

1 **BENNINGTON SELECT BOARD**

2 **BENNINGTON FIRE FACILITY**

3 **130 RIVER STREET**

4 **BENNINGTON, VERMONT 05201**

5 **JANUARY 14, 2019**

6 **MINUTES**

7 **SELECT BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT:** Thomas Jacobs-Chair; Donald Campbell-Vice-Chair; Jim Carroll;  
8 Jeanne Conner; Chad Gordon; Carson Thurber and Jeannie Jenkins.

9 **SELECT BOARD MEMBERS ABSENT:** None.

10 **ALSO PRESENT:** Stuart Hurd-Town Manager; Daniel Monks-Planning Director; Chris Wright; Joel Lentzner;  
11 Dr. Richard Dundas; Michelle Alexander; Barbara Tru-Weber; Elizabeth Schumacher; John Shannahan-Executive  
12 Director Bennington Downtown Alliance; Lynn Green-Director Grow Bennington Initiative; Matt Harrington-  
13 Executive Director Chamber of Commerce; Sheila Harden-Owner-Bennington Potters; Eric Pederson-Director-  
14 Old Castle Theatre; Maru Leon Griffin-Owner-Mt. Anthony Country Club; Jack Hurley; Paul Doucette-Police  
15 Chief; 30 citizens; Bennington Banner; Mike Cutler-CAT-TV and Nancy H. Lively-Secretary.

16 At 6:04pm, Chair Thomas Jacobs called the meeting to order.

17 **1. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE**

18 The Pledge of Allegiance was recited by all present.

19 **2. CONSENT AGENDA**

20 **A. MINUTES - JANUARY 2, 2019 AND JANUARY 5, 2019**

21 **B. WARRANTS**

22 *Donald Campbell moved and Carson Thurber seconded to approve the Consent Agenda as*  
23 *presented. The motion carried with Donald Campbell and Carson Thurber abstaining from the*  
24 *January 2, 2019 Minutes.*

25 **3. PUBLIC COMMENTS**

26 Chris Wright, representative of the Bennington Blotter, a grassroots Facebook organization with  
27 20,000 followers, spoke against the Town funding the Downtown Bennington Alliance (DBA) because  
28 forming a non-profit and requesting funding from a government entity "is opening a can of worms".

29  
30 

---

Joel Lentzner clarified that the DBA is requesting funds from the Downtown Improvement  
31 District tax and not the General Fund tax.

32 Mr. Lentzner has been in contact with Senator Sander's office, Vermont Transportation, and  
33 New York Transportation to improve the signage to downtown Bennington from Route 279 at no cost  
34 to the Town. Businesses that were listed on the signs would pay to do so. Since the signs - digital or  
35 paper - would be in New York, Mr. Lentzner requested that the Town pursue this idea with them.

36 Mr. Carroll added that there may eventually be state and/or federal funds available for digital  
37 billboards around the perimeter of Vermont.

38 Mr. Jacobs will meet with Mr. Hurd on this and get back to Mr. Lentzner.

39

---

40 Dr. Richard Dundas, speaking on behalf of the Bennington Free Clinic, noted that the children in  
41 Bennington have the worst teeth in the State, who then become adults with the worst teeth in the  
42 State. The Bennington Oral Health Coalition has been working for years with the school systems. The  
43 Bennington Free Clinic and the Oral Health Coalition have resurrected/renovated the Molly Stark  
44 Dental Suite and are requesting an increase of Town funding from last year's \$7,500 to \$12,500. Dr.  
45 Dundas circulated the petition to put this on the March ballot.

