

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

5
6 **SATURDAY, JANUARY 16, 2016**

7
8 **MINUTES**
9

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

13
14 **ALSO PRESENT:** Stuart Hurd, Town Manager; Cassandra Barbeau,
15 Town Clerk; Mike Cutler, CAT-TV Videographer; Michael Harrington,
16 Economic and Community Development Director; Michele Johnson,
17 Human Resources & Contracts Administrator; Larry McLeod, Facilities
18 Manager & Health Officer; Daniel Monks, Assistant Town Manager &
19 Planning Director; Joan Pinsonneault, Director of Collection & Town
20 Treasurer; and Keith Whitcomb, Jr., Bennington Banner Reporter.

21
22 **CITIZENS PRESENT:** Jason Lillie and Jessica Lillie representing WBTN;
23 and Larry Robinson.
24

25 T. Jacobs called the meeting to order at 8:00 A.M and invited the WBTN
26 representatives present to speak. They addressed the Board noting that
27 WBTN provides the emergency alert system for the town and are
28 recognized by FEMA. It provided 36 hours of air time during Tropical
29 Storm Irene. While recently obtaining voter signatures for the ballot they
30 stopped the process as someone indicated to them that they could not
31 petition for the ballot. WBTN has been on the air for 63 years and is a
32 non-profit agency with a 501(c). It has a 10 member board and may be
33 increasing to 13 members. Members serve from Hoosick Falls,
34 Manchester, North Bennington and Bennington. They requested that the
35 Board consider WBTN for a funding allocation of \$7,500. Discussion
36 followed between Board members and Town Manager regarding the
37 agency allocation process, the petitioning process, WBTN's prior ballot

38 process over the past couple of years, and that the Board could add them.
39 S. Hurd noted that he spoke with the new station manager and suggested
40 that submitting compliant petitions would show community support.

41
42 **Motion: J. Carroll made a motion and D. Campbell seconded to allow**
43 **WBTN to be placed on the ballot for a line item funding allocation of**
44 **\$7,500.00.**

45
46 Discussion followed. S. Brush spoke of concerns that it may set a
47 precedence. It was asked if the Board could allow WBTN more time to
48 gather signatures from voters and the Town Clerk explained the petitioning
49 process is set by law; therefore, no. Further discussion regarding the
50 process, concerns of funding requests increasing this year, the Town's own
51 budget and ability to control costs. M. Keane spoke that he was a WBTN
52 board member and stepped off the board eight months ago so needed to
53 abstain.

54
55 **The motion failed; J. Carroll and D. Campbell in favor, four opposed**
56 **and M. Keane abstained.**

57
58 **1. F.Y. '17 Budget Work Session**

59 **A. Recreation Budget**

60 S. Hurd spoke of the increase in the salaries & wages due to the increase
61 in the VT minimum wage. He discussed the payoff of the Recreation
62 Center borrowing before the need to formally bond. The Town has 10
63 years from the time of borrowing. If the Town continues paying \$40,000 it
64 will retire the debt and there will not be a need to bond. He reviewed the
65 line item highlights for the Recreation Department within the FY'17 Budget
66 Presentation. He reminded the Board that the new gator was discussed at
67 the January 9th budget meeting and the department is also budgeting for a
68 new gas powered John Deere with a 72" deck to be used for mowing
69 purposes only. It should have a life of ten years. The lease/purchase
70 price is \$26,800 including all attachments. L. McLeod discussed the
71 continuance of the paving at the lower Willow Parking area. Asphalt is at a
72 good price. He discussed improving the Headwaters Park with a bridge
73 for access from the Beech Street field and several bog bridges throughout
74 the park. The Recreation Department will host a snow-cross snowmobile

75 racing event in February. It is estimated that 3,000 – 5,000 people will
76 attend. The town needs to provide water if the organization needs to
77 make snow; however they bring their own portable bathrooms, take care of
78 necessary police presence and the event will only run during the days.
79 There is less vandalism throughout the grounds since the individuals that
80 vandalized the BMX Track were caught. The life of the pool was brought
81 up by a member of the board and discussed. The pool is well maintained
82 and as necessary and we are one of the few municipalities in the State that
83 has an indoor pool. The Wetlands Management Plan was just submitted.
84 With the addition of the bridges and a kayak launch pad, the park will be
85 very useful to citizens. The parking lot and kiosks will help the public to
86 access and utilize the area safely. There is an increase in the
87 communications budget due to a change from a dial up connection to
88 Comcast internet. Board members discussed concerns of the new mower
89 for only mowing, the price, and contracted services for mowing. L.
90 McLeod explained that the Town's current John Deere tractor is capable of
91 other functions such as post-hole digging, etc. It does not make sense to
92 purchase another Tractor for the additional expense. The new mower will
93 be purchased for mowing only and help to increase the life of the old
94 tractor. The town's fields get tremendous use and we spend a great deal
95 of time maintaining them. Contracted Services for mowing was reviewed.
96 The current vendor is paid \$12,000 for annual contracted mows. The town
97 advises the vendor when the mowing season begins and ends and pays
98 weekly. He is currently mowing the Beach Street field, Willow Park
99 grounds other than the ball fields and Stark Street. Memberships with the
100 Recreation Department are relatively stable, and the programs are
101 advertised throughout the schools.

