



Town of Bennington

Communications Coordinator Report — October 25, 2021

On September 20, 2021, the new role of Communications Coordinator was launched as a manager level position in Town Government.

Much of the first month has been taken up with meeting with each of the department heads in the town and becoming familiar with where information is stored and how it is all handled.

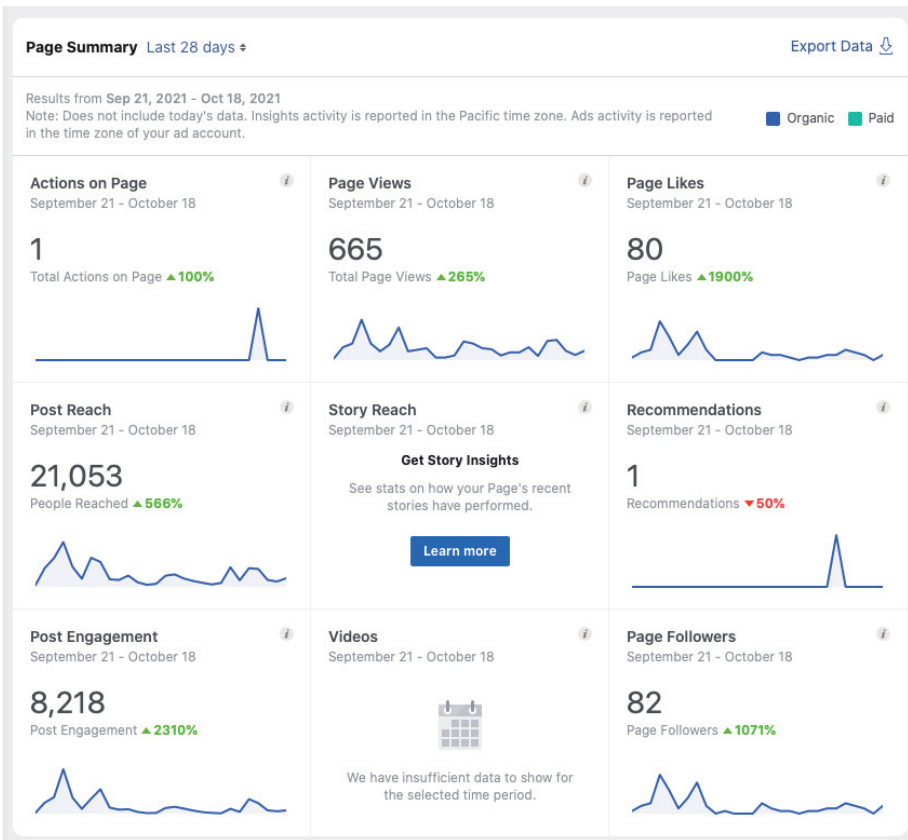
Citizen Outreach:

I've met with, emailed, or spoken with 21 citizens on a wide variety of concerns or questions. I feel strongly that my role requires me to be present in the community as much as possible and my goal is to have at least one citizen interaction per day. When the interaction includes complaints I work to address those immediately whenever possible.

Business Outreach:

I've stopped by or emailed with the following businesses to hear their concerns or ideas: Gift Garden, Fiddleheads, Bennington Armory, Garage Distillery, Bennington Bookshop, Bennington Museum, Spice and Nice, and Bringing You VT. When possible, I follow up immediately (ie: new bike racks for Bennington Bookshop), and I'm recording more long term concerns to share with the appropriate departments.

Social Media / Facebook Report - First Month



Non-Profits and Community Groups:

These organizations often our partners in engaging with the community and I've made an effort to connect with a number of them early on and will continue to do so. Those include the SVSU, BCRC, CAT TV, and the Bennington County Coalition for the Homeless.

Facebook and Social Media:

Outreach via Facebook is currently our only significant social media platform. I plan to add Instagram in the future to increase engagement with different target audiences that are not using Facebook as much. I've expanded our postings to include more items of general interest to increase overall engagement and so far the results have been very good which indicates a strong interest in this type of information from the community.

Facebook Reach - One Year Comparison



Town Departments, Boards, Commissions, and Task Forces:

The Town has ten departments, plus the Senior Center and Bennington Community Center (Rec Center). I have met with each of those departments and have begun work coordinating with those departments as appropriate.

The Police Department is one that I expect will be a growing part of my work which also includes working with the Safety and Equity Task Force and associated efforts to share with the public progress and developments.

I've also worked with updates for the Historic Preservation Commission, the Energy Committee, the Town Clerks Office, and Collections.

Website Updates:

A major revamp of the town website is needed. The town has over 120 pages of information and over 1,300 posts of content. I've started doing research on other town websites and will be looking at our traffic logs to determine ways to improve navigation as part of preparing for an RFP to implement the update. My plan is complete this work and have a RFP ready to put out by the end of November.

Cyber Security / IT:

I've joined the town team that is charged with reviewing cyber-security and IT security. While I am not an expert in this regard, I am hopeful that my background experience in this area will be useful to the team and provide another set of eyes to help navigate this very complicated and ever changing landscape.

Current and Recent Projects:

One of the first projects to hit my desk was organizing an award ceremony for Climate Advocates Bennington (CAB) to present an Environmental Achievement Award to the Bennington Police Department. The ceremony involved coordinated with CAT TV, the Energy Committee, the BPD and Select Board members. A Bennington Banner photographer was in attendance as well. The result was a videotaped ceremony that is on CAT TV, You Tube, and has been shared on Facebook.

I'm currently working on a ribbon cutting event to celebrate the completion of the Orchard Village – Willowbrook Pathway. This upcoming event will be open to the public and will also be recorded. We will have an official date for this event by the time of this next Select Board meeting.

250th Planning:

Bennington has long been a leader in celebrating our local history and the 250th Anniversary of the Founding of Vermont and the Battle of Bennington is coming in 2027. We have continuously celebrated the Battle since 1778 and several of those celebrations were of historic proportions in and of themselves — with the creation of the Bennington Battle Monument our greatest reminder of what is possible. What “big thing” will we do as our mark on posterity?

To that end I am active on the newly created Vermont 250th Anniversary Commission, and am the only commissioner representing Southern Vermont. I also serve on the Vermont 250th Education Sub-committee and I am happy to report that we are just

now beginning a collaboration with the SVSU that will help inform our work at the state level. I am also part of the Vermont delegation to the Federal America 250th commission.

I am also working on the creation of a local committee to interface with the State and Federal commissions to focus specifically on Commemoration efforts for Bennington. I will report on this further in November.

Citizen Survey:

Another initial project has been the creation of a citizen survey, based on surveys that have been done in 2016 and 2018. The survey launched on October 12 and will be running through the week of November 2. Currently we have 322 responses and a 73% completion rate. Average time to fill out the survey is 15 minutes. The survey is promoted on social media, stories in the paper, and we have purchased ads in the Bennington Banner.

Future Proactive Outreach:

I'm interested in creating an advisory team of local business leaders, do outreach to fraternal orders and social clubs, and create paths for citizen involvement and listening.;

Outreach by the numbers:

Looking at my calendar and email for the last month, here are some stats for you...

Number of FB Posts - 25
 Number of emails sent - 550+
 Number of meetings attended - 47
 Looking Ahead:

Respectfully Submitted,
 —Jonah Spivak