



# Town of Bennington

Communications Coordinator Report — April 24, 2023

## **It's Spring!**

It looks like we are done with winter, and the town is busy getting everything ready for summer. We are also making good progress on a number of projects that have been in the works for some time now, including the Willow Park playground renewal which is now at the one year point from when we started. This was a short month for me as I was away for a week of vacation.

## **Get Involved in Your Local Government**

A final call for folks who are interested in serving on a board or commission. Letters of Interest for those who would like to serve on a town board or commission are due by May 1st. This is a great way to be directly involved in your Town and community! For more information, visit the Town website and look under "Government" and select "Join Town Government."

## **Community Outreach**

Planning is well underway for a public ribbon cutting ceremony for the Rail Trail on May 6, Green Up Day. The event is now also in collaboration with the annual Bike Rodeo which is a program run by the Bennington Police Association. The event will be from 10 am to noon at the parking lot behind the Bennington Fire House. A short ribbon cutting ceremony will occur at 10 am. There will be free food and free bike helmets given away. Bring your bike! Do the bike safety course and be entered to win a free bike. Other partners include the Bike Hub, the Garden Club and probably other community organizations. This event is also part of the Alliance for Community Transformations (ACT) Youth Appreciation Month. A community clean up of the trail is also part of the event in honor of Green Up Day, with the town providing garbage bags and pickup of the collected garbage.

## **Willow Park Playgrounds**

No project is more on my mind than the Willow Park Playgrounds. With the return of nice weather, the completion of this project is of utmost importance. 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 before winter. Work on the playgrounds has resumed and is very close to being completed. We hope to have that work completed in the very near future.

## **Organizational Outreach**

I met with BCCH, PAVE, as well as a GBCS grant leadership team as part of my outreach work to other organizations this past month. I also have a monthly meeting with the director of Turning Point as well as my counterpart at the SVSU to keep lines of communication open, to learn about upcoming issues, and to share information. I was also peripherally involved in assisting with the logistics of the State-directed community effort that has resulted in the "Project Alliance" which we hope will lead to good results in the future.

## **Citizen Outreach and Public Record Requests:**

I was in contact with citizens seven times over this past month on a variety of issues, ideas, and concerns. There were three public record requests to my office.

## **250th Anniversary Planning:**

Planning work for the 250th anniversaries continues with a major regional meeting with twenty 250th planners from NY, MA, CT, RI, and VT this past week. A full committee meeting of the Bennington 250th Anniversary committee happens this coming Monday right before the Select Board meeting. A launch of a website for the Bennington 250th is in the works and I will be asking the Select Board to give time for me to give an update on planning work in June or July.

### Website Development

The new unified town websites are running smoothly. I continue to work on improving ADA accessibility with improvements to the site coding to make it more compatible with JAWS style web page readers that are used by blind people to navigate websites. I am now beta testing a new feature that allows site visitors to subscribe to pages on the website so they will be automatically notified when an update is made. This is handy for folks who want to know when minutes are posted, new bids are available, or when new public notices are available. If this is of interest, please do try out the service by going to the category "How do I" and choose "get notified of website updates"

### Community Based Learning (CBL) Intern

Kayla Thompson, the assistant Town Clerk, has been the lead in overseeing our CBL intern Thomas Scheetz who continues to impress us with his tremendous work ethic and dedication. His primary work has been the digitization of cemetery maps.

### Benn High Redevelopment

I am active in supporting Dan and Shannon who are the leads in the pre-development work planning around the Benn High project. Most recently we held an informational meeting with Seniors with an update on progress and I am currently working on the public presentation update that will be presented at this next Select Board meeting.

## Facebook POST OF THE MONTH:

Not surprisingly, the update on the Willow Park playgrounds was our biggest post of the month.

While we don't always have good news to report, our goal is to get the information out there so folks know what is going on.

I am looking forward to being able to post about the playgrounds being finished and seeing what kind of reach that has!

