

**M E E T I N G   N O T I C E**

**BENNINGTON SELECT BOARD**

Monday, September 26, 2022

Bennington Fire Facility

Multi-Purpose Room - 3<sup>rd</sup> Floor

130 River Street

Bennington, Vermont 05201

**A G E N D A**

6:00 PM

1. Pledge of Allegiance
2. Vision Statement
3. Consent Agenda 6:00 PM - 6:05 PM
  - A. Minutes of September 12, 2022
  - B. Warrants
4. Public Comment 6:05 PM - 6:20 PM
5. Public Hearing 6:20 PM - 6:35 PM  
NeighborWorks Closeout
6. Vermont Community Fund Equitable & Inclusive Communities  
Grant Application 6:35 PM - 6:50 PM
7. Implementing the Town Vision 6:50 PM - 7:00 PM
8. Manager's Report 7:00 PM - 7:10 PM
9. Upcoming Agenda 7:10 PM - 7:15 PM
10. Other Business 7:15 PM - 7:20 PM
11. Executive Session
  - A. Legal

We endeavor to host inclusive, accessible events that enable all individuals to engage and participate fully. To request an accommodation or for inquiries about accessibility, please contact Paul Dansereau, Facilities Director:  
pdansereau@benningtonvt.org or call 802-447-9715.

1 **BENNINGTON SELECT BOARD MEETING**

2 **130 RIVER STREET**

3 **BENNINGTON, VERMONT 05201**

4 **SEPTEMBER 12, 2022**

5 **MINUTES**

6 **SELECT BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT:** Jeannie Jenkins-Chair; Jeanne Conner-Vice Chair; Bruce  
7 Lee-Clark; Jim Carroll; Sarah Perrin @ 6:45pm; and Tom Haley.

8 **SELECT BOARD MEMBERS ABSENT:** Gary Corey.

9 **ALSO PRESENT:** Stuart Hurd-Town Manager; Dan Monks-Assistant Town Manager; Shannon  
10 Barsotti-Community Development Director; Paul Dansereau-Director of Facilities; Lori Vadakin  
11 and Alex Figueroa-UCS; Loni Myran-ACE Project; Sam Restino; Mike Bethel; Kelly Carroll; 5  
12 citizens; Jim Vires-CAT-TV; and Nancy H. Lively-Secretary.

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

14 **1. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE**

15 The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

16 **2. VISION STATEMENT**

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

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

21 **3. CONSENT AGENDA**

22 **A. MINUTES OF AUGUST 22, 2022**

23 **B. WARRANTS**

24 *Bruce Lee-Clark moved and Jim Carroll seconded to approve the Consent Agenda*  
25 *amended as follows:*

26 *Line 117, Change "Director UCS" to "Director of Substance Use Disorders Services at*  
27 *UCS"*

28 *Line 141, Change "Line" to "Alliance"*

29 *The motion carried with Gary Corey and Sarah Perrin absent.*

30 **4. PUBLIC COMMENT**

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

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

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46 Sam Restino: Had the following comments:

- 47 • Citizens should adopt a storm drain grate to keep it clean.
- 48 • The sewer project is on both Benmont Avenue and County Street.
- 49 • Wasn't aware that any of the Riverwalk wasn't town property.
- 50 • Is concerned about our water supply given the current drought.
- 51 • Taxpayers shouldn't pay for other people's trash.
- 52 • Is there an ordinance against 'dead weight storage' in town parking lots?
- 53 • There should be a 'code blue alert' when the temperature is below 32° so we can get  
54 the homeless to a shelter.
- 55 • We need private funding and shouldn't totally rely on grants.

56 Mike Bethel: Is against resurrecting the Benn High building and should use the ARPA funds for a  
57 gym at the Rec Center instead. Will there be a vote on this? *There will be a public meeting in*  
58 *October on the Benn High project and the decision has been made to allocate a portion of the*  
59 *ARPA funds to this project. UCS was never to provide a gym at the Rec Center - there was*  
60 *discussion to bond for a gym that the tax payers would pay for. There will not be a vote on the*  
61 *project as is.* Mr. Bethel requested that the public meeting in October have telephone access.

62 Kelly Carroll: Event reminders:

- September 17<sup>th</sup> - Walloomsac Downtown Riverwalk starts at People's Park at 10:00am. It will be hosted by Turning Point with discussion, coffee and pie at the end of the walk at the Splash Pad.
- September 17<sup>th</sup> - VFW 2<sup>nd</sup> Annual Adult Scavenger Hunt from noon to 5:00pm. VFW membership is not required but participants must be 21 years old and the cost is \$5/participant that will go to the winner.

