/Doug Bailey to approve the warrants of October 28, 2024, in the amount of \$140,459.04. **The motion passed unanimously.**

Ralph Ethier questioned the warrant for Bow Wow Babysitters. Bill Moore reported this is an outside contractor that provides 2-hour hikes for people with their dogs and has a fee that is collected. There was also a question regarding the Burlington Communications vehicle maintenance. Mr. Hopkins advised this is for replacing the radios and a base station for the Police Department and is a one-time expense that will last a number of years. Doug Bailey questioned the warrant for GMP regarding the Town's EV charging station as to whether the Town is breaking even. Mr. Hopkins stated the Select Board changed the rate a year ago and it would be good to download the revenues and compare them to the GMP bills the Town has paid. Mr. Bailey also questioned the warrant of \$1054.00 for the drug enforcement dog training. Mr. Hopkins stated this was

not actually for dog training but was for drug enforcement training for two officers and the warrant being for five days for lodging expense with the training funded by a federal grant.

#### **4. Regional Plan Update from Jeremy Gildrien, RRPC**

Jeremy Gildrien of the RRPC attended the meeting to provide an update on the RRPC's regional plan that is written for the county, minus Pittsfield and is updated every 8 years. Phase 1 that included public outreach is complete. The outreach included presentations in every town, pop-up events and a survey that received 1200 responses. They are now in Phase 2, which includes checking with everyone to determine if their interpretations were correct on the information received and are doing outreach to get opinions if they are on the right track with the plan. Mr. Gildrien advised the next feedback session will be held on Wednesday at the RRPC building. Information will be provided on what was heard, what policies were written and how they worked the feedback into the policies. This is the opportunity to have feedback on where the RRPC is on the plan and what will be included in the regional plan.

Doug Bailey asked about possible expansion of rail services and whether there may be a chance that a stop could be added in Brandon. Mr. Gildrien advised the feedback session on Wednesday would be the time to ask that question. Bill Moore advised he had previously worked with Dave Atherton and the State House requesting a whistle stop be added in Brandon but have been denied. Steve Bisette stated it would be good to have a whistle stop in Brandon due to the speed that the trains travel through Town.

#### **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 reported last Friday the Town was awarded three different grants. The Select Board has encouraged staff to secure non-property revenues for property tax relief that the staff has pursued for many years. Through efforts of Bill Moore and Kyle Leedam of Buildings and Grounds, the Town is eligible for equipment grants through VLCT. Police Chief Kachajian has secured a grant for \$1,500 to replace bullet proof vests and will also apply for the Leahy Bulletproof Vest Fund for the remainder of the cost. Also, through efforts of Mr. Moore, the Town was awarded funding through a Rec grant to acquire parkland to expand the Seminary Hill Park in the amount of \$12,500 and is half of the purchase price. Mr. Hopkins recommended using the Town Farm Fund as a potential non-budget match. Through efforts of the BEC and Jack Schneider, the Town has been approved for a \$50,000 grant to establish an energy navigator project to assist Brandon residents in securing contractors and funding sources to weatherize their homes and other initiatives. There is no Town match required for this award. On behalf of the Town, Mr. Hopkins would like to thank all who located and brought these grants through the application process as it takes a lot of people for these grants to come together.

Regarding updated financials, Mr. Hopkins reported at the end of FY24 there was \$100,000 taxes owed that were not paid and that is why the delinquent property taxes increased. He has made progress with the attorneys and have requested them to write a letter for the Town under their signature regarding the statutory tax sale process. The perception is another notice from the Town may be disregarded and a letter from the attorney is required. Mr. Hopkins advised some budget line-item numbers that may be of interest were included. Several are annual fees that have to be paid all at one and there will not be further expenses later. The police radio maintenance will exceed its budget and there should be a reduction in police overtime over October through December and Mr. Hopkins is working with the Police Chief for an over run on the department. Expenses are running a little more over pace and there was \$9,000 for paving the hoop house that will have to be moved to another method for those funds.

