

1 **BENNINGTON SELECT BOARD MEETING**

2 **130 RIVER STREET**

3 **BENNINGTON, VERMONT 05201**

4 **JUNE 12, 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:** Dan Monks-Assistant Town Manager; Shannon Barsotti-Community
10 Development Director; Jonah Spivak-Communications Coordinator; Rodney Galton, Ian Jewkes,
11 and Michael Buscher-Chelsea Solar; Representative Dave Whitman and John Rogers-State
12 Motel Voucher Program; Beth Wallace Mike Bethel; Sam Restino; Laurie Mulhern; Kelly Carroll;
13 Nancy White; Lora Block; Maru Leon-Griffin; Bruce Lee-Clark; Wendy Lawrence; Peter
14 Lawrence; Lincoln Colbert; Representative Mary Morrissey; Clark Adams; Chad Foster; Mary
15 Ellen Mumley; Bill Perrot; Diane Lisa; Colleen Wall; 30 citizens; Jim Therrien-Bennington
16 Banner; Josh Boucher-CAT-TV; and Nancy H. Lively-Secretary.

17 At 6:00pm, Chair Jeannie Jenkins called the meeting to order and reminded everyone
18 that it is easier to hear up front and there is one set of head phones available.

19 **1. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE**

20 The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

21 **2. VISION STATEMENT**

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

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

26 **3. CONSENT AGENDA**

27 **A. MINUTES OF MAY 22 AND MAY 30, 2023**

28 **B. WARRANTS**

29 **C. LICENSES**

30 *Ed Woods moved and Gary Corey seconded to approve the Minutes of May 22, 2023*
31 *amended as follows:*

32 *May 22, 2023 Minutes Addendum, Lines 3, Change "personnel" to*
33 *"legal"*

34 *The motion carried unanimously.*

35 *Jeanne Conner moved and Ed Woods seconded to approve the Minutes of May 30,*
36 *2023. The motion carried with Gary Corey abstaining.*

37 *Jeanne Conner moved and Ed Woods seconded to approve B. Warrants and C.*
38 *Licenses. The motion carried unanimously.*

39 **4. PUBLIC COMMENT**

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

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

54 _____
55 Sam Restino: 1. Reminded everyone not to flush wipes. 2. Reminded everyone that there is a
56 vote on 6/13/23 from 10:00am-7:00pm with four towns involved. 3. The CTC litigation should
57 be an agenda item. 4. The Town should ask businesses if they are struggling before they go out
58 of business.

59 Beth Wallace: Explained that the SVSU vote on 6/13/23 is to extend the lease to 30 years. The
60 Pownal Elementary, the Oak Hill Children's Center, and the Headstart Pre-School Building have
61 been there since 1995 in a modular building that needs to be replaced. The vote is not for the
62 building - we have federal funding for that - it's just to extend the lease so we can continue
63 there.

64 Mike Bethel: Is requesting that the Town take \$2,000-\$3,000 from the advertising budget and
65 spend it on ads in the Bennington Banner to promote our businesses through foliage. Some of
66 those businesses will also be contributing their own dollars.

67 Laurie Mulhern: Requested that the packet documents, especially the warrants, be available for
68 public review prior to the meeting. *Ms. Jenkins: This will be fixed.*

69 Kelly Carroll: The monthly Riverwalk is 6/17/23 at 10:00am at People's Park. We will be walking
70 to the Community Park and have a talk by Master Gardener, Nathan Harrington. You can park
71 at the rec center if this is too far for you to walk.

72 Nancy White: It is unfortunate that most voters are unaware of the vote on 6/13/23 because
73 the SVSU has waited until today to provide information on it. Because the proposal is to charge
74 UCS \$1/year rent for 30 years with a 30 year option means that the towns will be paying for the
75 maintenance of the property with UCS not making any contribution to that. How was it legal
76 for the Town to have given UCS a \$1/year lease for their addition to the rec center without a
77 vote? *Mr. Monks: That lease was approved by counsel.*

78 5. CHELSEA SOLAR DISCUSSION

79 Ms. Jenkins explained that the Planning Commission had advised to deny the request by
80 Ecos Energy, LLC for a solar array because it was against the Town Plan's criteria for a solar
81 array preferred site.

