

1 **TOWN OF BENNINGTON**  
2 **2023 ANNUAL TOWN MEETING**  
3 **BENNINGTON FIRE FACILITY**  
4 **RIVER STREET, BENNINGTON, VERMONT 05201**  
5 **MARCH 6, 2023**  
6 **MINUTES**

7 **MODERATOR:** Jason Morrissey

8 **ALSO PRESENT:** Bennington Select Board Members - Jeannie Jenkins-Chair; Jeanne Conner-Vice  
9 Chair; Jim Carroll; Bruce Lee-Clark; Sarah Perrin; Tom Haley; and Gary Corey; Stuart Hurd-Town  
10 Manager; Dan Monks-Assistant Town Manager; Joan Pinsonneault-Treasurer; Cassandra  
11 Barbeau-Town Clerk; Shannon Barsotti-Community Development Director; Jonah Spivak-  
12 Communication Coordinator; Kristal Hier and Laurie Benjamin- ASL Interpreters; Bill Camarda-  
13 Bennington Rescue Squad; Mr. Rzyki; Charles Kozloski; San Restino; Nancy White; Ned  
14 Perkins; Lorna Charitin; Jenna Caslin; Lindsey Brillon; Lenora Volkmer; Tom Donahue; Charles  
15 Murphy; Ron Hache; Sean-Marie Oller; Matt Bentley; Linda Putney; Charlie Gingo; Jonathan  
16 Cooper; Jessica Fredette; Chloe Viner Collins; ~100 citizens; Mike Cutler-CAT-TV; and Nancy H.  
17 Lively-Secretary.

18 1. MODERATOR OPENS MEETING; READS WARNING

19 At 7:03 p.m., Moderator Jason Morrissey called the meeting to order and Judge Justine  
20 Scanlon led the group in the Pledge of Allegiance.

21 Mr. Morrissey read the following Warning:

22 **WARNING**

23 **TOWN OF BENNINGTON**

24 **2023 ANNUAL TOWN MEETING**

25 *The residents of the Town of Bennington qualified by law to vote in Town Meeting are hereby*  
26 *notified and warned to meet in said Town on Monday, March 6, 2023 at 7:00 p.m., (or*  
27 *immediately following the Southwest VT Regional Technical School District's Annual meeting*  
28 *should that run over) to transact the business specified to be done from the floor. Provisions for*  
29 *the hearing impaired will be in place for this meeting.*

30 *Following the completion of such business, the Meeting will stand adjourned to Tuesday, March*  
31 *7, 2023, at The Bennington Fire Facility on River Street (Lincoln Street entrance). The polls are*  
32 *open from 7:00 a.m. until 7:00 p.m. for the election of officers and voting on all ballot articles*  
33 *specified. However, those on the checklist to vote in the Village of North Bennington shall vote*

34 *for the election of officers and on all ballot articles at the North Bennington Village Office on*  
35 *Main Street in North Bennington. The Bennington Fire Facility above mentioned, is hereby*  
36 *established as the central polling place for those on the checklist to vote in said Bennington.*  
37 *Residents of Bennington and North Bennington may register to vote at the Town Clerk's Office,*  
38 *205 South Street, Bennington, Vermont. Eligible residents registering on Election Day must do*  
39 *so at the polling place where they will cast their Town Meeting ballot.*

40 *BUSINESS TO BE TRANSACTED FROM THE "FLOOR"*

41 *Monday, March 6, 2023* *7:00*  
42 *P.M.*

43 *ARTICLE 1. TOWN REPORT: To hear the report of Town Officers.*

44 *Charles Kozloski: Noted that an 8.75% increase in the FY2024 Budget and \$5.8M for the water is*  
45 *a "hefty bunch for us to assimilate". Is the 2% administration fee what we will actually be*  
46 *paying? Mr. Hurd: Yes. When we borrow money from the State from the Water and Sewer*  
47 *Fund, they charge a 2% fee on top of the principal and interest payments.*

