

**TOWN OF BENNINGTON
2017 ANNUAL TOWN MEETING
BENNINGTON FIRE FACILITY
130 RIVER STREET -- 3RD Floor
BENNINGTON, VERMONT 05201**

MONDAY, MARCH 06, 2017

MINUTES

MODERATOR: Jason Morrissey

ALSO PRESENT: Tom Jacobs – Chair; Michael Keane – Vice Chair; Jim Carroll; Justin Corcoran; Donald Campbell; Jeanne Conner; Jeannie Jenkins; Stuart Hurd, Town Manager; Cassandra Barbeau, Town Clerk; Dan Monks, Zoning Administrator & Assistant Town Manager; Joan Pinsonneault, Treasurer; Mike McDonough, Economic & Community Development Director; Michele Johnson, Human Resources & Contracts Administrator; Keith Whitcomb, Bennington Banner; BNN News; CAT-TV; (145) Citizens; Linda E. Bermudez – Recording Secretary

Absent: *None*

At 7:00 P.M., **Jason Morrissey** called the meeting to order.

Congressman Peter Welch was introduced and asked to lead the Pledge of Allegiance which was recited by all.

Congressman Welch discussed how current times in Washington, DC are tough and the country is now divided over many subjects. The challenge is that the framework is broken. It is a joy to represent Vermont because we have a tradition of fairing problems. There is nothing so wrong with America that what's right, can't fix.

Congressman Welch opened up for questions. Adrienne (Bennington resident) asked if signing petitions make a difference. Congressman Welch stated it does.

Another Bennington resident (unidentified) asked for his thoughts on oil pipelines. Congressman Welch stated we need to move forward with renewable energy as much as we can.

Another Bennington resident (unidentified) asked what happens when the Federal Administration doesn't agree and the head of the EPA doesn't believe in global warming. Congressman Welch stated it is a real challenge. Your concerns are real and the divisions are significant but this is your democracy. It is important for you to keep an eye on us and stay involved. Let's do what we can and let's do it together.

Jason Morrissey then read the Town warning:

-WARNING-
TOWN OF BENNINGTON
2017 ANNUAL TOWN MEETING

The residents of the Town of Bennington qualified by law to vote in Town Meeting are hereby notified and warned to meet at the Bennington Fire Facility on River Street (Lincoln Street entrance) in said Town on Monday, March 6, 2017, at 7:00 p.m., or immediately following the Bennington School District's Annual meeting should that run over, to transact the business specified to be done from the floor.

If you are a resident of the Town of Bennington, intend to be present at the meeting and are hearing impaired, arrangements will be made for a sign interpreter to be present at this meeting. For necessary arrangements, please contact Stuart A. Hurd, Town Manager at the Bennington Town Offices, 205 South Street, P.O. Box 469, Bennington, VT - (802) 442-1037 no later than Friday, February 17, 2017.

Following the completion of such business, the Meeting will stand adjourned to Tuesday, March 7, 2017, at The Bennington Fire Facility on River Street (Lincoln Street entrance). The Polls are open from 7:00 a.m. until 7:00 p.m. for the election of officers and voting on all ballot articles specified. However, those on the checklist to vote in the Village of North Bennington shall vote for the election of officers and on all ballot articles at the North Bennington Village Office on Main Street in North Bennington. The Bennington Fire Facility above mentioned, is hereby established as the central polling place for those on the checklist to vote in said Bennington. Residents of Bennington and North Bennington may register to vote at the Town Clerk's Office, 205 South Street, Bennington, Vermont. Eligible residents registering on Election Day must do so at the polling place where they will cast their Town Meeting ballot.

Mr. Morrissey then reminded those present that the only binding decisions from the floor this evening are for Article #1 and Article #2.

BUSINESS TO BE TRANSACTED FROM THE FLOOR

Monday, March 6, 2017

7:00 P.M.

ARTICLE 1. TOWN REPORT: *To hear the report of Town Officers and to take appropriate action thereon.*

Motion: **Motion from the floor (Jacquie Prue) to accept the Town Report as submitted. Motion was seconded by the floor (Aaron Sawyer). Motion passed unanimously (verbally).**

ARTICLE 2. SELECT BOARD MEMBERS COMPENSATION: *To determine what compensation shall be paid to the Town Select Board Members.*

It was discussed that the compensation for the FY'17 budget was set at \$1,400 per year (per member) and was level funded and set for the same in FY'18.

Motion: **Motion from the floor (Bob Black) to approve Select Board compensation as submitted. Motion was seconded by the floor (Aaron Sawyer). Motion passed unanimously (verbally).**

ARTICLE 3. OTHER BUSINESS: *To transact such other proper business when met.*

Michael Thompson, North Bennington wanted to have a non-binding resolution read and voted upon this evening that designates Bennington as a town of inclusivity of all humanity. Laura Block, Christopher Gagne, Mary Garisch, Tom Hailey, Bob Block, Jeannie Rainer & Vicky Lampron stepped forward to each read a section of this resolution.

Jason Morrissey stated that the resolution put forth this evening voids Federal law and therefore is found to be non-germane.