82 Rodney Galton, Senior Project Manager at Ecos Energy, LLC, Michael Buscher, and Ian
83 Jewkes did the following presentation:

- 84 • The proposal is for a 2.0MW ground-mounted solar PV project located on a
85 portion of a 27.3 acre parcel off of Willow Road in the Rural Conservation Zone.
- 86 • Clearing is 9.54 acres - reduced from 10 acres - and the panels will take up less
87 than 5 acres.
- 88 • Part of the Vermont Standard Offer program, the project will sell power to VEPP,
89 Inc. for 25 years.
- 90 • This Chelsea project is eligible for the low-income Community Bonus Investment
91 Tax Credit that can be paid to the Town for this project (\$425,000).
- 92 • We are proposing grading on the north and east with some excavation for the
93 access run to Willow Road.
- 94 • The project was last before the Public Utility Commission (PUC) in Case No. 17-
95 5024, and the Final Order in that case on January 2, 2019 held that the Project
96 met all of the §248 criteria (including orderly development (b)(1) and aesthetics
97 (b)(5)).
- 98 • However, the PUC determined that because the Project would share a portion of
99 the newly built Green Mountain Power utility line extension with the planned

- 100 Apple Hill solar facility, the two projects would be considered to be a “single
101 plant”.
- 102 • The PUC gave us two options in the Final Order - (i) formally merge the two
103 projects and seek authorization of a 4.0MW facility or (ii) demonstrate that the
104 Project does not share infrastructure with the Apple Hill solar facility. We have
105 elected option 2.
 - 106 • On January 22, 2018, the Town of Bennington adopted the Bennington Town
107 Plan Energy Amendment which introduced the concept of “preferred areas” for
108 solar development in the Town.
 - 109 • Areas with “proximity to existing hedgerows or other topographical features that
110 naturally screen the entire proposed array” are specifically identified as
111 “preferred areas”. Clearly, the intent of this provision is to include any site as
112 “preferred” if the project is not visible because of the existing hedgerows or
113 other topographical features.
 - 114 • This Project is specifically designed to meet the criteria of a “preferred area”
115 because it is naturally screened by the existing hedgerows without alteration to
116 the hedgerows.
 - 117 • An Environmental Consultant has concluded that the project will not have an
118 adverse effect on outstanding resources waters, water pollution and
119 headwaters, floodways, streams, shorelines, wetlands, soil, rare and
120 irreplaceable natural areas, rare threatened or endangered species, necessary
121 wildlife habitat, or impact any primary agricultural soil.
 - 122 • Due to the Planning Commission’s concerns of the impact on the hydrology of
123 the area, and based on the evaluation and reports from our hydrology
124 consultant, there will be no significant impacts from the construction or
125 operation of the proposed Chelsea Solar project on the hydrology or
126 hydrogeology of the area, including on water supplies, groundwater, drainage,
127 streams or wetlands.
 - 128 • This Project is a smaller, more compact version of that previously held to satisfy
129 the statutory criteria regarding aesthetics and is designed to meet the definition
130 of “preferred area” under the Town Plan Energy Element.
 - 131 • Post construction simulation photos show that the array cannot be seen from
132 the Golf Course or Welcome Center.
 - 133 • Both the Chelsea Project and the Apple Hill Project qualify for the IRS Low-
134 Income Community bonus investment tax credit (ITC) of \$425,000 each, or
135 \$850,000 for both.
 - 136 • In exchange for the Town’s support of the Projects, we would pay upon
137 commercial operation \$425,000 per project to the Town to use as it sees fit.
 - 138 • To summarize the benefits/impacts continued:
 - 139 ➤ Low/no burden on town services