48 *Charles Kozloski: Strongly recommends to the Board to consider water meters so that everyone*  
49 *pays their fair share because we may have a water problem in the future. Mr. Hurd: The Board*  
50 *has considered putting on meters to all connections to the Town's system. At the present time*  
51 *we meter only multi-residential and commercial firms. We do not meter single family dwellings.*  
52 *Bennington's water supply can supply 6.1M gallons/day and we're currently using ~2.9M*  
53 *gallons/day.*

54 *Charles Kozloski: How much of the Federal Infrastructure Bill actually reached Bennington? Mr.*  
55 *Hurd: One could argue that the \$5.8M that we're borrowing from the State is part of that. We*  
56 *don't have eligibility standards developed by the State to qualify for any additional funds at this*  
57 *time. Most of these funds are currently going for State paving and bridge projects.*

58 *Charles Kozloski: What is the conviction rate from the 929 criminal arrests? Mr. Hurd: Neither I*  
59 *or the Chief of Police can answer that. It is a question for the State's Attorney's Office.*

60 *Sam Restino: Was the increase in the budget driven by inflation and infrastructure? Mr. Hurd:*  
61 *Yes, it was driven principally by inflation. Infrastructure in the General, Highway, and Fire Fund*  
62 *is generally for sidewalks and highways. Other projects, like the water project, are paid for from*  
63 *the Water and Sewer Fund which is not impacting the budget before you tonight.*

64 *Sam Restino: Will we be able to find funding from the State in the next year or year after that?*  
65 *Mr. Hurd: It is unlikely that we will find grants that will completely fund infrastructure projects,*  
66 *however, the two water projects that we have presented tonight are funded by the State from*  
67 *Federal money through grants with a minor 2% fee. This is a break for us because interest rates*  
68 *are now 5%-6%.*

69 Sam Restino: Will Bennington residents see an increase in their water and sewer bills because  
70 of infrastructure? *Mr. Hurd: There will be a savings of \$141,000 in expenses if this bond is*  
71 *approved.*

72 Sam Restino: Is disappointed in the turnout this evening and encourages our leaders to educate  
73 newcomers to the Town on how our government works. And, we need to tighten our budget.

74 Sam Restino: Noted the fire that recently took place on Northside Drive. How did the  
75 “exuberant” amounts of water used on that fire affect our water supply? *Mr. Hurd: Normally,*  
76 *high water flows in our downtown area or Northside Drive, may have affected people on*  
77 *Crescent Boulevard, Jefferson Heights, and Margaret Lane area that may have seen a pressure*  
78 *drop. That is why we hope the voters approve the \$5.8M bond so we can address that in our*  
79 *water system.*

80 Nancy White: The 8.75% increase in the budget is not due to inflation. It is due to the Select  
81 Board choosing not to cut the budget when town officials gave it to them. I hope the voters do  
82 the job that the Select Board didn’t do for us.

83 Ned Perkins: Reviewed the loan agreement for the Bennington Community Market with the  
84 revolving loan information document on the Town’s website and the Select Board Minutes  
85 when the loan agreement was executed. Revolving loans have a normal maximum loan  
86 amount of \$35,000 with an interest rate of 50% of prime plus 2 points and a maximum term of  
87 15 years. It also says that if the Development Director and the loan committee accept the loan  
88 application, it is forwarded to the Select Board for a decision. The loan amount for the  
89 Bennington Community Market is \$200,000 with a 0% interest rate for a term of 20 years. This  
90 decision was not in the Select Board Minutes when the transaction took place. Nancy White  
91 questioned this and was told that this is policy driven that the Board does not have to approve  
92 the revolving loans. That contradicts the published policy.

93 Mr. Perkins asked the Board - 1. Did you approve the loan? 2. Were the published  
94 procedures for granting the loan properly followed? 3. Were you aware the loan was at 0%  
95 interest rate? 4. Were you aware that the 1<sup>st</sup> payment has already been pushed back 6 months  
96 to July 15, 2023? 5. Did the Community Development Director act within her authority when  
97 she executed the note?

