

1 **BENNINGTON SELECT BOARD MEETING**

2 **130 RIVER STREET**

3 **BENNINGTON, VERMONT 05201**

4 **JULY 10, 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; Jonah Spivak-Communications  
10 Coordinator; Jenny Dewar and Jeanne Mintrone-BBC; Margae Diamond-Turning Point; Linda  
11 Donigan and Johnna Frederickson-Bennington Free Library; Sam Restino; Nancy White; Jack  
12 Rossiter-Munley; Joey Kulkin; Asher Edelson; Kelly Carroll; 20 citizens; Josh Boucher-CAT-TV;  
13 and Nancy H. Lively-Secretary.

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

15 **1. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE**

16 The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

17 **2. VISION STATEMENT**

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

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

22 **3. CONSENT AGENDA**

23 **A. MINUTES OF JUNE 26, 2023**

24 **B. WARRANTS**

25 *Tom Haley moved and Jeanne Conner seconded to approve the Consent Agenda*  
26 *amended as follows:*

27 *Minutes of June 26, 2023, Line 127, Change “Would the park be open to*  
28 *competitions?” to “Is this current proposal a design that will be up to competition*  
29 *specifications?”*

30 Mr. Corey asked about the invoice date of June on Warrant Report #2 and Mr. Monks  
31 answered that a June invoice date is for something that occurred in June and goes against the  
32 FY23 budget.

33 ***The motion carried unanimously.***

34 **4. PUBLIC COMMENT**

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

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

49 \_\_\_\_\_

50 Sam Restino: 1. Mentioned that the skate board design was presented, then People’s Park was  
51 closed, and when reopened there was a substantial drug bust. 2. The Roaring Branch flood wall  
52 has a few cracks in it. 3. The CTC building on Benmont Avenue should be a Board agenda item.  
53 4. The piano compass has been painted but the crosswalks have not been. 5. No one seems to  
54 know how to become a part of the Neighborhood Watch. 6. The doors are still not on the  
55 Baptist Church on Convent Avenue. 7. People from Pennsylvania came to Bennington on  
56 ‘Fantastic Friday’, liked what they saw, and would encourage others to come to Bennington.

57 Jack Rossiter-Munley: 1. An employee of ECDC, noted that last week the first refugees came  
58 directly to Bennington. Even though refugees have been coming to Bennington County since  
59 2021, the Town of Bennington was designated as an official resettlement site in October 2022.  
60 ECDC is looking for all kinds of donations including the Bennington Mattress Squad. If  
61 interested, contact [jrossitermunley@ecdCUS.org](mailto:jrossitermunley@ecdCUS.org) . 2. The Community Café is open every  
62 Saturday from 1:30pm-3:00pm at 121 Depot Street and over the last few weeks we have served

63 over 60 meals and have also had music. If interested in helping out, contact  
64 [benningtoncommunitycafe@gmail.com](mailto:benningtoncommunitycafe@gmail.com) .

65 Joey Kulkin-Downtown Bennington Alliance (DBA) Director: 1. Thanked the BBC for the success  
66 of the Student Art Flag Project. 2. Kudos to the Board for the transparency of altering the Loan  
67 Program and including the Warrants in the packets. 3. Is requesting an agenda item to bring  
68 back the Downtown Improvement Commission that was made up of the Downtown merchants  
69 that made recommendations on how the Downtown Improvement District tax money was  
70 spent, and the DBA would like to be allocated some of those dollars for the work that they do -  
71 as well as others. 3. The DBA does raffles, currently for various items including handmade  
72 pencils. Sign up for the raffles can be done on the DBA Facebook page.

73 Nancy White: 1. Requested that the \$500,000 worth of work that needed to be done at the Rec  
74 Center from a report issued in January 2022 be put on the agenda so the Bennington taxpayers  
75 are aware since they are the only ones that pay for the Rec Center. 2. How much money do we  
76 have in the Pennies for Park Fund? This was to be used for the new park at Willow Park but  
77 ARPA money has paid for that. 3. The Rec Center schedule through June 2024 shows the pool  
78 closed on Sundays. It used to be closed on Sundays in the summer but this shows it's closed  
79 throughout the year and Sundays are the only time that many families have to use it. 4. UCS is  
80 running a program where anyone can use the showers at the Rec Center. This should have  
81 been approved by the Board and UCS could run this program in one of the many buildings they  
82 own in the Town. The public needs to be aware of the activities at the Rec Center with safety in  
83 mind.

