

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

MONDAY, APRIL 24, 2017

MINUTES

BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT: Tom Jacobs; Jim Carroll; Jeanne Conner; Jeannie Jenkins; Donald Campbell; Chad Gordon; Carson Thurber

Absent: None

ALSO PRESENT: Stuart Hurd, Town Manager; Dan Monks, Zoning Administrator & Assistant Town Manager; Linda E. Bermudez – Secretary; (17) Citizens

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

1. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

2. CONSENT AGENDA (A-C)

A) Minutes – April 10, 2017

Jeanne Conner noted one spelling correction: Lynn Greene

B) Warrants

C) 2017 Liquor License Renewals

There were no questions.

MOTION: Jim Carroll motioned and Jeanne Conner seconded to accept and approve the Minutes of April 10, 2017 as well as the warrants and Liquor License Applications/Renewals as submitted. Motion passed unanimously

3. CITIZENS

Mary Morrissey stepped forward and wanted confirmation the Select Board still acts as the Water Board for Bennington Municipal Water System. They confirmed this. Ms. Morrissey continued by stating she recently learned at a visit in Montpelier that there are (8) priority projects listed at the State level for Bennington's Water System. She asked if the Select Board was aware of this and how they plan to move forward.

The Town Manager clarified by stating that Agency of Natural Resources asked the Town to list our top priority projects for the next 8-10 years. This is so the State can be on the forefront and prepared for when any Federal and/or State Grant monies becomes available in the future and to understand what those numbers are. The largest priority project is the Water Line Extensions due to PFOA, which is expected to be of no cost to the Town or the ratepayers. Another priority project is the upgrade of the Wastewater Treatment Plant (sewer not water). This has been, and continues to be discussed with the Board as well as the public and will be going to bond in October 2017. Some of the other projects listed are either already planned for or are future “wish list” priorities set by the Town, not the State.

David Crowley stepped forward with questions and alternate suggestions for a proposed roundabout at the Bennington College/Silk Road intersection. Tom Jacobs stated that had been placed on the State’s priority by the Agency of Transportation (not the Town) due to the volume of accidents in the past. Representative Corcoran was able to secure planning money for its study and design. There is no construction at this time.

Jacqueline Boucher, resident of Bradford Street stepped forward with concerns regarding the Bradford Street Community Garden and the Vermont Pure/Morgan Springs Contract. She continued by reviewing the history of the community garden noting it began in 2008 however has had little activity in the last 3 years. She believes it has been poorly managed and as “Town Property” it should have been voted upon to become community garden.

Ms. Boucher recalled an incident where a truck broke down near the garden and had leaked anti-freeze. She believes the garden is now contaminated. It looks like a farm and she would like it to go back to grass.

The Manager stated he met Paul Miller on site last week to have soil samples taken and tested. Ms. Boucher disputed the Manager’s claim and does not believe samples were taken.

Continuing with her concerns Ms. Boucher recited the number of gallons sold to VT Pure from Morgan Springs and the per gallon rate received by the Town. She then questioned who had the authority to sign that contract (14) years ago and believes it is corrupt and been violated multiple times. She will be going to a higher power.

A brief recess was taken

Jenny Rozycki, Director of the North Bennington McCullough Library stepped forward. She was excited to announce the McCullough Library had joined the Catamount Library Network at the end of March 2017. This joins 15-17 Libraries around Vermont and expands your selection and resources. For example, through this network someone could arrange a “hold” on a book or make purchase suggestion. She encourages everyone to join.

Additionally, Ms. Rozycki wanted to announce and invite the public to their “Open Community Meeting” on May 6, 2017 at 2:00pm. They are looking for some feedback and suggestions for their “5-Year Plan”.

Mike Bethel moved forward and spoke in support of Jacqueline Boucher.

Jeannie Jenkins reminded everyone that these are to be civil discourses. Everyone must show respect to each other.

Tom Jacobs stated that the VT Pure/Morgan Spring contract is valid. After a recent site visit along with Jim Carroll, the Manager and Donald Campbell to hear the residents’ concerns, alternate loading areas are being considered. Jim Carroll stated there is not a blind eye turned at this. Nothing happens fast.

No other citizens spoke this evening.

4. BENNINGTON COUNTY HABITAT FOR HUMANITY

Susan Sommer and Dave Low of Habitat for Humanity and Brian Coon of the Mt. Anthony CDC Building & Trade School stepped forward to present. They have been working on the North Branch Street development. Ms. Sommer gave a history of the Habitat for Humanity's organization. They were organized 47 years ago first in Georgia. The Bennington County affiliate started in 1997 and built their first home in 1999. To date there have been 23 homes build in Bennington County by the organization.

Mr. Low continued by stating the partnerships are the foundation of their success. No interest loans, grants, donation, and thousands of volunteer hours etc. The first homeowner on Corcoran's Way is now in their new home. Five more single family homes will be added there.

Brian Coon spoke of the students helping to build these homes from start to finish. They are excited each day to go to work. The Trades need more tradesmen and this is very good training for them. Mr. Coon looks forward to a continued partnership.