98 *Ms. Jenkins: The Select Board does not make the final decision on a revolving*  
99 *loan. The revolving loan was set up over 40 years ago to assist new and existing*  
100 *businesses to be successful in our community. We are a lender of last resort after*  
101 *businesses have obtained all of the funding they can get from other sources. The success*  
102 *rate has been “phenomenal” at over 90%. The information that the Select Board makes*  
103 *a decision on these loans is inaccurate. The decision currently lies with the Community*  
104 *Development Director and previously with the Economic and Community Development*  
105 *Director. The Select Board does review the applications in Executive Session where all of*  
106 *the appropriate questions/concerns are asked of the Community Development Director.*

107 *No one who is applying for a loan should have their confidential information aired at a*  
108 *meeting open to the public.*

109 *Mr. Hurd: The Select Board does have the authority to veto a proposal and*  
110 *request more information. Then, if the Board has no objection, we are*  
111 *authorized to issue the loan and waive any of the requirements that Mr. Perkins*  
112 *has read. We currently have over \$500,000 available to loan.*

113 *Ms. Perrin: Thanked Mr. Perkins for bringing up what needed to be corrected.*

114 Nancy White: The revolving loans are not only available to businesses, they are available to  
115 homeowners and landlords, as well. The Select Board should be approving loans over \$100,000  
116 and the basics should be heard at public meetings.

117

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118 Jonah Spivak and Shannon Barsotti presented the following Town Reports:

119 ➤ The Town’s Vision Statement is:

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

123 ➤ Bennington is Vermont’s first town, chartered in 1749 and settled in 1761. Samuel  
124 Robinson saw what would be Bennington on his way to fight in the French and Indian  
125 War.

126 ● BENNINGTON POLICE DEPARTMENT -

127 ➤ Community Policing initiatives while working closely with the Community  
128 Policing Advisory Review Board (CPARB) has been the focus of the Police  
129 Department for the last two years. Recently work has been done to develop all  
130 new policies, procedures, and handling complaints.

131 ➤ Even though still short staffed, two new officers have been hired, as well as, a  
132 human trafficking position.

133 ➤ Hosted summer camps and events where the community and police co-mingled.

134 ● FIRE DEPARTMENT -

135 ➤ The all-volunteer department of men and women, referred to as the “modern  
136 day militia men” respond to hundreds of calls each year that include fires,  
137 vehicle crashes, police and medical assists among others.

138 ➤ They have made the Bennington Battle Day weekend a town tradition for 58  
139 years.

140 ➤ Provided fire prevention training in 5 of our area schools reaching out to 125  
141 students.

142 ➤ Anyone interested in becoming a member should contact an existing member or  
143 call the fire department for information.

- 144
- 145 • DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC WORKS -
  - 146     ➤ Highway Department maintains all roads (120 miles), curbs, sidewalks (41 miles),
  - 147     and vegetation along the road.
  - 148     ➤ Projects included installing a sewer main, drainage, curb, sidewalks and paving
  - 149     on Maple Street.
  - 150     ➤ Rebuilt Franklin Lane and managed over 500 acres of town forest land.
  - 151     ➤ The Water Department’s ability to harness water was a major factor in the early
  - 152     industrialization of Bennington.
  - 153     ➤ Our water is now a revenue stream as we sell our excess Morgan Spring water to
  - 154     water bottling companies with its location shown here on an 1891 map along
  - 155     with our current water source from Bolles Brook which goes to our water
  - 156     treatment facility.
  - 157     ➤ We treat and deliver an average of 1.4M gallons of water/day to Bennington
  - 158     residents.
  - 159     ➤ Residents may have a flat rate amounting to \$1.71/day, or ~\$20/month less than
  - 160     the average U.S. citizen pays.
  - 161     ➤ Residents can choose to switch to a meter system, whereas, commercial and
  - 162     multi-residential facilities are all metered.
  - 163     ➤ The State is requiring us to upgrade the water system on Gage, Jefferson
  - 164     Heights, and Margaret Lane. The \$5.8M bond vote will enable us to do this
  - 165     faster and more economically.
  - 166     ➤ The Waste Water Treatment Plant treats 4M to 4.5M gallons of wastewater per
  - 167     day.
  - 168     ➤ Residents pay \$1.61/day for sewage services, or ~\$8/month less than the
  - 169     average U.S. citizen pays.
  - 170     ➤ Much work has been done at the Treatment Plant including replacing the
  - 171     primary digester, replacing pumps and piping, and replacing the rotation
  - 172     biological contactors (RBC’s).
  - 173     ➤ Please do not flush the flushable wipes....they are not flushable.
  - 174 • PLANNING DEPARTMENT -
  - 175     ➤ The Rail/Trail Project from Bennington Station to Northside Drive is now
  - 176     complete and the Ninja Trail is being worked on.
  - 177     ➤ Worked on the redevelopment of Southern Vermont College.
  - 178     ➤ Worked with the Planning Commission and Development Review Board to
  - 179     develop the Town Plan and Land Use and Development Regulations with a focus
  - 180     on Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion.
  - 181 • COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT -
  - 182     ➤ Tasks include:
  - 183     ➤ Downtown development, community recreation, and expanding affordable
  - 184     housing.

