Selectboard members present: Kate O’Connor, Brandie Starr, Tim Wessel, John Allen, and David Schoales.

Staff Present: Town Manager Peter Elwell, Assistant Town Manager Patrick Moreland, Police Chief Mike Fitzgerald, Fire Chief Mike Bucossi, Assistant Fire Chief Len Howard, Police Captain Mark Carignan, Library Director Starr LaTronica, Public Works Director Steve Barrett, and Executive Secretary Jan Anderson.

Media present: Chris Mays representing the Brattleboro Reformer and BCTV staff and volunteers.

Others present: “Nick” Nickerson, Maresa Nielson, Cory Sorensen, Mary Goodemote, Dale Joy, Sharon Couturier, Mary Gannon, Brenda Siegel, Anne Louise Wagner, Michael Bosworth, Linda Bailey, Phoebe Gooding, Tim Maciel, Tad Montgomery, Stewart McDermet, Kathleen White, Roseann Grimes, Leo Schiff, George Harvey, Bob Bady, Stephen Lloyd, Alex Fisher, Mary McCarthy, Alan Blackwell, Dick DeGray, Pal Borofsky, Daniel Quipp, Michelle Simpson-Siegel, Rhianna Kendrick, Jason Cooper, Shela Linton, Ezlerh Oreste, Alex Fisher, Curtiss Reed, ASL interpreters Elizabeth Fox and Janet Dickinson, and others who did not sign the attendance sheet.

Chair O’Connor called the meeting to order at 5:45pm. She confirmed that the meeting was properly warned.

MOTION BY KATE O’CONNOR TO ENTER INTO EXECUTIVE SESSION TO DISCUSS CONTRACTS AND THE NEGOTIATING OR SECURING OF REAL ESTATE PURCHASE OR LEASE OPTIONS, WHERE THE BOARD HAS DETERMINED THAT PREMATURE GENERAL PUBLIC KNOWLEDGE WOULD CLEARLY PLACE THE SELECTBOARD AND THE PEOPLE INVOLVED AT A SUBSTANTIAL DISADVANTAGE. THE TOWN MANAGER AND ASSISTANT TOWN MANAGER WERE INVITED TO ATTEND. MOTION CARRIED 5-0.

Chair O’Connor reconvened the meeting at 6:18pm.

APPROVE MINUTES

MOTION BY JOHN ALLEN TO APPROVE THE MINUTES FROM SEPTEMBER 5, 2017. MOTION CARRIED 5-0.

CHAIR’S REMARKS
Chair O’Connor mentioned the three ribbon cuttings that had taken place recently. She said the first ribbon cutting was for the I-91 Bridge and the Governor was present for the ceremony. The second ribbon cutting and “push button ceremony” took place at the new Police Station on Black Mountain Road. The third ribbon cutting was at the new McDonald’s Restaurant on Putney Road and the organization donated some of its weekend profits to the Green Street School and proposed skatepark.

MANAGER’S COMMENTS
Town Manager Elwell announced the celebration of Brooks Memorial Library’s 50th birthday and the party on Saturday, September 23. He spoke briefly about the festivities and invited the community to attend.
SELECTBOARD COMMENTS AND COMMITTEE REPORTS
Starr spoke about herself, O’Connor and Wessel attending a meeting last week on economy and climate change. She spoke about how renewable energy was an economic driver and a creator of jobs. She said that Steve Geller, from SEVCA, spoke about reaching out to people in poverty and residents in rural areas about the subject.

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION
None.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS
Police-Fire Facilities Project – Update. Town Manager Elwell provided the Board with a brief update on the opening of the Police Station and construction progress at the Central Fire Station, as set forth in his memorandum dated September 14, 2017. There was a brief discussion by the Board.

NO ACTION TAKEN.

Ordinance Amendments – Second Reading and Public Hearing
(i) Modifying On-Street Parking on Elliot Street and Church Street
Appendix C, Articles I, II, and III, Sections 16-87, 16-100, and 16-110
(ii) Increasing Speed Limit on Vernon Street
Appendix C, Article IV, Section 16-46(b)

O’Connor said that the Board was asked to hold a second reading and public hearing on amendments to Appendix C of the Code of Ordinances.

O’Connor called the public hearing to order.

O’Connor summarized the amendments to the Ordinances. Assistant Town Manager Moreland explained that the amendment to Articles I, II, and III would alter parking on Elliot Street to allow for the Fire Department vehicles’ turning radius when leaving the station at the intersection of Spring Street and Elliot Street. He said that three metered spaces would be added on Church Street and would make more on-street parking available to the public. He said that the amendment to Article IV (increasing the speed on Vernon Street) had previously been approved by the Traffic Safety Committee and the Selectboard. Allen noted that parking spaces in front of TJ Buckley’s would be moved a little further down Elliot Street but that more parking spaces would be created by the amendments. There was no public comment.

O’Connor closed the public hearing. There was no further discussion by the Board.

