

**BRATTLEBORO SELECTBOARD
TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 20, 2018
EXECUTIVE SESSION – 5:45PM
REGULAR MEETING – 6:15PM
SELECTBOARD MEETING ROOM, MUNICIPAL CENTER
MINUTES**

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

Staff Present: Town Manager Peter Elwell, Assistant Town Manager Patrick Moreland, Finance Director John O'Connor, Public Works Director Steve Barrett, Recreation & Parks Director Carol Lolatte, Fire Chief Mike Bucossi, Assistant Fire Chief Leonard Howard, Police Chief Mike Fitzgerald, Planning Director Sue Fillion, Library Director Starr LaTronica, and Executive Secretary Jan Anderson.

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

Others present: Gerald Zwyna, Samantha Duda, Peter F. May, Steve Cheim, Greg Worden, Anne Van Couvering, Barry Walz, Christopher Tanner, Stephanie Bonin, Dick DeGray, Franz Reichsman, Gersham Moore, ASL interpreters Janet Dickinson and Karen Todd, and others who did not sign the attendance sheet.

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

MOTION BY KATE O'CONNOR TO ENTER INTO EXECUTIVE SESSION TO DISCUSS CONTRACTS, LABOR RELATIONS AGREEMENTS WITH EMPLOYEES, THE NEGOTIATING OR SECURING OF REAL ESTATE PURCHASE OR LEASE OPTIONS, AND THE APPOINTMENT OR EMPLOYMENT OR EVALUATION OF A PUBLIC OFFICER OR EMPLOYEE, WHERE THE BOARD HAS DETERMINED THAT PREMATURE GENERAL PUBLIC KNOWLEDGE WOULD CLEARLY PLACE THE SELECTBOARD OR PEOPLE INVOLVED AT A SUBSTANTIAL DISADVANTAGE. THE TOWN MANAGER AND ASSISTANT TOWN MANAGER WERE INVITED INTO THE SESSION. MOTION CARRIED 3-0 (STARR WAS NOT PRESENT AT THE TIME OF THE VOTE).

Chair O'Connor reconvened the meeting at 6:21pm.

APPROVE MINUTES

O'Connor asked the Board to approve the minutes from the November 6 and November 13, 2018 meetings. There was no discussion.

MOTION BY DAVID SCHOALES TO APPROVE MINUTES FROM NOVEMBER 6 AND NOVEMBER 13. MOTION CARRIED 4-0.

CHAIR'S REMARKS

Chair O'Connor noted that Board Member Shanta Lee Gander was not present because she was recovering from surgery. O'Connor announced that the Community Thanksgiving Dinner was scheduled on Thursday, from 12:00pm to 5:00pm, at St. Michael's School on Walnut Street. She said it was a community event and that everyone was welcome to attend and enjoy a free meal.

MANAGER'S COMMENTS

Town Manager Elwell announced that the overnight winter parking ban went into effect on November 15. He reminded residents that their vehicles could not be parked on a street between 11:00pm and 7:00am and to watch for the purple and amber lights that flash when snow removal was taking place on the streets and in parking lots.

SELECTBOARD COMMENTS AND COMMITTEE REPORTS

Wessel noted that he attended the 2018 Statewide Housing Conference and said the conference would be addressed later in the meeting under the review of a Selectboard housing goal (item E).

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

Christopher Tanner, who resided at 197 Elliot Street, spoke at length about the drug activity taking place in another apartment in his building. He said that his apartment building was owned by a member of the Groundworks Collaborative and that he had spoken to the Town Manager and the Police Chief about his concerns. He said that he had complained several times to his landlord about the crimes and activities taking place at the building. He asked for a meeting with someone from the Groundworks to give him answers. He said that his neighbors were subjected to four broken windows and were forced to move. He said that his peace, quiet, and sanctity of his home had been taken away. Anne Van Couvering, who lived next door to 197 Elliot Street, spoke about the amount of traffic and activities at the building and in the area. She said that she was concerned and, although she believed in second chances, did not feel that a second chance should come at the safety of others. She said that she felt unsafe and stated that she could not leave personal items outside. Gerald Zwyna said that he formerly lived at 197 Elliot Street and was forced to move after living there for 13 years because of the drug activity and smashed windows. He spoke of how life was different when he first moved to the location and said that his wife and grandchildren, all of whom lived there, were not safe. Barry Walz, husband of Anne Van Couvering (who spoke previously), said they lived at 195 Elliot Street and he spoke about the traffic, suspicious activity, and exchanges taking place at the property and at the park across the street. He said that he feared for his safety and the safety of his wife and dog.

Dick DeGray noted that the drug activity mentioned by the previous speakers was heartbreaking and the “reality of small town U.S.A.” He then thanked several members of the noontime Rotary Club for helping put up holiday lights in Pliny Park. He noted that the tree lighting ceremony at Pliny Park was scheduled on Friday, with festivities starting at 5:30pm and the tree lighting at 6:00pm.

NEW BUSINESS

Financial Report – Monthly Report, October. Finance Director John O’ Connor spoke about the monthly financial report for October. Dick DeGray, Franz Reichsman and some Board members asked several questions.

NO ACTION TAKEN.

