

**BENNINGTON SELECT BOARD MEETING
BENNINGTON FIRE FACILITY
130 RIVER STREET
BENNINGTON, VERMONT 05201**

MONDAY, MARCH 13, 2017

MINUTES

BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT: Tom Jacobs – Chair; Michael Keane-Vice Chair; Jim Carroll; Jeanne Conner; Jeannie Jenkins; Donald Campbell;

Absent: Justin Corcoran

ALSO PRESENT: Dan Monks, Zoning Administrator & Assistant Town Manager; Michael McDonough, Economic & Community Development Director; Keith Whitcomb, Bennington Banner; Linda E. Bermudez – Secretary; (40) Citizens

At 6:00 P.M., **Tom Jacobs** called the meeting to order.

1. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

2. CONSENT AGENDA (A-E)

A) Minutes – February 27, 2017

Jeannie Jenkins noted a (name) spelling correction for Jerry Byrd.

B) Warrants

C) 2017 Liquor License Renewals

There were no questions.

MOTION: Donald Campbell motioned and Michael Keane seconded to accept and approve the minutes of February 27, 2017 with name spelling correction as presented, as well as the warrants and Liquor License Renewals as submitted. Motion passed unanimously (*Justin Corcoran absent*)

3. CITIZENS

Bernie Bandman wanted to invite the public to a screening of a documentary at the Old Castle Theatre on Friday March 24, 2017 at 7:00pm. The name of documentary is Boys of 2nd Street Park and was premiered at the Sundance Film Festival. It revolves around boyhood friends in New York City and their lives as they get older. Mr. Bandman stated he is one of those boys and his portion was filmed here in Bennington.

The screening of this film is a fundraiser for an organization that Mr. Bandman founded called the Center for Communication in Medicine. They educate people on how to better communicate with doctors. How we communicate with doctors effects the treatment and care we receive.

Michael Keane stated that although he grew up in a different neighborhood in New York City, he has seen this movie four times and it grabs him every time.

Robert Block, resident of Bennington stated he was one in the group that stood up for immigrants at the Annual Town meeting. He stated the State of Vermont is currently working on a similar resolution. The Vermont Attorney General's office had made recommendations on how to move forward in Bennington.

Michael Thompson, North Bennington resident, stated he too stepped forward for immigrants at the Annual Town meeting. He wanted to propose a Town Policy on how to deal with Law Enforcement moving forward with immigrants.

Tom Jacobs stated the Board is well aware of the State's Attorney's recommendations. He has forwarded it to Town's Counsel and we are awaiting his guidance.

Steve Smith stated he sits on the Senior Center's Advisory Committee. Mr. Smith read a statement requesting a meeting with the Select Board to discuss transportation issues for the Senior Center. Tom Jacobs agreed and stated it would be placed on a future agenda.

No other citizens spoke this evening.

4. NORTHERN BERKSHIRE "Y"

Randy Kinnas stepped forward as a representative. He has worked for the "Y" for over (21) years and is very passionate about the organization. They work with youth, adults and seniors at their different facilities across the nation. The "Y" is not just a "swim and gym". The core elements of this Non-Profit are social responsibility and healthy living.

This is a welcomed partnership and they look forward to working with Bennington to suit their needs. At this time, it will be a one-year contract. The plan is to begin with some additional summer camps and perhaps move forward with additional after school programs in the fall. After one year, both sides will be able to re-evaluate the needs of Bennington.

Jeannie Jenkins asked Mr. Kinnas to describe some of the programs offered at other "Y" facilities. He noted they vary depending on their location, however they offer everything from infant/child care, after school programs, tutoring, teen/youth groups, adult fitness, assistance with supervised visitation and senior fitness.

Michael Keane asked about their resources. Mr. Kinnas stated because they are the largest Non-profit in the United States they can offer sliding scale fees for those programs as well as financial assistance and full scholarships. They do a lot of fundraising so that everyone can participate.

Jim Carroll asked if they would take over managing the Town's Recreation Center. Mr. Kinnas again stated that this would be a partnership with the Town to expand services. They would not be taking over the Recreation Center.

Donald Campbell believes this is a great partnership and likes the idea that we could "test-drive" it for one year.

Jeanne Conner also thought this was a great concept. She has many ideas to share but will save it for another time.

Tom Jacobs stated that after school programming is something Bennington really needs. Mr. Kinnas stated they too are very excited and are ready to go as soon as the Town is.