Doug Bailey thanked everyone involved with the grants, noting that the Board is excited about obtaining the remainder of the land for the Seminary Hill Park as some had assumed that the Town already owned it.

Mr. Hopkins advised he will post the updated report on the website in the Board packet.

#### **6. Community Development Report**

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A Community Development Manager's report was provided by Bill Moore and is available in the Board packet on the Town's Website. Mr. Moore reviewed the report:

*"Fall Sports seasons have ended for the Brandon Rec. Want to thank our amazing coaches for their hundreds of hours of volunteer times enriching the lives of area youth.*

- a) *U8 & U6 Soccer - Jonathan Fries & Justin Martelle*
- b) *U10 Boys Soccer- Brian Thomas, Smith Remy*
- c) *U10 Girls Soccer - Miles Krans and Justin Martelle*
- d) *U12 Boy Soccer - Ron Coble, Kassandra Cole*
- e) *1-2 NFL Flag Football - Bill Rose, Meghan Rose & OV Varsity Football Players*
- f) *3-4 Padded Flag Football - Justin Mannell, Mike Stark, Nate Bradbury*
- g) *5-6 Padded Flag Football - Joe Desabrais, Duke Whitney*
- h) *7-8 Padded Flag Football - Duke Whitney, Daniel Whitney*
- i) *Fall Cheer - Robin Douglas, Lexi Duby*

*Winter Sports Registration opens November 1st*

*A NYC Broadway bus trip has been planned for January.*

*The Brandon Rec is partnering with the Brandon Museum to sponsor a showing (with director Q&A to follow) of Kingdom County Productions Vermont Historical Film: Lost Nation. This will be held on December 15th, 2pm at the Brandon Town Hall. Tickets are free and available at the door.*

*Received information regarding recreational grants that are available that require a financial match. We are exploring the possibility of partnering with the folks at SolarFest for walking trails that connect to Estabrook. We are also considering applying for a grant for the proposed Disc Golf Course on the land that is behind the American Legion.*

*Letters of engagement for ROW/easement application will be sent to the property owners on Union Street in November as a part of the Sidewalk project.*

*Asbestos Inspection has been performed at the FEMA buyout property located at 317 North Street. Upon testing completion and remediation (if needed), we will proceed with permitting and RFP for demolition."*

Mr. Moore also advised that as part of the Building and Grounds grants, there was an economic development grant and one business in town, Morningside Bakery, received \$6,500.00 that is to be part of a larger project for them to expand their business.

Tricia Welch asked what the show will be for the NYC trip. Mr. Moore suggested checking out the information on the Rec Department's page of the Town's website or reaching out to Colleen Wright who is spearheading the trip.

## **7. Consider Proclamation of Steve Cijka Day in Honor of His Retirement**

Seth Hopkins stated Steve Cijka has been an outstanding Department Head and has always made complicated information understandable. Doug Bailey appreciated Mr. Cijka providing clear and concise information to the Select Board when bringing forth purchases for the wastewater treatment plan. Mr. Cijka will be retiring after 38 years this Friday and Mr. Hopkins requested the Board consider a proclamation of Steve Cijka Day in honor of his retirement.

Bill Moore read the following proclamation to be considered by the Board.

*"WHEREAS Stephen Cijka began work for the Town of Brandon as chief wastewater treatment operator on March 28, 1988, and*

*WHEREAS Steve has been an exemplary chief treatment system operator, providing outstanding quality of information and judgment to selectboards and town managers since then, and*

*WHEREAS the Town of Brandon operates a complex system of wastewater collection and treatment for the protection of public health and the environment, requiring a high degree of professional and technical knowledge, all of which Steve has and applies to his position, and*

*WHEREAS Steve's stewardship of public funds required to operate our wastewater system represents great care and prudence, and*

*WHEREAS Steve has demonstrated sustained dedication to public service and has kept the system functioning as required and responded to emergencies at all hours for many years, and*

