

1 **BENNINGTON SELECT BOARD MEETING**

2 **130 RIVER STREET**

3 **BENNINGTON, VERMONT 05201**

4 **JUNE 5, 2023**

5 **MINUTES**

6 **SELECT BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT:** Jeannie Jenkins-Chair; Tom Haley-Vice Chair; Jeanne
7 Conner; Ed Woods; Gary Corey; Jim Carroll; and Sarah Perrin.

8 **SELECT BOARD MEMBERS ABSENT:** None.

9 **ALSO PRESENT:** Stuart Hurd-Town Manager; Dan Monks-Assistant Town Manager; R.J. Joly-
10 Public Works Director; Larry Gates-Assistant Public Works Director; Melissa Courier-Finance
11 Director; Michele Johnson-Human Resources and Contracts Administrator; Sam Restino; Nancy
12 White; CAT-TV; and Nancy H. Lively-Secretary.

13 At 5:00pm, Chair Jeannie Jenkins called the meeting to order.

14 **1. WATER/SEWER FUND BUDGETS**

15 Mr. Hurd noted that the proposed increases for the FY24 fiscal year are 4.4% in the
16 Water Fund and 3.4% in the Sewer Fund giving a 1% increase in the Water Rates and a 5%
17 increase in the Sewer Rates. The water fund has appeared to stabilize due to maximizing
18 depreciation over the last several years, the increase of customers from the PFOA projects, the
19 elimination of annual projects for system compliance due to the bond passing, and there are no
20 water projects planned. The sewer fund is impacted by increased costs of certain materials due
21 to inflation, increased depreciation for the County Street sewer replacement, some increases in
22 operational costs, and the continuing bond payment.

23 *Board comments/questions on the Water Fund Budget answered by Mr. Hurd, Mr. Joly, Mr.*
24 *Gates, and Ms. Courier:*

25 Ms. Conner: Explain the health care costs increase. *We are part of the Blue Cross/Blue Shield*
26 *pool and our costs increase with them. Health care costs are on a calendar year so there are no*
27 *increases the first 6 months and a 10% increase assuming the costs will increase during the*
28 *second 6 months.*

29 Ms. Conner: Explain the energy efficiencies in all of our facilities. *We are adjusting our pump*
30 *run schedules by not running 2 pumps at the same time and the hydro running at the plant*
31 *continues to produce energy at 12-15 KWH.*

32 Mr. Corey: Where does the bond for the water fund show up in the budget? *We just received*
33 *approval and haven't started paying yet, however, we will be sure that money is set aside for*

34 *when payments are due and we have enough in reserve to cover that. There is usually a one*
35 *year delay on a water fund bond payment so we are ~2 years out before these payments will*
36 *affect the budget.*

37 Mr. Corey: Explain the Total Water Fund changes from the FY22 Budget, to the FY22 Actual, to
38 the FY23 Budget, to the FY24 Budget? *The FY22 Actual is \$1.9M for the lead line project that we*
39 *will be fully reimbursed for and is a Construction in Progress so it will eventually show again in*
40 *the FY23 Actual.*

41 Mr. Carroll: How is the budget affected by the new Morgan Springs pump station? *We have*
42 *actually seen an increase in income and expect ~\$200K in income up from the previous income*
43 *of ~\$120K. We anticipate a steady increase in income that will eventually follow inflation.*

44 *Board comments/questions on the Sewer Fund Budget answered by Mr. Hurd, Mr. Joly, Mr.*
45 *Gates, and Ms. Courier:*

46 Mr. Gates explained that the contracted costs for sewer line cleaning will decrease \$30,000 this
47 year due to the purchase of a used vac truck for \$78,000. We previously had sub-contracted
48 this out at a cost of \$60,000-\$70,000/year.

