

1 **BENNINGTON SELECT BOARD MEETING**

2 **130 RIVER STREET**

3 **BENNINGTON, VERMONT 05201**

4 **MAY 22, 2023**

5 **MINUTES**

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

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

9 **ALSO PRESENT:** Stuart Hurd-Town Manager; Dan Monks-Assistant Town Manager; Shannon  
10 Barsotti-Community Development Director; Jonah Spivak-Communications Coordinator; Jenn  
11 Conley-VHB; Jenny Dewar-BBC; Mike Bethel; Zak and Jon Hale; Bill Camarda and 6 Emergency  
12 Medical Staff-Bennington Rescue Squad; Sam Restino; Eric Postel; Debbie Mann; Mark Anders;  
13 15 citizens; Jim Therrien-Bennington Banner; Josh Boucher-CAT-TV; and Nancy H. Lively-  
14 Secretary.

15 At 6:05pm, Chair Jeannie Jenkins called the meeting to order.

16 *Jim Carroll moved and Gary Corey seconded to move Agenda Item #3C. Rescue Squad*  
17 *Proclamation to Agenda Item #2A. Rescue Squad Proclamation. The motion carried*  
18 *unanimously.*

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 **2A. RESCUE SQUAD PROCLAMATION**

27 Mr. Haley read the Town of Bennington Proclamation Emergency Medical Services  
28 Week, May 21-27, 2023, in celebration of the Bennington Rescue Squad’s 60<sup>th</sup> Anniversary.

29 Bill Camarda, Bennington Rescue Squad Executive Director, thanked their 28 employees  
30 for their service and advised every one of the Save-A-Life event on May 25<sup>th</sup> (registration on  
31 their website is necessary) and the Crew and Partnership Awards on May 26<sup>th</sup> at the Rescue  
32 Squad station at 2:00pm.

33 **3. CONSENT AGENDA**

34 **A. MINUTES OF MAY 8 AND MAY 15, 2023**

35 **B. WARRANTS**

36 **C. RESCUE SQUAD PROCLAMATION (MOVED TO AGENDA ITEM #2A ABOVE)**

37 **D. LICENSES**

38 *Jim Carroll moved and Ed Woods seconded to approve the Consent Agenda amended*  
39 *as follows:*

40 *May 15, 2023 Minutes, Lines 45 and 46, Change "spade" to "spay"*

41 *May 15, 2023 Minutes, Line 99, Change "Core" to "Gore"*

42 Ms. Conner asked if the license for Tobacco Substitute Endorsement was for  
43 vaping, and Mr. Hurd did not know.

44 *The motion carried unanimously.*

45 **4. PUBLIC COMMENT**

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

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

60 \_\_\_\_\_

61 Jenny Dewar-BBC: Announced the following events -

- 62 ○ Mayfest, May 27, 2023 - over 100 vendors with 6 vendors aged 13 or under. Thank you
- 63 to those that have volunteered.
- 64 ○ Thursday Nite Live - will start on June 1, 2023.
- 65 ○ Townwide Tag Sale, July 22, 2023 - applications are out.
- 66 ○ Hemmings Cruise Ins, 3<sup>rd</sup> Thursdays of the month - 4 more coming.
- 67 ○ WTEN did their live broadcast in Bennington on May 19, 2023 - their first downtown
- 68 feature in Vermont.

69 Sam Restino: 1. Organized a candle vigil on May 9<sup>th</sup> in recognition of National Fentanyl  
 70 Awareness Day and was disappointed in the poor attendance. 2. Attended the BCRC meeting  
 71 where Health and Equity was the main topic. 3. We are an Appalachian Trail Community and  
 72 there is a meeting at the Fire House on May 23<sup>rd</sup> at 6:00pm or 6:30pm. 4. Memorial Day is May  
 73 29<sup>th</sup> and he assumes there will be a parade but hasn't seen any notification of it yet. On May  
 74 27<sup>th</sup> work on the cemetery is scheduled. 5. Is disheartened that the Farmers Market is moving  
 75 to Pownal. 6. There should be more discussion on packet items in the packet. 7. We've had a  
 76 good week with the Cruise In and WTEN coverage.