MOTION BY DAVE SCHOALES TO APPROVE THE AMENDMENTS TO APPENDIX C, ARTICLES I, II, III, AND IV, SECTIONS 16-87, 16-100, 16-110, AND 16-46(b), AS PRESENTED. MOTION CARRIED 5-0.

Panhandling – Informational Sign (from September 5 meeting). O’Connor summarized earlier discussions by the Board and the four actions previously approved by the Board, being (1) task force initiated by the Police Chief, (2) creating a jobs program, (3) installing special donation containers, and (4) a survey. She said that at the last meeting a citizens’ committee requested permission to install an informational flyer at multiple locations on Town property and the committee was asked to revise the flyer/sign (“sign”) and bring it to the Board at this meeting. She said that the logos and support from the Chamber of Commerce and Groundworks had been removed from the sign at the request of the
organizations and that the 2-1-1 agency had requested that its number be removed. She said that the sign in the Board’s back-up materials was not the current design. Michelle Simpson, President of Downtown Brattleboro Alliance, read the contents of the sign and spoke at length about the sign and the intent being to educate the public and people panhandling about their rights and other factual information. She said it was not intended to correct behavior of those panhandling or those giving money to panhandlers. She said that the sign and addressing the problem had been a collaborative effort.

Dick DeGray confirmed that panhandling affects the merchants and public in the downtown area. He asked why the organizations had withdrawn their support and he also requested a greater police presence in the downtown area.

Rhianna Kendrick, Director of Operations at Groundworks, said that the mission and values of Groundworks were not supported on the sign. She said that the causes for panhandling were complex and that Groundworks was not set up to provide support for those causes nor able to provide money to the people panhandling. She said the current version of the sign was more reactive in suggesting that people call 9-1-1 and less representative of meeting the needs of the people panhandling. She said that every panhandling situation was not an opportunity to call law enforcement.

Kate O’Connor stated that in the role of Executive Director of the Chamber of Commerce, it was important to the Chamber that the sign be a collaboration of agencies, citizens and the Town and that the information should be publicized as a community message. She said that the Chamber withdrew its support when she learned that the Groundworks withdrew its support. She agreed that the issue of panhandling was difficult and complex. She also said that the Chamber was committed to being involved in a continued discussion.

Brenda Siegel said that the sign was more than just informational and appeared aggressive and threatening. She said that human contact was important and that fear was one’s own perspective. She noted that a message of collaboration was important and supporters should be named. Dale Joy spoke in support of the sign. Pal Borofsky said that panhandling was a problem downtown and spoke about problems encountered in his store and by his employees and customers. Alan Blackwell spoke about the wording appearing aggressive and the need to view people on the street as individuals and not as an entire group.

There was a very lengthy discussion by the Board and each member provided opinions and observations. There was no consensus on whether to have a sign, the content of the sign, whether the sign addressed the issue, and whether the Town should take on the task of rewriting the sign when it was initiated by a citizens’ group. Some members wanted the committee to reword the sign and some spoke about the collaborative members meeting again to develop another sign that was acceptable to all parties. Some members spoke about promoting the four action items that the Board had already approved. All agreed that they wanted people downtown to feel safe. Elwell spoke about the jobs program that was being investigated and the possibility of adding collection boxes which would contain some explanation on them so information would be disseminated that way. He said it was unlikely that the collaborative members could agree on the wording of the sign but offered that staff could prepare a sign that provided information from the Town’s perspective.

**MOTION BY DAVE SCHOALES TO ACCEPT PETER’S PROPOSAL FOR THE STAFF TO DEVELOP A SIGN REGARDING PANHANDLING THAT WOULD BE APPROPRIATE FOR THE BOARD TO CONSIDER PLACING IN PUBLIC PLACES. MOTION CARRIED 5-0.**
NEW BUSINESS
Diversity/Inclusion/Equity in Town Government and in the Community – Town Manager’s Report and Recommendations. O’Connor summarized the Board’s previous request of the Town Manager to investigate and recommend ways to increase diversity and inclusion in the Town. She said that Town Manager Elwell prepared an extensive memorandum (dated September 14, 2017) and she recommended that the public read the memo which had been posted on the Town’s website under “Promoting Diversity in Our Community” under the News section on the home page. Elwell spoke in detail about the many interactions he had since the June 6 Selectboard meeting with individuals and groups regarding diversity, inclusion, and equity in Brattleboro. He discussed the information contained in his memo and spoke of conclusions that he had drawn from his many communications and about his recommendations for additional Town actions. Several people in attendance – Marisa Nielson, Phoebe Gooding, Dale Joy, Anne Louise Wagner, Ezlerh Oreste, Alex Fisher, Curtiss Reed, Shela Linton, and Nick Nickerson - provided their opinions and comments. Nearly all complimented Elwell for his efforts and outreach on this matter and spoke in support of his memo. Many commented on this being the first step in a long process and suggested committing various types of resources to the effort. Schoales invited members of the audience and public to attend the next Town School Board meeting on October 18 to continue the discussion with the School Board. There was some discussion by the Board and all Board members spoke in support of Elwell’s efforts, the resulting memorandum, and of the Town’s continued support.