- One-time payment of up to \$850,000
 - Increased tax revenue for Bennington
 - Naturally screened
 - No noise
 - No waste
 - Very low traffic
 - No lighting
 - Low impact
 - Helps Bennington meet its 2025 energy goals
- The Planning Commission is attempting to re-write the Energy Amendment to read: “existing hedgerows and other topographical features that naturally screen the entire array” and to include only existing fields as “preferred areas”.
 - The Planning Commission’s view of forested sites is directly contrary to the Select Board’s decision regarding the forested sites of Stark and Warner solar projects in Bennington designated as “Preferred Areas” by the Select Board.
 - This would also preclude developers from incorporating any supplemental landscape mitigation or grading to limit offsite visibility for fear of losing the “preferred area” status.
 - In addition to the “substantial alteration” test not being in the Energy Amendment, it is also vague and, therefore, unenforceable. Developers would have no way of determining what “substantial alteration” means.
 - As demonstrated in the visual simulations from the Welcome Center, if this Project was to be built without the contemplated grading, the Project is still “naturally screened” and qualifies as a “Preferred Area”.
 - One of the Planning Commission criticisms was that some of the screening provided by vegetation is not on our land. First, the Energy Amendment does not say “naturally screened by vegetation controlled by applicant”, and Second, it is highly unlikely VTRANS would ever clear the vegetation to the south and west of the Project. But, if VTRANS were to do so, the Project is still “naturally screened” as demonstrated in the visual simulations of Route 7 and the Welcome Center.
 - The balance of the Planning Commission’s analysis of the Project (i.e. views of the residences to the north and visibility of the clearing) are (1) contrary to any evidence and (2) unrelated to the “preferred area” question before the Select Board.

175 *Board comments/questions answered by Rodney Galton, Ian Jewkes, and Michael Buscher from*
176 *ECOS Energy, LLC:*

177 Mr. Woods: Is this Plan the same one that the Planning Commission has? Yes.

178 Ms. Conner: Explain the earthwork that has been referenced. *On the north end of the site the*
179 *array is being pushed down 18' to 6' on the south end. Cut slopes on the north and east side*
180 *and fill slopes on the south and west side. This is to screen from the elevated areas around*
181 *town, specifically the Golf Course.*

182 Mr. Corey: Do you have test cores to see if you'll hit ledge? *We do have a few done that are*
183 *showing "stiff sediment" but not ledge. We still have a few more to do.*

184 Mr. Corey: Did the Planning Commission receive the Impact Report? *Yes, at the December 13,*
185 *2022 meeting.*

186 Mr. Corey: Do you know why this site was not listed as a preferred site? *No.*

187 Ms. Jenkins: You're doing more test cores because you don't know how to excavate the 18'?
188 *Yes. We are comfortable with the information that we have that blasting would not be*
189 *necessary. That would only be if we found actual ledge.*

190 Mr. Corey: In the Hydrologic Evaluation it mentions cracked ground. How does this affect the
191 solar panels? *Solar panels cannot be placed on impervious ground and this reference is speaking*
192 *to the access into the site.*

193 Ms. Perrin: Am I correct in that the 9.5 acres will be cleared? *That is correct - 9.54 acres will be*
194 *cleared.*

195 Mr. Carroll: What did the Planning Commission tell you their conclusion was? *They were*
196 *concerned about hydrology because of the amount of earthwork that we needed to do, that the*
197 *abutters to the north would be able to see the clearing, and that the site would be visible from*
198 *the elevated areas in Town. Therefore, it was their conclusion to reject the preferred area*
199 *designation. However, because we have met the screening criteria, we feel that it should be a*
200 *preferred site.*

201 *Public comments/questions answered by Rodney Galton, Ian Jewkes, and Michael Buscher from*
202 *ECOS Energy, LLC:*

203 Lora Block: Spoke to reasons not to approve the site below:

- 204 ✓ As President of the Apple Hill Neighborhood, she is speaking on their behalf.
- 205 ✓ We hope that the Select Board will agree with the Planning Commission's decision that
- 206 the Chelsea Project cannot be created as a preferred site.
- 207 ✓ Nowhere does it say that you can change a site geographically to make it into a
- 208 preferred site.
- 209 ✓ This company has illegally cleared many of the natural hedgerows and are under
- 210 questioning by the PUC already. Were they still there, they may have protected the
- 211 site from being visible.

