



Town of Bennington

Communications Coordinator Report – May 22, 2023

A Busy Month!

I had to hit the ground running this April with planning for two events, a major public meeting on Benn High, Willow Park playgrounds, and then of course the unexpected things that always come up... this month the unfortunate new vandalism at Village Cemetery.

Public Outreach

A main focus for this past month has been the public presentation on the Benn High redevelopment project. This was an opportunity for town officials to bring the community up to speed on where we are at on this project. A detailed presentation was given at the Select Board on April 24th. The slide deck from that presentation, a recording of the event, and all new floor plans have been added to the town's web page about the redevelopment. This page includes every document related to the project, timelines, recordings of prior meetings, and a public comment form to allow folks to share their thoughts and concerns. We continue to also have extra meetings at the Senior Center to address concerns and hear input from the users of that facility as we have promised them we would do.

250th Planning

The work for planning for our 250th never ends! This month I've been coordinating with 250th planners from NY, MA, CT, and RI for an in person meeting at Fort Ticonderoga to see how we can do a multi-state collaboration in 2025 for the kickoff to the anniversaries with our very own Ethan Allen and the Green Mountain Boys. The hope is that by working together to tell this story that is woven between NY and the New England states in a way that will maximize exposure and

interest for all the respective states. Vermont is the smallest in terms of resources in this group, but we are taking a leadership role in the planning which gives us a strong voice at the table.

Community Events

On May 6, the Town joined with partners from the Bike Hub, the Bennington Garden Club, ACT's Youth Appreciation Month, and the Bennington Police Department to put on a combined event. The event combined honoring the official opening of the new Bennington Rail Trail, the annual police department Bike Rodeo, and Green Up Day. The well attended event included a ribbon cutting ceremony, free bike helmets and food, a fun bike safety course, a raffle to win one of four bikes, free ice cream, and lots of other giveaways.

I was also involved in helping plan for and promote the Bennington Volunteer Fire Department Open House that happened on May 13. This family friendly event was geared towards letting the public know about volunteer firefighting, what they do, and encouraging folks to join. It was also about giving tours and having fun checking out trucks and fire fighter gear. One hope is to get more kids interested and involved. A "junior firefighter" program has existed in the past and we'd like to see that come back.

Willow Park

Regular updates on Willow Park playgrounds have been a regular part of my work for over a year now... but the end is in sight! The playgrounds had a soft opening the end of April, much to the delight of hundreds of kids who have already been enjoying the new playground equipment. There will be a few days when the

new playgrounds will need to be closed in order to finish up some remaining punch list items. The goal is to have this work done on days when the playgrounds are typically less busy.

Village Cemetery

Last fall we had the shock of 200+ gravestones overturned at the Village Cemetery. Out of the bad came some good... namely the extraordinary effort by dozens of volunteers to reset the stones. At that time, we noted numerous stones that were actually broken and we had planned then to do that work this May. Sadly, just as I was starting to plan that May restoration work, the cemetery was vandalized again. This time the damage was much less, and the people responsible were caught right away.

The volunteer day to work on fixing stones is on Saturday, May 27. We will be on site from 8

am to noon restoring and cleaning grave stones. If you are interested in helping with this work, please contact me at jspivak@benningtonvt.org.

Organizational Outreach

This past month I've worked with the Bennington Housing Solutions group, GBCS, SVSU, the Vermont Old Cemeteries Association, the Village Trustees of Old Bennington, and the state, federal, and local 250th organizations in addition to the regional 250th group I mentioned earlier.

By The Numbers

This past month I interacted with thirteen citizens and I had three public records requests come through my office.

Facebook Post of the Month:

The screenshot shows a Facebook post with a blue 'Boost post' button at the top. The post text reads: 'The fences came down at the Willow Park playgrounds yesterday! On Tuesda...' followed by the date 'April 27, 2023 at 8:21 AM' and ID '2647070362110331'. Below the text are three interaction buttons: '448 reactions', '116 comments', and '72 shares'. On the left side of the post, there are two images of a playground with green canopies and purple slides.

Performance

Reach	Reactions, comments and shares	Results								
<p>Total</p> <p>12,837</p> <p>Worst Best</p> <p>This post reached more Accounts Center accounts than 100% of your 50 most recent Facebook posts and stories.</p>	<p>Total</p> <p>636</p> <p>Worst Best</p> <p>This post received more reactions, comments and shares than 100% of your 50 most recent Facebook posts and stories.</p>	<p>Total</p> <p>--</p> <p>Link clicks</p> <p>--</p>								
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Perhaps not surprisingly, our post this month about the opening of the Willow Park playgrounds was our biggest post in terms of reach. While we will be closing it for a few days in the near future to finish final details, we are very glad to have this community resource back in use for the warm weather!