

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

MONDAY, JUNE 22, 2015

MINUTES

BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT: Tom Jacobs – Chair; John McFadden -Vice Chair; Sharyn Brush; Michael Keane; Jim Carroll; Justin Corcoran; Donald Campbell

Absent: None

ALSO PRESENT: Dan Monks, Zoning Administrator & Assistant Town Manager; Michele Johnson, Human Resources & Contracts Administrator; Joan Pinsonneault, Treasurer; Cassandra Barbeau, Town Clerk; Mike Harrington, Economic & Community Development Director; Keith Whitcomb - Bennington Banner; Linda E. Bermudez – Secretary; (13) Citizens

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

1. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIENCE

2. CONSENT AGENDA (A-B)

A) Minutes – JUNE 8, 2015 & JUNE 16, 2015

There were no corrections for the minutes of June 8th & 16th, 2015.

B) Warrants

There were no questions.

Motion: Sharyn Brush motioned and Michael Keane seconded to accept and approve the minutes of June 8th & June 16th, 2015 and the warrant as submitted. Motion passed unanimously

3. CITIZENS

Loyal Wescott stepped forward. He noted there were two police calls to 326 Pleasant Street within 45 minutes last night. He does not feel the catalyst program is working and there needs to be something with more teeth done.

Mr. Wescott stated that Rutland has the 1,000-foot law on the books but the local judges and State's Attorney do not want to enforce it. He also wanted to know when the speed limit would be reduced on South Street.

Sharyn Brush noted that this was a State Highway. Dan Monks stated we would need to warn an analysis and may be responsible for its cost. He will look into what those costs would be.

Tom Jacobs asked Mr. Wescott to not give up. He would also welcome the State's Attorney at a Select Board meeting to explain the lack of enforcement on Rutland's 1,000-foot law.

Chris Wright stepped forward and asked about FEMA's appeal status. Mr. Monks stated we are at their mercy; they have no deadline to meet. We have not heard anything yet, but Congressman Welch is tracking this for us.

Mr. Wright also asked about the Barney Road Solar project. Mr. Monks stated that the State just passed new extensive setback requirements for solar projects. This will not allow them to move forward on the Barney Road property. The Town is looking at other possible locations so as to not lose this deal or the significant savings we would be provided. Mr. Wright then asked what the plans were for the Barney Road site. Mr. Monks stated there were no set plans as of yet, only suggestions being considered.

Sam Restino stated there have been many complaints regarding dog owners not picking up after their dogs in the Beech Street field and Willow Park. This needs to be better enforced.

Mr. Restino also questioned the lack of signage for the new electric car plug-in station at the Town Offices. Mr. Monks noted that in the last 2 weeks significant signage has been placed within the parking area. Street visible signs shall be installed soon.

Proper 911 plaques for homes and businesses were Mr. Restino's next concern. Mr. Monks stated no "CO's" (Certificate of Occupancy) are issued unless a property has proper 911 address signs.

Mr. Restino continued by questioning the speed limit near the Tastee Freeze on North Street. Tourists do not pay attention. He would like to see a flashing light to grab their attention. Tom Jacobs noted this area is a State Highway also. The Town will look into this and work with VTrans (Vermont Transportation) on what could be done.

4. GLENDA CRESTO INTRODUCTION

Tom Jacobs noted that Ms. Cresto is still in the process of moving and therefore could not make this evening's meeting. They will look to have her on future agenda.

5. A. FY 2016 TAX ANTICIPATION BORROWING B. FY 2016 CAPITAL ASSETS BORROWING C. RECREATION CENTER NOTE ROLLOVER

Joan Pinsonneault and Cassie Barbeau stepped forward. Dan Monks summarized the three notes presented. The Tax Anticipation note is done every year in anticipation of tax money collected. This is essentially a line of credit extended to the Town for up to \$2 Million dollars. All of this may not be needed but is available. The interest rate is 0.9%

The Capital Asset Borrowing is to buy capital equipment (Dump Truck and Loader). These have already been budgeted for and are at rate of 2.55% interest per year.