- 184 ➤ We have \$3.2M of investments in the Downtown with public and private
- 185 investors.
- 186 ➤ Manage the grant funding and the revolving loan fund.
- 187 ➤ Work closely with the YMCA, the Senior Center, Vermont Council on Aging, and
- 188 Meals on Wheels.
- 189 ➤ The YMCA manages all of our recreation at the Recreation Center, a Seniors
- 190 Program at the Bennington Sports Center, and programs for all ages at the Benn
- 191 Hi building.
- 192 ➤ A new history of the arts and recreation kiosk has been completed.
- 193 ➤ We have received grants for the Riverwalk and Recreation Center, as well as,
- 194 grants for housing and recovery housing.
- 195 ➤ The Communication Coordinator’s position is to get information out to the
- 196 community, handle social media, and help with the design of the new website.
- 197 ➤ A good example of our community coming together is when every head stone
- 198 that had recently been vandalized at the Village Cemetery had been righted.
- 199 ● OTHERS -
- 200 ➤ Buildings and Grounds manages all of the multiple parks, fields, buildings, and
- 201 projects throughout the Town.
- 202 ➤ The Town Office was built in 1844 and donated to the Town for municipal use in
- 203 1920 and is the root of our Town Government located at 205 South Street. Town
- 204 records back 261 years are housed there.
- 205 ➤ Our several Boards and Commissions are made up of many citizens who are
- 206 volunteering their time to serve in these areas.

207 *Public comments/questions:*

208 Sam Restino: So, we no longer have an Economic Development position, correct? *Ms. Jenkins:*

209 *We work with the Bennington County Regional Commission (BCRC) which is county wide.*

210 *Economic Development and Community Development are very closely tied and both sides suffer.*

211 *Community Development has served us well.* Mr. Restino: “Trust comes from transparency and

212 communication”. “We need some serious Economic Development in this town.”

213 Nancy White: BCRC doesn’t have a report in our Town Report. “We should not have a county

214 regional group in charge of our town’s economy.” They are pushing a State agenda and this

215 isn’t always the best for Bennington. The taxpayers have always paid for everything and

216 economics should be our number one goal in Bennington. *Ms. Jenkins: “Community*

217 *development is housing, is economic development.” We have made improvements to*

218 *recreation, attention to youth and seniors, attention to housing, and the revolving loan fund.*

219 Charles Kozloski: Agreed that Economic Development and Community Development “are

220 inseparable”. The Use and Zoning Permits went from \$25M in 2021 to \$48M in 2022 which

221 indicates that there is something happening in this town, and these figures prove it.

