

**Brandon Select Board Meeting  
February 10, 2025**

**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, Jan Coolidge, Steven Jupiter, Jeff Haylon, Steve Bissette, Barry Varian, Joseph Bertrand, Karen Rhodes, Billy Bullock, Vicki Disorda, Claire Astone, Isaiah Webb

**Others by Zoom:** Keith Whitcomb, Neil Silins, Adam Murach, Tricia Welch, Jack Schneider, Bruce Jenson

**1. Call to Order**

The meeting was called to order at 7:05PM by Doug Bailey – Board Chair.

***a. Agenda Adoption***

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

Item 9 – strike the word violation and consider the ethics procedures

**2. Select Board Remarks**

Doug Bailey reminded all to be courteous. He wished to clarify that each time someone wants to speak they are asked to come to the podium that has a microphone for the zoom recording and is then part of the permanent record. As the Board Chair, he will ask the individuals to come to the podium. He noted that at the last meeting he was trying to do that but caused a confusing situation. He wants to have an open meeting and allow people to speak and going forward he will note the names of the people who would like to speak and will call them to the podium. Mr. Bailey took ownership of the issue at the last meeting.

Heather Nelson noted all who attend the meetings want good things for the Town, which may differ between individuals, but she likes to think that everyone has good intentions and hoped that everyone had the same mindset.

**3. Recurring Matters**

***a. Approval of Select Board Meeting Minutes – January 27, 2025***

**Motion** by Brian Coolidge/Ralph Ethier to approve the Select Board minutes of January 27, 2025. **The motion passed unanimously.**

***b. Approval of Select Board Budget Advisory Committee Meeting Minutes – January 30, 2025***

**Motion** by Heather Nelson/Tim Guiles to approve the Select Board & Budget Advisory Committee minutes of January 30, 2025. **The motion passed unanimously.**

Doug Bailey thanked all who attended the budget meeting to hear the presentation on the budget and he appreciated everyone's input.

***c. Warrant – February 10, 2025 - \$126,660.68***

**Motion** by Tim Guiles/Brian Coolidge to approve the warrants of February 10, 2025, in the amount of \$126,660.68. **The motion passed unanimously.**

#### **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 provided the following highlights from his report to the Select Board. First, he wished to thank the Select Board, Budget Committee and Town staff in presenting the proposed budget and thanked all members of the community who attended the meeting. It was well received by everyone and a good start for the budget. He also wished to thank the Friends of the Town Hall for the gift of the flagpole in front of the town hall. This is one of the many gifts that the Friends of the Town Hall have provided and is much appreciated. There was no Town staff or funds used for this item and the Friends have purchased the flag and the Town will take care of the flag going forward.

Doug Bailey questioned the percentage of expenses to this point. Mr. Hopkins reported it was 62.5%. Mr. Bailey was surprised in the revenue being up in many areas and exceeding the year's goals early. Mr. Hopkins reported the Town had two additional cars that the sales were completed and tomorrow morning the last of the 4 vehicles will be paid for and picked up. Jackie Savela has completed an update of the delinquencies for the Town's attorney for the tax collection letter. Mr. Bailey was glad to see buildings and grounds is 3 times what it usually is and is all good news.

Brian Coolidge thanked the Town Manager for the information on the police, noting that during January there were 93 calls, which averages 3 calls per day and the off-duty hours that the State Police are covering was 5 calls. Seth Hopkins was pleased that the State Police did not have to respond many times to Brandon. The winter months are quieter than summer months, but it is a reasonable number and people should feel that there is sufficient protection for life and property.

#### **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 is back with the country music concert this Friday. Doors open at 6:30pm show starts at 7:00. 15 singers backed by the Brandon Idol Band. Drink service by Mae's Place, Concessions by Dallas Ladd. There are some really talented signers.*

*Bounce House Karaoke, A collaboration with Colleen Wright Events, has been moved to March 1<sup>st</sup> from 4pm - 6pm. Kids can Sing and Bounce! This is no cost to the Town.*

*A local theatre group, One Room Theatrics, is using the town hall stage for a stage play called Private Peacefull on February 20, 21 & 22. Tickets are available at the paramountvt.org"*

*The Rec Department is looking for a replacement for Colleen Wright for the Assistant to the Rec Director. This is a 20-hour per week position and will be posted on Front Porch Forum and on the Town's website.*

Mr. Moore reported that the Town received a check from the Water District for their share of the fountain.