- 212 ✓ Not only is this site not a preferred site, it has been denied by the PUC and the
213 Supreme Court of Vermont because it would be visible by key locations such as the
214 Monument and the Country Club.
- 215 ✓ The PUC is the one that makes the decision, not the Town, and ECOS Energy have
216 already asked them to extend their contract again to give them more time to build it.
- 217 ✓ Contract extensions are important because a contract 10 years ago gave them
218 13¢/KWH, whereas, a new contract only gives them 8¢/KWH.
- 219 ✓ They don't want to move the project to a preferred site because the contract stays
220 with the land.
- 221 ✓ Even though there are two projects - Chelsea and Apple Hill - they are adjacent and the
222 Supreme Court hasn't made a decision on the Apple Hill Project.
- 223 ✓ Our thanks goes out to the Board for intervening on the Chelsea Project.
- 224 ✓ At a recent meeting of the Apple Hill Association, a unanimous vote rejected a sizable
225 monetary settlement from these developers if we stopped objecting to both the
226 Chelsea and Apple Hill projects.

227 Bruce Lee-Clark: Is in favor of solar energy, renewable energy, and the Town Plan but is not in
228 favor of either the Chelsea or Apple Hill projects. There are many preferred sites that can be
229 utilized for solar projects, but they own this land and want the higher rate. "This is the wrong
230 project, in the wrong location, and for 10 years, has been the wrong time."

231 Maru Leon: Requests that the Board deny this proposal as the PUC has done in the past. It is
232 against our Town Plan, is visible from the Monument and the Country Club, and destroys the
233 aesthetics of our scenic area. Ms. Leon shared many photos with the Board.

234 Wendy Lawrence: In favor of solar but this is about right project, right place. There are a lot of
235 contingencies involved in the \$850,000 that we didn't feel would come to fruition, and at the
236 end of the life cycle of a solar project, the land must be restored to the way it was. How will
237 they do that if "pushing down or blasting"?

238 Colleen Wall: Where is all of the spoil from their excavation being dumped?

239 Diane Lisa: How does stiff soil translate to the ledge that you see driving up Route 7?

240 Sam Restino: One of your solar rays caught fire and they are starting to show their age and lack
241 of maintenance. "You're wasting time on our agenda."

242 Representative Mary Morrissey: Why were we shown simulated photos that can show what
243 people want you to see instead of actual photographs? She supports solar and renewable
244 energy but this is not the project or the time. How many times have the people in this room
245 heard this same information?

246 Lincoln Colbert: There is no way that is not going to affect the aesthetics of the beautiful
247 mountains. We don't even allow billboard signs because of what they do to our landscape. Not
248 the time or the place.

249 Peter Lawrence: Every time we hear a presentation, the developers put their spin on the PUC
250 and Planning Commission's decisions. They have said that the Chelsea Project and the Apple
251 Hill Project are separate - they are not because they both share the same access point. Just
252 follow the Planning Commission's decision.

253 *Michael Buscher response:*

254 *We have done a lot of research on this project, so please consider all of the points that we've*
255 *made. We have gone to great lengths to make this project acceptable to the Town. This project*
256 *will not be visible as we have shown.*

257 ***Sarah Perrin moved and Jim Carroll seconded to accept the Planning Commission's***
258 ***recommendation, and deny Alco Renewable Energy Limited's request to deem the Chelsea***
259 ***Solar Project as within a preferred area under the Town Plan Energy Amendment.***

260 Mr. Woods noted that there are preferred sites to be used, he is in favor of solar energy,
261 but is opposed to this as a preferred site.

262 ***The motion carried unanimously.***

263 **6. STATE MOTEL VOUCHER PROGRAM EXPIRATION**

264 Ms. Jenkins explained that the State motel voucher program has ended. There has been
265 much work on this subject and we are here to learn of what our options are going forward. We
266 have put a lot of attention on the Putnam Block and Benn High but we have also given housing
267 much consideration. We have done work on the management of funding on projects such as
268 the Norton House Renovation, Shires Housing, and Hale Resources renovations on Pleasant
269 Street. We are beginning to rewrite the Town Plan to include Equity Training that reflects the
270 Town Vision.