## 5. UCS SUBSTANCE USE DISORDER SERVICES

Alex Figueroa, Assistant Director of Substance Use Disorder Services at United Counseling Service (UCS) and Lori Vadakin, Division Director of Outpatient Mental Health and Substance Use Services (UCS) did the following presentation:

- UCS is recognized by the Vermont Department of Substance Use (VDSU) to provide substance use services; i.e., counseling, group therapy, case management, care coordination, and an Intensive Outpatient Program (IOP).
- We work with partners at Turning Point to provide Narcan and fentanyl test strips that will test drugs for the presence of fentanyl. These are also available at UCS.
- We will be relaunching our Rocking Horse program on October 19<sup>th</sup> for pregnant women who are at risk.
- Our Public Inebriate Program (PIP) is for those that have had public intoxication and provides a safe space for them to "sober up".
- We also have an Emergency Substance Use Disorder program to provide services to those that are in crisis.
- The last quarter as of August 31<sup>st</sup> we received 35 crisis calls and 51 general SUD consultations.
- Post COVID, UCS began a program called Finding Access to Services and Treatment (FAST) so people can receive treatment the same day. Bennington began this program and we are now sharing our experiences with other designated agencies in the State.
- 96% of the people that have come to UCS have been served with this program.
- We are also starting an EMDR initiative on Fridays during October to treat those experiencing trauma.
- We also treat dual diagnosis clients, or those that have resorted to substance use to self-medicate their mental health problems and then become addicted.
- UCS is also having an event on October 21<sup>st</sup> at the Bennington Performing Arts Theatre where people that have lost someone close to them can come and share their feelings, as well as, share those that have had successes. We will need to check and see if it will be recorded.

Loni Myran from the ACE Project shared the following:

- The ACE Project is an outreach program for overdoses by providing Narcan and home delivery of syringes to keep people safe and reduce the spread of HIV and Hepatitis.

- ACE's primary goal is to treat people with respect and educate the community.
- If you see syringes on the ground, pick them up while wearing protective gloves and put them in a container until they can be safely disposed of in a sharps container.
- "It takes what it takes" for a person to begin recovery. This is a different period of time for each individual.

## 6. WILLOW PARK UPDATE

Paul Dansereau, Director of Facilities, did the following update:

- ✓ The old play structure has been removed and the new play structures are complete in both the upper and lower playgrounds.
- ✓ The crushed gravel is the sub-base for the rubber top coat under the slides and pathways which is expected to be done next week. The other areas will have wood chips as a base.
- ✓ The final landscaping still needs to be done, as well as, the final safety inspection of the play structures.
- ✓ The projected opening date is in 2 weeks. Announcements for that will go out when the actual date is known.

## 7. IMPLEMENTING THE TOWN VISION

There will not be an ADA update this evening.

***Jim Carroll moved and Bruce Lee-Clark seconded for Tom Haley to be appointed as the Select Board liaison to CPARB. The motion carried with Gary Corey absent.***

Ms. Jenkins attended the information session on the Inclusion, Diversion, Equity, Action and Leadership (IDEAL) Vermont Program and found it to be something that we should be a part of. Here is what we know so far:

- ❖ We have put together a team that will include 2 members of Town staff (Michele Johnson, HR Director and Dan Monks, Asst. Town Manager), 1 member of SVSU (Jonathan Phipps (Acting Coordinator), and 2 members of the Select Board (Jean Conner and Jeannie Jenkins). There is a slot for another Select Board member if someone is interested.
- ❖ The Program will go on as long as communities are willing to participate.
- ❖ There are 2 in-person meetings - the 1<sup>st</sup> month to meet everyone and the 2<sup>nd</sup> month for trainings - and the 3<sup>rd</sup> month is an online chat.
- ❖ The purpose of the Program is for communities that are already thinking about inclusion and equity.
- ❖ They have funding for 10 communities a year to receive \$10,000/each to help implement ideas.
- ❖ We should be proud that we were asked to do this.

137 **8. POLICY ON SIGNS ON PUBLIC LANDS**

138 Mr. Hurd stated that there has been discussion in house and publicly on the number of  
139 and eye sore created by the plethora of campaign signs on public property. The Town can  
140 legally prohibit such signage and Mr. Hurd read the Public Property Sign Policy from the  
141 Secretary of State's office:

142 "Signs Prohibited on Public Property - Except for signs owned and/or maintained by the Town  
143 of Bennington, signs of any kind, including but not limited to political campaign signs, are  
144 prohibited on all public property.

145 Definitions -

146 SIGN: Any sign, display, or representation which is intended to be visible from a public  
147 right-of-way.

148 PUBLIC PROPERTY: Any property owned, leased, held, controlled, and/or maintained by  
149 the Town of Bennington, including but not limited to, public parks, highway rights-of-way,  
150 public facilities, and municipal buildings and infrastructure.

151 POLITICAL CAMPAIGN SIGN: Any sign with the name, image, or likeness of a candidate  
152 for public office."

153 *Board comments/questions answered by Mr. Hurd or Mr. Monks:*

154 Mr. Carroll: Can there be signs that would help the homeless when it's cold or help UCS reach  
155 those that need their services? *Yes, if the Town approves and places them.*

156 Ms. Conner: Should the policy contain language on handling signs that are placed on the Town's  
157 property without permission? *That isn't necessary and our guidance was to keep it short.*

158 Mr. Lee-Clark: Why a policy instead of an ordinance? *Because the Secretary of State says to do a*  
159 *policy and an ordinance takes 60 days before it is effective, so any time it is changed, the change*  
160 *isn't effective for 60 days, whereas a policy can be changed at any time. And, we have equal*  
161 *authority with either.*

162 Mr. Lee-Clark: Being able to change a policy quickly may also be a disadvantage and encourages  
163 eventually making an ordinance for a more long term effect and ease of public notification.

