



Town of Bennington

Communications Coordinator Report — June 27, 2022

Summer Solstice

In true Vermont fashion, we are catapulted from spring to full blown summer in just a few weeks. For the town, it means all kinds of maintenance work and the start of new major projects from our Department of Public Works.

Willow Park Playgrounds:

A presentation of the final design of the new Willow Park playgrounds scheduled for May 19th was cancelled due to illness. The presentation will be re-scheduled to correspond with the start of site work and will be a ground breaking event as well. The project currently remains on track for a late July start. Once begun, the construction will take 3-4 weeks.

For more information about the Willow Park playgrounds renewal project and process please visit the Town website page on Willow Park located at: <https://benningtonvt.org/willow-park/>

FBI/LEEDA Training:

I spend a week in Florida attending an FBI Law Enforcement Executive Development Association (LEEDA) training on Media Relations and Crisis Communications. The weeklong training was immersive, extensive, and extremely valuable. I learned many new skills that will be very useful to me in this position and I've already begun applying what I've learned to my day to day work. I attended the training with our police Chief Paul Doucette and Lt. Cam Grande which was a great opportunity for us to work together. One thing I learned was how incredibly busy our Chief and Lt. are with their duties even when far off in another state. After training, our day was not done; we continued our work into the evenings remotely to stay on top of work.

Citizen Outreach:

Due to being away for a week, I had less citizen outreach than normal, with just six this month. There were no public record requests to my office.

Community Outreach

Another informational meeting was held at the Senior Center. The presentation to the seniors was part of our ongoing effort to include folks and keep them informed as we proceed with the redevelopment of the BenHi building on East Main Street. A survey is being developed for the seniors to solicit additional ideas and feedback.

A.T. Community and Business Outreach

Planning continues for the July 30 "Bennington Trail-fest" to be held at the Bennington Community Center (Rec Center) from noon to 3 pm. There will be live music, free food, activities, and informational tables. Free to the public. Several businesses have joined as A.T. Community Business supporters who will be recognized during the event. The BBC is also a supporter of this effort. A trivia contest with prizes, lawn games, and hiker related skill workshops will also be included.

250th Anniversary Planning:

A number of 250th planning efforts happened this past month, notably a first meeting on Regional collaboration at the Bennington Museum with state representatives from VT, NY, MA, and CT in attendance along with representatives from Fort Ticonderoga. A final anniversary event for Remember Baker was a dramatization of the Rescue and Capture of Baker that was held on June 18th at 6:00 pm in East Arlington at the Federated Church. The event was well attended and very successful.

Work continues on creating a 250th committee for Bennington and the surrounding region to allow for the start of planning for specific events and to explore what "big ideas" might be possible for 2025-2027 and to interface with the statewide 250th commission as they begin outreach to the various parts of the state for input. A first meeting of that committee will be held the end of June. I was joined by Phil Holland for a presentation to the Social Studies department at MAUHS which sparked many ideas for how we can

use the 250th anniversary as a vehicle to engage and inspire youth in our schools and to assist teachers with materials that they can use to take advantage of place-based learning. The enthusiasm of our teachers for our local history and their dedication to education is truly inspiring!

Website Update:

A new design and navigational system for a unified town website is nearing completion and awaiting final review. Once finalized, the content from the existing sites will be moved to the new site for beta testing. The police department website will be a part of the unified site, but will continue to have it's own URL

(web address) and identity which has been identified as a best practice for police department websites. New photography has been taken for the site as well. We are on track for a launch of the new site in late August or September.

Organizational Collaboration:

I have been working with the BCCH and GBICS to create a memorandum of understanding with the Bennington Police Department to improve communications and develop best practices for coordinating efforts. Development of such collaborations is an important part of the police department's vision.

Facebook POST OF THE MONTH:

Credit for our post of the month goes to Linda Bermudez and the team at the Water Department!

On June 10, we had a major break in the water line on East Road... followed by a SECOND break just a couple of hours later near Orchard Village! Town crews left to action to repair the situation, and Linda immediately began posting to social media to keep the community updated.

The break caused water problems throughout the town, and people needed to know what was going on. Linda made sure that everyone was updated on progress throughout the day as our team worked feverishly to fix the problem and restore water.

A bad day could have been much worse if not for this fine work by the team at the Department of Public Works.

