

**BRATTLEBORO SELECTBOARD
TUESDAY, JULY 21, 2020
REGULAR MEETING – 6:15PM
HELD REMOTELY VIA GoToMeeting
MINUTES**

NOTE: Per the “Stay Home – Stay Safe” order issued by Governor Scott on March 13, 2020, this meeting was held remotely with no physical location using GoToMeeting.

Selectboard members in attendance: Tim Wessel, Elizabeth McLoughlin, Ian Goodnow, Brandie Starr, and Daniel Quipp.

Staff participating: Town Manager Peter Elwell, Assistant Town Manager Patrick Moreland, and Executive Secretary Jan Anderson.

Others participating: Alex Fischer, Shea Witzberger, Ain Thompson, Abby Mnookin, HB Lozito, Tara O’Brien, Rikki Risatti, Elizabeth Francese, Amber Arnold, Franz Reichsman, Julie Cunningham-Cook, “ACAB”, Gary Stroud, ASL interpreters Janet Dickinson and Elizabeth Fox, and BCTV staff and volunteers.

Chair Tim Wessel called the meeting to order at 6:16pm. He confirmed that the meeting was properly warned.

APPROVE MINUTES

Chair Wessel asked the Board to approve the minutes from July 7. There was no discussion.

MOTION BY IAN GOODNOW TO APPROVE THE MINUTES FROM JULY 7. MOTION CARRIED 5-0.

CHAIR’S REMARKS

Chair Wessel noted that the Selectboard Clerk Ian Goodnow would be assisting with managing the “chat” feature in this remote meeting, and he asked people interested in speaking to add their names to the chat section with a comment that they wanted to speak. There was a brief discussion about how to manage the chat function. Wessel then remarked on the trauma taking place in the nation on many levels, due to COVID-19 and other social concerns. He asked people to reject the polarization affecting the country in order to move forward with community safety especially for people of color and other historically marginalized communities everywhere. He noted that New England held a robust democratic process and this Board welcomed reasonable requests brought forward by community members. He said that he was a strong believer in democracy and free speech, and participants were asked to be respectful and avoid inappropriate comments at this forum. He said that he looked forward to collaboration with community members while reviewing the Town’s Police Department procedures and the safety of the community.

MANAGER’S COMMENTS

Town Manager Elwell announced that the Board would hold a special meeting on Tuesday, July 28, to discuss how to move forward with scheduling Representative Town Meeting this year. He thanked voters who responded to the survey.

SELECTBOARD COMMENTS AND COMMITTEE REPORTS

Goodnow noted that two elections were approaching – the primary election on August 11 and the general election on November 3. He suggested that voters visit MyVoterPage to update their registration information and to request absentee ballots. He said there would be no in-person early voting and he encouraged people to vote by mail. He said to contact Town Clerk Hilary Francis with questions.

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

Oscar Heller, Chair of the Energy Committee, announced that two seats on the Energy Committee were vacant. He noted that the committee was very active and committed. He suggested that anyone with questions contact him at oheller@protonmail.com.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

Police Review Process – Further Consideration.

Wessel opened the discussion by asking Board members to speak first. Goodnow noted that he received Board member Quipp's e-mail today at 12:46pm containing a four-page substantive "Collaborative Community Statement." Goodnow questioned whether procedurally the Board should hold a discussion on that document since it had not been made available to the public and, consequently, could the Board vote on it tonight. Quipp stated that he had been working with the group of people who prepared the Community Proposal ("Proposal"), that the material was in response to McLoughlin's Request for RFP ("RFP"), and that it was germane to the topic that had been publicly warned. He added that precedence had previously been set when the Board, at times, had received materials at or just prior to the meeting. He noted that a link with the document had been added to the GoToMeeting platform for this meeting so people watching this meeting could see the document. He said he believed that the Board and community could work collaboratively and accomplish something transformative. He asked that the Board extend a courtesy to the many people "in attendance" at this meeting who wanted to speak to the Proposal. There was some discussion by the Board, including whether to provide time for the public to review the document and the need for Board members to have additional time to absorb and understand it.

Alex Fischer said that the authors of the Proposal were seeking a review process with a focus on comprehensive examination of community safety and policing in Brattleboro to determine whether the police force effectively met the community's needs and how best to fund and support community safety. They said many members of the community did not feel safe so wanted to create community safety and wellness for everyone and to review the institution of policing, not just whether the Brattleboro Police Department ("BPD") was doing a good job. They said the group wanted to seize the enormity of the current political moment and asked the Board to slow down and give time for the process to evolve. They said that members who wrote the Proposal had been doing this work for the "long haul" and would continue for the long haul. They spoke of five points of disagreement with the RFP, being (1) needing a wider scope, (2) providing community decision-making power involving those impacted at all levels, (3) remove from the RFP the chosen framework and leading outcome specified in Campaign Zero and, instead, provide a process, (4) extend the timeline, and (5) value community work and process. They said many people were in "attendance" that wanted to speak to the matter. McLoughlin responded and said she was in agreement with some of Fischer's requests but said she needed additional time to fully understand the wider scope and community decision-making requests. There was some discussion by the Board, including better understanding the requests, clarification on some of the requests and process, collaborative work, and complying with the Town Charter and State statutes.

Ain Thompson, Abby Mnookin, and HB Lozito read the full Community Proposal in full, a copy of which was added to the back-up materials for this meeting. Shea Witzberger, HB Lozito, Tara O'Brien, Wichie Artu, Rikki Risatti, and Elizabeth Francese spoke in support of the Proposal and added their comments and opinions.

