

1 **BENNINGTON SELECT BOARD**
2 **BENNINGTON FIRE FACILITY**
3 **130 RIVER STREET**
4 **BENNINGTON, VERMONT 05201**
5 **JANUARY 28, 2019**
6 **MINUTES**

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

9 **SELECT BOARD MEMBERS ABSENT:** Thomas Jacobs.

10 **ALSO PRESENT:** Stuart Hurd-Town Manager; Daniel Monks-Planning Director; Bhima Nitta-
11 Power Guru Solar Electric Systems; David Pearson; R.J. Joly-Public Works Director; David Dence-
12 CDC Forestry Program Instructor; Rose Telford; Betsy Greenawalt; Nancy White; William Parks;
13 Mark and Paula Hayco; Susan Hoag-Senior Center Director; Nadine Mort; Tom Steffen; 25
14 citizens; Bennington Banner; Mike Cutler-CAT-TV and Nancy H. Lively-Secretary.

15 At 6:00pm, Vice-Chair Donald Campbell called the meeting to order.

16 **1. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE**

17 The Pledge of Allegiance was recited by all present.

18 **2. CONSENT AGENDA**

19 **A. MINUTES - JANUARY 12, 2019, JANUARY 14, 2019 AND JANUARY 16, 2019**

20 **B. WARRANTS**

21 *Jeannie Jenkins moved and Jeanne Conner seconded to approve the Consent*
22 *Agenda as presented. The motion carried with Jim Carroll abstaining from the January*
23 *16, 2019 Minutes.*

24 **3. PUBLIC COMMENTS**

25 Rose Telford asked if a new Senior Center Director had been hired, and Mr. Hurd
26 answered that "we're working on it" with many different options being considered. Ms.
27 Telford added that the seniors are concerned as to the future of the Senior Center.

28 Nadine Mort added that the rumor is that someone has already been hired.

29 Susan Hoag, Senior Center Director, also expressed her concern about the future
30 for the Senior Center, and Mr. Hurd reiterated that this is a work in progress. When

31 decisions have been made that information will be shared. The Board thanked Ms.
32 Hoag for her 20 years of service.

33

34 Betsy Greenawalt, a downtown merchant, noted the Marketing Presentation at
35 the January 14th meeting and asked when and how that money would be used. Mr.
36 Hurd explained that \$50,000 from the FY20 budget has been identified for marketing
37 Bennington but it hasn't been determined how that money will be used yet. The Board
38 may make that decision within the next couple of months. Ms. Greenawalt suggested
39 that the funds distribution be part of the Community Development Director's job and
40 for that person to hear ideas from everyone in the community. Ms. Greenawalt also
41 suggested that the "Vermont Begins Here" branding be changed to "Vermont Begins in
42 Bennington" because "Vermont Begins Here" could be any town in the State.

43

44 Nancy White reminded everyone that the first of two public hearings on
45 changing to a mayoral form of government will be held at the Fire Facility on February 4,
46 2019 at 6:00pm.

47 Ms. White asked if there are any new jobs with benefits coming to Bennington,
48 and Mr. Carroll answered that there are 10,000 good paying jobs in the State that are
49 not being filled because the school systems are not training the students to fill them.
50 Ms. White added that there are efforts to get people to move to Vermont that we will
51 have to support and "we can't afford to live here" ourselves.

52 Ms. White also pointed out the continuous issue of poverty in Bennington, and
53 Mr. Campbell explained that 'Citizens Comments' is not the place to engage in a
54 "complicated debate".

55 **4. COMMUNITY SOLAR PROJECT - 1819 MONUMENT AVENUE**

56 Donald Campbell recused himself from this agenda item.

57 *Bhima Nitta, owner of Power Guru, did the following presentation on the*
58 *Community Solar Project at 1819 Monument Avenue:*

- 59
- 60 • The project will comprise ½ acre of a 4 acre field on the property owned by David
 - 61 Pearson, Elizabeth Beal and Susan Beal at 1819 Monument Avenue.
 - 62 • Mature trees screen three sides of the project with the fourth side visible from
 - 63 the 2nd floor of the neighbor's house which is 800' to the East. This can also be
 - 64 screened and the project is not visible to the public from Monument Avenue.
 - 65 • There will be 2 arrays with dimensions of 360' long x 12' high x 14' wide spaced
 - about 30' apart.