271 Representative Dave Whitman did the following presentation:

- 272 ○ The need for housing is a major issue in the State and especially for our most vulnerable.
- 273 ○ In March 2020 when social distancing became a priority with the COVID pandemic, the
- 274 State responded with an 'open door' policy for our General Assistance Housing Program
- 275 - also known as the Hotel/Motel Voucher Program - made possible by Federal COVID
- 276 CARE Act dollars.
- 277 ○ Pre-pandemic the State spent \$5M on vouchers and during the pandemic it went to
- 278 \$50M.
- 279 ○ In November 2022, Vermont was providing over 1,500 motel rooms to 2,500
- 280 Vermonters including almost 600 children.
- 281 ○ In 2022, 1/3 of those in a shelters had a mental disorder and ¼ had a substance abuse
- 282 problem.
- 283 ○ The Program came close to expiring in the Fall of 2021 and was extended until the
- 284 Spring of 2023.

- 285 ○ After the federal dollars ran out, the Legislature appropriated ~\$25M of the State's
- 286 General Fund to buy us 3 months to get us to where we are today.
- 287 ○ Since March 2020, Vermont has appropriated federal and state funds of \$900M to
- 288 housing as a whole.
- 289 ○ In our next budget year we have dedicated ~\$100M for housing assistance and ~\$100M
- 290 to address permanent housing with \$25M dedicated to the Hotel/Motel Voucher
- 291 Program, as well as, \$17M for the housing opportunity program.
- 292 ○ The Voucher Program is not going away but it will not be fully funded to provide shelter
- 293 primarily in the winter months, to older Vermonters, families with children, Vermonters
- 294 with a disability, and survivors of family violence.
- 295 ○ The Agency of Human Services (AHS) has a request for proposal (RFP) prioritizing
- 296 locations in Rutland County, Washington County, and Chittenden County for 1,000
- 297 emergency shelter beds.
- 298 ○ The AHS is also working with the Department of Forest, Parks and Recreation for
- 299 showers and camping facilities.
- 300 ○ Everyone is accountable for addressing homelessness.

301 John Rogers, Spokesperson for the Homeless Crisis Subcommittee, did the following
 302 presentation:

- 303 ■ Following the 5/18 Project Alliance meeting discussion on the termination of the
- 304 General Assistance Emergency housing program, 34 individuals representing 25 local
- 305 community service providers from town and state offices formed the Homeless Crisis
- 306 Subcommittee.
 - 307 ❖ Goal: To establish a response between state, town, and local community
 - 308 organizations that ensures homeless individuals exiting hotels are valued,
 - 309 supported, and connected.
 - 310 ❖ Key Objectives/Definition of Success:
 - 311 ➤ 1. By August 1, 90% of homeless individuals are formally connected to
 - 312 the best community partner to meet their needs.
 - 313 ➤ 2. By August 1, 80% of homeless individuals have been screened for
 - 314 coordinated entry.
 - 315 ➤ 3. By July 1, all who need credential materials (ex. Photo identification,
 - 316 social security card, etc.) have received support and requests for missing
 - 317 materials have been properly submitted.
- 318 ■ The Housing Crisis Subcommittee have responded to the Vermont Department of
- 319 Children and Families (DCF) appeal for Letters of Interest (LOI) by 6/1 - 45 letters were
- 320 sent - to request immediate funding and resource needs.
 - 321 ❖ Submitted LOI Topics:
 - 322 ➤ 1. Funding for the creation of a multi-disciplinary street outreach team
 - 323 including service vans that will replace the state sponsored CCHRT that
 - 324 terminates on July 1.

