

**Brandon Select Board Meeting  
December 9, 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

**Others In Attendance:** Seth Hopkins, Bill Moore, Karen Rhodes, Barry Varian, Lauren Tessaro, Tom Kilpeck, Jan Coolidge

**Others by Zoom:** Keith Whitcomb, Billy Bullock, Cecil Reniche-Smith, Steven Jupiter, Bruce Jensen, Ed Kemon, Vicki Disorda

**1. Call to Order**

The meeting was called to order at 7:03PM by Doug Bailey – Board Chair.

***a. Agenda Adoption***

**Motion** by Ralph Ethier/Heather Nelson to adopt the agenda as written. **The motion passed unanimously.**

**2. Select Board Remarks**

Doug Bailey thanked all for attending the meeting and reminded that comments are to be respectful.

**3. Recurring Matters**

***a. Approval of Select Board Meeting Minutes – November 25, 2024***

**Motion** by Heather Nelson/Brian Coolidge to approve the Select Board minutes of November 25, 2024. **The motion passed unanimously.**

***b. Select Board & Budget Advisory Committee Minutes – December 2, 2024***

**Motion** by Ralph Ethier/Heather Nelson to approve the Select Board & Budget Advisory Committee minutes of December 2, 2024 as amended. **The motion passed with one abstention – Brian Coolidge.**

Regarding the agenda addition motion, a correction to the motion that Ralph Ethier made the motion and it was seconded by Heather Nelson.

***c. Warrant – December 9, 2024 - \$464,875.02***

**Motion** by Heather Nelson/Brian Coolidge to approve the warrants of December 2, 2024, in the amount of \$464,875.02. **The motion passed unanimously.**

Doug Bailey questioned the warrants for Silloway Network. Seth Hopkins advised this is the external IT vendor and the \$75 warrant was a service call and the \$762.15 warrant is the Town's carrying cost that was originally over \$1,000. This includes the subscription for Microsoft office, antivirus and the vendor's monitoring and assistance.

**4. 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 advised the report on expenses was provided this time by departments. The figure hoped for at this point would be 46% and currently the Town is at 49%. Mr. Hopkins also provided an update on the local option tax fund. The November payment has been received and there will be requests later in the meeting to transfer funds to close out the paving and for the downpayment on the highway truck. Mr. Hopkins also alerted the Select Board that one of the police officers was injured during a call, but Mr. Hopkins had a conversation with the officer and he is okay and back to work.

Doug Bailey questioned the update regarding staff members' health insurance with the police department rejecting the change in insurance carriers. Seth Hopkins reported the police department was asked to consider a change to MVP as it would cost the employees and the Town less, as the negotiated contract with the police indicates Blue Cross, but they have elected to retain the Blue Cross coverage. The Town will manage two different health insurance coverages, but it is within their rights. This will cost the police staff more and cost the Town more.

Mr. Bailey also wanted to confirm that the Select Board will not be meeting on the 4<sup>th</sup> Monday in December. Mr. Hopkins noted the Select Board will need to hold a special meeting to pay bills, but there will be no planned agenda items. It was agreed this meeting would begin at 6:30PM on December 30<sup>th</sup>.

Brian Coolidge stated people have asked him about Carver Street's name with a Lower Carver, as it was thought the road was Carver Street that changed to Syndicate Road further down the road. Mr. Hopkins stated there is no Syndicate Road in Brandon and the verbiage of lower Carver was used only to differentiate the location of the topic that was discussed at the meeting. Doug Bailey noted he will reach out to Pittsford about the subject as the Town is not looking to change the classification of the road at this point.

Barry Varian asked if the preference for the police department to stay with Blue Cross was due to better coverage. Mr. Hopkins advised that Vermont has a limited number of health insurance plans and they are very comparable. The Town made a change from MVP to Blue Cross and over the course of the year, the staff did not find their experience was what they remembered from years ago. Mr. Hopkins noted the plans are nearly identical.

## **5. Community Development Report**

Bill Moore reviewed his report that is available for viewing in the Board packet on the Town's website.

*“Brandon Idol 2025 registration has opened. The try-out concert is to be held on January 10th, 7pm. We are limiting registration, so sign-up today! The themed concerts with the backing band will be on February 14th, March 14th, April 11th and the final is to be held on May 16th. This is the 5<sup>th</sup> year and has been a great way to engage the community. It is a net gain to the Town.*

*Little Otters Wrestling Registration has not yet opened but will be starting wrestling practices the week of January 28<sup>th</sup>. Kids in Grades K - 6 will be working with coaches Mason and Desabrais once per week starting January 28th.*

*Adult Cornhole will be back in the town hall on Tuesday evenings with commissioner Ross Edmunds starting on January 14th and running through end of March.*

*We are once again collaborating with the Brandon Free Public Library to host the winter Quiz Night series. The Brandon Inn will host on Sundays at 6:30 for the month of January. February will be held at the Neshobe Golf Club and the Lilac Inn will be the location for March. This is a FREE event for folks 18+. You can register your team of up to 6 online at the [brandonpubliclibrary.org](http://brandonpubliclibrary.org) website. This is a lot of fun and is an economic boost for the locations where the event takes place.”*

Heather Nelson noted that Brandon Idol is a very good event and was one of her favorite events that was held at the Town Hall.