Mary Garisch stated the Moderator must state this as a non-binding and is advisory only.

Joe Hall stated sanctuary cities are contrary to Federal law; that should be the end of the discussion.

Mr. Morrissey again stated the resolution was non-germane and suggested the resolution be amended to remove a provision contrary to Federal law.

Motion: **Motion from the floor (verbally) to adjourn. Motion was seconded by the floor (verbally).**

Motion was DEFEATED (verbally).

Meeting discussion continued.

Jim Carroll questioned the definition of a sanctuary city. Mr. Morrissey stated his position was not to have an opinion but to simply moderate the meeting.

A resident who wished not to identify herself stated she understood that Federal government makes laws and then the States can make their own. If the Federal government enforces theirs then we back off and follow them.

The Town Manager stated that the last three lines are beyond the Town's power and parview. He suggested amending the non-binding resolution to strike the last three lines.

Kiah Morris stepped forward to remind everyone that this is a non-binding resolution. It would not engage local law enforcement. They are not asking for those changes to take place, it is just an expression of the will of the people. People have a right to be heard.

Jeff Vickers stepped forward and stated this was a very one-sided vote this evening. There was great support present, however those who may oppose had no warning this resolution would be read and/or voted upon. Therefore, those who would oppose are not represented.

Motion: Motion from the floor (verbally) to amend resolution as presented by the Town Manager to strike the last three lines of the Inclusivity of all Humanity Resolution. Motion was seconded by the floor (verbally). Motion passed (verbally).

Will Stuart identified himself as a Bradford Street resident. He read a statement regarding the noise, pollution, traffic and vibrations he experiences at this house due to the tanker trucks filling up at Morgan Springs. He stated he has complained multiple times to the Town Manager and Terrance Morse, Water Resources Superintendent but has seen no help. Mr. Stuart asked why the revenues were not included in the town report. He feels the Town Manager is constantly hiring others to do his work. He would like to see a Mayoral system of Town government. You must go so Bennington can grow.

Kate Trafton identified herself as a Sunrise Family Center Board member. It is a pleasure to serve and give back. Their organization has served over 800 families. Please vote Yes for article #14.

Forest Wyman Director of the Bennington Rescue Squad stated this is the first time their organization was on the ballot. They are a 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 365 days per year critical care support organization. There is currently no direct funding from Bennington. Please vote Yes on article #17.

Richard Dundas stepped forward on behalf for the Bennington Free Clinic. This organization is primarily volunteer; however they do need funding to support such things as medications and lab tests for those who use the clinic. Please vote Yes.

The Manager wanted to clarify some questions raised earlier. The Town of Bennington sells approximately 100,000 gallons of water per day from a 2.1 Million gallon per day facility. There is no danger to our water supply by selling this water. We are looking into different solutions for some of the complaints of noise etc that have come in. This includes the development of an off-site loading location. The revenue generated by the sales are used to mitigate the water rates each year. Last year the water sales totaled approximately \$65,000.

The Manager continued by noting that the Rescue Squad is on the ballot every year regarding tax-exempt status. This support saves them just over \$16,000 each year. Additionally, the Town

of Bennington Police Dispatch handles all of their 6,000 calls per year. If they were to handle these calls themselves or contract out it would be much more expensive. The Town has been very supportive of this organization.

Pat Kinney stated he was a former Town employee. He questioned how many bonds the Town has. He agreed the Highway Department needs a new facility but questioned if it should be in a swamp. Mr. Kinney also questioned if the Town could get more money for the water it sells.

The Manager stated the Bond for the DPW Facility would be incorporated into this year's budget and have no impact on taxes this year or in the future.

The Manager continued by reading a resolution regarding Multiple Myeloma Month.

Mary Morrissey then stepped forward to read a similar resolution adopted by the State of Vermont recognizing March 2017 as Multiple Myeloma Month.

Jan Bopp stepped forward and identified himself as a Multiple Myeloma survivor. He lives each day with great gratitude. There is hope. He then encouraged all adults to get the protein test.

Mary Gerisch stepped forward and noted that only the amendment to the Inclusivity of All Humanity resolution was accepted. The resolution itself was not voted upon.

Motion: Motion from the floor (verbally) to accept the Inclusivity of All Humanity resolution as amended and approved. Motion was seconded by the floor (verbally). Motion passed (verbally).

Maryanne St. John stepped forward on behalf of BROCC. They helped 1700 individuals in different ways such as fuel assistance, weatherization, housing, food, tax preparation, healthcare etc. We are grateful for community's support in the past. Please vote Yes on article #10.

Cathy Aliberti stepped forward on behalf of Green Mountain RSVP. They work to match volunteers with non-profit organization including museums & hospitals as well as provide transportation to doctor appointments, assist in tax preparations, and coordinate meals on wheels recipients. Please vote Yes on the ballot.

Andy Laportain stepped forward on behalf of Council on Aging. They work to keep seniors independent and include such services as counseling (both mental and financial), personal care, healthcare insurance and meals on wheels. Please vote Yes on article #11.

