

1 **BENNINGTON SELECT BOARD MEETING**

2 **130 RIVER STREET**

3 **BENNINGTON, VERMONT 05201**

4 **OCTOBER 10, 2022**

5 **MINUTES**

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

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

9 **ALSO PRESENT:** Stuart Hurd-Town Manager; Dan Monks-Assistant Town Manager; Shannon
10 Barsotti-Community Development Director; Jonah Spivak-Communications Coordinator; Paul
11 Dansereau-Director of Facilities; Paul Doucette-Police Chief and Cam Grande-Police Lieutenant;
12 Sam Restino; Clark Adams; Kelly Carroll; Jenny Dewar-Better Bennington Corporation; Lauren
13 Barsotti; Ned Perkins; Robert Ebert; 10 citizens; Josh Boucher-CAT-TV; and Nancy H. Lively-
14 Secretary.

15 At 6:00pm, Chair Jeannie Jenkins called the meeting to order.

16 **1. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE**

17 The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

18 **2. VISION STATEMENT**

19 Ms. Conner read the Town’s Vision Statement that was adopted by the Select Board on
20 August 24, 2020:

21 “Bennington is a welcoming, engaged, inclusive, resilient community where everyone
22 regardless of identity shares in our vitality and benefits from an outstanding quality of life.”

23 **3. CONSENT AGENDA**

24 **A. MINUTES OF SEPTEMBER 26, 2022**

25 **B. WARRANTS**

26 *Bruce Lee-Clark moved and Tom Haley seconded to approve the Minutes of September*
27 *26, 2022 as presented. The motion carried with Jeanne Conner, Sarah Perrin, and Gary Corey*
28 *abstaining.*

29 *Bruce Lee-Clark moved and Tom Haley seconded to approve the Warrants as*
30 *presented. The motion carried unanimously.*

31 **4. PUBLIC COMMENT**

32 The following Public Comment Practices to make the experience for all involved a
33 productive and informative use of the Public Comment period at Select Board meetings was
34 placed on the podium for those that wish to make Public Comments to reference:

- 35 1. Public Comment is to allow residents an opportunity to share information or make
36 announcements that benefit the community at large.
- 37 2. The topic should not be related to an agenda item. If a member of the public wants to
38 comment on an agenda item they can do so during the discussion of that item.
- 39 3. Comments should be 3 minutes or less.
- 40 4. You are required to state your real name and town of residence.
- 41 5. Sharing comments, announcements and concerns are encouraged rather than asking
42 questions. Public Comment is not a time for discussion. If you have specific questions it is best
43 to call the Town Manager to get a full explanation and accurate information.
- 44 6. If the topic requires much discussion the item will be considered as an agenda item at a
45 future meeting.

46 _____

47 Sam Restino: Urges all citizens to become involved and vote. Voters may also be confused
48 because the absentee ballots don't get signed, we now have only District 2 and 5, and any
49 questions can be directed to Mr. Restino's Facebook page.

50 Jenny Dewar, BBC and Lauren Barsotti: Noted all of the activities that will be taking place at
51 Harvest Fest on October 15, 2022 from 10:00am-5:00pm including 4 stages of entertainment,
52 pumpkins carving and painting, face painting, hair braiding, medieval combat demo, food
53 trucks, outdoor serving, competitions, and many games.

54 Kelly Carroll: Shared information on two events taking place on October 22, 2022:
55 Riverwalk starting at People's Park at 10:00am ending at the Splash Pad with an opportunity
56 to meet the local candidates.

57 American Legion Riders are hosting Chicken Shoot Bingo starting at 1:00pm. Tickets are
58 \$25/each to support the Veteran's Fund.

59 **5. BENNINGTON POLICE UPDATE**

60 Police Chief Paul Doucette and Lt. Cam Grande did the following presentation:
61 • During the month of October, socks may be dropped off at the Police Department to
62 celebrate
63 Sock-tober. Socks will be donated to the Veteran's Home and the Bennington Coalition
64 for the Homeless. Last year we raised 900 pairs and hope to do better this year.