#### 84 **5. BBC WORK PLAN AND BUDGET**

85 Jenny Dewar, BBC Director of Events, and Jeanne Mintrone, BBC Director of Operations,  
86 did the following presentation:

- 87 • In April 2023, the Executive Director and Assistant positions were split into two  
88 autonomous and overlapping co-director positions.
- 89 • Bennington is one of the 24 Designated Downtowns in the State, each of which is  
90 mandated to have an organization to carry out that vision. The BBC serves as that  
91 organization for Bennington.
- 92 • Designated Downtowns (DD) is a grassroots national program with 40 programs and  
93 over 2,000 neighborhoods nationwide.
- 94 • As a DD, we are eligible for downtown and village center tax credits, downtown  
95 transportation fund, priority consideration for State grants, building, and general  
96 services, traffic calming and signage options, BGS, special assessment districts, ACT 250,  
97 and rural development area eligibility.
- 98 • The 4 required committees are:
  - 99 ✓ Economic Vitality - strengthens the community's existing economic assets while  
100 expanding it's diversified economic base.

- 101 ✓ Design - works to get the Downtown into top physical shape and capitalizes on  
102 its assets.
- 103 ✓ Organization - everyone working toward the same goal.
- 104 ✓ Promotion - works to create an inviting atmosphere.
- 105 • DISTRX.com is helpful in notifying the public on events like mapping out the street  
106 banners event that we just had and creating tours.
  - 107 • Post pandemic events, such as Thursday Nite Live, Harvestfest, PopUp Markets, Town  
108 Wide Tag Sale, Cruise-Ins, and Mayfest, have been “hugely successful”.
  - 109 • Fundraising with sponsorships is a campaign that is done every year and we will begin  
110 creating levels of membership.
  - 111 • The Visitor Center staffed with our docents is very popular as people come into Town.
  - 112 • We are promoting the idea of “Our Town” and not just the “Downtown”.
  - 113 • The FY24 Projected Budget has an Income and Expense total, respectively, of \$203,993 -  
114 an increase of \$37,794 over the FY23 Projected Budget.
  - 115 • The Downtown Improvement District Funding request in FY24 is \$94,493 - an increase of  
116 \$4,109 over FY23 due to the increase of what we need to pay to the police - which we  
117 gladly pay - as well as, the increase of absolutely everything.

118 *Board comments/questions answered by Ms. Dewar and Ms. Mintrone:*

119 Mr. Woods: Why is Contract Employee under Income? *The Town pays Bill Clark’s actual salary*  
120 *and the BBC pays his workers comp, liability insurance, and everything else that goes with that.*

121 Mr. Corey: Why, in FY23 there was a Projected Income of \$4,589 for Membership Dues but  
122 actual was only \$300? *As the only Director I didn’t have the time to pursue the dues and the*  
123 *Board had agreed that we would stop collecting membership from those that were in the DID as*  
124 *that was double-dipping.*

125 Ms. Jenkins: The FY24 Membership Dues of \$1,000 is a modest amount so if those in the DID  
126 aren’t paying dues, who is? *We plan on beginning a Social Membership because people like to*  
127 *support what they belong to.*

128 Ms. Conner: Is becoming a DD a one-time thing or are there requirements each year, or every 5  
129 years, etc.? *We have to do an extensive annual reporting to the State.*

130 Ms. Conner: What is the time commitment to become a docent? *Right now they come in for a 3*  
131 *hour shift, either 10:00am-1:00pm or 1:00pm-4:00pm Monday-Friday. However, we would like*  
132 *to have them present on Saturday and making the week Tuesday-Saturday instead of Monday-*  
133 *Friday.*