Heather Nelson highly recommended Brandon Idol, noting there is a series of concerts that is entertaining for both children and adults.

#### **6. Boundary Line Adjustment – Faivre Circle**

Bill Moore noted this is a topic that was discussed during the December meeting. With the planned acquisition of the former Ultravation building, Mei Mei Brown discovered there is a parcel of land that the former owners of Ultravation had kept up. It was at one time planned to have a circular drive where the Compass Center was but was not developed by the Town. Ms. Brown brought it to the Town's attention in purchasing the building and Mr. Moore was requesting the Select Board approve a boundary line adjustment as it is land that the Town does not maintain. Doug Bailey viewed the area and noted it is a piece

of land that is undevelopable and should have been with that building, and the best use of the land would be with the Humane Society. Mr. Bailey was in support of a boundary line adjustment.

**Motion** by Heather Nelson/Ralph Ethier to adjust the boundary line at Jones Drive/Faivre Circle to square off parcel 6-1-58.11, and to adjust the boundary line for the Rutland County Humane Society parcel 6-1-58.15 to trace the edge of the 50' right of way over the privately maintained portion of Jones Drive which would remain Town-owned. **The motion passed unanimously.**

### **7. Approve Vermont Gran Fondo Request to use Roadways on Saturday, June 28, 2025**

Doug Bailey stated this is a yearly request for a bicycle event that comes down the Brandon Gap and turns north on Route 73. They provide their own security and insurance coverage and no road closings are required for this event. Seth Hopkins noted he has not met these people and his side business is not involved in this event.

**Motion** by Heather Nelson/Ralph Ethier to approve the Vermont Gran Fondo request for use of the roadways on Saturday, June 28, 2025, as described. **The motion passed unanimously.**

Karen Rhodes noted she was stopped when on a motorcycle to allow the bikes to pass and indicated they need to be more aware that they do not own the road and other people need to get through for certain reasons.

### **8. Approve Assessor's Certificate – No Appeal or Suit Pending**

Seth Hopkins advised this is a statement where the assessors let the Select Board know that they have lodged the certificate and there have been no appeals or suits regarding the grand list.

**Motion** by Brian Coolidge/Ralph Ethier to approve the Assessor's Certificate as presented. **The motion passed unanimously.**

### **9. Consider the Ethics Procedures**

Doug Bailey reported that the State has a new way of handling code of ethics complaints. They had the Board take a home study course but was not sure if all members have taken the course at this point. The Board chose the full Select Board as the liaison who will receive the complaints and the Board is trying to come up with a procedure. It was considered step one would be once a complaint is received; it would be determined in a public session if the complaint met the State's requirement. If it does not, the complaint would go no further; if it does the Board would go into executive session. In reviewing the code of ethics information, Mr. Bailey advised it only pertains to conflict of interest. It is best to do these types of actions in an open meeting as he does not want the Select Board accused of not being transparent. Heather Nelson thought it a good practice for the Board to review the complaint to determine if it meets the State's criteria, and if a complaint does not, it would not go further. This would allow the Board to be thoughtful of every complaint and if it is done in an open session people would understand why. With each Select Board member responding to the criteria, it seems a transparent and fair way to do things. It was the consensus of the Board to create a working group to create a policy. Ms. Nelson volunteered to be on a committee. Claire Astone asked for clarification of whether there has to be a majority of the Board or if one person's voice is sufficient to move a complaint along. Mr. Bailey noted these details will be considered in creating the policy.

### **10. Public Comment and Participation**

Doug Bailey appreciated the people that came to the budget meeting. He noted the annual school meeting is scheduled for February 26<sup>th</sup> at 6:30PM in the OV library. There is going to be information about a proposed Valley Community Center that will have a major effect on the town budget in a year. The first step is to obtain 10 acres of land from the school district and only the people that are present at this meeting will be allowed to vote on this item. Mr. Bailey noted there are usually not many people from the public attending the school's meeting and he encouraged people to attend. The proposed building would cost \$12 million and shared by the 7 towns that would be added to the tax bill. Operating expenses are anticipated at

\$300,000 per year, of which they have \$108,000 projected income with the remainder to be paid by the 7 towns. Mr. Bailey noted that OV has worked diligently to reduce their budget and suggested people attend to be informed about their budget.