- 65 We also have purchased many “treats” for our Copsicles to hand out including
66 toothbrushes along with the candy and other candy substituted options.
- 67 • Since January we have had 17 firearm related incidents in Bennington. We are working
68 diligently with our federal partners and surrounding agencies to curb this violence.
69 “Scary stuff involving drugs and guns.”
 - 70 • We are speaking with Commissioner Morrison from the Vermont Department of Health
71 and Safety and Senator Sears to introduce some legislation in the upcoming session
72 around firearms, violence, and juveniles.
 - 73 • We have seen an influx of youth, 15-19, involved in the firearm/drug arena.
 - 74 • Our communication center is now fully staffed with 2.5 FTE’s plus another part timer to
75 start soon.
 - 76 • We have dispatched 16,000 total calls for service during the first 9 months of the year
77 for the Bennington Police Department (BPD), Bennington Rescue Squad, Pownal Rescue
78 and Fire, North Bennington, Bennington, and Bennington Rural Fire Departments.
 - 79 • We are down 8 police officers and are now recruiting from Castleton in the wake of the
80 Southern Vermont College closing.
 - 81 • We gave received a large grant from the Vermont Crime Victims Services to work with a
82 Human Trafficking Case Manager at the BPD as of today. Human trafficking does
83 revolve around the “drug tree” and she will be shared with other agencies that may
84 need her services. The hope is that she will provide the direction to help those in need
85 to get their lives headed in a better direction.
 - 86 • We are continuing to work with and stay current with what is going on at Turning Point
87 and SVHC.
 - 88 • We have met and had an enjoyable visit with the seniors at the Senior Center who look
89 forward to the police coming. They have the same speeding/barking dogs concerns that
90 everyone else has.
 - 91 • We have spent 9 hours with CPARB getting them to understand the workings of the
92 police department. “They are a great group.”
 - 93 • National Drug Take Back Day is October 29th so be sure to bring any unused/unwanted
94 prescriptions to the BPD in the drop boxes.
 - 95 • We will be working with United Counseling on their Superhero road race in November
96 and we will be defending last year’s Kick Ball Championship trophy on Friday.
 - 97 • From October 16th thru December 3rd, the male officers will be growing beards and the
98 female officers will be wearing headbands to raise funds for the SVHC Cancer Center.
 - 99 • We would like another police dog and will discuss this further at budget time and in
100 regard to having a fundraiser, as well.

101 *Board questions/comments answered by Chief Doucette:*

102 Ms. Conner: Do you know what the long term trajectory is for a teen that is in trouble now if
103 they could be retained longer? *We’re seeing an influx of teens coming from Massachusetts and*

104 *New York, so even though it's hard to put them into the criminal justice system, when they're*
105 *fully aware of the crimes that they are committing, we have to get them into programming*
106 *either here or back in their home states.*

107 Ms. Conner: What is the ultimate goal of disrupting the drug trafficking? *The goal is to disrupt*
108 *what they're doing in our community so that they do not return here. Unfortunately, there's a*
109 *demand, so therefore, there's a supply. This is why it is so important to get the HUB/SPOKE*
110 *program to get people into treatment so the demand stops.*

111 Ms. Conner: Retired teachers and nurses are coming back to fill the vacancies in their
112 professions. Is this an option for the police? *We have made calls to try and do this but it is*
113 *unlikely it will be successful. The response is "no way, no how". Our efforts are better spent*
114 *recruiting younger people.*

115 Mr. Lee-Clark: How soon will you be able to give information to the Town on the new Human
116 Trafficking Case Management position? *The Case Management position will work side-by-side*
117 *with law enforcement so that she can start helping the victims immediately instead of having to*
118 *wait for the paperwork process to occur. There will be money available through the grant for up*
119 *to 2 years for the services that they need. Hopefully, she will be able to attend the January*
120 *board meeting with us.*

121 *Public questions/comments answered by Chief Doucette:*

122 Sam Restino: Is concerned that the fentanyl that looks like candy is in Bennington. *We haven't*
123 *seen any here but understand that it has made it up to Connecticut and agree that it is just a*
124 *matter of time before it gets here. Parents must be cognizant of what their children have in*
125 *their trick or treat bags.*

126 Sam Restino: How do you feel about the threat of recreational marijuana in Bennington? *51% of*
127 *Vermonters feel that marijuana should be legal and I am required to enforce the laws regardless*
128 *of my personal opinion. People from Vermont can easily violate federal law and buy marijuana*
129 *in the "hundreds of dispensaries" in Massachusetts and bring it back to Vermont. Our task is to*
130 *be sure those using it are not under age and to keep people safe.*

131 Ned Perkins: Thank you to the police. Do we have police presence in the schools? *We do have*
132 *officers there a couple days a week but don't have enough officers to be there every day.*

133 Ned Perkins: Do you have surveillance cameras in the high crime areas and do we use shot
134 locators? *We don't use shot locators but are using technology the best that we can. We still*
135 *ring door bells and recommend that everyone have the 'ring door bells' system in place. To*
136 *make follow up easier every officer should hand out contact information to those that they*
137 *speak with.*

138 Clark Adams: The Town would benefit by hearing the successes from officials throughout the
139 State - real facetime with the public - and not just the bad things that are happening. *Because*

140 *the good outcomes may take so long to result from the bad, they often don't get publicized.*
141 *What is more current is more exciting. We have been discussing with the Select Board the*
142 *possibility of starting a Citizen Police Academy in Bennington that would have two levels - a*
143 *Bachelors Level program and a Masters Level program that would bring in our Federal partners*
144 *to explain what their role is in Bennington. This would give the citizens the whole picture of how*
145 *we relate to our partners.*

146 Robert Ebert: As a member of CPARB, thanked Chief Doucette and Lt. Grande for the 9 hours of
147 training that they have given the group even after having already worked a 12 hour day.

