



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 or reach... over 8,700!!!!

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

The screenshot shows a Facebook post titled "Have you visited the Headwaters Park on Belvidere Street? Th..." posted on August 19, 2022. The post includes a photo of a park area with a stream and a wooden walkway. Below the photo are interaction counts: 173 reactions, 37 comments, and 38 shares. A performance analytics section is visible below the post, showing:

Reach		Engagements		Negative interactions	
Total	8,745	Reactions	173	Total	3
Organic	8,745 (100%)	Comments	37	Unique	3
Paid	0 (0%)	Shares	38		