- 325 ➤ 2. Funding for the purchase of the Thatcher House to serve as
326 transitional housing for 10 families as they pursue permanent housing.
327 ➤ 3. Funding to extend lodging in the Fife & Drum hotel for 15 individuals
328 for 5 months as they pursue permanent housing.
329 ➤ 4. Funding for a transitional housing village made up of 16 single and 2-
330 person tiny houses as they pursue permanent housing.
- 331 ▪ In addition for state funding for longer-term projects, efforts for short-term with no or
332 low funding required could be implemented within the next 30-60 days.
 - 333 ❖ Ensuring AHS is identifying out of county transitional and permanent housing
334 resources to Coordinated Entry lead organizations.
 - 335 ❖ Partnering with the Town of Bennington per their proposal to grant \$50K from
336 the Revolving Loan Program to 6 families for 4 months as they pursue
337 permanent housing.
 - 338 ❖ Develop a pop-up day shelter where homeless individuals can access electricity,
339 Wi-Fi, local support agencies, showers, bathrooms, etc. The shelter will utilize
340 North American Mission Board disaster relief showers when units are not
341 deployed for a Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) disaster event.
 - 342 ❖ Form a local outreach team to augment efforts underway by the AHS
343 transitional housing outreach team.
 - 344 ❖ Producing an informational flyer to be distributed widely listing available
345 support resources.
 - 346 ▪ Of the 191 people exiting hotels over the summer, Bennington County could see 100
347 unsheltered individuals of which 60 are highly vulnerable.
 - 348 ▪ Specifically, we are asking for four things:
 - 349 ❖ 1. Can you help us identify, secure, and stand up a location for a pop-up day
350 shelter that would provide access to electricity, water, and sewer by July 15th ?
 - 351 ❖ 2. Can the majority of the select board and key town leadership engage in
352 weekly meetings to collaborate on initiatives to provide a coordinated and
353 complimentary response?
 - 354 ❖ 3. Can you join with us to quickly navigate local and state zoning challenges for
355 the projects selected and funded by DCF?
 - 356 ❖ 4. Can the Housing Crisis Subcommittee have a standing agenda item at the
357 select board’s meetings until the crisis has waned, perhaps until October?

358 Ms. Jenkins: Your first three asks we have already discussed and are doable. 1. Dan is working
359 on the day shelter; 2. Select Board members can attend any meeting as individuals but Open
360 Meeting Law prevents us to appear as a Select Board quorum when we are actually
361 representing the Select Board. 3. We were on the call on local and state zoning with the state
362 zoning the bigger issue of the two. And, 4. You are welcome to come to any meeting to share
363 any updates you may have.

364 Mr. Monks: We are in the early stages of the Revolving Loan consideration. More work needs
365 to be done and we may have some information at the next Select Board meeting. Ultimately,
366 the Select Board will need to approve any proposal.

367 Mr. Haley: Read the following letter to the Legislative Delegation from the Select Board:

368 “Dear Legislative Delegation,

369 As you are aware, the end of the Motel Voucher program has created a crisis situation for
370 families and individuals utilizing this resource as well as for the communities within which
371 affected recipients reside.

372 The Town of Bennington staff and Select Board have been fully aware of this looming crisis. We
373 have diligently worked to encourage new housing, particularly in the downtown area, through
374 use of technical and grant resources, use of the Town’s revolving loan program, and the
375 redesign of our Land Use and Development Regulations. For more than a decade, we have
376 actively partnered with developers, including Shires Housing, the Housing Authority, the
377 Putnam Project, and Hale Resources, to increase housing stock through both rehabilitation of
378 older units and new construction.

379 Bennington is also pleased to be home to state agencies for the county and a healthy and
380 engaged non-profit sector. These entities have served our county well. We understand the
381 advantages of housing individuals needing access to state services close to those services.
382 However, this places a significant strain on Bennington as the primary housing and sheltering
383 location.

384 To help us help those in need more effectively and to build the additional social infrastructure
385 that our communities need, the Bennington Select Board asks you, as our legislative delegation,
386 to address the needs outlines below.