Jeannie Jenkins announced there would be a community “meet & greet” with representatives from Northern Berkshire “Y”. They will have three site visits and conduct a “Q & A” session at each one. This is so that the community could voice their ideas and concerns. The site visit locations are as follows:

March 21, 2017

9:30am – 10:30am	Senior Center on Pleasant Street
12:00pm – 1:00pm	Recreation Center on Gage Street
4:30pm – 5:30pm	CCV – Health Dept – Main Street

Betsy Rathbun-Gunn stepped forward and stated she is the person who “cold called” the “Y” to see if there was any interest. She works in early childhood and sees a need for after school programs. Ms. Rathbun-Gunn is thrilled to have this collaboration and thanked the taskforce for moving forward with this. It is an opportunity for all residents.

Sam Restino asked why it took so long. It had been discussed/suggested back in 2012 at a community meeting. He continued by stating the “Y” is not what it used to be. Also, if they were going to have their own facility he would like to suggest something tasteful on Main Street as the location.

Mary Garisch grew up elsewhere with access to a “Y”. It was the best. However, she is concerned about the costs to taxpayers. Jeannie Jenkins stated there would be no additional costs to the town except to lend the use of our physical assets.

Beth Wallace stated this is a big investment in economic development for Bennington.

An unidentified resident from the back asked if they would accept Vermont’s vouchers and subsidiaries for daycare. Mr. Kinnas stated they would.

Joanne Conklin stated the Recreation Department building is not big enough for daycare. Would they add on to the building? Jeannie Jenkins stated they would look at utilizing multiple facilities. Ms. Conklin asked if any of the Recreation Department employees would lose their jobs and if the real estate taxes would go up. Tom Jacobs stated they would not lose their jobs and this partnership would not make taxes go up.

Mia Shultz stated she has moved here from California. Where she lived the “Y” was great; however, there were many families that had transportation issues. Mr. Kinnas stated that any after school programs are directly after school and they often contract with the school bus companies for transportation home.

5. BENNINGTON COUNTY INDUSTRIAL CORPORATION (BCIC) CONTRACT

Dan Monks reviewed the background of the proposed contract. Over many years, it has been discussed to allow BCIC to take over some of the Economic Development services the Town has been involved in. It is often a duplicated effort. Now that Michael Harrington has left the position, we believe this is a good time to revisit this option and transfer the economic development services and redevelop his former position.

Bill Colvin stepped forward as representative of BCIC to provide a brief overview of the proposal. He noted this would be a one-year agreement beginning July 1, 2017 and run through June 30, 2018 at a cost of \$25,000. BCIC’s focus would be on areas such as business support and retention, site promotion, events and trainings, marketing and finance and regional economic development. They would also take over the newly developed business surveys the Town conducted last year.

This partnership would eliminate previously overlapping efforts, create efficiency and leverage with (more) staff and add additional resources to those tasks thereby creating more bang for our buck. In addition, the Town would have direct access to a full-time lobbyist in Montpelier, technical assets (mappings & GIS) and regional commitment to economic development.

Jim Carroll stated he had complained in the past about the overlapping of services. Discussion continued briefly about the changes to the Town's position. It could focus now more on Community Development (only).

Jeanne Conner likes the idea as well as the clarity and structure of it.

Jeannie Jenkins noted that she would be recusing herself from the vote as she sits on the BCIC Board.

Donald Campbell appreciates the idea that we could ease into this with only a one-year contract and how it reduces costs to the Town. However, he felt it would be harder to evaluate success etc. Mr. Colvin stated the contract states they are to meet with the Board twice a year. He would however, invite and/or suggest a quarterly meeting. Additionally, there will be monthly reports and on-going dialogue between BCIC and the Town.

Tom Jacobs noted this is the first meeting on this subject so no vote would be taken this evening. The Board members (and/or public) etc may review this proposal further and return with questions. He will have it added to the next regularly scheduled agenda for possible approval.

6. DOWNTOWN TRANSPORTATION FUND GRANT RESOLUTION

Michael McDonough stepped forward to discuss the application and use of a Downtown Transportation Fund Grant to complete the "Park @ 336". As a streetscape enhancement project it qualifies for this grant. Additional requirements are a 50% match. This amounts to approximately \$50,000. The match has been obtained at no additional cost to the tax payers. It is comprised of donations, pledges, a grant given by Citizens for a Better Bennington and in-kind services.

Michael Keane asked when the winner of the Downtown Transportation grant would be announced. Mr. McDonough stated it is very competitive but he believes late March or early April the awards would be announced.

Tom Jacobs asked if the Planning Commission has reviewed this. Mr. McDonough stated they have and they support it.