102

103 **B. General Fund Misc. Budgets**

104 S. Hurd spoke regarding the Senior Citizens Building. The Town recently
105 raised the rent for the space occupied by the Meals on Wheels program to
106 cover their electricity use. VIT has left; however their equipment is still in
107 the building and should be out by the end of February. The bus used by
108 the center is now ten years old. It is being used less and the Town has
109 obtained a proposal from Green Mountain Bus but it raises the user fees.
110 Currently looking at a subsidized ticket cost by selling the vehicle and no
111 longer having the fuel and maintenance costs. The center has reduced its

112 around town trips and moved some to Green Mountain as the costs is only
113 .50 cents per trip. The trip numbers are up but the activity numbers are
114 down. D. Campbell would like to know the costs regarding the bus, trips,
115 etc. S. Hurd spoke that the Town's personnel are not properly utilized
116 regarding the trips. The remaining life for the bus is approximately three to
117 five years if maintained properly. The center currently services 20 – 25
118 seniors daily and a great deal more with trips.

119

120 **C. Bennington Free Library**

121 Lynne Fonteneau McCann, Bennington Free Library Director arrived at the
122 meeting to present the Board with a library fact sheet for the FY 2014-2015
123 and review the library's funding allocation request. 588 children are
124 included within the registered borrowers of the library. She reviewed new
125 programs, the staff, and infrastructure including the need to replace the roof
126 in the future as well as the heating system. The building became the
127 Bennington Free Library in 1865 and has the original roof with the addition
128 of the Main Street roof in 1936. She spoke to the increase in salaries due
129 to the VT minimum wage increase and the increases in the health, workers
130 compensation and liability insurances. The library currently employs 23
131 staff members. Five are full-time and the rest are part-time. Grants are
132 down. Fundraising goals were increased a few years ago but are at
133 capacity. The library's computers are on a five years life cycle. Many are
134 older than that. The library does receive a discount from Dell on all
135 equipment. The pension is funded by staff. Profits and non-profits pay a
136 user fee to use the meeting rooms. The Select Board would like to see a
137 capital plan in the future that includes the roof and heating system.

138

139 **D. Better Bennington Corporation**

140 John Shannahan arrived at the meeting to discuss the Better Bennington
141 Corporation's (BBC's) work plan, budget requests and impacts. The BBC is
142 looking for a \$3,000 per year waiver on rent, is asking the Town to take
143 over maintenance and insure the kiosk, is requesting that the Police
144 Department services at future events be at no costs (estimated
145 \$4,000/year), and is seeking the restoration of funding for a part-time
146 downtown maintenance person employed by the BBC at \$13,430. The
147 events are free to the entire community and the BBC does not receive any
148 revenues other than from vendors. These events do require police

149 presence which is an overtime expense. The kiosk is currently insured
150 and maintained by the BBC. It is was donated to the downtown
151 approximately 20 years ago and is well utilized. It requires cleaning,
152 painting, necessary repairs and items need to be posted and removed
153 accordingly. There was discussion regarding the Merchants Park. J.
154 Shannahan spoke that much has been and is being done. Two architects
155 from Centerline recently completed the blueprints. Dick Cutler has
156 stepped up to be the head contractor and the blueprints have been
157 forwarded to the electrician. The BBC will begin working on the campaign
158 for funding. It is a community wide project and will not be funded by
159 taxpayers. All work has been volunteer until the final blueprints were
160 established. The BBC currently operates with 1½ positions and
161 volunteers. The additional part time position requests will enable the
162 Director to come in off the streets to handle other tasks. J. Shannahan
163 reviewed some of the events handled by the BBC as well as events that
164 are not part of the BBC; however, there has been confusion that they are
165 under the BBC's umbrella such as the Bennington Car Show. No matter
166 what the events are, the BBC does not make money. It actually loses
167 money. These events are taken on as part of the downtown processes if
168 the merchants want them. Membership is at 278. Sponsorships are
169 down with the economy. Years ago the BBC selected and is a member of
170 the National Main Street Program and goes by that program's guidelines.
171 This is a great program and it advertises and advocates for the BBC.
172 Twenty-three other towns in the state adopted this program and its
173 services. The BBC defines a certain district and the municipality's role
174 goes beyond that of the district. The Town does not necessarily advocate
175 for the merchants; therefore, that's the role of the BBC. The rate is
176 \$.01915 on the tax rate for businesses. Tax is focused only on the
177 business portion of a downtown buildings. The BBC is looking to expand
178 the taxing district in the future. There was Select Board discussion in
179 support of the budget.