134 Ms. Perrin: The events are really for everyone and it doesn’t seem the time to increase the DID  
135 tax but possibly decreasing it a bit. *It is only a \$4,000 increase.*

136 Ms. Jenkins: With the new Our Town promotion, noted that there was a proposal last year to  
137 make it a town wide tax which is not how this budget is presented. *That discussion ended when*  
138 *Ms. Dewar had just started and she was opposed to doing that at the time.*

139 Ms. Jenkins: You have said that the \$20,000 from the Governor's Budget - if it goes through -  
140 would be for staff salaries. *Yes, Ms. Dewar took a \$20,000 pay cut to hire/create a co-director.*  
141 *The hope is that the \$20,000 will go through and most of it will be given to each co-director as*  
142 *around a \$10,000 raise. This is why there wasn't a higher increase in the DID fees.*

143 Mr. Corey: How much would the DID tax go up with the ~\$4,000 increase? *Mr. Monks: The tax*  
144 *is currently \$256.70/\$100,000 and would go up to \$268.40/\$100,000 - a 4.5% increase. This is*  
145 *only for commercial property, nothing residential.*

146 *Public comments/questions answered by Ms. Dewar and Ms. Mintrone:*

147 Sam Restino: 1. Verified that the BBC is a 501c3 and are able to fundraise and take donations.  
148 *Yes, we're a 501c3 and take donations all the time.* 2. Suggested that they offer a chicken  
149 barbeque on the Cruise In nights.

150 Joey Kulkin: Noted that the DBA brought DISTRX.com to Bennington, and "by a set of  
151 circumstances", it came to the BBC. *The BBC received an e-mail from DISTRX.com asking what*  
152 *the relationship is between the DBA and the BBC. We answered that we don't really have a*  
153 *relationship and that the BBC is the designated organization. The DISTRX.com folks decided*  
154 *that it was the BBC's app.*

155 Nancy White: 1. Verified that the tax being discussed is the DID tax paid by the DID. *Yes.* 2. Are  
156 the overall Bennington taxpayers still paying for the façade on the Downtown buildings? *Mr.*  
157 *Monks: That was a program many years ago that is no longer a program.* 3. Is there a plan to  
158 ensure that people aren't leaving their vehicles parked all day in front of a business and then  
159 going to do something else? *It's not in our budget.* 4. To be fair, the BBC should pay rent to the  
160 Town for the building that they are in. 5. Parking will be an issue in the Downtown. *This is*  
161 *unrelated to our budget.*

162 Jack Rossiter-Munley: Your budget reflects a large increase in the cost of police presence at  
163 events. What were the conversations that you have had with the Police, the Town, and CPARB  
164 about this? *Town policy is that there must be police presence at an event with over 75 people*  
165 *and we're no different than any other organization. The police decide how many officers are*  
166 *needed and there is a 3 hour minimum. Last year it was \$45/hour/officer and now it's*  
167 *\$68/hour/officer. Why the rate increased so much was a police union decision. The police work*  
168 *with us and the BBC will gladly pay for their presence in the name of safety.*

169 ***Jim Carroll moved and Gary Corey seconded to approve the Better Bennington***  
170 ***Corporation FY24 Budget as presented. The motion carried with Sarah Perrin opposed.***