#### 46 **4. PLASTIC BAG BAN DISCUSSION**

47 *Michelle Alexander, Barbara True-Weber, and Elizabeth Schumacher did the following*  
48 *presentation:*

- 49 • Most single use bags are used for a few minutes and discarded.
- 50 • Only 1% are recycled.
- 51 • In the country, 100M bags - which takes 100M gallons of oil to make - are thrown away.
- 52 • The bags litter everywhere and kill 1M animals each year.
- 53 • Our oceans are becoming "plastic soup" with concentrations 40% greater than the plankton in  
54 the oceans.
- 55 • Estrogenic chemicals leach into the seafood consumed by humans that can alter the hormones  
56 in our bodies, effect fetuses, and cause cancer.
- 57 • Single use bags have been banned in the states of California and Hawaii with New York  
58 proposed to do so in the next budget year. Williamstown, MA, Brattleboro, VT, and  
59 Wilmington, VT currently have banning ordinances with Albany, NY to follow soon.
- 60 • The request is for Bennington to adopt an ordinance to ban the bags. This will be discussed at a  
61 Bennington County Waste Alliance (BCWA) meeting on January 16<sup>th</sup> with a meeting to be  
62 scheduled in February or March to educate the public.
- 63 • Much work has already been done with the local businesses and we have collected 200  
64 signatures on our petition from the region.
- 65 • Brattleboro, Adams, MA, Melrose, NY New Paltz, NY and Eugene, OR share similar language in  
66 their ordinances of the American Society for Testing and Materials (ASTM) standards for single  
67 use, compostability and recycling. Manchester, VT declined the proposed ordinance that came  
68 before them.

- 69 • Reusable bags must be able to carry 22 pounds for at least a distance of 175 feet.
- 70 • Most ordinances exempted thin flexible plastic that is used for bulk fruit, vegetables, meat,
- 71 baked goods, bread and dry cleaning.
- 72 • Most ordinances allowed passing on the extra costs to the consumer up to 10¢/bag.
- 73 • Some ordinances were stand-alone but most were included with solid waste programs.
- 74 • Each ordinance had various town employees responsible for enforcement and penalties that
- 75 range from \$25-\$50 with hardship deferments.
- 76 • There was no verbiage in the ordinances concerning town financial assistance - if they, indeed,
- 77 did it. Some larger cities have grants available for this purpose.

78 *Board questions and comments:*

79 Ms. Jenkins: Aldi's is probably the closest to having made this transition, have you interviewed  
80 the shoppers there, and Ms. True-Weber said they have not but that was a good idea.

81 Mr. Campbell: Is very supportive of the change and is happy to see the work being done with  
82 the BCWA.

83 Mr. Jacobs: Keep getting signatures and educating the public.

84 Mr. Carroll: Is very supportive and mentioned there are other alternatives, such as,  
85 biodegradable plastic bottles. Years ago, groceries used to be packed in the store's cardboard boxes,  
86 whereas, now there are dumpsters full of those. This is also a topic at the State level.

87 Mr. Thurber: Why and when did Manchester vote down the proposed ordinance so we don't  
88 make the same mistakes, and Ms. True-Weber stated that it was around 6 months ago and their Select  
89 Board didn't even vote on it.

90 Ms. Conner: Is very supportive and remembers that the choice used to be given of plastic or  
91 paper not so long ago. This could be the beginning of addressing many other environmental issues.  
92 Does the money collected for fines go toward other green initiatives, and Ms. True-Weber answered  
93 that would be a town decision. Washington D.C. puts those dollars into cleaning up the waterways.

94 The Board will review the existing ordinances for when the plastic bag ban is again on the  
95 agenda.

96 **5. MARKETING PLAN PRESENTATION**

97 *John Shannahan, Director of the Bennington Downtown Alliance , Lynn Green, Director of the*  
98 *Grow Bennington Initiative, Matt Harrington, Executive Director Chamber of Commerce, Sheila Harden,*  
99 *Owner Bennington Potters, and Eric Pederson, Director, Old Castle Theatre did the following*  
100 *presentation:*

- 101 ➤ The Bennington County Development Partners came into being from a conversation between
- 102 the BDA and the Chamber of Commerce. Also, the Bennington Area Arts Council was revived
- 103 and is doing very well, as well as, the formation of the Grow Bennington Initiative.