- 387 • Provide specific funding to communities, including Bennington, who serve as hub
388 communities for unhoused families and individuals. These communities generally host
389 state health and social services and serve as economic hubs in their counties. The
390 strain on municipal government services, non-profit organizations, and schools is
391 substantial.
- 392 • Double the Bennington County funding for Pathways Vermont to expand their services
393 to work more closely with unhoused families and individuals. They have
394 demonstrated their expertise in providing an effective housing model.
- 395 • Increase funding to our transit system partner, Green Mountain Express, to increase
396 the number and reach of the system so that families that rely on public transit have
397 efficient access to work, school, and services located not just in Bennington, but
398 throughout the county.

- 399 • Last, we ask that the legislature do the hard work of addressing the barriers in state
400 laws and regulations, including elements of ACT 250, so that communities can increase
401 housing stock in a timely matter.

402 The Town of Bennington thanks our delegation for the assistance provided over the years and
403 looks forward to working collaboratively to serve our community in this present crisis.

404 Sincerely,

405 Bennington Select Board”

406 ***Gary Corey moved and Jeanne Conner seconded to send the above letter to the***
407 ***Legislative Delegation from the Bennington Select Board as read by Tom Haley. The motion***
408 ***carried with Jim Carroll abstaining.***

409 *Public comments/questions on the State Motel Voucher Program Expiration.*

410 Sam Restino: Supports the Select Board’s actions and would not want to see tents along the
411 newly completed Rail Trail.

412 Clark Adams: Homelessness is not eliminated with one solution. Money seems to be what is on
413 the table. The Motel Voucher program is a short term plan so what is the long term plan for a
414 long term multifaceted problem?

415 Chad Foster: As a therapist dealing with those in this crisis situation agrees that there is not one
416 solution, however, what we’re trying to achieve is everyone in the community to be involved
417 and there is not a straight line solution for everyone that is homeless.

418 Bill Perrot: Appreciates what the Town is trying to do but many people are coming to Vermont
419 because they say Vermont has the best benefits. Vermont is one of the top 10 states for
420 benefits, and because of that, many have had multiple chances. Also, consideration should be
421 given to reaching out to large organizations, such as the Salvation Army, and a vacant building
422 such as the former K-Mart can accommodate many people with room for the services that
423 would be needed.

424 Mary Ellen Mumley: Encourages community involvement and will work with anyone on how to
425 help as individuals. We need more of a sense of urgency.

426 Kelly Carroll: Thanked the Select Board for their letter to the Legislative Delegation and was
427 glad to hear that there are 1,000 beds coming and encourages everyone to make Bennington
428 County a priority. “Vermont does not stop in Rutland.”

429 Laurie Mulhern: Is part of a group of 2,000 individuals who reach out to help others that are in
430 need for whatever the reason. Contact her on Facebook if you would like to be a part of these
431 efforts.

432 Nancy White: There are citizens in Bennington that would like the other towns to step up to
433 help and to continue to put pressure on Montpelier. There should be shelters in other towns in
434 Bennington County besides Bennington. We also should have a facility that can house those
435 that need 24-hour supervision by trained staff because they shouldn't be on their own.

436 Ms. Jenkins stated that we desire that everyone work together, discussions will continue
437 and there are plans in the works.

438 **7. IMPLEMENTING THE TOWN VISION**

439 Kelly Carroll, Chair of CPARB, shared the following information:

- 440 - The CPARB meeting will be 6/15/23 at 6:00pm at the Fire Facility. Lorna Mattern, Executive
441 Director of UCS will speak on the relationship between UCS and the Police Department and
442 Police Chief Paul Doucette will speak on how policing is affected by the new changes with
443 the legislative laws.
- 444 - CPARB will have its first Community Listening Session on 6/29/23 from 6:00pm-8:00pm at
445 the Fire Facility. Pizza and child care will be provided.

