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

Staff Present: Town Manager Peter Elwell, Assistant Town Manager Patrick Moreland, Town Attorney Robert Fisher, Assistant Assessor Jenepher Burnell, Planning Director Rod Francis, Library Director Starr LaTronica, Executive Secretary Jan Anderson, and others who did not sign the attendance sheet.

Media present: BCTV staff and volunteers.

Others present: Nick Nickerson, Erica Walch, Wayne Estey, Frank LaGrande, Merrill Bent, Stephanie Bonin, Franz Reichsman, Brian A. Robertshaw, Michael Bosworth, Donna Simons, Ted Kramer, Larry Cassidy, Dick DeGray, Craig Miskovich, Greg Worden, 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, AND NEGOTIATING REAL ESTATE PURCHASE LEASE OPTIONS, 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, ASSISTANT TOWN MANAGER, AND TOWN ATTORNEY WERE INVITED TO ATTEND. MOTION CARRIED 4-0 (SCHOALES WAS NOT PRESENT AT THE TIME OF THE VOTE).**

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

**APPROVE MINUTES**

**MOTION BY TIM WESSEL TO APPROVE THE MINUTES FROM DECEMBER 2 AND DECEMBER 5, 2017. MOTION CARRIED 5-0.**

**CHAIR’S REMARKS**

None.

**MANAGER’S COMMENTS**

None.

**SELECTBOARD COMMENTS AND COMMITTEE REPORTS**

Allen noted that Steve Steidle, a former member of the Selectboard, passed away last week. He offered condolences to the Steidle family.

**PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**

Wayne Estey, President of Brattleboro Artists’ Union, discussed the importance of arts in the community. He noted that the Town Arts Committee was without enough members to make a quorum and said that the committee was “unsuccessful lately.” He noted a gap between the committee’s mission statement and its effectiveness, as well as a lack of funding. He suggested that the Board review the committee’s goals, make this a future agenda item, and reconsider funding.
LIQUOR COMMISSIONERS

MOTION BY JOHN ALLEN TO CONVENE AS LIQUOR COMMISSIONERS. MOTION CARRIED 5-0.

Second Class Liquor License – Walgreens Eastern Co., Inc. (#00297), 896 Putney Road. Elwell said that the Board was asked to approve a Second Class Liquor License for Walgreens Eastern Co., Inc. (#00297), located at 896 Putney Road. Attorney Merrill Bent said that the documentation was in order and asked the Board to approve the application. There was a brief discussion.

MOTION BY JOHN ALLEN TO APPROVE A SECOND CLASS LIQUOR LICENSE FOR WALGREENS EASTERN CO., INC., LOCATED AT 896 PUTNEY ROAD. MOTION CARRIED 5-0.

First Class Liquor License – Hospitality Brattleboro, LLC, d/b/a Holiday Inn Express Brattleboro VT. Elwell said that the Board was asked to approve a First Class Liquor License for Hospitality Brattleboro, LLC., d/b/a Holiday Inn Express Brattleboro VT, located at 100 Chickering Drive. Frank LaGrande, General Manager, said that liquor would be sold from the gift shop. There was a brief discussion by the Board.

MOTION BY BRANDIE STARR TO APPROVE A FIRST CLASS LIQUOR LICENSE TO HOSPITALITY BRATTLEBORO, LLC., D/B/A HOLIDAY INN EXPRESS BRATTLEBORO VT, LOCATED AT 100 CHICKERING DRIVE. MOTION CARRIED 5-0.

MOTION BY DAVE SCHOALES TO ADJOURN AS LIQUOR COMMISSIONERS. MOTION CARRIED 5-0.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS
Police-Fire Facilities Project - Update. Town Manager Elwell said that final construction was in progress at Central Fire Station and that the report at the next Selectboard meeting would likely be the final report. He said there were uncommitted bond funds and the Police-Fire Facilities Build Committee would meet to make suggestions to the Board on how to use the uncommitted funds. He announced that a ribbon cutting ceremony and open house was scheduled on January 19, starting at 3:00pm. There was a brief discussion by the Board.

NO ACTION TAKEN.

NEW BUSINESS
Errors and Omissions to Grand List – Approval, Assessor’s Office. Acting Town Assessor Jenepher Burnell explained the changes between the Grand List that was initially filed with the State and changes that were subsequently made which were included in the report before the Board. She said that the overall value of the Grand List was reduced by $2,241,723. She said that the Board was asked to approve the changes in the 2017 Grand List as set forth on her Errors and Omissions 2017 Grand List Report, dated December 1, 2017. There was a brief discussion by the Board.