- 104 ➤ Everyone involved in Building A Lasting Marketing Infrastructure task force are volunteers and  
105 we aren't here to ask for any financing at this time.
- 106 ➤ Annual marketing budgets for the following towns are: Rutland, population 32,000, earmarks  
107 \$200,000 or \$6.00/capita; Manchester, population 4,200, earmarks \$50,000 or \$12.00/capita;  
108 and Bennington, population 15,003, earmarks \$0.00 with \$10,000 for events and projects.
- 109 ➤ We have presence in State of Vermont marketing, the Vermont Department of Tourism, and  
110 the Vermont Chamber of Commerce.
- 111 ➤ We also have presence regionally with SeVeds (economic development focus), the Bennington  
112 Area Chamber of Commerce, and the Shires Marketing RMO with limited/sporadic funding.  
113 None of these are just for Bennington.
- 114 ➤ Objectives: Build a marketing infrastructure for Bennington that we can build on year-after-  
115 year, effectively reach our target market, inspire targets to choose Bennington as a destination,  
116 leverage current assets, and collaborate up and across the State and Region.
- 117 ➤ Product: Bennington as a tourism destination. We need to sell a Lifestyle - Vermont Begins  
118 Here.
- 119 ➤ Target Market: Day-trippers, pass-through traffic, and weekenders.
- 120 ➤ Today's consumer is visual and Bennington has many assets to market visually.
- 121 ➤ Today's PR wins are with influencers on travel bloggers, Instagram, and quality content, as well  
122 as, today's magazines being online and on mobile.
- 123 ➤ Print, TV, and Video presence is also important.
- 124 ➤ Visual campaign promotions can be public/private partnerships.
- 125 ➤ A tourism lure website, Instagram account, and Facebook account would need to be created.
- 126 ➤ The process is "a marathon, not a sprint".
- 127 ➤ The recommended budget for the 1<sup>st</sup> year is \$75,000, or \$5.00/capita, with the 2<sup>nd</sup> year  
128 \$110,000, and the 3<sup>rd</sup> year \$120,000.
- 129 ➤ Jack Hurley recommended using other social media avenues besides Instagram and Facebook.

130 *Board questions/comments:*

131 Mr. Carroll: How are you going to measure success, and Ms. Green answered that the website  
132 and social media will track the activity, and Google Analytics will track revenue.

133 Mr. Gordon: Thanked everyone for volunteering and to keep up the good work.

134 Mr. Campbell: Are there opportunities for matching funds, and Ms. Green stated that there are  
135 with private partnerships, but that is a lot of work and perhaps out of the realm of the volunteer task  
136 force. The long term consideration should be to hire an individual to do the work in the future.

137 Mr. Campbell: Since every citizen will be paying for this, it's important that they know why it is  
138 important to them and not just the businesses.

139 Mr. Thurber: "This is fantastic and would be crazy not to do this." However, it is very difficult  
140 from a budget standpoint and thank you for your efforts.

141 Ms. Conner: Suggested going to the WMAC studio for promotion and volunteered her  
142 daughter, a freelance writer, to help the task force as needed.

143 Mr. Jacobs: We will be continuing our budget discussions, and noted that these funds are not  
144 Downtown Improvement District funds.

145 **6. VCDP - MUNICIPAL POLICIES AND CODES ADOPTION**

146 Mr. Hurd stated that the Vermont Community Development Program (VCDP) has amended the  
147 policies and codes municipalities must adopt in order to be eligible for grant monies and remain  
148 compliant.