Jan Coolidge noted Mr. Moore's email address is incorrect on [brandonrec.com](http://brandonrec.com). Mr. Moore appreciated the information and he will make the correction. There is an intern at the town office that is going through the website to check for broken links.

It was questioned why the Rec Department name has changed. Mr. Moore noted the Rec Department name has not been changed and Town also has a Community Development department. Seth Hopkins advised that the Town did not change any staff numbers, departments or missions but created clusters according to the various departments such as Administration and Finance now includes the town office administration, bookkeeper, and town treasurer. Public Safety includes the police emergency management team and Community Development includes the property codes, recreation, and economic development. This was done to organize the town staff and departments. Mr. Moore noted he changed his report from Rec to Community Development as it is easier to have one report.

## **6. Boundary Line Adjustment – Jones Drive**

Bill Moore provided the Board a map that showed the different parcels the Brandon Training School had been divided into. It was brought to the Town's attention when Ultravation was in the process of doing their deed work for a sale that land that was assumed to be theirs is actually the Town's. It is next to a right of way that is not maintained by the Town and the new owner asked about acquiring the land. Mr. Moore brought this before the Select Board for future consideration. The new owner is interested in squaring off the lot like it should be to the edge of the right of way. The highway department has no use for this property and it is not shown on the Town's map. Heather Nelson asked if this is something that could be developed. Mr. Moore stated it is teardrop shaped and not usable. Ultravation has sold the property to the Rutland County Humane Society and Mr. Moore suggested the Town consider giving the property to the Humane Society and a small bump in the back to Tanner Romano for workforce housing. Ms. Nelson suggested charging a fee for the property. Mr. Moore advised he was not looking for action at this point, but suggested the Board visit the property as viewing will make it clear that this was a mistake and the property has been maintained by the people that own the parcel and the Town was willing to say that they did own it. It is quite clear it is not of any use to the Town in its current state. The majority of the parcel would go with the Ultravation property. Mr. Moore suggested action at the next regular meeting in January. Doug Bailey suggested Mr. Moore provide the Select Board with a Google map. Cecil Reniche-Smith asked if the parcel is owned by the landowner due to adverse possession. Mr. Moore stated the interim Director of the Humane Society, Mimi Brown, had asked if the Town would adjust the property line. Mr. Bailey suggested all board members visit the area prior to the next regular meeting in January and Mr. Moore will provide the Select Board with the map. Ms. Reniche-Smith suggested the Board may want to run this by legal counsel and do a quit claim deed with no legal fees.

## **7. Accept and Sign Assessor's Errors & Omissions Report**

Seth Hopkins reported these are items that have changed in valuation between June and the date the audit was done in mid-November. There are three changes with one an increase in the grand list, the second one previously did not have tax stabilization and now does, and the last one is a mobile home that was destroyed by fire. There is a net decrease of \$3,580. This is something that is done every year and the listers ask that the Select Board review the document and sign it.

**Motion** by Brian Coolidge/Heather Nelson to accept the assessor's errors & omissions as presented. **The motion passed unanimously.**

## **8. Approve 1% Fund Transfer: \$73,294 Toward Replacement Highway Truck**

Doug Bailey stated this purchase was previously approved. Seth Hopkins reported the Town has taken delivery of the truck and has been used. This action authorizes the Town Treasurer to make the change from one department to the other.

**Motion** by Heather Nelson/Ralph Ethier to approve the use of the 1% Local Options Tax Fund in the amount of \$73,294 toward the replacement of a highway truck. **The motion passed unanimously.**

## **9. Approve 1% Fund Transfer: \$39,521.34 Toward FY25 Road Paving Projects**

Seth Hopkins advised the figure has been broken into two separate transactions. The Board had approved up to \$100,000 in the past year for paving and the Town was able to use carry-forward funds so that only \$35,000 was needed from the Select Board vote. After the work was completed, the Town Treasurer advised from last year's encumbrances the Select Board had

used \$7,000 for tree removal and \$10,000 for winter sand that reduced the amount by \$17,000 which is the reason for the second item. One transaction is for \$22,000 to bring the amount up to the \$35,000 approved and the remainder is to complete the transactions for road paving.

