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, Town Attorney Robert Fisher, Fire Chief Mike Bucossi, Assistant Fire Chief Len Howard, Police Captain Mark Carignan, Executive Secretary Jan Anderson, and others who did not sign the attendance sheet.

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

Others present: Nick Nickerson, Erin Weaver, Justin Bibee, Yousra Bibee, Terry A. Carter, Franz Reichsman, Stuart Strothman, Howard Fairman, 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 5:30pm. She confirmed that the meeting was properly warned.

MOTION BY KATE O’CONNOR TO ENTER INTO EXECUTIVE SESSION TO DISCUSS CONTRACTS, LABOR RELATIONS AGREEMENTS WITH EMPLOYEES, PENDING OR PROBABLE CIVIL LITIGATION OR A PROSECUTION TO WHICH THE PUBLIC BODY IS OR MAY BE A PARTY, 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 OR THE PEOPLE INVOLVED AT A SUBSTANTIAL DISADVANTAGE. THE TOWN MANAGER, ASSISTANT TOWN MANAGER, AND TOWN ATTORNEY WERE INVITED TO ATTEND. MOTION CARRIED 5-0.

Chair O’Connor reconvened the meeting at 6:17pm.

APPROVE MINUTES

MOTION BY BRANDIE STARR TO APPROVE THE MINUTES FROM NOVEMBER 21, 2017.

Howard Fairman asked that the words “He supports a statewide ban” be deleted from page 3, line 33 of the draft minutes. The Board agreed to the request.

MOTION BY BRANDIE STARR TO APPROVE THE AMENDED MINUTES. MOTION CARRIED 5-0.

CHAIR’S REMARKS
Chair O’Connor noted that the Board met last Saturday to discuss the Departments’ line items on the FY19 budget. She said that the meeting had been recorded and could be viewed on the BCTV website.

MANAGER’S COMMENTS
Town Manager Elwell recapped the upcoming regular and special meetings to discuss the proposed FY19 budget. He encouraged the public to attend and participate in the discussions.

SELECTBOARD COMMENTS AND COMMITTEE REPORTS
Schoales spoke about a recent meeting of the Community Equity Collaborative Workforce Committee, where representatives from the College of St. Joseph spoke about its successes with diversifying students and placing them in the job market. He spoke highly of the preparedness and professionalism of Town Manager Elwell and Police Chief Fitzgerald at the meeting. He said that he expected students and faculty from St. Joseph to visit Brattleboro in the spring.
Chair O’Connor recognized Justin Bibee who asked the Board to endorse the “Human Rights Day Proclamation 2017 Celebrating the U.N. Declaration of Human Rights” and to proclaim December 10, 2017 as Human Rights Day. Bibee spoke about human rights and the proclamation. O’Connor read the proclamation in its entirety. There was no discussion by the Board.

MOTION BY DAVE SCHOALES TO ADOPT THE PROCLAMATION AS PRESENTED. MOTION CARRIED 5-0.

Nick Nickerson spoke and said that he had an anti-abortion bumper sticker on his vehicle and that he had received notes on his truck and negative feedback. He asked the citizens and Police Department to help watch his vehicle in an effort to reduce the “lawlessness” in this Town and avoid conflict. There was no discussion.

Stuart Strothman, from Southeast Vermont Watershed Alliance (SEVWA), requested financial support from the Town to support SEVWA’s efforts in continuing to monitor water quality in the rivers. The Board agreed to discuss his request at a later meeting where it would discuss potential increases in levels of service. There was a brief discussion by the Board.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

Police-Fire Facilities Project - Update. Town Manager Elwell provided an update on the final stages of construction and said that the project was nearing substantial completion. He announced that the ribbon cutting ceremony and open house at the Central Fire Station would be scheduled on Friday, January 19, 2018, starting at 3:00pm. There was a brief discussion by the Board.

NO ACTION TAKEN.

NEW BUSINESS

Letter to VTrans Requesting Safety Improvements on Putney Road. Elwell said that the Board was asked to approve a letter to VTrans requesting safety improvements on Putney Road, as recommended by the Traffic Safety Committee. He spoke about the Traffic Safety Audit conducted by VTrans between Veterans’ Bridge and Town Crier Drive. He said that the Traffic Safety Committee reviewed the audit and recommended some specific short-term improvements in order to improve pedestrian and bicyclist safety in that area prior to the larger road improvement project expected to take place in 2024. The committee also recommended the installation of pedestrian crossing lights at the Hannaford’s intersection. Wessel, the Selectboard representative to the Traffic Safety Committee, also spoke about some of the discussions that took place at the committee meeting. He suggested revising the letter to add an introductory paragraph thanking VTrans for its swift response to the Town’s request for a safety audit. Terry Carter spoke about her concerns for and poor visibility of pedestrians that walked along Putney Road late at night when public transportation was not available. There was a brief discussion by the Board.

MOTION BY DAVE SCHOALES TO APPROVE THE LETTER TO VERMONT AGENCY OF TRANSPORTATION SECRETARY JOE FLYNN, AS AMENDED WITH THE SUGGESTION RECOMMENDED BY TIM WESSEL. MOTION CARRIED 5-0.

FY19 Proposed Budget

Fire Department’s Proposed Replacement of Aerial Ladder Truck. Elwell said that the Board was asked to hear the Fire Department’s request to replace the aerial ladder truck. He said that a replacement ladder truck was previously in the capital budget and funding for it was proposed through a grant; however, the grant was not awarded to the Town. He said that the truck would cost approximately $950,000, and suggested that it could be financed using $450,000 from the Unassigned Fund Balance and borrowing $500,000 through a 10-year note. He reminded the Board that the Department’s 26 year-old ladder truck had recently been taken out of service and was replaced with a used 24 year-old truck that was purchased from Sharon, Massachusetts. Fire Chief Bucossi and Assistant Fire Chief Howard spoke in strong support of purchasing a new ladder truck during FY19. They spoke about concerns regarding aging vehicles, the maintenance routine for all vehicles, public safety concerns, and the anticipated increase in cost if the purchase was delayed by another year. Chief Bucossi stressed that the problems with the 26 year-old truck was due to age and not maintenance issues. He also noted that a
new ladder truck would take a year to build and spoke about concerns in purchasing used equipment. The Chief and Assistant Chief also thanked the Putney Fire Department for loaning Brattleboro its ladder truck during the transition time when the Sharon truck was being purchased. Assistant Fire Chief Howard spoke about the used equipment market, rental options, firefighter safety, and the cost of delaying the purchase. Franz Reichsman, from the Finance Committee, suggested that renting a ladder truck may be an option if additional time was required to purchase or receive a new ladder truck. There was much discussion by the Board, including the daily/monthly use of the ladder truck, the cost of a new truck, age of vehicles, setting funds aside for the eventual purchase, and delaying the purchase of a new truck. The Board asked management staff to provide additional information about the status of the proposed budget discussions and other financial concerns. Elwell said that he would provide more information for the December 19 meeting where the Board would discuss additional FY19 budget matters.

NO ACTION TAKEN.

There was no further business.

MOTION BY BRANDIE STARR TO ADJOURN AT 7:40PM. MOTION CARRIED 5-0.

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Tim Wessel, Clerk