164 ***Sarah Perrin moved and Tom Haley seconded to approve the Public Property Sign***  
165 ***Policy as presented.***

166 Sam Restino feels that we should enforce the illegal signs on telephone poles.

167 ***The motion carried with Gary Corey absent.***

168 **9. MANAGER'S REPORT**

Mr. Hurd did the following report:

***Tom Haley moved and Jim Carroll seconded to approve waiving the alcohol prohibition for the Fire Department's Annual Clam Bake on November 1, 2022 held at the Fire Facility. The event will be catered by The Dutchman and is not open to the public.***

Ms. Conner asked where the liability lies and Mr. Hurd answered with the Town as they are a volunteer fire department. Dutchman's license would also be on the line if they overserved.

***The motion carried with Gary Corey absent.***

Liquor and Tobacco Licenses Move Online - An online portal has been created for licensees and Town Clerks as the State moves to a paperless system. Select Board signatures will no longer be needed. The Town Clerk will provide a list of new licensees similar to the list now provided for renewals but with more information. It will be part of the Consent Agenda at Select Board meetings. However, we do have a written application for the Couch and Cork that will be circulated for signatures at this time.

Benmont Avenue/County Street Sewer Line Replacement - The lower of the two bidders was Casella Construction at \$986,985.00. The contract will follow soon. Benmont Avenue will be worked on in the fall and County Street will be in the spring with the Town assisting to keep cost as low as possible.

Survivermont Training Webinar Released - This is a new training opportunity for businesses and organizations presented as a collaboration among the Vermont Department of Health, the Bennington Police Department, the Bennington Rescue Squad, SVMC, and CAT TV. It focuses on three components of preparedness: See Something, Say Something; Run, Hide and Fight; and Stop the Bleed.

Distribution of COVID Test Kits - We distributed 200-300 COVID Test Kits on September 9<sup>th</sup> at the Fire Facility parking lot from 7:00am-8:30am and 3:30pm-5:00pm. Staff volunteered their time at these events. We were given 2,200 kits that expire at the end of October. They are now available at the Town Office, Senior Center, Rec Center, Public Works Department, Police Department, and potentially, the Library for 2 kits/family member, or as many as they need. We welcome the help from any agency that would like to help distributing them.

Tax Sales - Tax sales for this year are planned for October 31<sup>st</sup> and a list of the properties will be available after September 15<sup>th</sup>. There are financial plans available through the State and Town to have your property removed from the list. Once the attorneys are involved, the full amount due will be required.

## **9. UPCOMING AGENDA**

September 26, 2022 - Bennington Police Department in Executive Session

204           October 10, 2022 - Bennington Police Department Quarterly Report

205           October 10, 2022 - ADA Update

206   **10. OTHER BUSINESS**

207   Ms. Conner: Attended a vigil at Lake Paran sponsored by UCS last Thursday for friends and  
208   family of those taken by suicide. It was very moving and talking to those contemplating suicide  
209   is very important in helping them. The suicide crisis hotline is 988 and UCS can be called 7  
210   days/week, 24 hours/day with any crisis at 802-442-5491.

211   **11. EXECUTIVE SESSION**

212       **A. CONTRACT**

213       **B. REAL ESTATE**

214           *At 7:16pm, Bruce Lee-Clark moved and Jim Carroll seconded that the meeting was*  
215   *adjourned finding that an Executive Session be held on a Contract and Real Estate as*  
216   *premature public knowledge would place a person involved in the subject matter at a*  
217   *substantial disadvantage. There will be no actions taken on these items when going back*  
218   *into Open Session. The motion carried unanimously.*

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221   Respectfully submitted,

222   Nancy H. Lively

223   Secretary

224



**SELECT BOARD  
MINUTES ADDENDUM**

**September 12, 2022**

Present: Jeannie Jenkins, Chair, Jeanne Conner, V. Chair, Jim Carroll, Tom Haley, Sarah Perrin and Bruce Lee-Clark. Staff present: Stuart Hurd, Town Manager, Dan Monks, Assistant Town Manager, and Shannon Barsotti Absent: Gary Corey

The Board went into executive session at 7:16 pm. for a contract and a real estate matter.

The Board came out of executive session at 7:47 pm. but took no action. There being no other business, the meeting adjourned at 7:47 pm.

Respectfully submitted,



Stuart A. Hurd

## MEMORANDUM

To: Bennington Select Board

From: Shannon Barsotti, Community Development Director

Date: September 20, 2022

Re: Rental Rehab Program Final Public Hearing

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The Town of Bennington received \$355,000 from the State of Vermont for a grant under the Vermont Community Development Program (VCDP) and sub granted these funds to Neighborworks for their Rental Rehab Program. In fulfillment of a requirement for the receipt of these funds, a public hearing will be held during the September 26 Select Board meeting. The purpose of this hearing is to provide information concerning the range of community development activities that have been undertaken by this program, and to give affected citizens the opportunity to comment on the use of VCDP funds.

The primary purpose of the Neighborworks Rental Rehab Program was to rehabilitate thirteen vacant, blighted, deteriorated rental units in Bennington into affordable, safe, code-compliant rental units meeting HUD Quality Housing Standards for thirteen low-income families.

