

BRANDON FIRE DISTRICT NO 1

Prudential Committee Meeting – April 9, 2026 – 6:30 PM

Present: Natalie Steen, Amber Lovely-Lee, Cathy Bilodeau, Doug Bailey

Also in Attendance: Raymond Counter, Tom Kilpeck, Kristy Pinkham, Catarina Harding, Alan Leavitt, Bryan Jones

1) Call to Order

Natalie Steen called a meeting to order at 6:32 pm.

- a) Agenda Adoption – Amber/Cathy made a motion to adopt the agenda. **Motion passed 4-0**

2) Old Business

- a) **MERP** - Project Updates - Fire Department heat pump installation: Partially complete but installed, waiting for the electrician (3 weeks) to make the outdoor connection. Once completed, only minor punch list items will remain for the current project. Office Work: Outstanding entryway and conference room work has no set completion date. Ray will reach out to establish a firm deadline (grant funds must be spent/allocated by December 31, 2026).
Tom presented a detailed heat loss report from Hulbert Supply analyzing the ventilation system in the truck bay area of the fire station. The report concluded that operating the exhaust fan causes approximately 640,000 BTUs per hour of heat loss, with the vast majority attributed to ventilation issues. The absence of a controlled makeup air system significantly amplifies this heat loss. The report recommends implementing a tempered makeup air strategy as the most effective solution for reducing energy consumption and improving system performance. Preliminary quotes for the work range from \$50,000 to \$70,000. Ray confirmed that sufficient grant funding is available (well over \$100,000 remaining), though the final budget allocation will depend on how much is allocated to potential solar installation costs. Tom will forward the report to Maggie at RPC to begin developing an RFP for the project.
- b) **Brandon South Tank Project** - Delayed while waiting for DWGPD to review the agreement. They are currently prioritizing another community's public health issue.
- c) **Proposed Bylaw Changes** - Natalie explained the complexity of fire district statutes that don't align with each other, creating uncertainty about whether the clerk and treasurer positions must be elected or can be appointed. Due to this ambiguity and lack of clear legal guidance, the committee decided to proceed with holding a special election rather than risk improper appointments. The proposal is to re-elect Kristy Pinkham as treasurer, though she would serve primarily in a nominal figurehead position (similar to the auditor role) with minimal actual responsibilities—the clerk would continue handling the work. Natalie addressed liability concerns, clarifying that the fire district would indemnify the treasurer, meaning the district would provide legal defense and coverage for any issues. The committee agreed that this approach gives Christy time to adjust to the role during the first year before reevaluating. Meanwhile, they will continue researching whether future appointments are permissible and plan to update bylaws accordingly before the next election cycle (targeting the end of the year/January). The committee discussed scheduling and procedural matters for addressing the clerk and treasurer election issues. Natalie proposed holding a special meeting at 6 PM on the same night as the next regular meeting, pending approval of the warning notice at the next meeting. The discussion clarified that the town of Brandon currently serves as the collector of taxes for the fire district through the joint billing arrangement (previously, the treasurer, Seth Clifford, held this role). This position needs clarification in the bylaws, which will require updates before January. However, the committee decided to focus only on re-electing the clerk and treasurer positions for now, postponing other bylaw changes. The goal is to complete all bylaw updates before the next election cycle, ideally by year-end or January.

3) Fiscal

- a) **Warrant – Fire Department** – Motion by Amber/Cathy to approve the general fund warrant for the fire department of \$8,146.65. **Motion passed 4-0.**
- b) **Warrant – Water Department** – Motion by Amber/Cathy to approve the general fund warrant for the water department of \$32,697.16. **Motion passed 4-0.**
- c) **Warrant – Payroll** – Motion by Amber/Cathy to approve the water reserve fund warrant of \$11,087.10. **Motion passed 4-0.**

- 4) **Approval of Minutes** – Motion by Amber/Cathy to approve the minutes of March 12, 2026, as amended to correct attendance details before approval. Corrections included: Bradley was not present, Natalie attended remotely, and the motion to adjourn was made by Cathy since she had already signed off. **Motion passed 4-0.**

5) Water Department Report

Provided online with the agenda. Ray added that he is actively pursuing 3-4 funding opportunities for water system improvements, including a Homeland Security grant to upgrade the SCADA system due to cybersecurity concerns (noting that Iranian cyberattacks on US water facilities have occurred multiple times in the New York/Vermont area).

6) Fire Department Report

Provided online with the agenda. Tom announced that the Estabrook Estate has been finalized with the Fire Department as one of the named beneficiaries and expects to receive an amount totaling approximately \$71,000. He requested that these funds be directed to the Equipment Replacement Fund to address continually rising equipment costs, noting that fire truck replacements will likely be needed within the next couple of years.

- 7) **New Business** - None

- 8) **Public Comment** – Alan Leavitt, owner of the former Dr. Dick marble house on Conant Square, presented a serious ongoing issue affecting his property's habitability. His home has experienced recurring water line freezing for 4-5 winters, making it uninhabitable during winter months. The problem prevents all water usage—no flushing toilets, showers, tooth brushing, or dish washing—sometimes lasting for weeks or months at a time. Key Issue: The water service line from the street to the house freezes repeatedly, and the problem did NOT exist before the Segment 6 installation. Alan has owned the property since 2003 (23+ years) without issues until Segment 6 was completed. Ray explained the water department advises running water during extreme cold snaps, but this doesn't help when residents are away. Once ice forms in the line, it continues to build, making the problem worse over time. The fire district cannot definitively determine where the freezing occurs without excavation. The committee discussed the potential liability of Casella (Segment 6 contractor) since issues began after their installation, though the typical warranty period is only one year after project completion. The board committed to researching the issue thoroughly before the next meeting, including determining responsibility, exploring solutions, and investigating potential contractor liability. Alan stated he has not had water service all winter, indicating he does not intend to pay for service he didn't receive (comparing it to utilities that wouldn't bill for no service).

Bryan Jones, a rental property owner from Salisbury with property at 16 Franklin Street in Brandon, presented a claim of long-term water meter overcharges. This was his second appearance before the committee on this matter. Bryan alleges his water meter failed to read properly for approximately 22 years, resulting in 25 years of overcharges totaling \$44,000+ and over 2 million gallons of water he claims he never used. He calculates he was overcharged by approximately 60%. The board acknowledged that nothing had been done to investigate the claim (not intentionally). Ray will research the matter and provide an analysis to the board. The issue is scheduled for full discussion and decision at the June meeting. Bryan will leave his documentation with Ray for scanning and distribution to all board members. Ray noted he doesn't necessarily agree with how Bryan presents the information but wants to avoid debate until proper research is completed.

- 9) **Adjournment** - Motion by Amber/Cathy to adjourn at 7:27 pm. **Motion passed 4-0.**

The next regularly scheduled meeting for the Prudential Committee will be held on Thursday, May 14th at 6:30 pm in the Fire Department conference room at 61 Franklin Street.

Raymond Counter
Clerk for the Board