

1 **BENNINGTON SELECT BOARD MEETING**

2 **130 RIVER STREET**

3 **BENNINGTON, VERMONT 05201**

4 **NOVEMBER 13, 2023**

5 **MINUTES**

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

8 **SELECT BOARD MEMBERS ABSENT:** Tom Haley-Vice Chair and Jim Carroll.

9 **ALSO PRESENT:** Stuart Hurd-Town Manager; Dan Monks-Assistant Town Manager; Shannon
10 Barsotti-Community Development Director; Jonah Spivak-Communications Coordinator;
11 Meagan Snide-Health Department; Kayla Becker, Taylor McGuire, David Young, and Wendy
12 Scott-YMCA; Representative Mary Morrissey-Hotel/Motel Inspection Update; Jack Rossiter-
13 Munley; Clark Adams; Debbie Matte; Nancy White; 10 citizens; Josh Boucher-CAT-TV; and
14 Nancy H. Lively-Secretary.

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

16 *Jeanne Conner moved and Sarah Perrin seconded to update the Agenda as follows:*

17 *Add 6A. Hotel/Motel Inspection Update-Representative Mary Morrissey*

18 *Change 6. Health Department Dashboard-Meagan Snide to 6B.*

19 *The motion carried with Tom Haley and Jim Carroll absent.*

20 **1. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE**

21 The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

22 **2. VISION STATEMENT**

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

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

27 **3. CONSENT AGENDA**

28 **A. MINUTES OF OCTOBER 23, 2023**

29 **B. WARRANTS**

30 **C. LICENSES**

31 ***Ed Woods moved and Gary Corey seconded to approve the Consent Agenda as***
32 ***submitted.***

33 Ms. Conner verified that the new 2023 2nd Class License was for W. Collective
34 now at 198 North Street.

35 Mr. Corey asked about the two checks to M&T Bank, and Mr. Hurd answered
36 that the first one for \$48,929.72 was for the FY22 Highway Equipment Loan and the second one
37 for \$202,544.83 was for the WWTF RBC Bond Payment.

38 ***The motion carried with Tom Haley and Jim Carroll absent.***

39 **4. PUBLIC COMMENT PROCEDURES**

40 Ms. Jenkins stated that Mr. Spivak, Mr. Monks, and Attorney Merrill Bent reviewed the
41 Select Board Public Comment Guidelines and that this Select Board has given the public lots of
42 opportunities to share their thoughts, and, we want to continue to do that. However, we must
43 also be sure that we are “all our best selves” when making comments not on the agenda and
44 when we have guests that have been invited to speak.

45 ***Jeanne Conner moved and Sarah Perrin seconded to accept the following additions to***
46 ***the Public Comment Practices:***

47 ***“8. When appropriate, Town staff and/or Select Board members will respond to questions or***
48 ***issues raised during public comment at the end of public comment. If additional explanation***
49 ***is desired, members of the public are encouraged to contact Town staff in person during***
50 ***regular business hours, or via e-mail or phone.***

51 ***9. When an agenda item is a presentation to the board, and after the board has asked any***
52 ***questions, the public may comment. Any public comment on the presentation will be directed***
53 ***to the board chair. The board chair may answer or ask the presenter to answer at their***
54 ***discretion.”***

55 Ms. Perrin noted that this is a nice addition.

56 ***The motion carried with Tom Haley and Jim Carroll absent.***

57 **5. PUBLIC COMMENT**

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

61 1. Public Comment is to allow residents an opportunity to share information or make
62 announcements that benefit the community at large.

- 63 2. The topic should not be related to an agenda item. If a member of the public wants to
64 comment on an agenda item they can do so during the discussion of that item.
- 65 3. Comments should be 3 minutes or less.
- 66 4. Speakers are required to state their legal name and town of residence.
- 67 5. Sharing comments, announcements and concerns are encouraged rather than asking
68 questions. Public Comment is not a time for discussion. If you have specific questions it is best
69 to call the Town Manager to get a full explanation and accurate information.
- 70 6. If the topic requires much discussion the item will be considered as an agenda item at a
71 future meeting.
- 72 7. Once an individual's comment is finished, unless a Board member has a clarifying questions,
73 the speaker is asked to take their seat.
- 74 8. When appropriate, Town staff and/or Select Board members will respond to questions or
75 issues raised during public comment at the end of public comment. If additional explanation is
76 desired, members of the public are encouraged to contact Town staff in person during regular
77 business hours, or via e-mail or phone.
- 78 9. When an agenda item is a presentation to the board, and after the board has asked any
79 questions, the public may comment. Any public comment on the presentation will be directed
80 to the board chair. The board chair may answer or ask the presenter to answer at their
81 discretion.