# **MEMORANDUM**

**To: Select Board**

**From: Daniel Monks**

**Re: Vermont Community Fund Equitable and Inclusive Communities Grant Program**

**Date: September 19, 2022**

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The Town of Bennington Planning Commission intends to apply for a Vermont Community Fund (VCF) Equitable and Inclusive Communities Grant in the amount of \$6,750 to fund Diversity/Equity/Inclusion (DEI) training for the Planning Commission and staff and the development of a public outreach plan for the pending update of the Bennington Town Plan. A primary goal of the Planning Commission is to address DEI issues thoughtfully and deliberately in the new Town Plan.

A program summary for the Vermont Community Fund Equitable and Inclusive Communities Grant Program and the draft application for funds are attached. The Planning Commission is requesting that the Select Board support the VCF grant application.

# Equitable & Inclusive Communities

In cooperation with the Vermont League of Cities and Towns and the state of Vermont's Office of Racial Equity, the Vermont Community Foundation is seeking proposals from Vermont villages, towns, and cities that close the [opportunity gap](#) by supporting local efforts to foster inclusion and belonging for people of all races and backgrounds. We recognize the powerful leadership roles that local governments can play in removing structural barriers and building a more inclusive and diverse state, and want to support communities in fulfilling that potential.

The vision we hope to advance with this grant program is a Vermont where:

- All people feel connected to their communities, and do not feel afraid to visit, live, or conduct business in certain towns because of a reputation for exclusion, intolerance, or bias, nor because of a person's own appearance.
- Businesses and local governing bodies can easily recruit or be led by people who are Black, Indigenous, or People of Color (BIPOC) because they feel safe and supported as members of the community.
- Educators, students, local leaders, and families have tools and resources to handle issues of discrimination, exclusion, intolerance, or bias *as soon as they happen*.
- It doesn't matter how long someone has lived here to be considered a part of the community.

## What We Fund

We recognize that Vermont communities are starting in different places in their work on equity, inclusion, and belonging, and that communities will need different things at different times. We welcome communities at all stages of learning. We also acknowledge that a single project will not address all of a community's equity and inclusion challenges, and that this work is an ongoing process, so we seek to fund proposals that help a municipality make progress in its learning and actions.

Because of this, the program is open to a range of proposals that meet locally defined community needs. This may include:

- Requests for funding to support consultant-led work within a community
  - introductory trainings on diversity, equity, and inclusion
  - implicit bias trainings
  - equity assessments
  - planning efforts
  - review of hiring practices

- Community-wide conversations
- Support for the creation and work of municipal equity committees
- Stipends for community members to be involved in the work (for example, so that people can take time off work, pay for child care or transportation, or otherwise have their time appropriately compensated)
- Or a combination of these activities

Communities interested in the different ways a city, town, or village can engage on justice, equity, diversity, and inclusion can review the Vermont Local Solutions and Community Action Team's "[Municipal Engagement for Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion](#)" for information and inspiration. Another resource showing how towns can undertake this work can be found in the [Declaration of Inclusion Implementation Guide](#), part of the [Declaration of Inclusion](#) initiative. Funding is not limited to these activities.

## Who May Apply

Eligible applicants are Vermont cities, towns, and villages. Nonprofit organizations or community groups doing work on behalf of and in coordination with a city, town, or village may apply if a letter of support from the municipal partner is included.

All applicants to programs at the Vermont Community Foundation must meet [these guidelines](#).

## How We Evaluate Your Application

The Vermont Community Foundation will consider the following criteria:

### *Threshold requirements*

- Complete application
- Strong support of the municipality, as demonstrated by a letter of support from the legislative body or other evidence of strong support (letters indicating unanimous support will be the most influential).

### *Evaluation criteria*

- Application states clearly why the proposed approach is the one that will be best for the community at this time.
- Application is clear about work that has been accomplished to date and how it will be built upon should the project be funded.
- Application is clear about what the project aims to achieve. (We also recognize that once underway, projects can shift as they unfold. This is fine, but initial goals should be clear.)
- Project goals can be met within the term of the grant (one year).
- Application clearly demonstrates that the project has been developed with at least a basic awareness of the needs of the community's former, current, and future BIPOC residents and businesses, and is responsive to those needs. Ideally projects will be developed in partnership with diverse groups of people.

*Note:* By submitting your application to the Vermont Community Foundation, you give the Foundation permission to share your application with other interested funders (if any), both individuals and foundations.

## Grant Size



This program will award grants of up to \$10,000 for a 18-month project period.

## Deadline and Notification

Beginning April 1, 2022, applications will be accepted on a rolling basis until funding is no longer available. Review of applications will take place monthly.

Applicants should expect to hear back from the Foundation within 30 days following application submission.

## Application Process

All applications must be submitted electronically. [Visit our Online Grants Center page](#) to learn how and to register for a new account. Or [click here](#) to access your existing account. You may contact Jennifer duToit Barrett, Senior Grants Specialist, at [jbarrett@vermontcf.org](mailto:jbarrett@vermontcf.org) with any questions you have about the application process.

To help you prepare, [click here](#) to preview a sample of the application. **Please note that this is a PDF sample and not the actual application.** To view and begin working on the application, login to the Online Grants Manager (OGM), which can be accessed at [vermontcf.org/OGM](http://vermontcf.org/OGM).

