

1                                   **BENNINGTON SELECT BOARD MEETING**  
2                                   **BENNINGTON TOWN OFFICES**  
3                                   **205 SOUTH STREET**  
4                                   **BENNINGTON, VERMONT 05201**

5  
6                                   **SATURDAY, JANUARY 10, 2015**

7  
8                                   **MINUTES**  
9

10 **BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT:** Greg Van Houten, Chair; Sharyn Brush,  
11 Vice Chair; Jim Carroll; Justin Corcoran; John McFadden; Thomas Jacobs;  
12 and Michael Keane.

13  
14 **ALSO PRESENT:** Stuart Hurd, Town Manager; Melissa Currier, Finance  
15 Director; Steve Crawford, Fire Chief, Paul Doucette, Jr., Police Chief &  
16 Public Safety Director; Blake Greenawalt, CAT-TV Videographer; Michael  
17 Harrington, Economic and Community Development Director; Michele  
18 Johnson, Human Resources & Contracts Administrator; Daniel Monks,  
19 Assistant Town Manager & Planning Director; Joan Pinsonneault, Director  
20 of Collections and Town Treasurer; Jeff Vickers, Deputy Fire Chief; and  
21 Keith Whitcomb, Jr., Bennington Banner Reporter.

22  
23 G. Van Houten called the meeting to order at 8:06 A.M.

24  
25 **1. F.Y. '16 Budget Work Session**

26 S. Hurd explained that the proposed budget is up by less than 1% and  
27 there is a potential at FY '15 year end to have monies to contribute to the  
28 Fund Balance given that we have experienced a great year to date. The  
29 Town is near completing the EPA settlement of Kocher Drive. This  
30 proposed budget includes \$50,000 for that contingency.

31  
32 **A. Fire Budget**

33 P. Doucette, Jr. discussed the upcoming vote at the end of this month.  
34 Chief S. Crawford is looking to step down and Deputy Chief J. Vickers is  
35 hoping to become Chief. T. Jacobs inquired about the Chiefs stipends *03-*  
36 *4500.100 Salaries*. S. Crawford explained that the stipends are given to  
37 help cover such things as the Chiefs personal gas, personnel cell phones,

38 etc. and have been budgeted at the same rate for a number of years.  
39 Therefore, the department is proposing an increase. The stipends are  
40 currently: Chief - \$3,500; Deputy Chief \$3,000; and the Assistant Fire  
41 Chief \$2,500 annually. G. Van Houten inquired about the new pumper  
42 truck regarding how things are going. There was discussion that the truck  
43 is well received by the department and training is going good. J. Corcoran  
44 inquired about the \$21,000 proposed in *03-4580.680 Repairs &*  
45 *Maintenance*. S. Crawford expects the ladder truck maintenance expense  
46 to remain the same next year to maintain its certification and the other  
47 three trucks are getting older. There was discussion about the reserve  
48 being at \$258,000. G. Van Houten reminded all that the ladder truck helps  
49 with lowering homeowners insurance rates. P. Doucette, Jr. did explain  
50 that \$15,000 in this line item is required to keep the ladder truck at  
51 certification. G. Van Houten inquired about membership and recruitment  
52 of the Fire Department. S. Crawford explained there are between 60 – 65  
53 members with approximately 25 active. The training requirements make it  
54 a part-time job that you are not paid for and the Junior Fire Fighter Program  
55 is stable; however, not growing. M. Keane inquired about the average age  
56 of a volunteer firefighter within the department and the reply was between  
57 42 to 45 years of age. Each member averages 15 to 20 years of service.  
58 In response to J. Corcoran, it was discussed that the overall increase in the  
59 Fire Department's proposed budget is 4.6% or \$15,000. S. Crawford  
60 discussed communications and the need for mobile repeaters. J.  
61 McFadden inquired about the future ladder truck purchase. There was  
62 discussion if it would be a county wide purchase given the current ladder  
63 truck's use. S. Crawford explained that mutual aid is fair and equipment  
64 and services are shared; therefore, no. G. Van Houten brought up  
65 discussion regarding the billing of insurances for Fire Department services  
66 responding to crashes. P. Doucette, Jr. explained this is not being done  
67 yet; however, department is in the process of working on it. J. McFadden  
68 wants an example of a detailed incident report so he can be prepared in the  
69 future for the ladder truck purchase. S. Crawford will follow up. G. Van  
70 Houten thanked the Fire Department.