222 Lorna Charitin: Ms. Barsotti’s and Mr. Spivak’s presentation did reflect how our government  
223 works and how it is communicating to the citizens. There has been a lot of negativity tonight -  
224 especially from two individuals - where they’ve raised a number of points. We certainly need to  
225 have citizens watching the Select Board’s performance, however, “I think the Select Board is  
226 doing a great job” including responding professionally and civilly to questions. If this negativity  
227 continues to be directed to the Select Board, “we’re not going to get good candidates willing to  
228 serve”.

229 \_\_\_\_\_  
230 Bill Camarda, Bennington Rescue Squad Interim Executive Director: Thanked the Town for its  
231 support and explained that the Executive Director position has been eliminated, we’re replacing  
232 5 of the “big box ambulances with the more economical van ambulances, and will drop down to  
233 a fleet of 5 units. We’re training people from the community to join Bennington Rescue. Thank  
234 you for your support.

235 Jennie Roczyski’s husband: Spoke in his wife’s absence to thank the Town for their support of  
236 the Park McCullough Free Library’s level funding request.

237 *ARTICLE 2. OTHER BUSINESS: To transact such other proper business when met.*

238 BUSINESS TO BE TRANSACTED BY BALLOT

239 TUESDAY, MARCH 7, 2023

240 THE POLLS TO BE OPEN FROM 7:00 A.M. TO 7:00 P.M.

241 AT THE POLLING PLACES SPECIFIED ABOVE

242 SELECT BOARD ELECTION. Two Select Board Members residing in the Town shall be  
243 elected for a term of three (3) years.

244 *ARTICLE 1.* Shall the Town appropriate for the next fiscal year, July 1, 2023 through June  
245 30, 2024, the total sum of \$16,135,310.00 consisting of the following: \$4,853,340.00 for the  
246 laying out, maintaining, and repairing of the highways and bridges of the Town; and  
247 \$11,281,970.00 for the payment of the following: Any indebtedness not otherwise specifically  
248 provided for, interest on indebtedness, legally authorized State and County taxes, the  
249 prosecution and defense of the common rights and interests of the inhabitants of the Town,  
250 and for other necessary incidental expenses?

251 The proposed budget includes \$25,000.00 for fire equipment, \$5,000.00 for fire  
252 facilities, \$10,000.00 for technology improvements, \$426,100.00 for healthcare reserve and  
253 workers compensation insurance, \$80,000.00 for bridges and \$2,000.00 for well maintenance,  
254 any unexpended portion of which will be reserved to subsequent years for that purpose.

255 ARTICLE 2. Shall the bonds of the Town of Bennington in an amount not to exceed \$5.8 million  
256 be issued for the purpose of upgrading the Gage Street water main and upgrading the water  
257 system in the south end (Jefferson Heights and Margaret Lane) to increase water pressure  
258 within the system.

259 *ARTICLE 3. Shall the voters increase the F.Y. 2024 General Fund by the sum of \$5,000.00 for*  
260 *Bennington County Association Against Child Abuse?*

261 Jenna Caslin spoke to the work that the Bennington County Association Against Child  
262 Abuse does by serving victims of sexual abuse and child victims of egregious physical abuse and  
263 neglect. We work with clients from the time of disclosure to the disposition of their case and  
264 often times beyond that. We also provide education for prevention, outreach, and support  
265 groups. For more information, our website is [www.bcaac.org](http://www.bcaac.org) .

266 *ARTICLE 4. Shall the voters increase the F.Y. 2024 General Fund by the sum of \$5,000.00 for*  
267 *Project Against Violent Encounters?*

268 Lindsey Brillon stated that PAVE provides services to survivors of domestic and sexual  
269 abuse in Bennington County. Over the past year, PAVE has realized the increased violence in  
270 Bennington which include domestic and sexual abuse. Lack of economic opportunity,  
271 substance abuse, and lack of mental health treatment are all contributors. All agencies must  
272 partner together to work toward a solution to the problem. We have seen 1 survivor/day we  
273 were open with 110 of the survivors being from Bennington. We continue to provide our 24  
274 hour crisis line and provide shelter to clean survivors. We taught 350 students healthy  
275 relationships in our schools on how to prevent abuse.