### Contact Us



### Grants & Community Impacts

✉ [Email - grants@vermontcf.org](mailto:grants@vermontcf.org)

📞 [Call - 802-388-3355 ext. 222](tel:802-388-3355)

### Community Impact

[College & Career Training](#)

[Community & Economic Vitality](#)

[Early Care & Learning](#)

[Support for Youth & Families](#)

### Programs & Funds

[VT COVID-19 Response Fund](#)

[Philanthropic Leadership Fund](#)

# Town of Bennington

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## *Equitable and Inclusive Communities Grant Program - 2022 Grant Opportunity*

### ***Town of Bennington***

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Shannon Barsotti  
205 South Street  
P.O. Box 469  
Bennington, VT 05201

sbarsotti@benningtonvt.org  
O: 802-445-1330

### ***Shannon Barsotti***

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205 South Street  
P.O. Box 469  
Bennington, VT 05201

sbarsotti@benningtonvt.org  
O: 802-445-1330

# Application Form

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## *Guidelines*

In cooperation with the Vermont League of Cities and Towns and the state of Vermont's Office of Racial Equity, the Vermont Community Foundation is seeking proposals from Vermont villages, towns, and cities that close the Opportunity Gap by supporting local efforts to foster inclusion, belonging, and welcome for people of all races and backgrounds. We recognize the powerful leadership roles that local governments can play in removing structural barriers and building a more inclusive and diverse state, and want to support communities in fulfilling that potential.

Learn more about this grant round by visiting our website [here](#).

### **Eligibility**

Eligible applicants are Vermont cities, towns, and villages. Nonprofit organizations or community groups doing work on behalf of and in coordination with a city, town, or village may apply if a letter of support from the municipal partner is included.

All applicants to programs at the Vermont Community Foundation must meet [these guidelines](#).

Applicants are welcome to contact us with questions or for clarification prior to submitting a proposal. If you have questions, please contact Kate McCarthy at [kmccarthy@vermontcf.org](mailto:kmccarthy@vermontcf.org).

**Award Information:** Applicants may apply for up to \$10,000 for up to a 12-month project period.

### **Helpful Hints:**

- Character limits include spaces and punctuation.
- Be sure to save your work frequently by clicking the "Save" button at the bottom of the page as the system will log out after 90 minutes of inactivity.
- The size of text boxes can be adjusted by dragging on the lower right corner.
- Create a PDF version of your application via the "Application Packet" button at the top of the page. All content and attachments will be included.

All applications must be submitted electronically to the Vermont Community Foundation through the application form in the Online Grants Manager, which can be accessed at [www.vermontcf.org/OGM](http://www.vermontcf.org/OGM). Applications will not be accepted by mail or email. If you have questions about the Online Grants Manager, please contact [grants@vermontcf.org](mailto:grants@vermontcf.org) or 802-388-3355 ext. 222.

## *Application Questions*

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### **Amount Requested\***

Applicants may apply for up to \$10,000 for up to a 12-month project period.

\$6,750.00

### **Area Served\***

What municipality or municipalities are served by this project?



This project will serve the Town of Bennington.

## Goals and Objectives\*

What do you hope to achieve with this project? Who will benefit?

The Town of Bennington hopes to develop an updated Town Plan that centers equity and inclusion as central values of the community. Town Plans play a crucial role in Vermont communities, serving as a guide to long-term development, resource protection, and ensuring a high quality of life for all residents. Town Plans also reflect important community values and aspirations. The adoption of a Town Plan also requires a robust public engagement process that gives all residents an opportunity to provide input on the Plan and their vision for the Town. An updated Town Plan with a strong commitment to equity will benefit all residents of Bennington, but especially those who have historically been marginalized in the community. An important first step in this process will be a diversity, equity, and inclusion training for planning commissioners and town staff to help them prepare for an equity-focused plan update.

An important goal of this project is providing training on diversity, equity, and inclusion to the Town planning commission and Town staff. This will directly benefit the individuals who receive the DEI training, as they will gain a better understanding of these values and how to apply them in their work, but benefits will also ripple out to the larger community. This training is especially important for members of the planning commission as they are the volunteer board that develops zoning regulations, and there is a long history of zoning being used as a tool to perpetuate inequities. While a single in-depth DEI training will not make them experts, an introduction to the content will help the planning commissioners approach community planning efforts with an equity lens and lay the groundwork for further learning in this space.

## Activities being proposed\*

What are you proposing to do to advance equity work? What activities or steps will you take to do this? What is your timeline?

The Town of Bennington would like to complete an equity-focused update of the Town Plan. To help prepare for this update, the Town plans to hire a diversity, equity, and inclusion consultant to facilitate a training for members of the planning commission and town staff. The consultant will also help develop and review a public outreach plan that will be used by the Town during the public engagement phase of the Town Plan update.

With the assistance of the Bennington County Regional Commission, the Town has already identified a DEI consultant to work with and will schedule a training as soon as funding is guaranteed. The DEI training and public outreach plan are in preparation for the larger town plan update which will begin in early 2023. To fund the actual work of the plan update, the Town is going to apply for a Municipal Planning Grant (MPG) through the State of Vermont which has a deadline of December 1st. The DEI training and outreach plan are expected to be completed by the December 1st MPG deadline.