Chair Wessel called for a recess at 8:00pm. He reconvened the meeting at 8:12pm.

Quipp suggested as a way to move forward that McLoughlin meet with community members who drafted the Proposal in order to produce a more polished RFP for discussion at a future meeting. McLoughlin thanked the community members for the invitation to meet with them, and she requested time for her to thoroughly read and digest the Proposal. There was discussion by the Board and members of the community on working in collaboration on a way to move forward. Amber Arnold noted that community

members hoped for an equitable collaboration with the Board while providing people with experience with decision-making power. There was a very lengthy discussion by the Board about how to move forward, including some members needing more time to read and absorb the Proposal, the revised facilitator's experience and qualifications noted in the Proposal, concerns that the public had not yet had a chance to review the Proposal, Open Meeting Law requirements, clarification of what would be voted on at this meeting, formation of a process and committee to continue the process, and amending the proposed RFP. Several members of the public provided additional comments and opinions: Amber Arnold, Alex Fischer, Rikki Risatti, Abby Mnookin, Shea Witzberger, Franz Reichsman, Julie Cunningham-Cook, "ACAB," Ain Thompson, and Gary Stroud.

Quipp offered some language that could be included in a motion where action could be taken. He stated that a fully flushed-out document was not necessary tonight, but he requested a commitment from the Board. With assistance from a community member, Quipp offered a preliminary motion, as follows:

MOTION BY DANIEL QUIPP TO MAKE A COMMITMENT TO ACCEPT THE COMMUNITY STATEMENT IN FULL ALONG WITH LIZ McLOUGHLIN'S RFP [REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS], AND MOVE FORWARD WITH THAT.

Quipp added that he would ask Town staff to draft a RFP based on the Community Statement and incorporate McLoughlin's RFP into it and then build on it. There was much discussion about who should be included in drafting the document. Starr objected to the Town preparing such a document. She insisted that BIPoC and LGBTQ community members, who had been impacted by the system, should be the authors of the document, and that the five-person Board and Town Manager should endorse what the community partners prepared and not take the lead on it. She said that the community members told the Board what they needed and she asked the Board to trust them and let them take the lead. McLoughlin noted that she had been in full support of the previous statement submitted by the community group and had discussions about it with people in the community, but this Proposal was different and she had not yet had the opportunity to fully understand what was being proposed. She agreed it would be responsible to have an RFP with paid facilitators so that important and meaningful discussions could follow. She suggested adding the matter to the next agenda for action.

Quipp revised and restated his previous motion, as follows, and asked the Board to vote on it.

MOTION BY DANIEL QUIPP TO ACCEPT THE COMMUNITY STATEMENT IN FULL AND ASK TOWN STAFF TO DRAFT A RFP BASED ON IT.

Goodnow asked Quipp whether he intended to include the McLoughlin RFP with the Community Statement. HB Lozito (one of the authors of the Community Statement) offered a modification to the motion to vote for the continued process of working together so that the community had a role in continuing to define the process and then working together to define a new RFP and bring a collaborative statement to the next meeting. There was some discussion about how to proceed. Goodnow offered a friendly amendment to add this to the next agenda and vote on it then.

Quipp amended his motion to remove Town staff from preparation of the RFP, as follows:

AMENDED MOTION BY DANIEL QUIPP TO ACCEPT THE COMMUNITY STATEMENT IN FULL AND COLLABORATE WITH THEM TO PRODUCE A RFP.

McLoughlin noted that it would be helpful for Town staff to be involved in preparing the RFP because it would be a legal contract and the staff would have the insights on preparing such a document. Town Manager Elwell agreed that if the Town was officially launching a RFP process, it would require Town involvement and ultimately Selectboard action. He said that the community members could continue on its own initiative and could generate its own action without Town involvement, but if the police department was asked to enact changes and if the Town's budget and spending was impacted, any action would

require Selectboard action, as well as Representative Town Meeting action, at some point. He said there was value in an opportunity for continued collaboration that would include community members' lived experience. He suggested that one or two Selectboard members could engage with a core group of the community members, with the support of staff resources, and then bring a RFP to the Board for approval. There was more discussion by the Board, including when to schedule it for further discussion. Elwell recommended that the Board schedule a special meeting that would include this as the sole topic. Board members agreed to hold a special meeting for this purpose on Thursday, August 6, and to distribute the document publicly on August 3.

AMENDED MOTION BY DANIEL QUIPP TO ACCEPT THE COMMUNITY PROPOSAL IN FULL AND ASK REPRESENTATIVES FROM THAT PROCESS TO DRAFT A MORE FULL RFP [REQUEST FOR PROPOSAL] BASED ON IT BY MONDAY, AUGUST 3, AND RELEASE IT PUBLICLY AND WIDELY FOR SELECTBOARD MEMBERS, TOWN STAFF, AND THE BROADER COMMUNITY TO READ AND DIGEST IN ORDER TO DISCUSS AND VOTE ON THURSDAY, AUGUST 6. MOTION CARRIED 5-0.

Wessel thanked participants in this meeting for their hard work on several levels.

There was no further business.

MOTION BY DANIEL QUIPP TO ADJOURN AT 10:51 PM. MOTION CARRIED 5-0.

Ian Goodnow, Clerk