MOTION BY JOHN ALLEN TO APPROVE THE CHANGES IN THE 2017 GRAND LIST AS SET FORTH ON THE ERRORS AND OMISSIONS 2017 GRAND LIST REPORT, DATED DECEMBER 1, 2017, FROM ACTING TOWN ASSESSOR JENEPHER BURNELL. MOTION CARRIED 5-0.

Financial Reports – Finance Director John O’Connor
(i) Audit and Financial Statements for FY17
(ii) Single Audit for FY17
(iii) Monthly Report for November of 2017

Finance Director John O’Connor summarized the FY17 Audit and FY17 Single Audit. Elwell noted that the FY17 Audit was clean and did not contain any findings again this year due to the thorough work of the Finance Department. He noted that the Single Audit for FY17 contained one finding that was due to an oversight where funds were drawn down but not expended within the required three days. He said that the funds were fully and properly accounted for, had been repaid to the EPA, and were still available for
future brownfields projects. Finance Director John O’Connor then discussed the monthly financial report for November, 2017. There was a brief discussion by the Board.

**NO ACTION TAKEN.**

**Close Out VCDP/Windham & Windsor Housing Trust Scattered Site Grant – Public Hearing.** Chair O’Connor said that the Board was asked to hold a public hearing in order to close out the VCDP Scattered Site 2013 Grant to Windham & Windsor Housing Trust.

Chair O’Connor opened the public hearing.

Assistant Town Manager Moreland summarized the amount and purpose of the CDBG grant received by Windham & Windsor Housing Trust (WWHT). He said that grant totaled $4,320,000, spanned over four years, and was ready to be closed out.

Erica Walch, from WWHT, spoke about the purpose and use of the grant funds. She said that the funds supported three WWHT programs. The first component was a homeownership program to rehabilitate single family homes that were owned by low to moderate-income homeowners. She said there were 100 applicants, 10 of whom were from Brattleboro, and 67 projects were completed, with 8 of them from Brattleboro. She said that the payback of funds revolved into a fund for future home repairs. She said another component of the grant was counseling and education for first time home buyers or others who needed help building financial capabilities, and that 956 households applied for funds, with 171 of which were from Brattleboro. She said that outcomes from those programs included debt reduction, downpayment savings, and foreclosure prevention. She said that the final component was for home purchases. She said that 179 participants purchased homes, with 53 of them in Brattleboro.

John Allen questioned why Brattleboro had such a low percentage on the residential rehabilitation program and a higher percentage of home purchases. Walch spoke about income restrictions connected with the programs. She said that WWHT would like to promote more home repair programs.

Wayne Estey noted that such an organization assisted him when he purchased his first home.

Chair O’Connor closed the public hearing. She noted that no action was required by the Selectboard.

**NO ACTION TAKEN.**

**Downtown Brattleboro Alliance – Annual Work Plan, Budget, and Town Meeting Article.** O’Connor said that members from the Downtown Brattleboro Alliance (DBA) were present to discuss DBA’s proposed FY19 Budget and Annual Work Plan. She announced that she would recuse herself from any vote because she worked for the Brattleboro Area Chamber of Commerce who had a seat on the DBA Board. She provided an overview explaining that Brattleboro was designated by the State as a Town with a Downtown Improvement District and such a designation allowed the Town to obtain tax credits, grants, and Act 250 considerations. She said that the Town then had the authority to designate an organization to oversee the downtown district and its budget in accordance with the downtown ordinance, and that DBA was the appointed organization. She said that the Town imposed an assessment on downtown properties which was the source of the funds contained in the DBA budget and that members of the downtown district determined its budget. The Selectboard and ultimately Town Meeting were required to approve the budget and work plan. Ted Kramer, Vice President of the DBA Board of Directors, and Stephanie Bonin, Executive Director, were present. Bonin said that DBA recently moved from a coordinator-type of organization to an executive director lead organization. She spoke in detail about DBA’s Year in Review that was included in the Selectboard’s back-up materials, and also spoke about the current year’s operation, which included transparency, more promotions, a membership drive, social media exposure, and staff changes. She then discussed the FY19 Work Plan, a copy of which was included in the Board’s back-up materials. She said that DBA was requesting $78,000 (not $75,000 as noted on the “Budget Detail”) for FY19 and that DBA was expected to raise $37,630 in private fundraising to complete its funding. Kramer spoke about the history of the downtown area, creation of a downtown district, and the executive director hiring process and selection. He discussed the DBA’s spending practices and its past frugality. He invited other volunteers to join the DBA Board of Directors. Several
members of the audience – Larry Cassidy, Craig Miskovich, Wayne Estey, Donna Simons, and Dick DeGray – provided their opinions and generally spoke in support of DBA. Some people spoke specifically in support of hiring Bonin as the executive director. DeGray spoke of his concerns about a surplus of funds from FY17 that was not carried over to the FY19 budget. The Selectboard asked several questions and had much discussion with members of the audience about the certain items in the proposed budget and the fundraising requirements.