148 **6. ADA TRANSITION PLAN**

149 Paul Dansereau, Director of Facilities, did the following presentation:

- 150 ○ In 1995, the Town of Bennington adopted an American with Disabilities Act (ADA) Self-
151 Evaluation & Transition Plan. Since that time, all recommendations have either been
152 completed or no longer used.
- 153 ○ In June 2022, the Town with the assistance of the Vermont Center for Independent
154 Living (VCIL), did a self-audit of a majority of the Town facilities that resulted in the
155 Updated ADA Transition Plan.
- 156 ○ The ADA Plan will be reviewed annually and updated and re-adopted every five years to
157 ensure it remains relevant as programs, activities, and facilities change.

158 *Board questions/comments answered by Mr. Dansereau:*

159 Mr. Lee-Clark: Suggested adding in bold type "To Be Reviewed and Re-Adopted October 2027"
160 at the bottom of the PURPOSE page.

161 Ms. Conner: Verified that it was stated about requesting an accessible accommodation for
162 events, and it was on Page 5 of the Plan.

163 Mr. Haley: This is a great example of an advocacy agency and the Town working together to
164 benefit the community as a whole.

165 *Public questions/comments answered by Mr. Dansereau:*

166 Sam Restino: Urged anyone that is hesitant to vote because of ADA issues to call the Town Clerk
167 or Town Office.

168 ***Sarah Perrin moved and Bruce Lee-Clark seconded to adopt the Town of Bennington***
169 ***Americans with Disabilities Plan Update amended as follows:***

170 ***Add, "To Be Reviewed and Re-Adopted October 2027" to the bottom of Page 1,***
171 ***PURPOSE.***

172 ***Page 5, Line 2, Change "Boards of Commissions" to "Boards and Commissions"***

173 Mr. Lee-Clark noted that the sound in the Multi-Purpose Room - 3rd Floor of the
174 Bennington Fire Facility is an issue and we need to do whatever it takes to make it workable so
175 people can hear the discussion and the dialogue.

176 Ms. Jenkins can't wait to get a push button on the door downstairs at the Fire Facility.

177 ***The motion carried unanimously.***

178 Ms. Conner added that on the Walk and Roll it was discussed that VCIL would help shop
179 owners make their business ADA accessible so we will be making shop owners aware of this.

180 **7. IMPLEMENTING THE TOWN VISION**

181 No additional comments.

182 **8. MANAGER'S REPORT**

183 Mr. Hurd did the following report:

184 Benmont Avenue/County Street Sewer Line Replacement - Casella is in Town getting ready for
185 the project and has indicated confidence in completion of the Benmont section before winter.

186 Franklin Lane Pedestrian Improvement Project - Buildings on either side are served by gas so
187 extra care has been taken while replacing the subbase. Once this is finished, the pavers are
188 going in today and the project should move along faster.

189 COVID Test Kits - The 2200 test kits have all been distributed and we have reached out to the
190 Department of Health to see if we can obtain more kits. If and when received, we will again
191 make them available at various municipal buildings.

192 Tax Sales - We are down to 11 properties that may go to sale on October 31st. Our goal is to
193 clear the delinquency or get a signed payment plan in place.

194 Mr. Hurd added that there will not be a ribbon cutting at Willow Park in two weeks.

195 Mr. Lee-Clark asked if we have the ability to compare the values of the permits year-to-
196 year for economic development purposes in addition to the number of them that we get now?
197 Mr. Hurd answered that he would need to confer with Mr. Monks to see if our software has
198 that capability. Mr. Monks added that these permits contain self-reported information so the
199 only way to see the value of the end results would be from the Grand List. Mr. Lee-Clark and
200 Ms. Jenkins agreed that it would be nice to see the dollars, as well as, that this was a "to be
201 pondered" request.

202 **9. UPCOMING AGENDA**

203 October 19, 2022 - Special Meeting on Benn High at 5:30pm at the Fire Facility

204 October 24, 2022 - Lake Paran Presentation

205 **10. OTHER BUSINESS**

206 Mr. Haley: Plugged Harvest Fest on October 15th and will be there carving pumpkins.

207 Ms. Conner: Plugged the Apple Cider Doughnuts at the Apple Barn - congratulations to Sarah
208 Albright.

209 Ms. Perrin: Wished her husband a Happy Birthday and thanked him for his help the past couple
210 of days.

211 Mr. Lee-Clark: Thanked the Department of Public Works for their striping job on Washington
212 Avenue and his neighbor for his library and bench. And, requested that people slow down
213 when driving.

214 Mr. Carroll: Noted the passing of Marie Legacy and her contributions to the youth in the
215 community.

216 **11. EXECUTIVE SESSION**

217 **A. REAL ESTATE**

218 *At 7:40pm, Bruce Lee-Clark moved and Gary Corey seconded that the meeting was*
219 *adjourned finding that an Executive Session be held on Real Estate as premature public*
220 *knowledge would place a person involved in the subject matter at a substantial*
221 *disadvantage. There will be no actions taken on these items when going back into Open*
222 *Session. The motion carried unanimously.*

223

224

225 Respectfully submitted,

226 Nancy H. Lively

227 Secretary

228