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84 Representative Mary Morrissey: 1. We need an update on the Project Alliance Autumn Inn
85 project. 2. The Bennington Health and Rehab is to be purchased by Eye Care and we need to be
86 notified of the changes that will be taking place with the hard to place people that are currently
87 there.

88 Jack Rossiter-Munley: The Bennington ECDC Resettlement permanent office is now at 122 Main
89 Street where there is more room for programs and more volunteer opportunities. If interested
90 contact jrossitermunley@ecdcus.org.

91 Clark Adams: Was upset about the police removing an individual at the last Select Board
92 meeting for not "self-identifying" and stated that the Attorney General's office and Secretary of
93 State's office both indicated that there is no statutory requirement in the Open Meeting Law
94 requiring someone to self-identify. *Ms. Jenkins read from the Select Board Public Comment
95 Guidelines - "The public comment period, however, is not a free-for-all. The chair of the board
96 may establish reasonable rules to maintain order, and reasonable limitations on the amount of
97 time for each speaker are not unusual or improper." The individual last week would not give his*

98 *name, town of residence, was shouting from the back of the room interrupting, and was very*
99 *aggressive to a presenter. That is why he was removed. Ms. Conner: Added that she is*
100 *contacted by a lot of people that are “extremely upset to hear the vitriol meeting after meeting*
101 *after meeting”. “Kindness and respect doesn’t bother anybody and that is what we need to be*
102 *moving toward.”*

103 Debbie Matte: Feels that the Town should put the YMCA in the current Senior Center building
104 to give the Seniors more space at the renovated Benn High building.

105 **6A. HOTEL/MOTEL INSPECTION UPDATE**

106 Representative Mary Morrissey reported the following:

- 107 ➤ The Agency of Human Services stated that there are new rules in place for voucher
- 108 hotels/motels to meet the health department and fire safety requirements.
- 109 ➤ If these are not met, their voucher payments will stop.
- 110 ➤ The State has not been doing a good job of these inspections since COVID and may be
- 111 reaching out to the communities for assistance with conducting these inspections.

112 *Board comments/questions answered by Representative Morrissey:*

113 Ms. Jenkins: What is new? *The hotels/motels will be receiving documentation from the State*
114 *that they have to follow the health and fire codes, and if they don’t, then they won’t be paid.*

115 Ms. Conner: Sometimes people won’t let the inspectors in. Do they have to let them in now?
116 *That still needs to be clarified.*

117 Mr. Woods: If the hotels/motels don’t comply and aren’t being paid, do the people staying
118 there go back into the system for housing elsewhere? *They didn’t clarify that yet.*

119 **6B. HEALTH DEPARTMENT DASHBOARD**

120 Meagan Snide, Public Health Specialist, did the following presentation:

- 121 ○ Bennington has been added to the City Health Dashboard because smaller cities and
- 122 towns - fewer than 50,000 people - can now be added.
- 123 ○ The goal of the City Health Dashboard is to help cities across the U.S. to leverage the
- 124 power of data to improve the health and wellbeing of everyone in their community.
- 125 ○ The Dashboard provides up to 40 metrics about each city. Bennington currently has 28.

126 They are:

- 127 ✓ Diabetes
- 128 ✓ Frequent mental distress
- 129 ✓ Frequent physical distress
- 130 ✓ High blood pressure
- 131 ✓ Life expectancy
- 132 ✓ Obesity

- 133 ✓ Children in poverty
- 134 ✓ Credit insecurity index
- 135 ✓ High school completion
- 136 ✓ Income equality
- 137 ✓ Neighborhood ethnic separation
- 138 ✓ Racial ethnic diversity
- 139 ✓ Unemployment
- 140 ✓ Binge drinking
- 141 ✓ Physical inactivity
- 142 ✓ Smoking
- 143 ✓ Air pollution - ozone and particular matter
- 144 ✓ Housing with lead risk
- 145 ✓ Walkability
- 146 ✓ Mental care - services 65+
- 147 ✓ Checkups - 18+
- 148 ✓ Uninsured
- 149 ○ This data is available in other areas, such as the CDC, the State, etc., so the Dashboard is
- 150 a repository for this data that is user friendly for everyone with the availability of data
- 151 from other towns to compare to.
- 152 ○ Two funding sources cover all expenses so the towns can interact with those that have
- 153 created and are maintaining the Dashboard at no charge to the towns.
- 154 ○ To access information go to www.cityhealthdashboard.com , Bennington, and the
- 155 metric you're interested in where there will be comparisons to other cities on the
- 156 Dashboard with this metric.
- 157 ○ Data may appear to be aged but that is just the way it works - it's collected and then put
- 158 on the Dashboard.
- 159 ○ The nuances of how the information appears on the Dashboard was explained.
- 160 ○ Ms. Snide will assist any town with the Dashboard application process, as well as, any
- 161 agency that wishes to utilize it.