446

447 Mr. Haley noted that the Town will be celebrating Juneteenth on June 16th on Depot
448 Street.

449 **8. STAFF UPDATE - VILLAGE CEMETERY REPAIRS**

450 Jonah Spivak did the following presentation:

- 451 ○ Last fall over 200 headstones were overturned at the Village Cemetery and citizens from
452 near and far came to right those headstones.
- 453 ○ However, we were not able to do repairs to the headstones that were needed at that
454 time.
- 455 ○ The Village Cemetery is the oldest cemetery where 2,100 veterans are buried.
- 456 ○ Dozens of headstones were repaired by volunteers from Halifax, Rutland, Clarendon,
457 Bennington, and surrounding towns on May 27, 2023. This would normally cost
458 hundreds of dollars/headstone.
- 459 ○ We also benefited from the expertise of the Vermont Old Cemeteries Association
460 (VOCA) as we couldn't have done it without them. Under their tutelage we also
461 removed some trees that would have fallen and damaged other headstones in the
462 future.
- 463 ○ Because we had installed cameras after the incident last fall, the vandalism that took
464 place in the spring was very limited and the juveniles responsible were apprehended
465 within hours.
- 466 ○ Giving back to VOCA in next year's budget was suggested as they literally saved us
467 thousands of dollars.

468 **9. APPOINTMENT TO BOARDS AND COMMISSIONS**

469 **Gary Corey moved and Jim Carroll seconded to approve the following 2023-2024 Slate**
470 **of Boards and Commissions:**

471 ***Development Review Board - Ron Alderman, Bill Barney, Charles Kokoras***

472 ***Housing Authority - Nancy Balconis (Open seat) and Scott Fox (Tenant seat)***

473 ***Planning Commission - Ken Swierad, Bridget Elder, Curan VanDerWielen***

474 ***Regional Commission - Donald Campbell***

475 ***Energy Committee - Chris Bates, Alison Levie, Bruce Lee-Clark***

476 ***CPARB - Select Board has chosen to keep this seat open 2023-2024***

477 ***Historic Preservation - Joe Hall, Jeff Goldstone, Thomas Blakely***

478 ***Select Board Appointments 2023-2024....***

479 ***Bennington Free Library - Gary Corey (liaison)***

480 ***Better Bennington Corporation - Jeanne Conner (liaison)***

481 ***Community Policing Advisory Review Board - Tom Haley (liaison)***

482 ***Energy Committee - Jeannie Jenkins (voting member)***

483 ***Rescue Squad - Ed Woods (liaison)***

484 ***The motion carried unanimously.***

485 **10. MANAGER'S REPORT**

486 Mr. Monks did the following report:

487 Paving - The Town has begun paving some of the streets not done last construction season. We
488 do not expect to overspend the total amount budgeted for projects.

489 County Street - This project moves forward. We expect to complete the work before the end of
490 the fiscal year and there will be sidewalks on both sides of the street.

491 Depot Street Slip Lining - We are slip lining a sewer main originally installed as clay tile. Slip
492 lining is a more cost-effective way to essentially replace a failing pipe with material that should
493 last 100 years.

494 Ms. Conner asked if Willow Park is 100% complete, and Mr. Monks answered that it is.

495 **11. UPCOMING AGENDA**

496 June 26, 2023 - Skate Park Design

497 June 26, 2023 - Benn High Project - if ready

498 June 26, 2023 - Water and Sewer Rates
499 June 26, 2023 - Monument Arts Presentation
500 June 26, 2023 - Shires Housing Hearing
501 June 26, 2023 - Parking at the Fire Facility and the Community Garden
502 July 10, 2023 - BBC Budget

503 **12. OTHER BUSINESS**

504 Ms. Conner: Congratulations to the MAU graduates.

505 Mr. Woods: Kudos to the MAU Seniors for their plans on their Instagram Page.

506 **13. EXECUTIVE SESSION**

507 **A. LEGAL MATTER**

508 *At 8:40pm, Ed Woods moved and Tom Haley seconded that the meeting was*
509 *adjourned finding that an Executive Session be held on a Legal Matter as premature public*
510 *knowledge would place a person involved in the subject matter at a substantial*
511 *disadvantage. No action will be taken when going back into Open Session. The motion*
512 *carried unanimously.*

513

514 Respectfully submitted,

515 Nancy H. Lively

516 Secretary

517