71  
72 There was a brief discussion regarding the Town's Fund Balance The  
73 Town has been drawing down the Fund Balance over the past five years to  
74 mitigate the Town tax rate; however, is not proposing this in FY 2016.

75 FEMA will be resolved regarding the 1.3 million dollar debt; the Kocher  
76 Drive EPA suit will be resolved; and the Town's health care costs are  
77 budgeted at 10%; however, only increased by 1%. J. McFadden began  
78 discussion regarding the tax rate and discussed his concerns. S. Hurd  
79 discussed how the proposed budget was prepared. It was agreed that the  
80 Town has not seen much growth in the Grand List in the past few years;  
81 however, it is likely to see growth this year.

82

### 83 **A. Police Budget**

84 P. Doucette, Jr. discussed employee turnover. Four employees have  
85 recently left the Police Department. Two due to retirement; and two due to  
86 employment opportunities. There are two more upcoming retirements  
87 pending. One in June of 2015 and one in December of 2015. The  
88 department is sending four officers to the VT State Academy at the same  
89 time this February. T. Jacobs inquired about quantity cost (retiring vs.  
90 newly hired Police Officers.) P. Doucette, Jr. explained it is costly to hire  
91 and send officers to the VT State Academy which is why the department  
92 tries to retain. New Police Officers are now hired under a three year  
93 contract with a penalty for leaving early, prorated accordingly. Sherriff  
94 Transport rates have been established effective July 1, 2015 and will  
95 remain for the next four years at ½ the rates the Town is currently paying.  
96 The Town can also begin using the Sheriff's impound area in July of 2016.  
97 There is a delay given a shortage of funds with the Sherriff's Department to  
98 do complete renovations. There was a review of the Police Chief's training  
99 budget and discussion regarding communications and the inclusion for  
100 video surveillance recording equipment in the proposed budget *01-*  
101 *4170.810 Improvements*. S. Hurd suggested to the Board that they could  
102 pull \$16,000 from the Capital Reserves to pay for the security camera and  
103 recording device. There was discussion regarding the reserves and it was  
104 further explained that these come from the \$2,700 a month collected from  
105 the Verizon tower rental fees. P. Doucette, Jr. explained the life span of  
106 the equipment proposed is expected to be ten years. Many of the Board  
107 present spoke in favor. There was further discussion regarding body  
108 cameras and their difficulty because they run real time to download. M.  
109 Keane inquired if Federal Grants are drying up and the P. Doucette, Jr.  
110 replied yes that the department is not seeing the funding that it used to. J.  
111 Carroll has noticed there is not a lot of information about drug activity lately