The Recreation Center Note rollover is for improvements completed to the Recreation Center approximately (4) years ago. The voter's authorized a bond and the Town has up to 10 years to get the bond. We were locally financed for \$600,000 at 1.47% per year and are attempting to pay down this amount without having to go to a bond. The current bond rate is 4%. Our remaining balance is now down to approximately \$242,000.

MOTION: Sharyn Brush motioned and Jim Carroll seconded to waive the reading of documents and approve the FY2016 Tax Anticipation Borrowing, FY2016 Capital Assets Borrowing and the Recreation Center Note Rollover. Motion passed unanimously

6. BETTER BENNINGTON CORPORATION WORK PLAN & BUDGET

Tom Jacobs noted that this agenda item turned out to be a larger discussion than originally anticipated. This will be moved to another agenda.

7. ORAL HEALTH COALITION

Dr. Dundas reviewed how the Oral Health Coalition has come to be. They have met approximately once a month for the last three years. They have secured a small amount of funding through the State and some private funds. This has allowed them to hire an "Oral Advocate".

Lisa Kazazean stepped forward to present. She stated she has inherited her adopted children's oral health issues. The focus on oral health should be on the children for long-term benefits. The Coalition has begun projects in the schools such as oral health essays. They have found that the only active "dental chair" is in the elementary schools. They would like the program to start up again in the Middle and High Schools. This is very difficult because there are many levels and need both hygienists and dentists to be involved.

Ms. Kazazean Also noted they have been working with UCS for a summer camp and conducting oral health surveys as well. The Coalition has been working on different ways to reduce sugar in the schools. They believe some responsibility lies with the teachers. They should not drink soda in front of the children or hand out candy. The Coalition is asking the Select Board to back them up and support them. There is a lot of work to be done.

Sue Andrews stepped forward. She stated she works in the local clinic. Leadership and values is what is needed in oral health. Ms. Andrews talked about her own family values and how her 26-year-old son has no dental issues or cavities. Families do not have the assets or the background to understand the value of oral health and why it's important.

Ms. Andrews continued by stating some of the findings from the local surveys conducted. She feels the voters were too quick to vote "no" on the Fluoride issue. Since then, only (4) "Anti-Fluoride" people have shown up to help with other ways to improve oral health in our community. We need more leadership and values.

The Coalition is asking the Board to step-up and help change the values around this issue. Ms. Andrews asked the Board to appoint the Oral Health Coalition to act as an official committee of the Select Board. Leadership is important

Michael Keane asked if all the stars were aligned perfectly how long it would take to radically improve this issue. Ms. Andrews stated if we were able to add Fluoride it would be 5-10 years. We need to start as soon as possible with all the different ways to improve oral health. They do not want to see another generation come around without the knowledge or values of oral health.

Donald Campbell asked what the Coalition needed from the Board. Lisa Kazazean stated open dialogue, open doors, and support.

Jim Carroll stated he supported an idea presented by a friend, which was to provide fluoride tablets in the schools. Lisa Kazazean stated one of the problems is the “opt-in/opt-out” paperwork is often not returned by the parents. Funding is also an issue. They would look to the Board for direction on how to find funding.

Justin Corcoran asked if the Coalition had some type of plan in place. Dr. Dundas stated they were working on a strategic plan.

Tom Jacobs asked for confirmation this was not a re-fight about fluoride and the vote outcome. Sue Andrews stated it was not at this time. They still believe it is the best way and may revisit it in the future. However right now they would like to move forward with other ideas.

Mr. Jacobs agrees that education is the key for overall health including oral health. To become an official committee the Coalition would need several things such as a mission statement, (5) dedicated citizens to sit officially on the committee and a reporting process developed.

John McFadden suggested that becoming an official Select Board Committee might slow down their progress. They would need to come before the board each time they wanted to do something and get approval. Donald Campbell agreed. At this time the Coalition is “autonomous”. You can do what you want now.

