



Town of Bennington

Communications Coordinator Report — March 27, 2023

March: In Like a Lion...

...and lets hope it leaves like a lamb! The vernal equinox arrived to the scene of deep snow which was the remnants of an impressive nor'easter that hit the community earlier this month. What was equally impressive was the Department of Public Works; their crews worked tirelessly to keep streets open and as safe as possible. Our police chief reported many fewer crashes and issues due to the storm than might be expected due to this excellent work.

Get Involved in Your Local Government

Voting Day resulted in the re-election of Sarah Perrin, and the election of Ed Woods. Participation in the vote was lower than we would like, with about 22% of registered voters participating. How did we do outreach to voters? We had several articles in the Banner, regular posts on social media, and frequent mentions at Select Board meetings. While we clearly must continue to do more, we are in line with other Vermont towns such as Milton that had a 23% turnout. One important result of the vote was the passage of the two water bonds to finish State mandated improvements to our water system which will allow those projects to be done quicker and avoid inevitable cost increases that would have resulted from continuing to address the issue on a piecemeal basis.

Letters of Interest for those who would like to serve on a town board or commission are now being accepted. This is a great way to be directly involved in your Town government! For more information, visit the Town website and look under "Government" and select "Join Town Government."

Community Outreach

We had an impressive turnout for our public meeting on the Y Woods. This collaborative effort, led by our Director of Public Works R.J. Joly and partners from the SW Tech Forestry Program and the Vermont Department of Forests, Parks and Recreation's Bennington County Forester. Thirty to forty members of the public were in

attendance to learn about the proposal for creating a forest management plan for the Y Woods and many comments and suggestions were made to inform the creation of a draft management plan. The ability to provide public comment on the Y Woods, and a recording of the presentation is available on the Town website under the "How do I" section; "Provide Input on the Y Woods."

A public ribbon cutting ceremony is planned for the Rail Trail on May 6, Green Up Day. A short ceremony at the entrance of the trail on River Street next to the Firehouse will occur at 10 am. The Town is partnering with the Bike Hub and probably other community organizations to be part of the ceremony. A community clean up of the trail will immediately follow the ceremony, with the town providing garbage bags and pickup of the collected garbage.

I am coordinating with our Buildings and Grounds team to stay on top of final arrangements regarding the new playgrounds at Willow Park. Completion of this work was delayed when staff discovered issues with the curbing and other punch list items that dragged on until winter prevented it from being completed. We are assured that finishing this work is a top priority from our vendor and we are doing everything we can to hold them to it. Once we have a firm completion date we look forward to finally being able to schedule a re-opening celebration for the playgrounds... ideally as soon as possible.

Organizational Outreach

Work has begun for planning for this year's Battle Day celebrations and I'm assisting the Fire Department who has graciously been leading this effort for what will now be 58 years. I'm also helping amplify Fire Department recruitment efforts including assisting with the promotion of the MayDay Open House which is happening on May 13th.

I've also met with the Communications Director of the SVSU, the director of the Turning Point, and the VP of communications for Bennington College as part of

my effort to improve communications between these organizations. I'm also part of a team supporting a grant request led by GBCS.

I was honored to be the keynote speaker for the Bennington Museum Board of Trustees retreat in Grafton, VT. The focus of my talk was the role of the museum as a premier regional history museum and its importance to the community, as well as the upcoming 250th commemorations and how the museum has played a role in past commemorations.

Citizen Outreach and Public Record Requests:

I met with citizens sixteen times over this past month on a variety of issues, ideas, and concerns. There was one public record requests to my office.

250th Anniversary Planning:

The Bennington 250th Anniversary steering committee is meeting again this week with a packed agenda. A full committee meeting will be held in April. I have agreed to serve as the chair of the State level VT 250th Education committee, and I also serve on the VT 250th Commission as a commissioner and as part of the executive committee. I traveled to Virginia (paid

by the State) to be one of Vermont's two representatives there for a convening of 24 States 250th planners with over 250 people in attendance. A tremendously valuable conference! I also continue to represent Bennington and Vermont as the facilitator of a regional collaborative of the states of NY, MA, CT, and RI.

Website Development

I continue to work out a few kinks in the new unified town website, but overall the launch has been very successful and I've had a lot of compliments from community members on the new design and usefulness of the site. I welcome suggestions and comments on how we can continue to improve this valuable community resource.

Community Based Learning (CBL) Intern

I am working with our Town Clerks Office to host an intern from the SVSU Community Based Learning program. Thomas Scheetz has proven himself to be a very diligent and effective worker! His efforts helping digitize the Town Cemeteries maps are very impressive and will be a real benefit to the town.

Facebook POST OF THE MONTH:

This month our biggest post was an update on the situation at the former CTC building on Benmont Ave.

This is an issue that has dragged on since May of 2021 and unfortunately does not have a solution in sight anytime soon.

The town HAS been working on this issue since the fire occurred, but the lack of an owner for the site makes the problem very difficult. If you missed the post, you can also read all the details on the Town website under the NEWS section.

The screenshot shows a Facebook post with a photo of a building and the following text: "What's up with the burned-out CTC building on Benmont? In May of 2021, a ...". Below the post, the performance metrics are displayed in three columns:

Reach	Reactions, comments and sh...	Results
Total: 4,764	Total: 136	Total: --
This post reached more Accounts Center accounts than 98% of your 50 most recent Facebook posts and stories.	This post received more reactions, comments and shares than 98% of your 50 most recent Facebook posts and stories.	Link clicks: --
Reach: 4,764	Reactions: 62 Comments: 65 Shares: 9	