171 **6. HOUSING UPDATE**

- 172 Margae Diamond, Turning Point Executive Director, did the following update:
- 173 ○ The Homeless Crisis Subcommittee is a project within the Project Alliance.
  - 174 ○ It is comprised of 26 different agencies.
  - 175 ○ Because of the legislative decision, we have revamped our plan to:
    - 176 ■ Local agency street and mobile outreach program - well under way with
    - 177 Turning Point and UCS.
    - 178 ■ Hotel conversion project.
    - 179 ■ Thatcher House transitional housing solution.
    - 180 ■ Community services flier.
    - 181 ■ Phone support program.
    - 182 ■ Consolidated resource list - an easy to read go-to map for people.
    - 183 ■ Fundraising for donated supplies.
    - 184 ■ Recreation Center shower cards - went live on 7/3/23. Private fundraising
    - 185 is being done and all that needs to be done for use is go to the Rec Center
    - 186 and ask.
  - 187 ○ BCCH has gotten grant funding for a full time community outreach coordinator
  - 188 to work with the homeless. The position will be filled by the end of July 2023.
  - 189 ○ BCCH has also received a \$5,000 grant to purchase easy to prepare foods.
  - 190 ○ Our goal now is to ensure that every person has received the letter and
  - 191 instructions from the State on what needs to be done to remain on the motel
  - 192 voucher program until April 2024, albeit help with limited literacy and/or
  - 193 medical/health needs. It isn't automatic.
  - 194 ○ Turning Point and UCS have applied for grant funding that we expect to receive.
  - 195 ○ Xylazine, a horse tranquilizer not for human consumption, is being mixed with
  - 196 other street drugs and was in 75% of what was just tested in Brattleboro. It
  - 197 cannot be reversed with Narcan because it isn't an opioid.
  - 198 ○ The effects on humans is sores that won't heal and limb amputation.
  - 199 ○ BCCH is having their annual meeting on 7/25/23 via Zoom. If you would like an
  - 200 invite, e-mail the Director at [director@bcch.org](mailto:director@bcch.org).
  - 201 ○ Our ultimate goal is for the homeless to obtain permanent housing and we thank
  - 202 the Town for its support.

203 *Public comments/questions answered by Ms. Diamond:*

204 Nancy White: Explain how the Alliance got the permission to do this without coming before the  
205 Select Board? *Ms. Jenkins: The YMCA manages the Rec Center so it was their decision.*

206 Jenny Dewar: The BBC is extending full membership to Turning Point.

207 Mary Ellen Munley: Thanked the Alliance and all of its members for their work and noted that  
208 the Community Café and Bennington Cares will help in any way they can.

209 Asher Edelson: How long will the shower program last? *A little over \$1,000 has been provided*  
210 *for showers, and when that runs out, we would have funding from another source. Showers are*  
211 *\$3/shower and we don't know at this time how long it will last.*

212 **7. BENNINGTON FREE LIBRARY READING PROGRAM AND INTRODUCTION OF NEW**  
213 **CHILDREN'S LIBRARY**

214 Linda Donigan and Johnna Frederickson from the Bennington Free Library did the  
215 following presentation:

- 216 ➤ Library programs are developing the inner and outer person from infancy to adults of all  
217 ages.
- 218 ➤ We have summer programs for children, online resources, and Library sponsored events  
219 out in the community at various locations, such as the Middle School, the Museum, and  
220 the Head Start Celebration.
- 221 ➤ Our "Altogether Now" children programs are teaching kindness, togetherness, and  
222 friendship with those from all over the world, as well as, art, music, yoga, chess,  
223 cooking, and nature to children of all ages including teenagers.
- 224 ➤ The Library is a place where you can go for research or just for fun.

225 *Board comments/questions answered by Ms. Donigan and Ms. Frederickson:*

226 Mr. Haley: Thanked Ms. Donigan and Frederickson for the work they are doing with maintaining  
227 children's focus on the greater world picture.

228 Ms. Conner: Do the adults that bring the children to the Library become engaged, themselves,  
229 at the Library? *Yes, including a space where they can interact with their children, as well as,*  
230 *steering them to the adult only areas of interest.*

231 **8. BENNINGTON HOUSING AUTHORITY - MODIFICATION OF APPOINTMENT**

232 Ms. Jenkins stated that the Board had appointed two individuals to the Housing  
233 Authority - one to the open seat (Nancy Balconis) and one to the tenant seat (Scott Fox). The  
234 information provided to the Board that the tenant seat was vacant was not accurate and we  
235 need to rescind the appointment of Scott Fox to the tenant seat.