49 Ms. Jenkins: Are we replacing the sand filter? *This is an ongoing discussion and sand filters are*
50 *no longer used - they are disc filters. Two years ago these were estimated at \$1.8M and are*
51 *higher now. Our current sand filter is getting us by. At some point in the future we will be*
52 *asking for a bond vote.*

53 Mr. Corey: This is the first year we aren't doing the 10.5% increase. What is the impact of that?
54 *The 10.5% increase was to get us to where we needed to be and we are leveling that out. We*
55 *are still in transition now and not able to begin rebuilding our reserves. The anticipation is that*
56 *this will occur in the next budget cycle or two.*

57 Mr. Corey: Did the County Street project wipe us out? *It didn't wipe us out and it's a Capital*
58 *Asset with a 75 year depreciation so the impact is spread out over 75 years and increases our*
59 *assets.*

60 Ms. Perrin: Are there any other anticipated increases? *Chemical costs continue to rise and there*
61 *are 4 sewer pumps that will need replacing/rebuilding at ~\$42,000 and we will need to replace*
62 *our filtration system at some time in the future.*

63 Ms. Perrin: Are there lines that need replacing? *We are slip lining on Depot Street which is a*
64 *\$100,000 project with an expected 75 years for depreciation. If we were to not slip line as was*
65 *done on BenMont Avenue it would be \$1.2M. Also, there is a possibility of being able to slip line*
66 *down to 6" which will be helpful as we have many lines that are 6".*

67 Mr. Carroll: Are the wipes in the sewer still an issue? *Yes, and the low flow toilets add to the*
68 *problem.*

69 *Public comments/questions answered by Mr. Hurd, Mr. Joly, Mr. Gates, and Ms. Courier:*

70 Sam Restino: Will continue to remind the public about flushing the wipes. How are the bio-
71 chemical levels with all of the breweries in town? *We have talked to the breweries. Some have*
72 *worked to alleviate some of the discharge and we have added aeration in our RBC's so we are*
73 *currently handling things very well.*

74 Sam Restino: What are the 3 top products besides the wipes that come into the wastewater
75 treatment plant? *Wipes are the worst and sand and gravel after a rain storm.*

76 Sam Restino: How does the power from the hydro plant in Papermill Village affect us? *We have*
77 *a contract with that hydro plant but it doesn't affect the water and sewer plants - that is solar.*
78 *However, we do get 5%-10% reduction in our electricity rates from the hydro plant.*

79 Nancy White: There was a \$28,000 transfer to the Highway Fund. Doesn't the money in the
80 Water and Sewer Budgets stay in those budgets? *There are administrative costs that are split*
81 *among all of the funds.*

82 Nancy White: Is the cost of electric meters in the water budget for charging stations for the
83 cars? *No, that should be water heaters and not water meters. We maintain \$20,000 for the*
84 *replacement or installation of the water meters.*

85 Nancy White: Why don't we charge people to use our charging stations for their cars so we
86 could reduce our electric bills? *The 3 stations away from the Town Office belong to Green*
87 *Mountain Power. The one on Pleasant Street and the one directly by the Town Office are ours*
88 *and were mostly paid for by a grant and we aren't allowed to charge for their use.*

89 Nancy White: Why was the cost of BenMont Avenue \$900,000 and County Street \$1.2M? *No,*
90 *the cost of the entire project - BenMont Avenue and County Street - was \$1.2M.*

91 Nancy White: The sand filter was at a cost of \$2M. Are we ready to go with that now? *We're*
92 *still waiting for the State's low interest loan.*

93 Nancy White: What will we have left at the end of this month in the Water and Sewer
94 Reserves? *Ms. Courier did not have that information available so Ms. White will contact her in*
95 *the office.*

96 Nancy White: Is there a list of projects in the order they need to be done? *The 3 that we just did*
97 *- Gage Street and the South End - were on that list, as was County Street and BenMont Avenue.*
98 *Much of the rest of the list was prepared for ARPA infrastructure money.*

99 Nancy White: Are we done with the Hurricane Irene Bond now? *No, we still owe on it.*

100 Nancy White: Is the \$10M bond for the wastewater treatment plant going to increase or stay
101 the same all of the way through? *The principal payment remains the same throughout but the*
102 *interest payments will be dropping.*

103 *Jim Carroll moved and Gary Corey seconded to approve the FY24 Water and Sewer*
104 *Budgets as presented. The motion carried unanimously.*

105 **2. EXECUTIVE SESSION**

106 **A. PERSONNEL**

107 *At 5:45pm, Gary Corey moved and Ed Woods seconded that the meeting was*
108 *adjourned finding that an Executive Session be held on Personnel as premature public*
109 *knowledge would place a person involved in the subject matter at a substantial*
110 *disadvantage. No action will be taken when going back into Open Session. The motion*
111 *carried unanimously.*

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114 Respectfully submitted,

115 Nancy H. Lively

116 Secretary

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