Jeff Haylon stated the crosswalk near the town office is not used and perhaps it is because no one sees it and suggested placing cones in the area. Seth Hopkins was unsure if there are any cones available as they do not generally last very long. Bill Moore looked into a blinking light but the cost is \$2,500 for each set and the problem with the crosswalk near the town office is that there is no good place to install one. Heather Nelson agreed that it is a scary place to cross and this is not the first time that this crosswalk has been mentioned. Ms. Nelson thought this item is worth revisiting and at the very least the lines repainted. Mr. Hopkins advised there is a budget of \$8,000 for signs and posts with half remaining and suggested purchasing a standing "Yield to Pedestrian" sign.

Tim Guiles noted the southbound speed identification sign has been out for a while and asked if it needs to be repaired. Mr. Hopkins reported the issue is a module that the Town staff can replace. Mr. Guiles stated there is also a stop sign on Nickerson Road that is in disrepair. Bill Moore reported the Town is aware of this sign, noting the sign was damaged by a student on their way to school.

Isaiah Webb suggested moving the crosswalk between the Mobile Station and the town office. He also noted there have been vehicles parked on the bridge for events that could cause an accident as they are in the lane of travel. There is also a stop sign on Walnut and West Seminary that no one comes to a complete stop at and noted concern of a new neighbor that has a 3 and 5-year-old if they go into the road when a car is coming. Doug Bailey stated the Police Chief can be informed of these issues and the areas can be patrolled, but cameras cannot be used for issuing tickets.

Karen Rhodes stated she sees people trying to avoid the light in Town by going through the Brandon Inn parking lot and she is concerned with the traffic in that area. Doug Bailey asked if a "No-Through Traffic" sign could be installed and Mr. Hopkins stated that a sign could be installed. Mr. Webb also noted that he has seen people going in the wrong direction in the area with the "No Left Turn" sign.

Vicki Disorda stated she watched a video on YouTube regarding the ethics policy and the way she understands it is that the complaints would still go to the Vermont Ethics Board and then to the liaison. Seth Hopkins stated that is not how he understood it. Ms. Disorda will send the video to the Select Board and the Town staff. Mr. Hopkins noted the initial contact should be the Select Board and there is a form that needs to be completed. The form can be found on the Town's website under Resources and there is a section on Ethics.

Bill Moore wished to remind people that there is a Brandon Chamber candidate forum scheduled for Thursday at 6:30PM in the town hall.

Claire Astone asked if the Select Board had considered the impacts on the Town as the federal system keeps taking away resources for the most vulnerable. Meals on Wheels has been defunded and she has spoken with Kathy Mathis and there are people that are willing to cook and deliver food. There was also discussion about a solar greenhouse at the Senior Center. We need to get ahead of the curve as many people do not know what is happening and we will be hit hard by the new federal system. She suggested people should be checking in on seniors and families. Doug Bailey was not aware that Meals on Wheels was being defunded.

Vicki Disorda advised the Friend Zone at the Methodist Church provides community lunches on Tuesdays and a community meal is scheduled for the last Friday of the month that is a free will offering.

The Select Board recessed at 7:53PM.

The Select Board reconvened at 7:58PM.

**Motion** by Heather Nelson/Brian Coolidge to find that premature general public knowledge of the pending contract negotiation with New England Police Benevolent Association Local 422 will clearly place the Town of Brandon at a substantial disadvantage by disclosing its negotiation strategy. **The motion passed unanimously.**

**Motion** by Heather Nelson/Brian Coolidge to enter into executive session at 7:59PM to discuss the Town's pending labor relation agreement with New England Police Benevolent Association Local 422, per 1 V.S.A. § 313(a)(1)(b) for labor relations agreements with employees to include the Town Manager. **The motion passed unanimously.**

#### **11. Executive Session**

The Board came out of executive session at 8:30PM. There were no actions required.

#### **12. Adjournment**

**Motion** by Brian Coolidge/Tim Guiles to adjourn the Select Board meeting at 8:30PM. **The motion passed unanimously.**

Respectfully submitted,

Charlene Bryant  
Recording Secretary