236 ***Ed Woods moved and Tom Haley seconded to rescind, with regret, the appointment of***  
237 ***Scott Fox to the Tenant Seat of the Housing Authority and suggest that he reapply in the***  
238 ***future. The motion carried with Sarah Perrin abstaining.***

239 **9. IMPLEMENTING THE TOWN VISION**

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

- 241 - CPARB had its first Community Listening Session on 6/29/23 from 6:00pm-8:00pm at the  
242 Fire Facility. 25 were in attendance, 10 people spoke, and we received 3 written  
243 comments.
- 244 ○ Topics covered were mental health trauma in our community.
  - 245 ○ Continue to work with and reach out to all agencies.
  - 246 ○ Support for the Bennington Police Department (BPD) with the understanding that  
247 they are understaffed.
  - 248 ○ Lack of diversity on CPARB.
  - 249 ○ BPD and CPARB should support continuous improvement.
  - 250 ○ The closing of People's Park.
  - 251 ○ What is the Town doing for housing for the Homeless?
  - 252 ○ The lack of public restrooms downtown.
  - 253 ○ The portrayal of defendants in handcuffs by the media.
  - 254 ○ Criminalizing domestic abuse and children's difficulties in school by having police  
255 respond to the homes and schools.
  - 256 ○ Look at problems as problems and not crimes.
  - 257 ○ Develop collaborative partnerships to build trust.
  - 258 ○ We should encourage empathy and understanding over fear.
  - 259 ○ We should be encouraging the development of front line officers through the  
260 development of an engaging organizational process that will aid and encourage the  
261 development.
  - 262 ○ Importance of community involvement and to reach out to the community if we  
263 need help.
  - 264 ○ We were encouraged to reach out to the BIPOC community, different  
265 demographics, different organizations and agencies such as NAMI.
  - 266 ○ Appreciation for the New Experience Camp this week.
  - 267 ○ Concern for the increased crime and the blowback that CPARB may unintentionally  
268 cause.
- 269 - Some of these comments are unrelated to the reason that CPARB was formed which was to  
270 foster collaborative efforts within the community to hear all the voices. This is why we had  
271 the listening session and have guest speakers at our monthly meetings.
- 272 - Plans for our next steps will take place at our meeting on 7/20/23 at 6:00pm at the Fire  
273 Facility with a speaker from the Center for Restorative Justice.

274 Mr. Woods commented that it was a great listening session and encouraged CPARB to have  
275 more of those more often. The more they occur, the more people will realize that it is a  
276 realistic outlet and their input feedback will go somewhere, if appropriate.

## 277 **10. MANAGER'S REPORT**

278 Mr. Monks did the following report:



279 New Household Hazardous Waste (HHW) Facility at the Transfer Station - The HHW Facility is  
280 expected to open the end of this month - possible August - and be available to residents of the  
281 13 towns on Mondays by appointment for a \$5.00 fee per vehicle. This will be on a weekly  
282 basis from April to October of a given year.

283 Ms. Conner asked if the HHW Facility could be opened on a Saturday instead of Monday  
284 since it would be difficult for many people to go on a Monday, and Mr. Monks recommended  
285 contacting the BCRC for information on making this change. Ms. Conner will do that.

286 People's Park - Most of the people just want to hang out and enjoy the day but there are a  
287 group that consistently cause trouble. The first day the Park reopened, a fairly substantial drug  
288 bust was effected. Numerous citations for alcohol consumption were issued and one individual  
289 was issued a No Trespass Order after defecating in the woods and consuming alcohol.

290 ADA Door Installation - The ADA Door is on its way and we are coordinating an installation.

291 Flood Wall - The flood wall is inspected every year.

292 Mr. Haley asked for an update on any storm damage in Town, and Mr. Monks stated  
293 that we "dodged a bullet" as there was no storm damage in Bennington.

294 **11. UPCOMING AGENDA**

295 July 24, 2023 - Bennington Elementary - Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

296 July 24, 2023 - Purple Heart Proclamation

297 An Upcoming Meeting - Vermont Begins Here Report

298 An Upcoming Meeting - Bennington Police Department Report

299 **13. OTHER BUSINESS**

300 None.

301

302

303 ***At 8:29pm, Ed Woods moved and Gary Corey seconded the adjournment of the***  
304 ***meeting. The motion carried unanimously.***

305

306 Respectfully submitted,

307 Nancy H. Lively

308 Secretary