**Motion** by Ralph Ethier/Heather Nelson to approve the use of the 1% Local Options Tax Fund in the amount of \$39,521.34 toward FY25 road paving projects. **The motion passed unanimously.**

## **10. Informational Presentation by Americans for a Clean Atmosphere**

Doug Bailey stated this will be an introduction to the Americans for a Clean Atmosphere. Mr. Bailey advised the Select Board does not write to the legislature or governor to ask for special things. Lauren Tessaro stated if petitions are signed by 5% of the voters, it could be sent to Montpelier for notice on an issue. Seth Hopkins advised that in discussing this with the town clerk, she confirmed 5% of the voters would put a question on the ballot and the result of the vote would happen at the election. It would depend on the voters to determine whether they want the Select Board to contact the State.

Ms. Tessaro stated it is an important issue that needs to start at a small democratic level. She has previously reached out to the legislators and the governor. She does not represent a political party and her attention has been drawn to the sky on this issue. She stated there are persistent jet trails and the sky is hazed. She received a fact sheet and it says that contrails can create manmade cirrus clouds, can have a warming effect, and are changing the weather. She has grown concerned that contrails come, haze comes, and there is no sun anymore. Ms. Tessaro stated with geoengineering, which is the intentional manipulation of the earth's climate by humans, there are many different technologies that go under this umbrella. 13 states have weather modification due to this and Vermont does not have any weather guidelines for geoengineering. Incoming sunlight is being lost and the soil is becoming alkaline. In June 2023, there was a congressional mandate to research solar modification. It is necessary to control global warming to block the incoming radiation. What they want to put into the sky is reflective particles like aluminum and are listed in the patents that exist and are owned by many military defense contractors. There are states that have put legislation in to ban geoengineering. She would like to see Vermont start to deal with climate change in a healthier way. Vermont prides itself in a beautiful environment and farmland. There is a lot more that can be done rather than spraying toxic chemicals. There is a lot of information available on geoengineering and it is not just hearsay and Ms. Tessaro would like to see some awareness, discussion, and legislation on this topic. There are no regulations and there are states that allow things to happen with zero oversight. Ms. Tessaro hopes to get 5% of the signatures on a petition for election day. Doug Bailey stated if Ms. Tessaro would like to host a meeting that is advertised, the Town could assist in finding her a place for people to attend. Mr. Moore stated the town hall and library are available for public meetings. Vicki Disorda requested contact information. Ms. Tessaro has an email address on the group she participates in. She stated the congressional mandate that is coming out is the most serious. Mr. Hopkins stated Ms. Tessaro provided documents that he will insert on the town's website. Barry Varian appreciated all of Ms. Tessaro's efforts but what he misses is if this would be considered an offensive activity and who are the offenders. Ms. Tessaro advised the patents are owned by Google and Raytheon, and National Oceanographic and Atmospheric is the group that approved them. NOA received funds to research solar radiation management. It was asked what the precise text is for the article to be put before the voters in March.

Bill Moore read the following petition that has now been posted on the Town's website and noted the deadline for submitting items for the ballot is by the end of January:

*"We the undersigned legal voters of Brandon, hereby petition the Select board of the Town of Brandon, Vermont to place the following Articles on the warning for the Annual Town Meeting to be held on the 4th day of March, 2025. This petition is filed pursuant to 24 V.S.A. § 2691. We certify that we are presently voters of that town. The Articles 1 and 2 to be placed on the warning to read:*

*Article 1: Shall the Brandon Select board demand the Vermont Governor and legislature commit to and sign into law the following:*

*"Environmental Preservation - As enacted, prohibits the intentional injection, release, or dispersion, by any means, of chemicals, chemical compounds, substances, or apparatus within the borders of this state into the atmosphere with the express purpose of affecting temperature, weather, or the intensity of the sunlight."*

*Article 2: Shall the Brandon Select board request the AGENCY OF NATURAL RESOURCES DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL CONSERVATION Drinking Water and Groundwater Protection Division to modify the ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION CHAPTER 21 WATER SUPPLY RULE as follows:*

*“Under 6.8 Inorganic Chemical Monitoring Requirements add a new section “6.8.2 All Community Public water system suppliers shall make yearly monitoring results available to their Vermont citizens for the following:*

*Table 6-1 - CONTAMINANT STANDARDS*

*Sec 3. Primary Inorganic Chemicals*

*Barium < 2 mg/l*

*Mercury < 0.002 mg/l*

*Sec 8. Radionuclides*

*Strontium-90 < 8 pCi/l*

*6.13 Secondary Standards*

*Table 6-3 SECONDARY CONTAMINANT STANDARDS*

*Aluminum < 0.2 mg/l*

*The undersigned respectfully request that the article be acted upon by all registered voters of the town by Australian ballot.”*

### **11. Public Comment and Participation**

Ed Kemon noted he enjoyed the well-run meeting.

### **13. Adjournment**

**Motion** by Brian Coolidge/Ralph Ethier to adjourn the Select Board meeting at 7:58PM. **The motion passed unanimously.**

Respectfully submitted,

Charlene Bryant  
Recording Secretary