77 Mike Bethel: 1. Would like to see some advertising money go toward ads in the Banner for our  
 78 town businesses to encourage more foot traffic and shopping in the Downtown. 2. Supports  
 79 what is happening at the Benn Hi with a mindful eye to the budget to maintain it once it's  
 80 complete.

81 **5. ROUNDABOUT PRESENTATION**

82 Jenn Conley, VHB Project Manager, did the following presentation:

- 83 ● The Roundabout project needs the support of VTRANS, the BCRC, and the Town.
- 84 ● The purpose of the project is to safely and efficiently enhance all modes of traffic -
- 85 including bicycles and pedestrians, and to make this an aesthetically appealing gateway
- 86 to Bennington.
- 87 ● We need to approve the need and then what the next steps are.
- 88 ● The three intersections recommended for a roundabout are:
- 89 ✓ Kocher Drive and Route 7
- 90 ✓ Benmont Avenue and Northside Drive
- 91 ✓ Orchard Road and Hicks Avenue
- 92 ● Two of the three intersections proposed by the BCRC for a roundabout are targeted as
- 93 high crash intersections and the other is a high crash segment.
- 94 ● Roundabouts can accommodate the traffic at the three locations and the decision still
- 95 needs to be made as to a single lane or double lane roundabout.
- 96 ● Roundabouts reduce the amount of pavement which improves the aesthetics, slows
- 97 traffic improving safety, reduces vehicle idling to improve the environment, and
- 98 pedestrians only cross one lane at a time which enhances their safety, as well.

- 99 • The roundabout that affects businesses and private property will need curb cut  
100 consideration.
- 101 • The cost of an underpass walkway is very high and pedestrians are sometimes hesitant  
102 to use it.
- 103 • There will need to be a transition of speed for vehicles on Route 7 prior to the  
104 roundabout.

105 *Board comments/questions answered by Ms. Conley:*

106 Ms. Conner: Confirmed that crashes at a roundabout are less severe because of the reduced  
107 speed. *Yes.*

108 Ms. Conner: Corrected the reference to Route 289 to Route 279.

109 Ms. Conner: Requested a description of the underpass. *Sloping from the pathway into the*  
110 *tunnel helps to make it more of a transition and something that was suggested in the 2002*  
111 *study. However, it is expensive and an evaluation of the number of people that would use it*  
112 *would need to be done before going forward with it.*

113 Ms. Conner: Your speed is reduced entering a roundabout so is it also reduced exiting? *Yes.*

114 Ms. Perrin: Is having trouble picturing the speed transition. *Remember that Route 7 has a right*  
115 *hand lane that would be dropped prior to the roundabout and be redesigned to make it*  
116 *narrower. A lot of pavement encourages drivers to go faster.*

117 Mr. Hurd: Plantings may also be calming at this particular location. *Yes, anything vertical will*  
118 *slow you down so that would be a design decision as the project moves forward.*

119 Mr. Corey: Will slowing people down create a backup of traffic? *The decision would have to be*  
120 *made with a concern for future traffic as to a single lane or double lane roundabout.*

121 Mr. Corey: How do roundabouts work for pedestrians and cyclists? *Pedestrians only cross one*  
122 *lane at a time so that enhances their safety, and bicycles can either merge into 25mph traffic*  
123 *instead of 50mph traffic or cross as a pedestrian. Either option is safer for the cyclist.*

124 Mr. Corey: Is this State funded? *The anticipation is that this project will continue to be*  
125 *evaluated by VTRANS if it receives an overwhelming endorsement by the Town and be a VTRANS*  
126 *funded project.*

127 *Public comments/questions answered by Ms. Conley:*

128 Eric Postel: As a motorists he loves the Walmart roundabout, but as a bicyclist, the lanes are too  
129 narrow for a bicyclist to ride along side of a car. The two solutions are to widen the lanes or  
130 have signage to tell motorists that bicyclists will be taking the lane. Planning for bicycles is a  
131 large part of planning for the future.