## Timeliness\*

What makes the proposed approach the best one for your community at this time?

Bennington has wanted to complete an equity-focused Town Plan update for a while now as it will build on and codify current and previous DEI work that the town has undertaken (see previous work section below for more details). The planning commission has begun preparing for the Town Plan update, and this DEI training and consultant input will be a crucial part of that preparation.

## Community engagement in project development\*

How does this approach serve the needs of the community's former, current, and future BIPOC residents and businesses? Who was involved in developing this project? (Ideally, projects will be developed in partnership with diverse groups of people.)

Town staff and officials will receive DEI training to help them incorporate these values into their work and develop an equity-focused Town Plan for Bennington. The training for municipal officials and updated Town Plan will help make Bennington a more welcoming and inclusive community, which will benefit BIPOC residents and other historically marginalized communities, as well as all residents of the Town. The Town Plan guides the Town's future and informs all municipal efforts, and a Town Plan that centers equity, will ensure that this value is carried out in all municipal actions. The municipal DEI training and Town Plan update demonstrate municipal leadership in this area and will encourage local businesses and organizations to commit to these values, as well as individuals.

This project was developed by the Bennington Planning Commission with support from the Bennington County Regional Commission, but it was informed by ongoing DEI efforts at the municipal level (see section below for more details).

## Previous work\*

What work has your community done so far on equity and inclusion? How will this project build upon that work? What conditions are present to help make this work successful, and what might make it challenging? (Prior work is not required, but we are interested in knowing how the community's work is progressing on this topic.)

Bennington has implemented several initiatives to advance equity and inclusion. The select board formally adopted a declaration of inclusion in 2021 and has implemented a series of police reforms and increased police accountability measures. The Town recently established a Community Policing Advisory Review Board comprised of community members, and a Safety and Equity Taskforce to help establish a Community Safety and Equity Board. The mission of the Safety and Equity Board will be to help the Town achieve its vision of becoming "a welcoming, engaged, inclusive, and resilient community where everyone, regardless of identity, shares in our vitality and benefits from an outstanding quality of life". The consultant we have reached out to provide the DEI training to the planning commission also worked with the Bennington Police Department to provide training. More about information about the Town's community policing efforts and declaration of inclusion can be found using the following links.

<https://benningtonvt.org/boards-commissions/cparb/>  
<https://benningtonvt.org/?s=declaration+of+inclusion>

## Evaluation\*

How will you evaluate your work? How will you know if your goals have been achieved? Evaluation can include metrics (# of people reached, trained, etc.) or other approaches to evaluation.

The success of this project will be measured by the number of people who receive training. We will also distribute a survey at the conclusion of the training to evaluate its effectiveness and assess whether participants' attitudes shifted as a result.

## Project Budget - Itemized (REQUIRED ATTACHMENT)\*

Attach a copy of your itemized project budget. You should include both expenses and revenue, including pending and secured support. (Sample budget documents may be used as a *guide* and downloaded from the Community Foundation's website - visit our [Online Grants Center](#) for more details.)

VCF\_Budget.xlsx

## Optional: Project Budget - Additional details

If this information is not provided elsewhere in the application materials, please provide a brief budget narrative for your proposed activities.

The budget includes funding for a 3-hour DEI training for planning commission members and town staff, facilitated by Curtiss Reed Jr. of the Vermont Partnership for Fairness and Diversity. The Town has already had some initial conversations with Mr. Reed to confirm his availability and rate. The budget also includes up to 5 hours of Mr. Reed's time for review of a proposed outreach plan developed by the Town. The Town of Bennington will contribute \$1,000 to the overall project cost.

## Evidence of Support\*

Please upload a letter or other documentation from your select board or city council that demonstrates support for your proposed work.

## About Your Organization

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### Organization Name\*

Town of Bennington

### Primary Contact First and Last Name\*

### Primary Contact Email\*

### Primary Contact Phone Number\*

### Organization EIN\*

### Organization Mailing Address, City, State and Zip\*

### What status best describes the applicant?\*

Our grants must be paid to a registered 501(c)(3) nonprofit, place of worship/religious group, or town/municipal agency. If your organization or group does not fall into one of these categories, you will need to use a fiscal sponsor. If you have questions, please contact 802-388-3355 ext. 222. We are happy to talk through your options.

Municipal entity (i.e., town, public school, or other municipal department or agency)

## Use this space to provide additional information about the applicant's status. (If Applicable)

If you have a fiscal sponsor—or if you operate under the umbrella of a larger registered nonprofit—provide their name below.

### Fiscal Sponsor Agreement Form (If Applicable)

Download a blank Fiscal Sponsor Agreement Form ([click here to download the form](#)) and forward it to your fiscal sponsor to print, fill out, and sign. The form must be filled out completely and you must use the official VCF form. Please call 802-388-3355 ext. 222 if you have questions.

## ***Save and Submit***

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**Applications will be accepted on a rolling basis until funding is no longer available.** Review of applications will take place monthly. Applicants should expect to hear back from the Foundation within 30 days following application submission.

By submitting your application to the Vermont Community Foundation, you give us permission to share your application and information about your project with other potential funders, both individuals and foundations.