- 66 • Each array contains 325 modules of 290 watts each with the total array DC
67 output of 188.5kWp.
68 • The Vermont Land Trust “has determined that the project is modest in scale, will
69 have no long-term impact on the agricultural resources, and will be sited in a
70 manner that will not affect the property’s scenic views”.

71 ***Carson Thurber moved and Chad Gordon seconded to approve the Community***
72 ***Solar Project at 1819 Monument Avenue as presented.***

73 Mr. Thurber noted that the Planning Commission determined, by consensus,
74 that the project complies with the Town Plan, and, as stated in the Town Plan, should be
75 “considered as being located on a preferred site and eligible for all of the regulatory and
76 financial incentives associated with larger scale solar energy installations pursuant to
77 Public Utility Commissions Rule 5.100 and 30 V.S.A. Section 248”.

78 ***The motion carried with Donald Campbell having recused himself.***

79 **5. Y WOODS USE AND PLAN DISCUSSION**

80 *R.J. Joly, Public Works Director, and David Dence, CDC Forestry Program*
81 *Instructor did the following presentation on the Y Woods:*

- 82 • The Department of Public Works has used the Y Woods on occasion for training.
83 • The CDC hasn’t done any timber harvest in the Y Woods for ~8 years. They have
84 only cleaned up down trees and tops that were on the trails. The local residents
85 also do much to keep the trails clean.
86 • There is no forest management plan on the property, however, the wood lot on
87 the bottom, or east toward Middle Pownal Road, “is beautiful”, and the top,
88 where the old YMCA camp was, is “young with a lot of invasive species and quite
89 a mess”.
90 • Adjacent to the town’s lot, there is a spruce plantation lot that is owned by the
91 Park Lawn Cemetery. There is a trail that runs north/south with the evergreens
92 being on the Cemetery property. There is also an area by a stone wall that is the
93 Cemetery’s property and, even though there are no pins, the boundaries have
94 been resolved.
95 • The Cemetery hired a logger to go in to clean out some of the spruce trees some
96 time ago but nothing has been done recently.
97 • The easiest access to the trails is from Morgan Street where there is a landing to
98 park your car.
99 • If anyone has questions concerning the Y Woods, they should call either Mr. Joly
100 or Mr. Hurd. Mr. Hurd added that the area is on the Listers Map that is available
101 to the public.

102 *Questions/Comments:*

103 Tom Steffen: A great place that more people should know about.

104 William Parks: Make the woods part of the Town's spring green up.

105 Mark Hayco: Would like to meet with the Bennington Area Trails System (BATS)
106 about maintaining the trails.

107 Mr. Campbell stated that this is something that the Board should consider doing
108 more on to better care for the Y Woods for the community.

109 **6. ADOPT FY2020 BUDGET**

110 Mr. Hurd explained that the total sum of the FY2020 budget is \$13,222,500 with
111 \$4,135,250 for the laying out, maintaining, and repairing of the highways and bridges of
112 the Town and \$9,087,250 for the payment of any indebtedness not otherwise
113 specifically provided for, interest on indebtedness, legally authorized State and County
114 taxes, the prosecution and defense of the common rights and interests of the
115 inhabitants of the Town and for other necessary incidental expenses. Also included is
116 \$60,000 for fire equipment, \$20,000 for parking improvements, and \$463,610 for
117 healthcare reserve and workers compensation insurance.

118 There were increases in the Bennington Free Library, the Park McCullough
119 Library, and the Bennington Rescue Squad but there was an overall decrease - mostly
120 from the General Fund - from the original budget presentation of \$119,910.

121 The combined General, Highway, and Fire budgets show an increase of 2.53%.
122 The calculated tax rates, using last year's Grand List, break down as follows:

- 123 ➤ General Fund increase of \$0.0235.
- 124 ➤ Highway Fund an increase of \$0.01334
- 125 ➤ Fire Fund an increase of \$0.0001
- 126 ➤ For a total increase of \$0.0370, or 3.19%. Any increase in revenues or the
127 Grand List will reduce the overall tax rate.

128 ***Carson Thurber moved and Jim Carroll seconded to approve the FY2020 Budget***
129 ***as presented.***

130 Kudos to Mr. Hurd and his staff for keeping the rate of increase around the
131 inflation rate.

132 ***The motion carried unanimously.***

133 **7. APPROVE ANNUAL MEETING WARNING**

134 Mr. Hurd stated that the 2019 Annual Town Meeting will be on March 4, 2019 at
135 7:00pm - or immediately following the Bennington School District's Annual Meeting - to
136 transact business specified to be done from the floor, the budget, the Bennington Fire

137 Department \$1.2 million bond for a ladder truck, the mayoral form of government, and
138 the 12 agency funding requests. These funding requests were all level funded from last
139 year except for the Bennington Free Clinic who has requested an additional \$7,500. A
140 reminder will be sent to the agencies for them to come and speak at the Meeting.