162 *Board comments/questions answered by Ms. Snide:*

163 Ms. Conner: Is concerned about the apples-to-apples comparison when her home town of
164 36,000 - which is on the Dashboard - is light years apart from Bennington. *It is difficult for*
165 *smaller towns to find a model that fits them at this time, however, eventually all towns will be*
166 *on here.*

167 Ms. Jenkins: The stand alone data, itself, is useful. How can we get additional metrics? *There*
168 *may be data that exists in another department but wasn't reported or formatted here in the*
169 *same way.*

170 Ms. Jenkins: Does the Department of Health have a plan on how they will use this data? *The*
171 *plan is to get as many people using and understanding the data as possible.*

172 Mr. Corey: How do you know where the data came from? *Tracked through the documents to*
173 *find where the source of information came from.*

174 *Public comments/questions answered by Ms. Snide:*

175 Nancy White: 1. Is this limited only to the residents of Bennington? *Yes.* 2. If taking data from
176 the middle school and high school, will you be backing out the students from towns other than
177 Bennington? *Data from the schools wouldn't eliminate students from other towns as there may*
178 *be not enough data to be meaningful. They can be separated out demographically elsewhere*
179 *for information only.*

180 **7. BERKSHIRE FAMILY YMCA PRESENTATION**

181 Kayla Becker, Taylor McGuire, Wendy Scott, and David Young from the YMCA did the
182 following presentation:

- 183 • Our Summer Program started on June 10th through August 26th with over 1,000
184 registrations.
- 185 • The 1st week is for staff training - 40 hours that week - with Trauma Training and getting
186 all certified in CPR and First Aid.
- 187 • We have 65 summer staff with 60 of them college aged. We also had 3 staff who
188 started with us as participants that are now old enough to have been hired.
- 189 • We partnered with SVSU for the Summer Recovery Partnership for those kids that had
190 Summer Recovery Learning in the morning joining us for fun in the afternoon, as well as,
191 many other community partnerships, such as the Town, Abbey Group (2 meals/day),
192 Dufour, Aces Tennis to just name a few.
- 193 • We had 1,496 campers in the summer averaging 200-250 campers/week ages
194 Kindergarten to Grade 10.
- 195 • We had 8 programs throughout the summer with field trips to the Conservatory and
196 Adventure Zoo.
- 197 • We are working on a grant where our Leaders In Training (LIT's) can decide how we
198 should spend the money.
- 199 • We are now also partnering with MAYAA Basketball which is ~200 kids, After School
200 Programs are now underway with 142 across the SVSU, as is planning for next summer.
- 201 • We also have 23 adult exercise classes, as well as, social programming with coffee
202 hours, drop in days, and crafting mostly at the Bennington Sports Center.
- 203 • Ms. McGuire added that she was a member 2 years ago and said she wanted to do
204 something to help. She loves working with the kids and seniors which includes not only
205 contributing to the seniors physical fitness but also the many activities for their mental
206 fitness.

207 *Board comments/questions answered by Ms. Becker and Ms. McGuire:*

208 Ms. Conner: Did you have enough staff? *Yes, we had a lot of staff.*

209 Ms. Conner: What is Vermont After School? *The YMCA is partnering with the Vermont After*
210 *School for grant money to be used for the teens even though it is for the age group of 10 to 21.*

211 Ms. Conner: Do you have to turn kids away? *No, but we do contract for a certain number of*
212 *slots for our after school program but we can always add in more.*

213 Ms. Jenkins: We used to have 30 kids before the YMCA and now we had 1,000. “Amazing.”

214 Ms. Jenkins: How many kids are involved in the youth leadership? *We had 12-20 fluctuating*
215 *over the summer, but with community input we had over 100 youth voices.*

216 Mr. Woods and Mr. Corey: Thanked the YMCA for their presentation and energy.

217 Ms. Perrin: Thank you, and what are your challenges - if you have any? *Our only challenge, if*
218 *you want to call it that, is finding other different things to do.*

219 Mr. Dan Monks: The Town’s partnership with the YMCA has been “an incredible success” and
220 thank you to the Select Board for their leadership with it. We haven’t seen an increase in the
221 fees from the YMCA in three years and we have “exponentially increased the services”. We are
222 not paying any more than we did when we had 2-3 staff. The YMCA has 65 staff, we have gone
223 from 30 kids to 1,000, and there are many more activities for seniors. Thank you to the YMCA
224 and we’re not done yet.