132 Sam Restino: Is against putting the roundabouts at these intersections.

133 Debbie Mann: Questioned the number of crashes since that information is 7 years old. VTRANS  
134 *stopped tracking the crashes several years ago, however, if they were a high crash site then they*  
135 *probably still are because the geometric conditions are what drives the crashes.*

136 Debbie Mann: With more businesses and traffic, will the roundabouts better handle that than  
137 the lights? *All scenarios will be studied in the scoping of the area and its trends.* And, how is it  
138 determined what intersection is assessed the cause of a crash? *The intersections influence area*  
139 *and segments are evaluated.*

140 Mark Anders-BCRC: Will we be getting more details on the underpass, such as how long it will  
141 be, how expensive, etc. because high school and middle school students would be using it  
142 frequently? *Unfortunately, I don't have those details at this time, however, these will be made*  
143 *available during the advanced scoping if the Select Board wishes.*

144 ***Ed Woods moved and Gary Corey seconded that there is a need for the Roundabout***  
145 ***Project as presented to enhance the safety, efficiency, and aesthetics at the three***  
146 ***intersections indicated. The motion carried unanimously.***

147 ***Jim Carroll moved and Ed Woods seconded to move forward with the Three***  
148 ***Roundabouts from Kocher Drive to Hicks Avenue as presented. The motion carried***  
149 ***unanimously.***

150 ***Ed Woods moved and Gary Corey seconded for VTRANS to continue to gather the***  
151 ***details on the underpass. The motion carried unanimously.***

## 152 **6. BENN HIGH UPDATE**

153 Mr. Monks and Ms. Barsotti explained that they are looking for the Board to authorize  
154 the Town Manager and Staff to negotiate a Development Agreement with Hale Resources on  
155 the terms we've outlined during the last meeting, as well as, this meeting.

156 The Summary of the Project is as follows:

- 157 ➤ The Benn High building is ~100,000 square feet on 2.2 acres.
- 158 ➤ The Towns Space is ~27,000 square feet with 14,000 square feet for the Senior Center  
159 and Meals on Wheels and ~13,000 square feet for the gym space, exercise activity, and  
160 changing rooms.
- 161 ➤ Residential Space is ~70,000 square feet for 22 market rate apartments, 15 affordable  
162 housing apartments, and a child care center.
- 163 ➤ Office Space ~3,000 square feet along Pleasant Street.
- 164 ➤ All renovations will be within the guidelines of the National Historic Registry which will  
165 also generate tax credits.
- 166 ➤ The property is currently owned by Chris Gilbert and the Town has taken control of the  
167 building with a long term lease/purchase agreement which can be assigned to Hale  
168 Resources.

- 169 ➤ Hale Resources, or an affiliate, will own the property.
- 170 ➤ The Town will lease from Hale Resources and sub-lease to Meals on Wheels.
- 171 ➤ Hale Resources will be responsible for attaining the funding for the entire building site
- 172 including the Town's space per specifications.
- 173 ➤ The whole project cost ~\$28M and the construction of the Town's space is ~\$8M.
- 174 ➤ The Town has committed up to \$2M for its portion of the building and predevelopment
- 175 costs of ~\$500,000 - all to be paid for from ARPA funds and will transfer the current
- 176 Senior Center building to Chris Gilbert when the project is done.
- 177 ➤ We will have a long term lease for our portion of the building at \$7.50/square foot, or
- 178 ~\$200,000/year to be paid for from funding sources and savings without impacting the
- 179 Town budget.
- 180 ➤ Town maintenance costs will be ~\$80,000 to be paid for from savings on the YMCA
- 181 contract reduction.
- 182 ➤ The remaining \$400,000 in ARPA funds are targeted for a skate park.
- 183 ➤ With Select Board approval to move forward with a Development Agreement with Hale
- 184 Resources, we anticipate bringing that final product to the Board for approval on June
- 185 12<sup>th</sup>.
- 186 ➤ The estimated property tax amount generated is ~\$60,000/year.

