

Minutes of Joint Meeting of Brandon Selectboard and Budget Advisory Committee
4 November 2024, Brandon Town Hall

Attendance
Selectboard present: Doug Bailey, Heather Nelson, Tim Guiles, Ralph Ethier, Brian Coolidge.
Budget committee present: Janet Coolidge, Gabe McGuigan, Karen Rhodes, Barry Varian, Tricia Welch. Public present: Seth Hopkins, Bill Moore, Billy Bullock, Stephen Jupiter, Todd Nielsen, Jackie Savela. Present by Zoom: Cecil Reniche-Smith, Tom Kilpeck

Selectboard Chair Doug Bailey called the meeting to order at 7PM. On motion of Heather Nelson and second by Tim Guiles, the posted agenda was adopted by the selectboard 5-0.

Selectboard
Remarks
Doug Bailey gave brief remarks about the process. The town manager had provided a second draft with some changes based on the previous workshops, as well as a one-year projection of the local option tax fund (1% fund) revenues and obligations. These were touched upon. All agreed that an overall strategy of rebuilding trust is paramount; some expressed that last year's negative experience was based on voters' dissatisfaction not with the process but with the product that resulted (an initial recommendation of a 19% increase in the amount to be raised by taxes).

Line by Line
Budget
Examination
In the first half hour, a line by line examination of the HWY budget resulted in broad expressions of confidence in the projections of the HWY division chief. The second half hour took in the administration, assessor, code, clerk, and (incomplete) intergovernmental and debt service departments in a line by line method. The third half hour made line by line examination of recreation; perennial issues like potential support from the surrounding Towns and the fact that cutting program expenses must also mean cutting program revenue came up. The recreation director highlighted the new responsibility and opportunity the Town has with the year-round programming of the Town Hall as the Friends of the Town Hall will disband next month. The final half hour covered buildings & grounds and the staff cost of living increase. A budget committee member had the view that not all taxpayers benefit from a cost of living increase in their own jobs. A selectboard member noted the social security cost of living adjustment for 2025 will be 2.5%. This led to a discussion about the idea of a pool of money available for the town manager to fund merit increases rather than a single cost of living adjustment. It was noted that the police have negotiated a cost of living adjustment plus a step each year. The matter was unresolved, with the selectboard to give more thought before the next workshop.

Executive
Session
The meeting was recessed at 9:05. On motion of Tim Guiles seconded by Brian Coolidge and voted unanimously, at 9:12 the selectboard entered executive session per 1 VSA § 313 (a) (3) regarding the evaluation of an employee. The board returned to public session at 10:15. No action was required.

On motion of Brian Coolidge seconded by Tim Guiles and voted unanimously, the board adjourned at 10:15PM.

Respectfully submitted,



Seth M Hopkins, town manager