141 ***Jim Carroll moved and Carson Thurber seconded to approve the 2019 Annual***
142 ***Town Meeting Warning as presented.***

143 Mr. Thurber reminded everyone that, if all of the agencies funding requests are
144 approved, and there are no changes to the Grand List, this will further increase our tax
145 rate by \$0.0100 to \$0.0470. The agencies are not part of the Town Budget that has
146 been presented and approved.

147 Ms. Jenkins added that this is why it would be more beneficial to the voters for
148 the agencies to speak prior to the night before the vote.

149 ***The motion carried unanimously.***

150 **8. MANAGER'S REPORT**

151 ***Carson Thurber moved and Jim Carroll seconded to close School Street from***
152 ***Main Street to Pleasant Street on September 14, 2019 from 8:00am until 5:00pm for***
153 ***the 2019 Food Truck Event.***

154 Ms. Jenkins noted that it might be nice to have an officer present to direct traffic
155 but wouldn't want the vendors to have to pay for that. Mr. Hurd stated that there is
156 only an extra cost if the coverage can't be part of the officers already on duty. He will
157 look into the police presence.

158 Ms. Conner added that, since it was so successful last year, there will probably
159 be more people attending this year.

160 ***The motion carried unanimously.***

161 Mr. Hurd stated that the results of the Citizen Survey will be out by late January
162 2019.

163 Mr. Hurd explained that there was a sewer backup to Elm Street that seriously
164 flooded and contaminated the first floor of the Blacksmith Shop. Our VLCT insurance
165 has agreed to the \$68,000 cost of the cleanup and we have a \$1,000 deductible. Work
166 is nearly done and the Bennington Downtown Alliance will be moving back downstairs
167 soon.

168 **9. OTHER BUSINESS**

169 Mr. Campbell: Read a statement concerning the fact that the Attorney General
170 had indicated that the law would allow language that "all of us would consider deeply

171 reprehensible” concerning the racist attacks on Kiah Morris. He has asked the Board to
172 do the following:

173 1. Make sure our house is in order. Have the Town Manager arrange to offer trainings
174 to all town staff, including the Select Board.

175 2. Make the most of what we have. The Board should participate more actively with
176 agencies that are working on these diversities.

177 3. Look to the future. The Board should include that we are a community where all are
178 welcome in the next Town Plan revision in 2020.

179 4. Acknowledge our limitations and push on. We must keep trying even if the process is
180 hard. Our community aspires to welcome everyone but we are not there yet.

181 Mr. Carroll: Legislation is being worked on to address racial and/or gender bios.
182 If there are not criminal consequences, we’re working on there being civil
183 consequences.

184 Ms. Conner: Kudos to the British Invasion performance at the high school,
185 including their talented Principal.

186 Ms. Conner: Where are we with the Recreation Center Committee, and Mr. Hurd
187 answered that we have received the letters of interest and expect that the Committee
188 will be formed within the next month.

189 Mr. Thurber: Concurred with Mr. Campbell’s comments and thanked those
190 agencies for their efforts on this subject.

191 Ms. Jenkins: Thanked Mr. Campbell for his comments and time spent on his
192 statement.

193 Mr. Gordon: Also thanked Mr. Campbell for his comments and also kudos to the
194 British Invasion production. The high school will be presenting Romeo and Juliet on
195 February 7-9, 2019 with tickets going on sale Wednesday.

196 Mr. Hurd: Added that everyone should realize that “misinformation,
197 exaggerations, and fabrications hurt the entire story”and “fuel the fire”.

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203 **10. EXECUTIVE SESSION**

204 **A. CONTRACT**

205 **At 7:25pm, Carson Thurber moved and Jeannie Jenkins seconded that the**
206 **meeting was adjourned finding that an Executive Session be held on a Contract as**
207 **premature public knowledge would place a person involved in the subject matter at a**
208 **substantial disadvantage. The motion carried unanimously.**

209

210

211 Respectfully submitted,

212 Nancy H. Lively

213 Secretary