Sue Andrews stated she wants the Board to take leadership. She had hoped a motion would be made tonight and action taken.

Justin Corcoran asked the Coalition to provide a clearer picture of what they want. The Board is lacking too much info right now. Select Board policy is to not vote on the first proposal of anything. Donald Campbell asked they provide a solid structure, how many people they see on the committee & how they would get on the committee. Tom Jacobs stated this is a long-term process. They need a clear picture of what the committee is and what they are looking for.

Dr. Dundas stated he would get that information to the Board.

At this time Tom Jacobs opened up the discussion for comments from the floor.

Sam Restino stated he remembered oral health education in elementary school. He questioned how we got to this point.

Mike Bethel stated he felt there was no advantage to an official committee because they would have to answer to the board. Mr. Bethel agrees this would slow down any progress. We need to figure out how to get more money for Medicaid. The Coalition needs to speak with the State.

Greg Van Houten stated the key for these projects is support. The Select Board’s support gives these projects creditability. It aligns itself as part of the Town’s priorities.

Tom Jacobs suggested a sub-committee of the Select Board meet with the Coalition to obtain more information. Michael Kean, Donald Campbell and Tom Jacobs all volunteered to serve.

8. APPROVE NINJA SCOPING REPORT & GRANT APPLICATION

Dan Monks reviewed the project. This evening the Board is asked to accept and approve the scoping report and authorize the Town Staff to continue to work with the Regional Commission and submit the grant application.

Tom Jacobs stated he was happy to hear this continues to move forward

MOTION: Michael Keane motioned and Justin Corcoran seconded to authorize the preparation and submittal of the Ninja Path grant application.

Discussion

Tom Jacobs asked for a time-line. Mr. Monks stated with a request for full funding it could be 5-6 years. The Town hopes it to be less with the many volunteers involved working hard. Mr. Monks stated it starts with identifying the alignment, then the area is cleared, and then the improvements can happen (earth, then gravel then pavement). It will be multi-use path, however non-motorized access only.

Donald Campbell stated many other paths elsewhere have crashed because they shoot for a perfect paved path before they use it. He loves that we will begin to use it as soon as possible at a rough stage (gravel). Mr. Monks stated that as part of Wal-mart's Act 250 Permit and their local Town Permit they would pave their section. He also noted today we were granted a very important easement (Hannaford's). There have been no other issues obtaining easements.

AMENDED MOTION: Michael Keane motioned and Justin Corcoran seconded to accept & approve the Ninja Scoping Report and authorize the preparation and submittal of the Ninja Path grant application.

VOTE: Motion Passed unanimously

9. APPROVE KOCHER DRIVE BIKE/PEDESTRIAN CONCEPTUAL PLAN

Dan Monks noted that this was the preliminary approval of the conceptual design. This allows the design to be sent to the State for review.

MOTION: Sharyn Brush motioned and Jim Carroll seconded to grant Preliminary Approval to the Kocher Drive Bike/Pedestrian Conceptual Plan. Motion passed unanimously

10. BENN HI PROJECT ED FUND REQUEST

Dan Monks and Michael Harrington stepped forward. They summarized the request by stating a local developer (Jon Hale) had been working with the property owner and other local professionals for a re-development plan for the abandoned building known as the former High School/Middle School on Main Street. The property owner and the developer are committed to a re-development project. They are requesting \$18,000 to fund a Phase I Feasibility Study by a highly reputable consulting firm that specializes in re-development within the State of Vermont. This study will identify the best use for this property.

Donald Campbell asked for confirmation that we would only be investing in the report itself. Tom Jacobs confirmed this. He continued by noting that the Board could be all for the “best use” found in the report but the developer may have a different vision and say no. Dan Monks stated that the money for this study is not tax money. It is Community Block Grant funds that were paid back to the Town. The original money came from the Federal Government. Therefore no tax money is being used and no taxes will need to be raised.