225 Ms. Conner: The money is great, however, the impact that this has had on the kids, seniors, and
226 families “must be tremendous”.

227 *Public comments/questions answered by Ms. Becker and Ms. McGuire:*

228 Nancy White: 1. Are the seniors just from Bennington or are they also from surrounding
229 communities? *Bennington residents are subsidized by the Town of Bennington, get free*
230 *membership, or get financial aid, but everyone else pays a higher rate and are not subsidized by*
231 *the Town of Bennington.* 2. Do towns other than Bennington subsidize the YMCA? *Residents*
232 *from towns other than Bennington pay a higher rate.* 3. Are all of the 65 employees trained
233 staff? *Yes, they are all YMCA staff trained by the YMCA.* 4. Why are the after school programs
234 not at the elementary schools in Bennington like they are in the other towns? *Bennington*
235 *elementary schools cannot house after school programs which is why they are off site. The*
236 *Town is paying \$3,000 for the morning and the YMCA is paying for the afternoons/evenings*
237 *from the SVSU partnership.* 5. How much does each town in Bennington County give the YMCA
238 for after school programs and day camps? *The Town of Bennington subsidizes the rate for their*
239 *residents and the non-Bennington participants pay a higher rate.*

240 **8. MANAGER’S REPORT**

241 Mr. Hurd did the following report:

242 Hometown Hero Banner Program - The BBC's student art banners are to be in place for two
243 years, so the VFW/American Legion Riders have decided to look at the use of telephone/electric
244 poles. Discussions have begun with GMP, although I am awaiting a call back from our contact
245 person. Initially, we are looking at the poles along North and South Streets between Park Lawn
246 Cemetery to the south and the Vets Home to the north. Dee Colety, group contact, and I are
247 working on the process and application procedure for selection and maintenance. The design
248 of the Banners remains to be finalized and a formal request to the Select Board is not yet ready.
249 We may be the first town in Vermont to do this and we are putting together a grant for the
250 costs involved.

251 Purple Heart Community Signage - We will continue to explore signage options recognizing
252 Bennington as a Purple Heart Community for installation at the entrances to the community.
253 We will, however, be installing two flags recognizing that we are a Purple Heart Community
254 near the Four Corners this week replacing two American flags. They will fly at all times the
255 American flags fly.

256 Benmont Avenue Burned Out Structure - There has been some positive movement on the tear
257 down and removal of this structure while eliminating liability for the Town from any
258 contamination issues. There is still much to work out with the State DEC, but we're working on
259 it and they are putting together some guidelines for us.

260 **9. UPCOMING AGENDAS**

261 November 27, 2023 - Bennington Rescue Squad Update

262 November 27, 2023 - 250th Collaboration Update

263 November 27, 2023 - TIF Update

264 **10. OTHER BUSINESS**

265 Ms. Conner: Congratulations to everyone who put on the play last weekend at MAU. "It was
266 hilarious."

267 Ms. Jenkins: Reminded all agencies on the ballot to get their budget information to the Town
268 Office by December 8th or December 1st if you're in the budget. Mr. Hurd added that it may be
269 a bit later than that due to statutory requirements but all reminder letters have gone out.

270 **11. EXECUTIVE SESSION**

271 **A. CONTRACTS**

272 *At 7:45pm, Jeanne Conner moved and Ed Woods seconded that the meeting was*
273 *adjourned finding that an Executive Session be held on Contracts as premature public*
274 *knowledge would place a person involved in the subject matter at a substantial*

275 ***disadvantage. No action will be taken when going back into Open Session. The motion***
276 ***carried with Tom Haley and Jim Carroll absent.***

277

278

279 Respectfully submitted,

280 Nancy H. Lively

281 Secretary

282

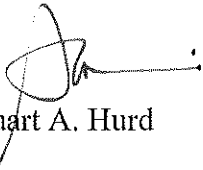
SELECT BOARD
MINUTES ADDENDUM
November 13, 2023

Present: Jeannie Jenkins, Chair, Ed Woods, Jeanne Conner, Gary Corey, and Sarah Perrin.
Also present: Stuart Hurd, Town Manager, Dan Monks, Assistant Town Manager, and Shannon Barsotti, Community Development Director

The Board went into executive session at 7:44 pm for a contracts matter.

The Board came out of executive session at 8:10 pm. but took no action. There being no other business, the meeting adjourned at 8:10 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be "Stuart A. Hurd", with a horizontal line extending to the right and a small vertical tick at the end.

Stuart A. Hurd