112 and wondered if that is because there is less? P. Doucette, Jr. explained  
113 that the work the Town is doing with its community partners over these past  
114 two years and the Project Catalyst Program is having a positive impact;  
115 however, it is still a battle. T. Jacobs inquired about the overtime running  
116 at 8.72% *01.4100.110 Overtime Wages*. P. Doucette, Jr. explained there  
117 is currently one officer on Light Duty Workers Compensation and another  
118 out on a short term disability leave; therefore, the department is down a  
119 shift and with State Traffic Court, and the recent robbery at the Cinema as  
120 an example, it is simply unavoidable. The department does not allow  
121 unreasonable or unjustified overtime and is as diligent as possible. It was  
122 running at 12% and runs 24/7 including all holidays which are paid out at  
123 an overtime rate of pay. M. Keane inquired about the *01-4120 Special*  
124 *Services* work. It was explained that it is 100% reimbursable. The officer  
125 is paid in full and the Town invoices the entity accordingly at the end of  
126 each month. It is technically a wash. G. Van Houten brought up the  
127 frozen position and it was confirmed that the position has been filled. The  
128 officer begins at the VT State Academy February 1<sup>st</sup>. S. Brush inquired if  
129 the department was buying any vehicles and S. Hurd replied one. P.  
130 Doucette, Jr. discussed the department's three year rotation, change of the  
131 fleet's color to grey and there would no longer be a flag. The Town will be  
132 looking to rotate out a 2013 Ford or sell it to the Sherriff's Department when  
133 the new vehicle is purchased *01-4180.830 Police Equipment*. T. Jacobs  
134 inquired about Animal Control and asked if the department had a K-9.  
135 There was a brief discussion that the department used the State Police  
136 Department's K-9 when necessary. The Town has had them in the past  
137 and the program did not work out well; however, we may try it again  
138 sometime in the future. J. McFadden inquired if the salaries of the four  
139 new officers coming in will be lower and P. Doucette, Jr. explained that they  
140 will come in on a lower step. There was a discussion regarding the *01-*  
141 *4100.100 Salaries* and the 2% that was budgeted as a salary increase  
142 proposed given union negotiations and this line item includes part time  
143 dispatching which comes in at \$70,000 each year with no benefits. The  
144 Bennington Rescue Squad dispatching fees will be increased for next year  
145 from \$12,000 to \$18,000. G. Van Houten thanked the Chief.  
146 P. Doucette, Jr. and J. Corcoran left the meeting at 10:15 A.M.  
147 There was a break from 10:15 to 10:27 A.M.  
148

149 S. Hurd discussed and reviewed the following department budgets:  
150  
151 *Select Board* - It was noted there was an error in the presentation.  
152 Employee Recognition is proposed at \$1,600.  
153 *Town Manager*  
154 *Treasurer*  
155 *Accounting*  
156 *Listing*  
157 *Collections*  
158 *Town Clerk* – J. McFadden questioned if the Town had been overpaying  
159 the Assistant Town Clerk’s position in the past and S. Hurd  
160 explained that C. Barbeau was brought in at that rate of pay  
161 by T. Corcoran. Once her position changed, the Town  
162 changed the rate of pay structure.  
163 *Permit-Plan-Code Enforcement*  
164 *Economic & Community Development*- There was discussion regarding the  
165 Town’s business development budget. M. Harrington will  
166 prepare information for the upcoming meeting. Further  
167 discussion continued regarding making funds available as  
168 seed money; however, it was agreed that it could be better  
169 discussed after the upcoming Bennington Economic  
170 Development Partners Presentation next week.  
171 *Administrative Services*  
172 *Buildings & Grounds* – There was discussion regarding the rental income at  
173 the Blacksmith Shop and Senior Center and S. Hurd said  
174 they are still low. S. Brush inquired if the Town was locked  
175 into a rate for its propane and fuel costs and S. Hurd  
176 explained that it is a fluctuated cost over the Port of Albany  
177 price.  
178 *Flood Control* - \$6,500 remains for Roy Shift as an all-inclusive cost for an  
179 annual maintenance plan to remove sediment in the Roaring  
180 Branch. Engineers will measure it annually with several  
181 years in-between for sediment removal unless an event  
182 occurs.  
183 *Solid Waste Management* – The BCRC contract is working well.  
184 *CERCLA* – Contains a \$50,000 contingency for completed work at Kocher  
185 Drive. The Town has a settlement with one carrier and is

186 currently working with two others. The dollar amount is not  
187 yet known but hopefully by June 30<sup>th</sup>.

188  
189 The Board discussed the Agency Interviews for the next budget work  
190 session and agreed that they will interview the Bennington Free Library on  
191 Saturday, January 17<sup>th</sup> at 8:00 A.M. M. Johnson will schedule accordingly.

192  
193 **Motion: G. Van Houten asked for a motion to adjourn the meeting.**  
194 **T. Jacobs made a motion and S. Brush seconded. Motion passed**  
195 **unanimously by remaining members.**

196  
197 The meeting adjourned at 11:08 A.M.

198  
199 Respectfully Submitted

200  
201  
202 Michele M. Johnson