

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

MONDAY, JUNE 12, 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; Michael McDonough, Community Development Director; Linda E. Bermudez – Secretary; (18) Citizens

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

1. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

2. CONSENT AGENDA (A-C)

A) Minutes – May 17, 2017 / May 22, 2017 / June 5, 2017

Jeanne Conner asked that the addition of “possible tree work” be added to the minutes of June 5, 2017. The Manager (recorded the minutes that day) recalled that portion of the meeting and agreed.

B) Warrants

MOTION: **Jim Carroll motioned and Donald Campbell seconded to accept and approve the Minutes of May 17, May 22, & June 5, 2017 as amended well as the warrants as submitted. Motion passed unanimously (Chad Gordon abstained from May 17th Vote ONLY; Jeannie Jenkins abstained from the May 22nd Vote ONLY; Donald Campbell abstained from the June 5th Vote ONLY)**

C) Bank of Bennington Proclamation

Donald Campbell read the proclamation.

MOTION: **Jim Carroll motioned and Donald Campbell seconded to accept and sign the Bank of Bennington Proclamation as submitted. Motion passed unanimously**

Donald Campbell stated they have been a very generous partner. They seem to touch just about everything in town.

3. CITIZENS

Chris Bates stepped forward to thank the Town Manager & Assistant Town Manager Dan Monks as well as the Green Mountain Club. The new White Rocks parking lot is great. Town employees were wonderful during the work. Tom Jacobs stated he believes it deserves some recognition and a ribbon cutting would be a great idea.

No citizens spoke this evening.

4. ACCOUNTABLE COMMUNITY FOR HEALTH

Jennifer Fels stepped forward to present. Overall American Healthcare needs to be reformed. The first step is defining what health is. Ms. Fels continued by giving an overview of the organization and going over their model. Different factors of health need to be looked at including health behaviors, clinical care, social & economic factors and physical environment. She noted they have partnered with several other community organizations such as Shires Housing, Council on Aging, SVMC and Bennington Free Clinic to address the different aspects of a healthy community.

Jeanne Conner asked why they haven't partnered with the schools. Ms. Fels stated they are a new organization and some things take time. They have however begun that dialogue and look forward to partnering with them in near future.

Stephanie Lane stepped forward as the Director of Shires Housing. She described the housing connection to good health. A new program (S.A.S.H.) has been developed to help those who are elderly or challenged remain independent. They are working with different social services and non-profits to ensure they have a healthy living plan, access to healthy living classes such as Tai-Chi, Heart Health and addiction prevention. As well as working with VNA, SVMC and Council on Aging. There are over 450 participants in Bennington County. This program was able to save each participant over \$1,500 in Medicaid benefits.

Jeannie Jenkins asked if they are able to serve all those who need it. Ms. Lane stated at this time they are not.

Susan Scorbatti of Bennington College stepped forward to speak of their partnership. They have been working with the Food Clinic over the last several months. They have identified a gap in the Free Lunch program. Each year the program ends August 4th leaving a large gap for children in need before it starts again in September. Therefore, they have developed "Harvest for Kids". This program will feed children in need for the entire month of August. If enough money is raised they will continue the program throughout the year.

Ms. Scorbatti noted there is a great need for volunteers for this new program. Please go to benningtoncares.org to find out how to volunteer or about team challenges.

Billie Lynn Allard, SVMC (Ambulatory Care) stepped forward to discuss the new Transitional Care Program. When a patient is discharged they are often overwhelmed or don't understand their discharge instructions and/or medication instructions. This often results in a return to the hospital. Through this program a nurse is now assigned to the patient for an on-going relationship for up to three months to assist them along the way. This has already reduced hospital re-entry by 50%.

Kathy Vogel, State Health Department stepped forward and asked the Select Board to consider "health" in every decision they make. Every decision across the board affects health including but not limited to transportation and housing.

CITIZENS (CONTINUED)

At this time Tom Jacobs apologized. He did not realize two sign-up sheets were available for those who wished to speak this evening. He re-opened Citizen Comments to allow those who were overlooked.

William Stewart stepped forward. He noticed (and videotaped) recently several people gathering at Morgan Springs for a discussion including Town Manager. He would like to know what this was about. The Manager stated they met on-site to discuss the truck traffic and different potential solutions. One solution is to develop a new off-site loading area. The location has not been determined yet, however there are at least two options, potentially three.

Tom Jacobs asked Mr. Stewart to continue to stay in touch with the Select Board and Town Management as this continues to develop.

Mr. Stewart then asked why the Town of Bennington doesn't build a bottling company and keep the money they (the bottling companies) make for ourselves instead of selling it to Albany company.

The Manager stated that the Town has looked into this and tried to entice someone to open that business but have had no takers as of yet. It is a costlier business than most think to bottle the water. In addition to the actual plant operations costs they will have to offer healthcare for employees etc.