Joey Kulkin, Bennington resident, questioned if the stipulations for the Citizens for a Better Bennington grant were met and how much was actually raised in donations. Mr. McDonough stated they had been, and deemed appropriate. Donations so far are approximately \$11,266 and pledges are at approximately \$4,302. Mr. McDonough also noted that fundraising continues.

Jeannie Jenkins stated she would be recusing herself from the vote as she sits on the BBC board. Jeanne Conner questioned if her involvement in the fundraising committee would pose a conflict. Tom Jacobs did not feel as a member of the fundraising committee this was an issue.

Dan Monks noted that this project has been before the board and approved two times previously and no tax money is being utilized.

Motion: Jim Carroll moved and Jeanne Conner seconded a motion to sign the resolution for the Downtown Transportation Grant match funds commitment as no real estate tax funds are required as presented. Motion passed (*Justin Corcoran absent; Michael Keane & Jeannie Jenkins abstain*)

7. MANAGER'S REPORT

The Assistant Town Manager noted the Town had previously approved the Neighborhood Works grant application. The resolution now needs to be signed.

Motion: Donald Campbell moved and Jeanne Conner seconded a motion to waive the reading of the Neighborhood Works Resolution and sign as presented. Motion passed unanimously (*Justin Corcoran absent*)

The Assistant Town Manager then stated there had been a minor revision to the Certificate of Mileage required by the Town to the State of Vermont each year. This revised certificate was circulated for signatures.

The Assistant Town Manager and RJ Joly, Highway Superintendent discussed with the Board the need to purchase a Town's Sweeper. The old sweeper caught fire approximately one year ago. The Town has been able to "demo" a new machine for the last few months (at no charge). We have been presented with a "lease to buy" option. RJ Joly recommends moving forward with this option. The insurance settlement has been approved and would cover one year's worth of payments; making this budget neutral for the current and coming fiscal year. Payments moving forward can be properly budgeted.

Michael Keane asked if a good interest rate was being offered. Mr. Joly stated it was less than 4% per year.

Motion: Donald Campbell moved and Michael Keane seconded a motion to approve and sign the lease-to-own option for a town sweeper as presented. Motion passed unanimously (*Justin Corcoran absent*)

Next the Assistant Town Manager and Mr. Joly continued by seeking approval for a Wheeled Excavator for the Water Department. Mr. Joly stated he recently became involved by assisting in the bid specs for this vehicle. The original bid was to replace a 25-year old backhoe. With further research, it was determined a wheeled excavator would be a more versatile and handy piece of equipment. It reduces work zone size, has greater mobility and is more efficient. As with many pieces of equipment, more than one department could also utilize this excavator; especially now that Water and Highway will be under one roof at the new DPW facility.

Mr. Joly did explain, however, that the lowest bid for the Wheeled Excavator came in approximately \$40,000 more than estimated for the backhoe replacement. The Town was able to sell the old backhoe and that money will be put towards the payments to reduce the budgeted monthly costs.

Motion: Donald Campbell moved and Michael Keane seconded a motion to approve and sign the Wheeled Excavator purchase option for the Water Department as presented. Motion passed unanimously (*Justin Corcoran absent*)

Lastly the Assistant Town Manager provided an update on the PFOA issues. The designs of the municipal water line extension to resolve the private well contamination issues continues. We hope to finish the design work sometime in April (2017). The State continues to negotiate payment for the project. The State Attorney General is in hopes to have a settlement before the end of the construction season. This new AG has been keeping the Town in the loop.

Tom Jacobs suggested we have a community meeting to inform more of the public as to where we are in the process.

Laura Block stepped forward and asked Mr. Jacobs to take the lead on the community meeting and move forward with scheduling this; even if there's not a lot of new development.

8. OTHER BUSINESS

Jeanne Conner asked where the Board was with the Charter Review. Mr. Jacobs stated at this point he would like to wait for the "new board" (in April) to move forward.

Jim Carroll wished everyone a Happy St. Patrick's Day.

Michael Keane also wished everyone a Happy St. Patrick's Day. He also congratulated Chad Gordon and Carson Thurber on their recent election to the Select Board. They are both good young guys. He asked them to do good. Lastly, he asked the community to be safe during the impending storm.

There was no other business this evening

Tom Jacobs stated there was a need for Executive Session.

Motion: Michael Keane moved and Jim Carroll seconded a motion finding that an Executive Session be held on a contract and a litigation matter and that premature general public knowledge of those matters would place person(s) involved at a substantial disadvantage. Motion passed unanimously (Justin Corcoran absent)

9. Executive Session

- A. Contracts**
- B. Litigation**

Respectfully submitted,

Linda E. Bermudez
Secretary