276 *ARTICLE 5. Shall the voters increase the F.Y. 2024 General Fund by the sum of \$5,500.00 for*  
277 *Green Mountain Retired and Senior Volunteer Program?*

278 Lenora Volkmer cited all of the beneficial work that the volunteers do for the  
279 community, such as, tax assistance, delivering meals and supporting the café for Meals on  
280 Wheels, supporting the American Red Cross blood drives, working with the Vermont Council on  
281 Aging, helping at the food pantry at St. Frances deSales Church and Sacred Heart Church, books  
282 on wheels, Sunshine cards, support to the Bennington Free Library, the Senior Center,  
283 Bennington Museum, Bennington Project Independence, Better Bennington Corporation, and  
284 Greater Bennington Community Services. For more information, visit our website,  
285 [www.rsvpvt.org](http://www.rsvpvt.org) ..

286 *ARTICLE 6. Shall the voters increase the F.Y. 2024 General Fund by the sum of \$6,750.00 for*  
287 *BROC - Community Action in Southwestern Vermont?*

288 Tom Donahue stated that “the foundation of a community is only as strong as how we  
289 treat our most vulnerable”. BROC helps people in crisis and then provides a sustainable path  
290 forward. This past year we have worked with Molly Stark and the four family engaged  
291 specialists at SVSU, provided warm weather clothing to 42 families, operate BROC community



292 food shelf 5 days/week, and continue our special senior hour on Fridays. In Bennington County,  
293 we provided over \$115,000 for fuel assistance and \$46,000 for rapid resolution housing  
294 assistance and are turning 3 of those into permanent housing. We provided \$5,000 recovery  
295 funds to each of 33 small businesses including 4 startup businesses - a total of \$165,000 in  
296 grants to businesses of 5 employees or less. We're responsible for implementing the home  
297 weatherization services in the County and provided \$325,000 in weatherization to Bennington  
298 residents. Over \$6.6M was provided last year to assist Bennington residents in need. For more  
299 information, visit our website, [www.broc.org](http://www.broc.org) .

300 *ARTICLE 7. Shall the voters increase the F.Y. 2024 General Fund by the sum of \$7,000.00 for*  
301 *Vermont Center for Independent Living?*

302 Charles Murphy noted that the Vermont Center for Independent Living is a disabilities  
303 and rights advocacy organization founded in 1979 with locations in Bennington, Burlington and  
304 Brattleboro. We help people with disabilities find services, problem solve, and to live  
305 independent lives. We work with the Sue Williams Freedom Fund, an equipment distribution  
306 program, the Home Access Program, Meals on Wheels, and the Vermont Communication and  
307 Distribution Program. For more information, visit our website, [www.vcil.org](http://www.vcil.org) .

308 *ARTICLE 8. Shall the voters increase the F.Y. 2024 General Fund by the sum of \$7,500.00 for*  
309 *Southwestern Vermont Council on Aging, Inc.?*

310 Ron Hache stated that our work is for seniors to be able to maintain maximum  
311 independence and quality of life. We work with Meals on Wheels and served 25,000 meals to  
312 170 Bennington residents. Our case managers make sure that seniors have mental health  
313 benefit counseling, insurance, transportation, care giver services, etc. We also work closely  
314 with the other care giving agencies to provide all the necessary services to our aging  
315 population.

316 *ARTICLE 9. Shall the voters increase the F.Y. 2024 General Fund by the sum of \$10,000.00 for*  
317 *The Tutorial Center?*

318 Sean-Marie Oller and Matt Bentley stated that The Tutorial Center works closely with  
319 the schools and provides tutoring from grade schools, to adults, to the ESL services, and to  
320 refugees coming to Vermont. We offer a pathway to a high school diploma or GED. Vermont  
321 has 33,000 people 25 years old or older that don't have a high school diploma, 33,000 that  
322 don't speak English very well, and 7,000 who don't speak English well at all. We work with the  
323 Department of Labor and Hireability with education being necessary for these people to  
324 improve their lives.