## File Attachment Summary

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### *Applicant File Uploads*

- VCF\_Budget.xlsx

**Project: "Bennington Town Plan Equity Update - Commissioner Training and Process Consultant"**

**Budget**

Step One: Commissioner Training

3-hour Equity/Inclusion Training with Planning Commission, Town Staff, Planning Consultant  
Workshop space and lunch

Step Two: Consultant Review of Public Outreach Process for Plan

5 hours (@\$450/hour) of Consultant Review of Proposed Outreach Plan

**Total Cost:**

*Town of Bennington contribution:*

**Total VCF Funding Request:**

<u>Price</u>	<u>Notes</u>
\$ 5,000	<i>Vermont Partnership for Fairness and Diversity, Curtiss Reed Jr.</i>
\$ 500	

\$ 2,250 *Vermont Partnership for Fairness and Diversity, Curtiss Reed Jr.*

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\$ 7,750
<i>\$ 1,000</i>
\$ 6,750

**MANAGER'S REPORT**  
**September 26, 2022**

**ACTION**

Nothing at this time

**INFORMATIONAL**

Willow Park Playground Work continues on this significant improvement. Staff are now projecting a mid to late October finish to the project. A ribbon cutting will be scheduled when we are certain that completion is near. Weather and staffing are the critical factors.

Benmont Ave/County Street sewer This project is now scheduled to start in early October. Mobilization may begin as early as next week weather permitting.

Maple Street rebuild This project is nearly complete. Paving is scheduled for the week of September 19 weather permitting. This was a total rebuild with new drainage, new sewer. Lead service lines have been replaced, and new sidewalks.

COVID test kits The test kits distributed by Town staff volunteers and available at a number of municipal sites throughout the community have had the expiration date extended once again. The new expiration date is January 31, 2023. It was formerly October 31, 2022. Kits are still available and they're free.

Town's new website Work continues on the upgraded website. We had hoped for an October unveiling, but it looks like that may be delayed. I'm told these projects are often more complex than one might think.

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**FOLLOW UP**

The Communication Coordinator's Report is attached.

The Police Department's Report is attached.





# Town of Bennington

Communications Coordinator Report — September 26, 2022

## One Year Anniversary

It is now one year since I began in this new position! I am inspired by our Town employee mission statement which reads in part: "The role of government is to serve and protect its people; to provide a quality of life which is environmentally safe, community oriented, and visionary... Our mission is to provide the necessary municipal services in an atmosphere that is helpful and caring, yet professional and efficient." I have greatly enjoyed my experience working with the team on behalf of the Town. It is the most personally rewarding work I have ever done and I remain grateful to the community for giving me this opportunity, and to my fellow co-workers who have welcomed me and supported me doing this work.

I have worked hard to become familiar with all departments in the town and to share with the community information about what the town is doing on a regular basis as well as the various major projects the town is pursuing. There is always more to do and I constantly ask myself... what more can I do? Where am I falling short? I have enough self awareness to know that I need to be always improving! I welcome thoughts from my co-workers and the community on what I can do better, and what I should be doing in the future.

## Social Media Outreach

We know from our citizen survey that most of our community members get information from social media. The Town's primary channel for this is through Facebook and that has been a big focus for me. In the past year, the reach of our Facebook posts was an impressive 129,908 which was a 341% increase over the prior year. Our facebook page likes increased by 653 which is a 119% increase over the prior year. We have added Instagram to reach additional demographic groups in our community, primarily a younger audience, and I will continue to use that additional outreach tool as we move forward.

## Building Community

I have committed myself to participate in the community as much as possible. This has led me to connecting with a great many groups and organizations including the VFW, both Rotaries, BCCH, GBCS, SVSU, the Continuum of Care, Bennington Historical Society, Friends of the Battle of Bennington, MAUHS, as well as connecting with around 180 citizens (sometimes the same person numerous times).

## Leadership Roles

Bennington needs to show leadership at the state level and beyond when it comes to 250th anniversary planning for 2025-2027. I was appointed by the Governor to serve as a Vermont 250th Commissioner and I also sit on a regional 250th Collaborative Committee with NY, MA, CT, and RI... and soon to include NH. I also represent Vermont at the Federal 250th planning group along with three other VT250 commissioners. I have been appointed by the Select Board to be Bennington's 250th representative, and I have been elected chair of the newly formed Bennington 250th Anniversary Committee (more about that later).

## Sharing Information

Keeping the community informed about major projects is a key part of my work. Some of these projects include the Willow Park Playground Renewal, working with Senior on a possible move of the Senior Center which is a part of the emerging effort to redevelop the BenHi building as a whole, information about improvements to the Recreation Center.

Then there is the more day to day issues that arise, whether it's dry conditions, information about upcoming elections, news about anniversaries and celebrations, recreational opportunities, events, and the occasional historical note of interest.

Plus sharing information as it happens... a water main break, an incident at the High School, free covid test kits, or other timely information.

### 250th Anniversary Planning:

Local planning for the 250th anniversaries is underway. A Bennington 250th Committee was formed in August, and a steering committee met in September. Another full committee meeting will be happening on October 20 and an official public announcement and website will be launched after that meeting to begin the public facing part of that work. People interested in serving on the 250th committee can contact me.