180

181 **Motion: S. Brush made a motion and D. Campbell seconded to**
182 **accept the BBC Budget as presented. Motion passed unanimously.**

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185

186 **E. Paran Recreations, Inc.**
187 Marlene Driscoll and Bob Howe arrived at the meeting to present the Board
188 with additional information regarding their special request for funding and
189 discussed the Lake House at Lake Paran project. B. Howe explained
190 facts and history of Lake Paran. It is owned by the state, is an artificial
191 lake that is 35 acres big and the land borders North Bennington,
192 Shaftsbury and Bennington. Paran Recreations, Inc. represents five acres
193 on the shore of the lake and has been in business for over 50 years. The
194 organization was funded on the swimming side. Approximately 5,000
195 people go each year and half of them are from Bennington. The old
196 bathhouse was cement and deteriorated. The septic system was removed
197 and a grinder system installed that now pumps into the Bennington Sewer
198 system. Last Fall Paran Recreations, Inc. began taking down the old
199 building. The cost to dispose of the painted cement blocks was \$8,000.
200 The required state permits were obtained. They have been working with
201 Jeff Goldstone, Architect and James Goodine of Blue Heron Construction
202 Corporation on this project. The cost for the new building totals \$187,000
203 and the Southwestern Vermont Career Development Center students are
204 constructing the building which is worth approximately \$150,000. The
205 new building will be open by Memorial Day weekend through Labor Day.
206 This project began last September. M. Driscoll displayed her chart of an
207 average season scheduled and spoke of the programs and events offered.

208
209 **Motion: D. Campbell made a motion and S. Brush seconded to**
210 **approve the special request as presented.**

211
212 Discussion followed with M. Keane reminding the board that the Town is
213 trying to attract younger people and families to our community and this is
214 an admirable project. Other members spoke in favor. B. Howe reviewed
215 membership fees for a family, single person, business and the
216 memberships they give. He also explained that this project will allow
217 utilization for a four season facility and will have devices for security.

218
219 **Motion passed unanimously.**
220
221
222

223 **Annual Marketing Budget**

224 M. Harrington presented and reviewed his annual marketing
225 recommendations and Town-wide Marketing Budget. There was
226 discussion regarding the outreach, visibility and maintenance of it. He
227 gave an example of advertising on buses. It would be approximately
228 \$1,000 per bus per month in the Albany area. He further discussed
229 tradeshow and the partnering with others to maximize assets but
230 important not to duplicate efforts. The Board discussed amounts to budget
231 in the local marketing budget and amounts to budget in the regional
232 marketing. They discussed recruitment efforts and the need for a
233 marketing strategy.

234

235 **Motion: M. Keane made a motion and S. Brush seconded to approve**
236 **the Economic & Development Director's marketing requests totaling**
237 **\$25,000.00 as outlined.**

238

239 Discussion followed with J. McFadden sharing concerns of additional
240 considerations to the budget such as the ECD's and the radio console.
241 There was discussion to amend the motion from approve to consider. The
242 Town is internally looking at different directions from the Economic
243 Development Director's Department such as recruitment efforts and
244 expansions, project implementation and marketing.

245

246 **M. Keane withdrew the motion and S. Brush seconded.**

247

248 It was agreed by the Board that they needed to reconvene regarding
249 Economic Marketing Budgets. The Board agreed to schedule another
250 budget meeting on Monday, January 18th at 6:00 PM at the Bennington
251 Police Department's Conference Room.

252

253 S. Hurd will get back to the Board with the Capital Plan that lays out all
254 major projects for the Town such as the armory, and consolidated highway
255 garage. D. Campbell would like to look at the agency funding for the
256 future and the creation of a guidance policy for long range planning.

257

258 **Motion: M. Keane made a motion and J. Carroll seconded to adjourn**
259 **the meeting. Motion passed unanimously.**

260 The meeting adjourned at 11:55 A.M.

261

262 Respectfully Submitted

263

264

265 Michele M. Johnson