*WHEREAS on November 1, 2024, Steve intends to retire from his position after more than thirty- six years and seven months, and*

*WHEREAS the Town of Brandon wishes to appropriately publicly recognize Mr. Cijka for all he has done for the Town of Brandon and the people of Brandon during his career here, now, therefore*

*BE IT RESOLVED that the Town of Brandon formally extend its gratitude by hereby conveying its appreciation to STEPHEN J CIJKA for his expertise, diligence, and tireless service, and*

*BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Town of Brandon designate Steve's first day of retirement, Saturday, November 2, 2024, as STEVE CIJKA DAY in Brandon, Vermont, and*

*BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Brandon Selectboard encourages all members of the Brandon community to make opportunity to congratulate Steve on his retirement, and*

*BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that this Proclamation be presented to STEVE CIJKA and that a copy be spread upon the Town records.*

*Given under our hands this 28th Day of October, 2024: Selectboard of Brandon, Vermont”*

Mr. Hopkins will present a certificate to Mr. Cijka at a gathering on Thursday and encouraged any Board members who were able to attend.

**Motion** by Doug Bailey/Tim Guiles to approve the proclamation of Steve Cijka Day for November 2, 2024 in honor of Mr. Cijka' s retirement. **The motion passed unanimously.**

## **8. Tax Stabilization Request: 333 Jones Drive**

Seth Hopkins reported this request would be stabilizing the taxes for converting the property into 20 plus rental housing units and Mr. Hopkins encouraged the Select Board's approval. Bill Moore stated that the tax stabilization process was approved by the voters in 1962 to allow for tax stabilization for people who are investing in the community. In 2016, there was a policy based on dollars invested and this application represents a small portion of a larger project that will be impactful for the Town to house people. The Town needs people here to work the jobs that Naylor and Breen and other businesses have and the amount meets the criteria of the policy. Doug Bailey stated the current value of the property is \$449,900.00 and Naylor & Breen will invest \$250,000.00 into the project that gives them 6 years of tax stabilization. The valuation will not change from the \$449,900.00 and after 6 years it will be reappraised. This encourages people to spend money and improve property in the Town and the policy has worked well. Mr. Moore stated this is only the municipal portion and not the school tax.

**Motion** by Brian Coolidge/Ralph Ethier to approve the tax stabilization request of 333 Jones Drive. **The motion passed unanimously.**

## **9. Consider Purchase Order 45042 to H. P. Fairfield for a 2024 International Truck - \$173,924.00**

Seth Hopkins reported that one of the town trucks that is used for snow plowing and general service is not able to continue in the current condition. The recommendation is to go to a smaller truck that could be purchased and not require ordering. The lead time for ordering a truck is in excess of a year with a cost of \$300,000. Mr. Hopkins has spoken with the highway employee that would use the truck and discussed different applications. It is believed the smaller truck that is available in November is suitable and may be better for the plow routes like Mt. Pleasant, Prospect Street and Seminary Hill. The truck will come with the offset plow, wing, and spreader and also includes the undercoating. Jeremy Disorda and Mr. Hopkins traveled to Hopkinton, NH and were able to choose the equipment. Mr. Hopkins suggested the Board waive the purchasing policy as the current truck will not pass inspection and authorize the purchase order. This truck is \$125,000 less expensive than ordering and there is a concern with the lead time.

**Motion** by Heather Nelson/Ralph Ethier to waive the purchasing policy and approve purchase order 45042 to H. P. Fairfield for a 2024 International truck in the amount of \$173,924.00. **The motion passed unanimously.**

Doug Bailey advised there was also financing options provided and after discussion with Mr. Hopkins concerning using \$70,000 of the \$100,000 delegated towards paving, there could be \$73,000 paid and \$100,000 financed. There were quotes received from 4 different institutions of which the best is the National Bank of Middlebury with two options of a five-year loan at 4.5% or 7 years @ 4.75%.