Tom Jacobs and the remaining Board members thanked Habitat for all that they do. It is an incredible organization.

5. BENNINGTON AREA CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

Jonah Spivak and Matthew Harrington stepped forward to present. Discussion surrounded the 2020-year plan of regionalizing chamber efforts. Over the next three years they will combine efforts for all for all of the Shires; from Pownal to Dorset. Bennington will remain the core and they are dedicated to not losing sight of it. It is an exciting time for Bennington.

Matt Harrington noted the Chamber has completed the Community Calendar and will be unveiling the new area Regional Guide this week. This guide covers the Bromley to Bennington area.

Jeanne Conner asked how the Welcome Center works with this. Mr. Spivak explained the State contracts the Chamber of Commerce to run/oversee it. There are (9) Chamber employees, mostly local residents, who work and manage that location. Over 114,000 people came to the Welcome Center last year. They have various information, pamphlets and showcase displays for the surrounding businesses.

Carson Thurber asked what events the Chamber is involved in. Mr. Harrington cited the GarlicFest, Winter Wing and Brewfest, and the area Guide Launch parties. The newest idea is to celebrate many of the small businesses. We will help organize ribbon cuttings, anniversary parties and continue with the mixers showcasing different businesses. Mr. Spivak continued by stating there are also many other events that are not "Chamber events", however they work closely with the other organizations to help make them a success.

From the audience, Kathy Hoisington stated if they really wanted to make a difference they should address the school issues in Bennington. Mr. Harrington stated they have been working with local schools for Career Month as well as members of the Chamber sitting on the Act 46 Committee.

Jim Carroll encouraged the Chamber to work with Downtown Alliance and Mike McDonough to get a hold of Bill Colvin to get an anchor store in the Putnam Redevelopment project.

6. SOLAR SITING UPDATE

Dan Monks presented an update on the request of the Select Board to form a list of “preferred sites” for solar development. Mr. Monks stated the list/map is almost complete. At this point they believe they have identified the preferred locations, however have not contacted the property owners to see if they were interested in being on the list. The draft will first go before the Planning Commission for review. Once they have reviewed it and commented it will come before the Select Board for adoption. During that time, it will also be available to the public for review.

Donald Campbell asked how this fits with the Bennington County Regional Commission (BCRC). Mr. Monks explained the solar map that BCRC developed simply looks at where there would be good solar gain. The Bennington Solar Committee took that map and narrowed down the site suggestions to see which fit into the Town Plan and have no other environmental conflicts (wetlands etc). We hope to be the first in the State to have specified/preferred mapping for our Town. To clarify further, Mr. Monks stated this would be for ground mounted projects only; not rooftop/building mounted.

Mary Morrissey expressed concern that this would be in unison with the Town Plan. Mr. Monks stated this would be and, if adopted by the Select Board, would be part of the Renewable Energy Amendment to the Town Plan.

Gerry Bird, Souhshire Community Solar stated many of the downtown businesses are interested in rooftop solar. However, there are concerns regarding the weight and structural reinforcements that would be needed. Mr. Bird thinks Bennington could be an energy efficiency signature town. He encouraged working with Efficiency Vermont to see what more could be done. Mr. Bird also thinks the local contractors are behind in technological installations. The CDC Trade students should be taught how to install solar panels and heat pumps.

Kathy Hoisington stated she supports renewable energy but doesn't support developers selling the energy credits to anywhere but here.

7. MANAGER'S REPORT

The Manager requested action for the Four Corners North request for road closure for the Home BrewFest to be held on Saturday August 05, 2017. The road closure request is for 8:00am (to allow for setup) to 5:30pm (to allow for clean-up).

Motion: Carson Thurber moved and Donald Campbell seconded a motion to approve the Four Corners North Road Closure Request for Home Brewfest 2017 as presented. Motion passed unanimously

The Manager continued by informing the Board and the public of a PFOA update meeting held by the Agency of Natural Resources at 7:00pm on Thursday April 27, 2017 at Bennington College.

Additionally, the Manager wanted to announce that today the Town was awarded a \$50,000 grant by the State of Vermont for the Park @ 336.

8. OTHER BUSINESS

Jeanne Conner stated she attended the Turning Point Vigil last Saturday. It was very well done and inspiring.

Donald Campbell feels the Select Board needs to continue working on how they handle the "Citizens" portion of the agenda. Tom Jacobs agreed to continue working on this.

Jim Carroll stated it is impermissible to call anyone a liar.

Jeannie Jenkins announced the "Y"'s Summer Camp Brochure is now available. It will be distributed to the three elementary schools and the library. Financial Aid is available.

Chad Gordon discussed the many sports events taking place this week (home games). He also briefly discussed the clothing and textile recycling fundraiser for the Music Department.

There was no other business this evening

Tom Jacobs stated there was a need for Executive Session.

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

9. Executive Session

- A. Contracts
- B. Litigation

Respectfully submitted,

Linda E. Bermudez
Secretary