187 *Public comments/questions answered by Jon Hale:*

188 Sam Restino: How well would geothermal work for this project? *The drilling is down ~500 feet*  
 189 *for water and/or sewer and there are no results yet to the engineers. We're trying to get ahead*  
 190 *of mechanicals before we do construction documents. The water mentioned is below the*  
 191 *ground water level.*

192 ***Jeanne Conner moved and Jim Carroll seconded to authorize staff to negotiate a***  
 193 ***Development Agreement with Hale Resources as presented. The motion carried unanimously.***

194 **7. IMPLEMENTING THE TOWN VISION**

195 Ms. Jenkins stated that the interviews for Boards and Commissions were completed this  
 196 evening. A slate for 16 open positions will be announced at the June 12<sup>th</sup> Select Board meeting.

197 Mr. Haley reported that CPARB had an excellent training session on May 20<sup>th</sup> and our  
 198 Community Listening Session will be on June 29<sup>th</sup>.

199 **8. MANAGER'S REPORT**

200 Mr. Hurd did the following report:

201 The Water Resources FY24 Budget Review Work Session will be on June 5<sup>th</sup> at 5:00pm at  
 202 the Fire Facility.

203 BBC Street Closure - *Jim Carroll moved and Ed Woods seconded to close Pleasant Street from*  
204 *North to School Street on July 1, 2023 from 9:00am until 7:00pm for a Pop Up Shop. The*  
205 *motion carried unanimously.*

206 Relocation Adjustment Order - *Ed Woods moved and Tom Haley seconded to authorize the*  
207 *Town Manager to sign the Relocation/Adjustment Order to begin relocation of utilities for the*  
208 *Bridge Replacement Project on Main Street near Miller's Toll.*

209 Mr. Corey asked how long the road would be closed, and Mr. Hurd answered the road  
210 won't be closed to relocate utilities.

211 Sam Restino asked how long the road would be closed for bridge replacement, and Mr.  
212 Hurd answered 30 days.

213 *The motion carried unanimously.*

214 Willow Park Playground - All major tasks are complete with a few small punch list items still to  
215 be done.

216 County Street Sidewalk and Paving - This project will begin very soon. New sidewalk will be  
217 constructed along the northerly side of County Street from Benmont Avenue to Depot Street  
218 and will be widened on one side to 7-8' to North Street. New pavement will be added to  
219 County Street to complete the project.

220 River Walk Update - This project involves widening the path and adding and improving lighting  
221 along its entire length and allow the path to stretch across the Depot Street parking lot to  
222 connect to the recently completed Rail Trail. It may start this June and carry over into July  
223 before completion. Some of the Norway maples will be removed to allow for widening the path  
224 and some trees between School and Park Street will also be removed for the lighting. However,  
225 some trees may be able to be relocated in coordination with the Skate Park. Also, widening the  
226 path may allow for higher bicycle speeds but it will be safer for the pedestrians.

227 **9. UPCOMING AGENDA**

- 228 June 12, 2023 - Chelsea Solar
- 229 June 12, 2023 - Benn High Project - potentially
- 230 June 12, 2023 - Boards and Commissions Slate
- 231 June 26, 2023 - BBC Budget
- 232 June 26, 2023 - Skate Park Conceptual Design

233 **10. OTHER BUSINESS**

234 Ms. Conner: Pointed out all of the upcoming events in Town - Mayfest, Thursday Nite Live, First  
235 Fridays, and the Hemmings Cruise-Ins. There are things to do in Bennington.

236 **11. EXECUTIVE SESSION**

237 **A. LEGAL MATTER**

238 *At 7:35pm, Jim Carroll moved and Gary Corey seconded that the meeting was*  
239 *adjourned finding that an Executive Session be held on a Legal Matter as premature public*  
240 *knowledge would place a person involved in the subject matter at a substantial*  
241 *disadvantage. No action will be taken when going back into Open Session. The motion*  
242 *carried unanimously.*

243 Respectfully submitted,

244 Nancy H. Lively

245 Secretary

246