**Motion** by Brian Coolidge/Tim Guiles to approve the financing of a five-year loan @ 4.5% with the National Bank of Middlebury. **The motion passed unanimously.**

Seth Hopkins reported the total interest to be paid over the life of the loan is \$12,049 and annual payment begins at about \$24,000 and reduces each year. This would be less than 10% of the local option tax revenue each year, but this does not need to be decided at this moment.

It was noted this beats all lease rates and can possibly be prepaid sooner and is the best plan. The current truck will be sold through the municipal bid platform as it has functionality and a farmer may be interested in it. Mr. Disorda did not intend to keep the current plow. The frame on this 2011 truck is totally cracked and will not pass inspection and \$10,000 was spent on it last year.

## **10. Consider Proposals for Sanderson Covered Bridge Repair**

Seth Hopkins reported the bridge was hit at the beginning of October. There are two proposals and the recommendation is the Town choose Naylor & Breen as the local preference and low bidder. There has been talk of an electric eye with an alarm being installed prior to the bridge that will allow for a turnaround, or a sway bar, or solar signs. The person who damaged the bridge is known and the Town is working with his insurance company and the cost of the repair will not be the Town's insurance.

**Motion** by Heather Nelson/Tim Guiles to approve the Sanderson covered bridge repair bid from Naylor & Breen, Inc. **The motion passed unanimously.**

Tricia Welch questioned the closure of the bridge for the repairs. Seth Hopkins advised he will work with the Barn Opera and the owners along the street regarding the scheduled repair. Heather Nelson asked if there could be something installed to avoid further damage to the bridge. Tim Guiles stated something needs to be installed before the bridge and allows vehicles to turn around safely. It was noted there will be a performance at the Barn Opera the week of November 11<sup>th</sup> to the 17<sup>th</sup>.

The Select Board recessed at 8:08PM.

The Select Board reconvened at 8:42PM.

## **11. Public Hearing: Objection to Removal of a Shade Tree Between #42 and #44 Park Street per 24 V.S.A.2509**

Hearing minutes reported under separate cover.

## **12. Public Comment and Participation**

Karen Rhodes thanked Mr. Hopkins for the explanation of whether they are full grants or requiring a match as it helps to clarify how much and who is receiving the grants.

Jan Coolidge was surprised to read about the Brandon Rec proposal for a community building. Bill Moore advised the community center project has nothing to do with the Brandon Rec and is being proposed by a group of people that formed a committee and have done a study and is something that this committee is pursuing. Ms. Coolidge asked how this will affect the Town's budget and who will be paying to build it. Doug Bailey advised no one has talked to the Select Board about this subject. Tricia Welch asked if this project would affect the Rec Department as this could affect the budget planning and should be keyed into how this proposal will affect the Town and the Rec Department. Mr. Moore considered this as he made his budget and noted the group is at the very early stage in their process. They are a group of people that have done research and approached the OVUU Board to request land for the project. They need to acquire land and secure funding from 6 or 7 communities. This is something the Rec Department is aware of and at this point it is a dream. Heather Nelson stated the Select Board has not been approached on this project and has no information. Mr. Moore advised the group will need to approach each of the towns and at that point, the Rec Department would talk to them about using the facility.

The Select Board recessed at 8:48PM.

The Select Board reconvened at 9:04PM.

**Motion** by Ralph Ethier/Tim Guiles to enter into executive session at 9:04PM regarding the appointment or employment or evaluation of a public officer or employee per 1 V.S.A.313(3)(a)(3) to include the Town Manager. **The motion passed unanimously.**

## **11. Executive Session**

The Board came out of executive session at 9:47PM. There was no action required.

## **12. Adjournment**

**Motion** by Brian Coolidge/Tim Guiles to adjourn the Select Board meeting at 9:47PM. **The motion passed unanimously.**

Respectfully submitted,

Charlene Bryant  
Recording Secretary