### Website Update:

Content migration to the new unified town website is underway. The new site will include three existing websites into one and the navigational challenges of

making this a seamless experience for users is a very large task and will be absorbing much of my time over the next 4-6 weeks. The three sites include over 1500 pages of content and documents. The goal of the new site is to provide the community with all information in one spot that is easier to use, as well as be more accessible for people with disabilities.

### Looking Forward

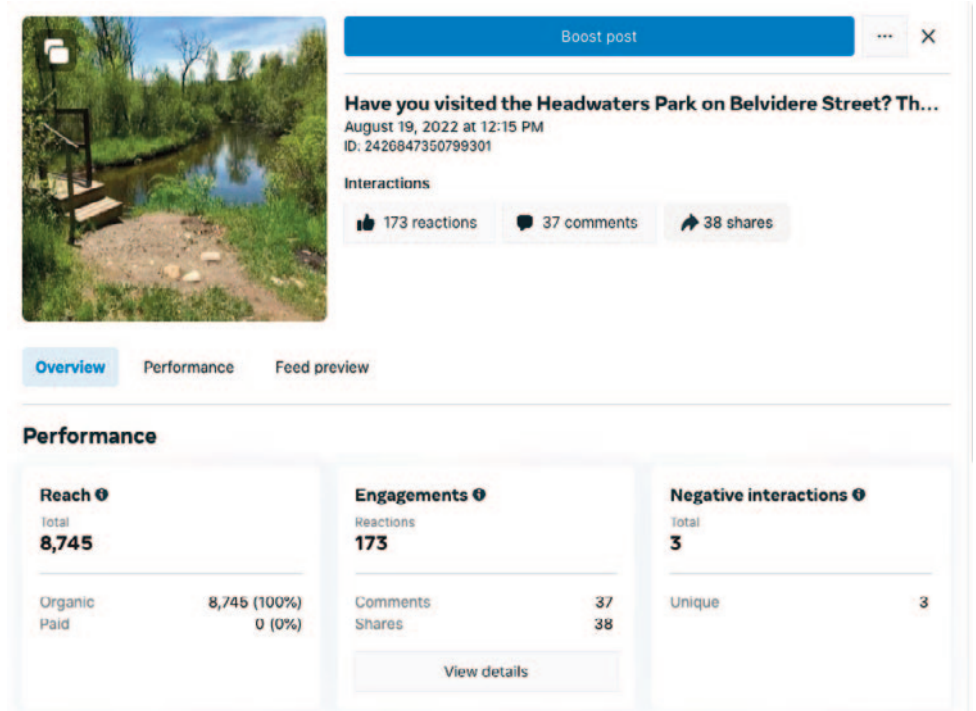
My goal is for Bennington to be a community that is well informed as to what their Town is doing on their behalf. A Town where people can feel good knowing that we are doing our best to serve and improve the quality of life for everyone in Bennington.

## Facebook POST OF THE MONTH:

This post is one I did on the suggestion of Steve Langlois and Jason Olanski, both town employees working for the Buildings and Grounds Department who noted that not enough folks know about town recreational opportunities like the Headwaters Park.

The post in August really caught fire and ended up as one of our "biggies" in terms of reach... over 8,700!!!!

I greatly appreciate Steve and Jason for sharing that idea, and the community is clearly grateful as well!



## Bennington Police Department

### Report to the Bennington Select Board

September 2022

September has been a busy month for us. We started the month out detailing officers to the Garlic Town USA Festival. We have had a couple of significant criminal investigations in the month of September that resulted in many continuous investigative hours, to include a plane crash investigation.

We continue to struggle with staffing within our Patrol Division. Two sworn police officers have left our employment with one taking a position with the Bennington School District. The second officer will be leaving employment at the end of the month to take a position with MAU School District. Members of the Bennington Police Department continue to work diligently at filling shifts and providing a high level of service to the community.

With the assistance from Communication Director Spivak, members from Bennington Police will be speaking with Criminal Justice majors at Castleton University in October.

We have made great strides with staffing our Communication Division. Three new dispatchers were hired to fill two full-time positions and one part-time position. We are excited to announce that Susan Gallina and Cameron Turner have been hired as full-time dispatchers and Savannah Robson for the part-time position. Susan and Cameron have begun their training and Savannah will begin her training the week of September 26<sup>th</sup>. The three of them will train closely with their assigned Communication Training Officer (CTO) over the next several months.

On September 6<sup>th</sup>, we welcomed Sean Madigan as a sworn Bennington Police Officer. Sean is a full-time Level III certified Vermont Law Enforcement Officer. Sean was a Manchester, VT police officer for three years and transferred to the Citrus County Sheriff's Office in Florida. Sean and his family decided to return to Vermont this past summer, with Sean taking a position with us. Sean is currently training with a Bennington Police Field Training Officer (FTO) and will be for the next several weeks. Sean will be taking a couple of courses to update his Vermont certification, but upon completion of those and his field training, he will begin normal patrol duties.

We began the BPD training portion for the members of the Community Policing Advisory and Review Board this month. We have had two training sessions this month with the last BPD training session at the end of the month. Members are being trained on various topics covering Vermont law enforcement and Bennington Police Department responsibilities. Members have also started their ride along portion of their training.