**MOTION BY DAVE SCHOALES TO APPROVE THE ANNUAL WORK PLAN AND BUDGET OF THE DOWNTOWN BRATTLEBORO ALLIANCE, AS PRESENTED. MOTION CARRIED 4-0 (O'CONNOR ABSTAINED).**

O' Connor called for a short recess at 8:26pm. She reconvened the meeting at 8:35pm.

Vermont Climate Pledge Coalition – Recommendation from Energy Committee + Staff. Town Manager Elwell said that the Board was asked to authorize him to add the Town of Brattleboro to the Vermont Climate Pledge Coalition (VCPC). He said the recommendation and the plan for tracking related actions was a joint request from staff and the Energy Committee, and was further described in his memorandum dated December 15, 2017. He said that the VCPC was a public forum with a community energy dashboard used for tracking commitments and performances and aggregating the results with other VCPC members in Vermont. He said that VCPC was supported by the Vermont League of Cities and Towns and involved five other municipalities, along with other private and public organizations. He said that members of the VCPC were not committed to spending dollars or required to engage in specific projects. He said that staff would post the municipality’s projects and the Energy Coordinator and Energy Committee would track data from other members. Michael Bosworth, Chair of the Energy Committee, spoke in support of the recommendation. There was no discussion by the Board.

**MOTION BY TIM WESSEL TO AUTHORIZE THE TOWN MANAGER TO ADD THE TOWN AS A MEMBER OF THE VERMONT CLIMATE PLEDGE COALITION. MOTION CARRIED 5-0.**

**FY19 Proposed Budget**

(i) Review Current Status  
(ii) What Decisions Still Need to be Made?  
(iii) What Information is Needed for Decisions that Still Need to be Made?  
(iv) Schedule of Meetings for January 2018

(i – iii) Town Manager Elwell reviewed a list of unfinished items for the FY19 budget process, as set forth on his memo dated December 18, and he asked the Board to confirm the accuracy of the list or to modify it, as needed. Elwell also discussed a new request by “We Celebrate Democracy / Civil Rights for All” that its banner be displayed over Main Street when a spot was open and that the fee be waived each time. The Board discussed whether the request should be made by petition of the voters and whether the request should be brought to Representative Town Meeting for decision. There was discussion about lost revenue, costs to the Town, the ballot process, and unfairness to other civic organizations that pay to display their banners. The Board generally agreed not to support the “We Celebrate Democracy” request. John Allen spoke about funding the Skatepark and he offered a personal challenge that if the Board agreed to expend $20,000 and the public matched that amount, then he would donate the second half of his Selectboard stipend ($1,500) to the Skatepark fund. Schoales asked for more information about the process to allow the Town to retain all of the Rooms & Meals Tax. Elwell said that the process included a Charter change so it could not be part of the FY19 budget, but said that additional information would be brought to the Board at a later date to more fully discuss the matter. Franz Reichsman, from the Finance Committee, requested information about additional grant opportunities for the aerial fire truck and clarification about modifying streetlights on Main Street, including seeking information and expertise from other organizations such as Efficiency Vermont. The Board asked several questions and asked for more information regarding the Human Resources Professional.

(iv) Elwell said that the Board was asked to confirm a schedule of meetings for January 2018 at which the Selectboard would finalize its FY19 Budget recommendations. The Board agreed to the schedule proposed in Elwell’s memo.
NO MOTION WAS OFFERED.

There was no further business.

MOTION BY DAVE SCHOALES TO ADJOURN AT 9:10PM. MOTION CARRIED 5-0.

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Tim Wessel, Clerk