325 *ARTICLE 10. Shall the voters increase the F.Y. 2024 General Fund by the sum of \$11,000.00*  
326 *Bennington Project Independence?*

327 Linda Putney stated that BPI was established 45 years ago to provide respite services to  
328 older adults and younger persons with disabilities so their care givers can do what's necessary

329 in their lives and not have to worry about their loved ones. We provide nursing care, dignified  
330 personal care, social contact, mental and physical activities, nutritious meals, art therapy,  
331 music, trips, and transportation to and from home - all of which help keep older adults out of  
332 nursing homes.

333 *ARTICLE 11. Shall the voters increase the F.Y. 2024 General Fund by the sum of \$12,500.00 for*  
334 *Bennington Free Clinic?*

335 Charlie Gingo shared that the Bennington Free Clinic has been in operation for 14 years.  
336 We serve people that have no insurance because they can't afford it or have very high  
337 deductible insurance. We have a team of 12 volunteer doctors, 1 physician's assistant, and 9  
338 nurses who saw 198 patients that had 300 appointments with 2/3 of them from  
339 Bennington/North Bennington. Patients are also referred to specialists as needed. We also  
340 help patients get enrolled in one of Vermont's health insurance programs and had 265 do so.  
341 This past year we have begun working with the Vermont Office of Refugee Settlement in the  
342 Ethiopian Community Health Center in Brattleboro. Our doctors did health assessment for 19  
343 Afghani and Ukrainian refugees. We screen everyone we see for all mental health, smoking, and  
344 dental issues.

345 *ARTICLE 12. Shall the voters increase the F.Y. 2024 General Fund by the sum of \$15,000.00 for*  
346 *Sunrise Family Resource Center?*

347 Jonathan Cooper stated that the Sunrise Family Resource Center has 30 employees that  
348 have served 2,700 families with care and concern. Families on the Move has been a very  
349 successful program that provides wrap around services to these families in need. Town funding  
350 allows our workers to be able to collaborate with several other agencies and go a little beyond  
351 their normal work responsibilities to serve Bennington residents.

352 *ARTICLE 13. Shall the voters increase the F.Y. 2024 General Fund by the sum of \$21,600.00 for*  
353 *Visiting Nurse Association & Hospice of the Southwest Region?*

354 Jessica Fredette noted that Town support enables VNA & Hospice to receive the care  
355 they deserve in the comfort of their home regardless of their financial situation. Last year we  
356 made over 120,000 visits to 3,900 patients in Bennington and Rutland counties. In Bennington  
357 County alone we saw 685 patients and completed 35,000 visits. Since the pandemic in 2020,  
358 we have had a 24% reduction in our work force and have seen significant price cuts from  
359 Medicare and Medicaid which makes the money that we receive the Town especially  
360 important.

361 *ARTICLE 14. Shall the voters increase the F.Y. 2024 General Fund by the sum of \$25,000.00 for*  
362 *Bennington County Coalition for the Homeless?*

363 Chloe Viner Collins stated that the Coalition operates 3 shelters - one for families (up to  
364 9 families), one for individuals (up to 16 individuals), and another as of this summer for up to 9  
365 families. We have served over 200 individuals this past year. All shelters are staffed 24/7 to

366 help clients with job searches, interviews, cleaning, cooking and any other help they may need.  
367 We have partnered with Goodwill to help with resume building, there's a visiting nurse through  
368 GBIC's that comes in once a week, and Turning Point gives the clients any recovery resources  
369 they may need. We also offer drop in services for those in need of a shower, meal, or warmth.  
370 Most of our clients do work but cannot afford the housing in Bennington.

371 All that spoke on Article 3 through Article 14 thanked the Town for their support.

372 ***At 8:42 p.m., it was moved and seconded that the meeting be adjourned until***  
373 ***tomorrow, March 7, 2023, at 7:00 a.m. when the polling places at the Bennington Fire Facility***  
374 ***and the Village Town Office in North Bennington will be open for voting. The motion carried.***

375

376

377

378 Respectfully submitted,

379 Nancy H. Lively

380 Secretary

381