MOTION BY JOHN ALLEN TO APPROVE THE TOWN MANAGER’S RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ADDITIONAL TOWN ACTIONS TO SUPPORT DIVERSITY, INCLUSION, AND EQUITY IN BRATTLEBORO. MOTION CARRIED 5-0.

O’Connor called for a 10-minute recess at 8:35pm. She reconvened the meeting at 8:47pm.

Energy Committee –
(i) Annual Report
(ii) Climate Accord Resolution
(iii) Downtown Brattleboro Building Energy Program

(i) Annual Report - O’Connor announced that the Energy Committee asked that this item be moved to a future agenda. The Board agreed to do so.

(ii) Climate Accord Resolution - Members from the Energy Committee – Michael Bosworth, Tad Montgomery, George Harvey, and Kathleen White – along with the Energy Coordinator Phoebe Gooding, were present to discuss agenda items (ii) and (iii). Bosworth said that the Trump Administration was taking actions to remove the United States from the Paris Climate Accord so the committee was asking the Selectboard to endorse a local Climate Accord Resolution. Tad Montgomery read and discussed the proposed resolution. Daniel Quipp, from 350Brattleboro (a climate justice organization), spoke about climate and energy concerns and suggested making the resolution stronger and that the Town take more action on energy-related matters. Dale Joy suggested that the Town set an example for the community. There was much discussion by members of the committee and the Selectboard about the resolution, town and state energy goals, whether to include additional language on the resolution, and other energy concerns.

MOTION BY JOHN ALLEN TO APPROVE THE CLIMATE RESOLUTION [FROM THE ENERGY COMMITTEE]. MOTION CARRIED 5-0.

(iii) Downtown Brattleboro Building Energy Program (DBBEP) – Tad Montgomery spoke about the DBBEP being "an initiative to encourage and support businesses, residents and organizations in
Brattleboro to undertake comprehensive energy audits, implement energy conservation measures, and install renewable energy systems.” He read the introductory paragraph to the proposal and the resolution proposed by the Energy Committee in support of the project. He asked for the Town to endorse the proposal. Jason Cooper, owner of a property redevelopment business, said he was asked by the Energy Committee to talk about energy efficiency improvements and the long-term financial implications. He discussed the various improvements that he made to his properties, associated costs, and the financial benefits. There was much discussion by the Board, including support for the concept, what type of support was being requested, what entity was making the request and its business structure, and what involvement was appropriate by the Town for a private business entity. The Board generally agreed that it could not support the proposal as presented.

NO ACTION TAKEN.

Ordinance to Ban Single-Use Plastic Bags – Discussion. Assistant Town Manager Moreland provided a brief history on the request for an ordinance to ban “single use plastic bags” as set forth in his memorandum dated September 14, 2017. He provided a draft ordinance for the Board to review and discuss, and he requested that the Board provide direction as to the thickness of a bag that would constitute “single use.” Pal Borofsky, owner of Sam’s Army and Navy Store, offered several samples of plastic bags with different mil thicknesses and he discussed the necessity and conveniences of the various plastic bags. He provided the Board with a copy of an e-mail with the cost factor of different bags and discussed the economic hardship it would create for his business. He also contended that his bags were not considered “single use” bags. Stewart McDermet spoke in support of a total ban of all plastic bags no matter what the thickness and urged consideration of using net bags or paper bags. Tim Maciel spoke in support of a total ban but said he would understand making exceptions for bags with unique sizes and dimensions. There was much discussion by the Board particularly about the thickness of the bags and the meaning of “single use.” The Board asked staff to confirm the thickness of the sample bags and to add the matter to the next agenda.

NO ACTION TAKEN.

FY17 Year-End Financial Report – Final But Unaudited. The Board agreed to move this matter to the October 3 meeting due to the late hour of this meeting.

NO ACTION TAKEN.


NO ACTION TAKEN.

New England Library Association Conference Grant – Accept and Appropriate. Elwell said that the Board was asked to ratify his decision to accept and appropriate a $495 scholarship grant from the Vermont Department of Libraries to pay for two library employees to attend the New England Library Association conference in Burlington on October 21 through 24, 2017. There was no discussion.

MOTION BY JOHN ALLEN TO RATIFY THE TOWN MANAGER’S DECISION TO ACCEPT AND APPROPRIATE A $495 SCHOLARSHIP GRANT FROM THE VERMONT DEPARTMENT OF LIBRARIES. MOTION CARRIED 5-0.

Announce Committee Vacancies. Allen announced the vacancies on various committees and boards.
O'Connor said that anyone interested in applying for those positions should submit an application by 5:00pm on September 28 for appointments at the October 3 Selectboard meeting.

NO MOTION WAS OFFERED.

There was no further business.

MOTION BY BRANDIE STARR TO ADJOURN AT 10:55PM. MOTION CARRIED 5-0.

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Tim Wessel, Clerk