Mike Bethel moved forward to ask the Select Board to not sell the 44 acres on Middle Pownal Road. If the Town holds onto this land for another 40-50 years we could harvest the wood again. This option would not have a negative impact on the neighbors.

The Manager stated the Town has sent out an "Invitation to Bid" to the four neighboring property owners (only). They are due by June 15th, 2017. They will then come before the Select Board and the public for approval. The Board does not have to accept the bids. Either decision, the public has 30 days to appeal.

Pat Kinney approached the Board and asked if they knew what people on the street were saying. He then asked if the Sewer Bond in the Fall would fix all of the plant's problems.

Rose Halpin asked what was happening with the Senior Bus. The Manager stated it had been sold. The money would go into "Sale of Fixed Assets" unless the Board designates it to the Senior Budget. Ms. Halpin thought that was not fair because the Seniors raised the money to buy it. The Manager stated that was true, however once purchased it became the Town's property and responsibility for repairs etc over the years. It is now at a point where it will no longer pass inspection and had to be sold. The Town has begun a new relationship with Green Mountain Bus service for the Seniors. Ms. Halpin complained there are only trips once a month. We used to be able to go whenever/wherever we wanted. The Manager stated it is the responsibility of the Manager of the Senior Center to coordinate when/where/how many trips with Green Mountain Buses. This is a new program and will continue to develop.

Mike Bethel asked the Select Board to go to the Senior Center to speak to the Seniors to see what they need.

Jeannie Jenkins asked if this new bus service contract is still in the trial period. The Manager stated it was. Green Mountain Bus and Council on Aging subsidize both short and longer trips for the seniors. It is a six-month commitment period. In October, we will receive feedback for this program.

5. TIF – AN OUTLINE OF THE PROCESS

Dan Monks presented the overview of the TIF process. According to Fred Kinney of VEPC (Vermont Economic Progress Council) to obtain a TIF designation there are 9 steps as follows:

- 1) Learn about the program – The Town is in this process now.
- 2) Inform VEPC of municipal interest in the program
- 3) Seek local approval of TIF Plan and create the District
- 4) Seek State approval to utilize Education Property Tax Revenue (File “Intent to Apply” then file the actual application)
- 5) VEPC Considers application – this will require three meetings: (1) in Bennington, the other (2) in Montpelier.
- 6) Application Approval (or Denial)
- 7) Seek State/VEPC Financial Plan Approval
- 8) Seek Local Approval (Voter Approval) – There is no negative impact on taxpayers.
- 9) Implement TIF District and file required annual reports.

The Town is beginning this process at the end of June when we meet with White & Burke (consultants). We will discuss such things as why Bennington wants the district, conceptual boundaries and what potential projects would be enticed by the designation.

Mr. Monks continued by stating this entire process is a very public/open process. We want everyone to understand what this is. It is an excellent tool to improve the community without burden on the taxpayers.

Jeanne Conner suggested inviting St. Albans to speak when it comes time to education the public further. To have someone who has already gone through the process speak can be very powerful. Dan Monks agreed that could be very powerful. He will contact St. Albans.

Jim Carroll noted that before St. Albans received their TIF District designation they had 80% vacancy rate. Three years after the transition they are now at 3-5% vacancy.

Tom Jacobs asked to keep this momentum going.

6. MANAGER’S REPORT

The Manager asked to establish interview dates for the Charter Committee members. He suggested the evenings of Monday June 19th and Tuesday June 20th from 5:30pm – 7:00pm. An interview would be scheduled every (15) minutes.

Additionally, the Manager suggested Saturday June 17th from 8:00am – 12:00pm for the Water/Sewer Budget discussion meeting.

Chad Gordon, Jeannie Jenkins and Carson Thurber all stated they were unavailable for Saturday June 17th meeting. Although there would be a quorum in their absence, Tom Jacobs stated this was too big of a subject to not have them involved. Mr. Jacobs suggested moving Budget discussion to the evenings of June 19th & 20th and move the interviews to the following week (June 26th before SB meeting and June 27th). All members agreed.

The Manager continued with a brief update on PFOA. He noted there has been some momentum. St. Gobain has accepted responsibility for certain areas of town. The additional areas previously not accepted by St. Gobain, are now being considered for investigation by their representatives. They have requested access to monitoring wells etc. The State and Federal EPA need to approve their process first.

7. OTHER BUSINESS

Jeanne Conner stated the Downtown flower arrangements were gorgeous.

Chad Gordon congratulated both the High School Girls Softball Team and the Girls Lacrosse Team on their win and wished them luck in the States.

Jim Carroll congratulated the Pappas family as their daughter was the High School Valedictorian.

Chad Gordon stated it was a beautiful night for graduation. He already misses the Seniors.

There was no other business this evening

Tom Jacobs stated there was a need for Executive Session.

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

8. Executive Session

A. Contracts

Respectfully submitted,

Linda E. Bermudez
Secretary