Resident who refused to identify herself spoke of snow plow issues. She cannot shovel her driveway because she is now too old. It then becomes icy. She feels it is not necessary to plow the sidewalks. People can just walk over it. If the Town feels they need to plow sidewalks can they redirect the snow?

Michael McDonough stepped forward to commend those present tonight. We were able to do something that Washington hasn't. There was a passionate issue on the floor and although we disagreed, we were able to find resolution and move forward. We should be proud.

Gail, Bennington resident, stepped forward on behalf of the Visiting Nurses and Hospice. She had been a recipient of their services. This organization does great work and comes in during desperate times. Please support them and vote Yes.

**BUSINESS TO BE TRANSACTED BY BALLOT
TUESDAY, MARCH 7, 2017
THE POLLS TO BE OPEN FROM 7:00 A.M. TO 7:00 P.M.
AT THE POLLING PLACES SPECIFIED ABOVE**

SELECT BOARD ELECTION. Two Select Board Members residing in the Town shall be elected for terms of three (3) years.

ARTICLE 1. Shall the Town appropriate for the next fiscal year, July 1, 2017 through June 30, 2018, the total sum of \$12,450,600.00 consisting of the following: \$3,996,990.00 for the laying out, maintaining, and repairing of the highways and bridges of the Town; and \$8,453,610.00 for the payment of the following: Any indebtedness not otherwise specifically provided for, interest on indebtedness, legally authorized State and County taxes, the prosecution and defense of the common rights and interests of the inhabitants of the Town, and for other necessary incidental expenses?

The proposed budget includes \$60,000.00 for fire equipment, \$20,000.00 for parking improvements, \$5,000.00 for regional economic development, and \$402,750.00 for healthcare reserve and workers compensation insurance, any unexpended portion of which will be reserved to subsequent years for that purpose.

YES
NO

ARTICLE 2. Shall the bonds of the Town of Bennington in an amount not to exceed \$3.2 million be issued for the purpose of purchasing and renovating a public works facility at 78 Bowen Road in the Town of Bennington?

YES
NO

ARTICLE 3. Shall the Town of Bennington grant tax exempt status as provided in T.32 §3840 to the Bennington Rescue Squad, Inc. for its property #49514600 for the tax listing years April 1, 2017, through and including March 31, 2022?

YES
NO

ARTICLE 4. Shall the voters increase the F.Y. 2018 General Fund by the sum of \$2,500.00 for Bennington County Association Against Child Abuse?
YES
NO

ARTICLE 5. Shall the voters increase the F.Y. 2018 General Fund by the sum of \$2,500.00 for Turning Point Center of Bennington?
YES
NO

ARTICLE 6. Shall the voters increase the F.Y. 2018 General Fund by the sum of \$5,000.00 for Project Against Violent Encounters?
YES
NO

ARTICLE 7. Shall the voters increase the F.Y. 2018 General Fund by the sum of \$7,000.00 for Vermont Center For Independent Living?
YES
NO

ARTICLE 8. Shall the voters increase the F.Y. 2018 General Fund by the sum of \$7,200.00 for Green Mountain Retired and Senior Volunteer Program?
YES
NO

ARTICLE 9. Shall the voters increase the F.Y. 2018 General Fund by the sum of \$7,500.00 for Bennington Free Clinic?
YES
NO

ARTICLE 10. Shall the voters increase the F.Y. 2018 General Fund by the sum of \$7,500.00 for BROCC - Community Action In Southwestern Vermont?
YES
NO

ARTICLE 11. Shall the voters increase the F.Y. 2018 General Fund by the sum of \$7,500.00 for Southwestern Vermont Council on Aging, Inc.?
YES
NO

ARTICLE 12. Shall the voters increase the F.Y. 2018 General Fund by the sum of \$10,000.00 for The Tutorial Center?
YES
NO

ARTICLE 13. Shall the voters increase the F.Y. 2018 General Fund by the sum of \$11,000.00 for Bennington Project Independence?
YES
NO

ARTICLE 14. Shall the voters increase the F.Y. 2018 General Fund by the sum of \$15,000.00 for Sunrise Family Resource Center?

YES
NO

ARTICLE 15. Shall the voters increase the F.Y. 2018 General Fund by the sum of \$21,600.00 for Bennington Area Visiting Nurse Association & Hospice?

YES
NO

ARTICLE 16. Shall the voters increase the F.Y. 2018 General Fund by the sum of \$25,000.00 for Bennington County Coalition for the Homeless?

YES
NO

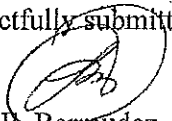
ARTICLE 17. Shall the voters increase the F.Y. 2018 General Fund by the sum of \$207,459.00 for the Bennington Rescue Squad?

YES
NO

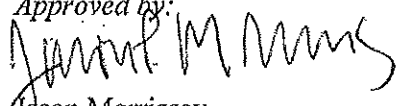
Jason Morrissey, Moderator asked to close the meeting.

Motion: Motion from the floor to close the meeting. Motion was seconded from the floor (*verbally*). Motion passed unanimously (*verbally*).

Respectfully submitted,


Linda E. Bermudez
Secretary

Approved by:


Jason Morrissey
Moderator