149 *Donald Campbell moved and Carson Thurber seconded to adopt the Vermont Community*  
150 *Development Program (VCDP) amended Municipal Policies and Codes (Form MP-1) and to circulate*  
151 *for signatures. The motion carried unanimously.*

152 **7. FIRE DEPARTMENT RADIO CONSOLE PURCHASE**

153 Paul Doucette, Police Chief and Public Safety Director, stated that Wells Communication will be  
154 installing radio equipment at the Fire Facility paid for by a grant obtained by Rensselaer County so the  
155 Bennington and Rensselaer fire departments will be able to communicate. This would be the perfect  
156 opportunity to move forward with the radio console project that we have been planning since 2012.  
157 We currently have a quote from Wells Communication for \$87,434.01 which also includes \$3,500.00  
158 for a software/hardware upgrade at the Police Department. We currently have \$74,000.00 earmarked  
159 for this project in reserve, and we propose using additional reserve funds of \$13,434.01 to fund the  
160 project. The radio console dispatches for the Bennington Fire Department, Bennington Police  
161 Department, and Bennington County Mutual Aid. We will continue to put money in the reserve for  
162 repeaters and a tower.

163 *Donald Campbell moved and Jim Carroll seconded to approve the quote from Wells*  
164 *Communication for \$87,434.01 to upgrade the existing radio console at the Bennington Fire Facility*  
165 *to the Zetron MaxPro console.*

166 Mr. Gordon: Do you dispatch for the Bennington Rescue Squad (BRS), and they do.

167 Mr. Campbell: What would happen if we waited a year, and Chief Doucette responded that it  
168 would be more expensive because we're saving a significant amount of money on labor because Wells  
169 Communication will already be here installing the radio equipment.

170 Mr. Thurber: Are there shared communication services, and Chief Doucette can't speak to the  
171 BRS issues. Also, we went to narrow banding which has created some of the communication issues  
172 that we have. Mr. Hurd added that the BRS need is for an AT&T tower on Mt. Anthony.

173 *The motion carried unanimously.*

174 **8. LIQUOR LICENSES**

175 The following 2019 Liquor License Renewal Applications were circulated for signatures:

176 *1<sup>st</sup> Class Renewals -*

177 1. American Legion Post 13

178 2. Pizza Hut

179 3. Publyk House (and outside consumption)

180 *2<sup>nd</sup> Class Renewals -*

181 1. Bennington Jolley #117

182 2. Bennington Jolley #145

183 3. Price Chopper #171

184 4. North Bennington Variety

185 **9. MANAGER'S REPORT**

186 Mr. Hurd circulated the Certificate of Highway Mileage for signatures. There is no new mileage  
187 this year.

188 Mr. Hurd announced that Zirwat Chowdhury, our Community Development Director, has  
189 resigned. She will be working full-time through the end of January and part-time through the end of  
190 February. We will be advertising the position as soon as possible and will be lucky to “get someone  
191 with half of her energy”.

192 Mr. Hurd responded to the inquiry if the Director's position had been filled at the Senior  
193 Center, and it has not. We are currently having discussions with the YMCA on senior program  
194 possibilities at the Rec Center.

195 **10. OTHER BUSINESS**

196 Mr. Carroll: Enjoyed his first week in Montpelier, has introduced two pieces of legislation, and is  
197 working on his third. He also mentioned the passing of Jackie Carson, a tireless advocate for keeping  
198 senior citizens in their homes.

199 Mr. Campbell: Kudos to the Police Department for the job that they did today.

200 Mr. Campbell: Noted the thoughtful speech that the Attorney General made on the situation  
201 that Kiah Morris, and others, are facing. Mr. Jacobs concurred and added that this should be a Board  
202 discussion in the future.

203 Mr. Gordon: The British Invasion is coming back to the high school's music department as a  
204 fundraiser on January 26<sup>th</sup> from 7:00-10:00pm. This was done several years ago and was very  
205 successful.

206 Mr. Jacobs: Stated that the League has endorsed a program for limited self-governance which  
207 would give the towns more authority and not have to go through the State for such things as charter  
208 changes, for example.

209 Ms. Conner: Recognized the Bennington Aces for their fundraiser and their programs for  
210 children - tennis opportunities with free tennis lessons and equipment for the needy, as well as,  
211 academically.

212 ***At 8:23pm, Jim Carroll moved and Donald Campbell seconded the adjournment of the***  
213 ***meeting. The motion carried unanimously.***

214

215

216 Respectfully submitted,

217 Nancy H. Lively

218 Secretary

219