Michael Keane thought this to be a valuable proposition and could be a trigger event. Jim Carroll thought it was the best news he’s heard on that property. Tom Jacobs asked if they have met with the Pleasant Street property owners. Michael Harrington confirmed they have as part of the Catalyst Program.

Jon Hale stepped forward to simply state he was a local businessman and developer. He stated he has his own vision for the property and hopes the Feasibility study matches. He would very much like to do this project.

Dan Monks stated the Feasibility study is a one-month to six-week process. If it found to make sense to move to the next Phase II study then that would begin in October 2015. If Phase II works than Mr. Hale could possibly begin re-development in the Spring of 2016.

Tom Jacobs reminded the Board of the two meeting policy. Dan Monks stated the next regularly scheduled meeting would be 3-weeks away on July 13, 2015. The Board could call a “special meeting” sooner and still comply with the policy without the long delay.

Mr. Monks continued by noting the consultant’s credentials and other successful projects. Mr. Glassberg is the leading re-development consultant in Vermont. He is creative, accomplished and his forte is getting financed. The Town Staff also supports this project based on the developer’s success as well.

Tom Jacobs called for a special meeting to be held on Monday July 29th, 2015 at 5:30pm at the Bennington Town Offices Conference Room. This will be open to public for comment.

11. SET PROPERTY TAX RATES

Dan Monks stated the voters approved the FY 2016 budget presented in March 2015 in the amount of approximately \$10,210,000. Therefore the total proposed tax rate shall be \$1.0631 per \$100 of assessed value. This is an overall tax increase of 5% over last year’s rate. This rate includes all agency requests.

MOTION: Sharyn Brush motioned and Jim Carroll seconded to approve the property tax rates as presented for FY2016. Motion passed unanimously.

12. MANAGER'S REPORT

Dan Monks noted that the Union negotiations are finished. All Union members have signed and ratified the agreement. Tom Jacobs asked that all Board members review the document one last time. Mr. Jacobs then asked this item to be added to the Special Meeting agenda set for Monday July 29th, 2015 for approval. He asked if Town Counsel has reviewed the contract. Mr. Monks confirmed this and stated Counsel was satisfied.

Mr. Monks then asked the Board to acknowledge receipt of the Proposed Revised Town Plan. All members acknowledged receipt of this proposed plan. Mr. Monks then proposed to warn the two required meetings as July 27, 2015 and August 10, 2015 as regularly scheduled Select Board meetings. It was decided that the Planning Commission should set a priority list and present it to the Board at those meetings.

Mr. Monks then announced there was now a vacancy on the Historic Preservation Commission as Ms. Erenhouse decided to resign for personal matters.

Neighborhood Works would like to facilitate a Homeownership and Rehabilitation workshop. The staff is confident that this is a good way to go. This will be addressed in the July meetings.

13. OTHER BUSINESS

Sharyn Brush asked when the Fireworks would take place. The Fourth of July fireworks will take place on the 4th of July at 9:30pm. The rain date would be the 5th of July.

Jim Carroll stated Jim Houran called the Town Office but the wrong number was given. If he is watching, Mr. Carroll asked Mr. Houran please call again.

Michael Keane noted there was a work session for the scorecards held on June 15th. The playback was sent out. He asked that dates be looked at for the next steps.

John McFadden, Michael Keane and Bill Colvin will be meeting again on June 23rd at the Town Office for another review of the surveys expected to go out shortly

Tom Jacobs asked if a copy of the survey could be made available at the Town Offices for anyone who would like to participate that is not on the list. Mr. McFadden stated they would have printed copies made available.

Mr. Jacobs stated this was a valuable meeting and thanked all who participated. It is important to learn from our community.

Tom Jacobs noted there was NO need to go into Executive Session.

Motion: Justin Corcoran motioned and Sharyn Brush seconded to close the meeting. Motion passed unanimously

Respectfully submitted,

Linda E. Bermudez
Secretary