Downtown Brattleboro Alliance (DBA) – Annual Work Plan, Budget, and Town Meeting Article. Stephanie Bonin, Executive Director, and Peter May, Board member of the Downtown Brattleboro Alliance (DBA), were present. Bonin introduced other Board members who were in the audience. She then discussed many of DBA’s programs and activities that took place throughout the year, including the bike parklet, rack cards to be distributed at four different Vermont Welcome Centers, BrattleBoo, and downtown flowers and holiday lights. She said that the holiday lights and tree celebration would take place at Pliny Park on Friday starting at 5:30pm. She then reviewed DBA’s budget for the upcoming year, which she said had been approved by the DBA Board. Peter May spoke praises for Bonin’s work at the DBA. O’Connor noted that DBA was asking for \$80,000 for the upcoming year and Elwell confirmed that the amount of \$80,000 was included in the Town’s FY20 proposed budget. There were several questions and much discussion by Board members. O’Connor noted that the Article for Representative Town Meeting in the amount of \$80,000 would be included in the Warning that the Selectboard would approve in January.

NO MOTION OFFERED.

FY20 Proposed Budget

- (i) Capital Equipment
- (ii) Capital Projects
- (iii) One Percent Local Option Sales Tax

(i) Elwell noted that the budget materials that were being discussed at this meeting were included in the Selectboard’s notebooks (rather than the separate budget notebooks). He spoke about past discussions where a minimum of \$1 million should be set aside for capital improvements, and he said that this was the year that the goal would be reached. He spoke at length about the many capital equipment and project needs. He then discussed several capital equipment needs and the projected 25-year capital

equipment plan, including long-term needs and a proposal to establish a “fire engine replacement fund” to maintain a relatively steady capital fund and avoid future spikes in borrowing for replacement of expensive Fire Department equipment. He reviewed the specific equipment purchases contained in the proposed FY20 budget. Dick DeGray and Franz Reichsman asked questions and provided suggestions. Police Chief Fitzgerald spoke about the replacement schedule of various police vehicles. There was much discussion by the Board.

(ii) Elwell said that capital projects were more difficult to anticipate and he provided a 5-year project plan. He spoke about the anticipated projects included in the proposed FY20 budget, including improving ADA accessibility to the Amtrak platform connected to the museum, replacing Brooks Memorial Library fascia soffit trim, replacement of hazardous windows in the Children’s Room at the Library, street paving and improvements, sidewalk repair and replacements, and Phase 2 renovations to the swimming pool at Living Memorial Park. He also spoke about a method to improve capital project planning as set forth in his memo dated November 15, 2018, including a Needs Assessment Phase, Prioritization Phase, and Planning Phase. There was a brief discussion by the Board.

(iii) O’Connor said that the Board would have a more detailed discussion about proposing a 1% Local Options Sales Tax at its special meeting on November 27. She spoke about some of the information requested for that meeting as set forth in the memo from Assistant Town Manager Moreland, dated November 15, 2018. Wessel spoke in support of the 1% tax in order to help reduce the financial burden on the taxpayers and make the tax rate more competitive with surrounding towns. He said that he had been collecting data which he would share with the Board at future discussions. Starr also spoke in favor of the tax and about reducing the significant burden on taxpayers and renters. Dick DeGray spoke in favor of implementing the 1% tax in order to improve the revenue stream and he suggested that the Town consider collecting the tax, with the required Charter amendment, rather than relying on the State to collect it. Franz Reichsman asked for known effects and hard evidence regarding the implementation of the 1% tax and the effect on the budget. There was some discussion by the Board.

NO ACTION TAKEN.

Name Private Drive – Barred Owl Lane, Off Bonnyvale Road. Elwell said that the Board was asked to approve the name of Barred Owl Lane for a private drive off of Bonnyvale Road, as set forth in a memo dated November 6, 2018, from E-911 Coordinator Rita Johnson. There was no discussion by the Board.

MOTION BY BRANDIE STARR TO APPROVE THE NAME OF BARRED OWL LANE FOR A PRIVATE DRIVE OFF OF BONNYVALE ROAD, AS PRESENTED. MOTION CARRIED 4-0.

Review Selectboard Goal - *Seek ways for the Town to support and extend the work being done by other community organizations to address areas of need in Brattleboro including housing and economic and community development.* Board Member Schoales spoke about his concerns about meeting affordable housing needs. He referred to his e-mail, dated November 14, 2018, with a list of questions to ask and a list of organizations that may be interested in gathering more information on the matter. Planning Director Sue Fillion spoke about the 2018 Vermont Statewide Housing Conference that she and Board Member Wessel recently attended. She said that the conference was a biennial event sponsored by the Vermont Housing Finance Agency after each gubernatorial election. She said the keynote speaker was an urban designer/planner from the Bay area who was involved in housing redevelopment projects and who spoke about getting stories from the people in order to meet the needs of the people. Fillion also spoke about another speaker (Tiffany Manuel from Boston) who said that housing was seen as a commodity rather than a basic right and she promoted building a case for a community approach. Fillion and Wessel both spoke about preserving “naturally occurring affordable housing (NOAH)” and gentrification of existing neighborhoods. Wessel also mentioned one speaker who suggested that some people lived in poverty and then were trapped in poverty and the difficult transition out of poverty. Wessel said that he wanted to focus on having a strong middle ground. Schoales suggested concentrating on affordable housing and he offered to review the most recent Windham & Windsor Housing Trust’s Housing Needs Assessment and to reach out to agencies and individuals already involved in the housing discussion. The Board generally agreed to continue to discuss the matter and be present in community conversations and forums.

NO ACTION TAKEN.

There was no further business.

MOTION BY BRANDIE STARR TO ADJOURN AT 9:15PM. MOTION CARRIED 4-0.

Tim Wessel, Clerk