

1 **TOWN OF BENNINGTON**
2 **2019 ANNUAL TOWN MEETING**
3 **BENNINGTON FIRE FACILITY**
4 **130 RIVER STREET**
5 **BENNINGTON, VERMONT 05201**
6 **MARCH 4, 2019**
7 **MINUTES**

8 **MODERATOR:** Jason Morrissey

9 **ALSO PRESENT:** Bennington Select Board Members - Thomas Jacobs-Chair; Donald Campbell-
10 Vice Chair; Jim Carroll; Carson Thurber; Jeannie Jenkins; Chad Gordon and Jeanne Conner;
11 Stuart Hurd-Town Manager; Dan Monks-Assistant Town Manager; Joan Pinsonneault-Treasurer;
12 Cassandra Barbeau-Town Clerk; Zirwat Chowdhury-Community Development Director;
13 Representative Mary Morrissey; Mary Ann Pembroke, Ron Pembroke, Russ Pembroke and their
14 families; Charles Koslosky; Albert Ray; Tom Legacy; Charlie Gingo; Seth Mumford; Elizabeth-
15 Council on Aging; Charlie Murphy; Peter Fish; Joy Kitchell; Suzanne Fitzpatrick; Linda Putney;
16 Sarah Wilson; Janice Lerrigo; Kathy Thompson; Dan Lucy; Forest Weyen; Melissa Deltufo; 150
17 citizens; CAT-TV and Nancy H. Lively-Secretary.

18 At 7:10 p.m., Moderator Jason Morrissey called the meeting to order.

19 The Pledge of Allegiance was recited by all present.

20 Representative Mary Morrissey read a Legislative Proclamation in honor of Richard
21 "Dick" Pembroke who passed away in June 2018. Mr. Pembroke had served Bennington on
22 numerous boards in Bennington, Bennington County, and the State of Vermont. He served in
23 the Vermont Legislature for 16 years where he was an active participant on Environmental and
24 Transportation committees. The Proclamation was given to Mary Ann Morrissey and her family
25 in recognition of her late husband.

26 Mr. Morrissey read the following Warning:

27 WARNING

28 **TOWN OF BENNINGTON**
29 **2019 ANNUAL TOWN MEETING**

30 *The residents of the Town of Bennington qualified by law to vote in Town Meeting are hereby*
31 *notified and warned to meet at the Bennington Fire Facility on River Street (Lincoln Street*
32 *entrance) in said Town on Monday, March 4, 2019 at 7:00 p.m., or immediately following the*

33 Bennington School District's Annual meeting should that run over, to transact the business
34 specified to be done from the floor.

35 If you are a resident of the Town of Bennington, intend to be present at the meeting and are
36 hearing impaired, arrangements will be made for a sign interpreter to be present at this
37 meeting. For necessary arrangements, please contact Stuart A. Hurd, Town Manager at the
38 Bennington Town Offices, 205 South Street, P.O. Box 469, Bennington, VT - (802) 442-1037 no
39 later than Friday, February 15, 2019.

40 Following the completion of such business, the Meeting will stand adjourned to Tuesday, March
41 5, 2019, at The Bennington Fire Facility on River Street (Lincoln Street entrance). The polls are
42 open from 7:00 a.m. until 7:00 p.m. for the election of officers and voting on all ballot articles
43 specified. However, those on the checklist to vote in the Village of North Bennington shall vote
44 for the election of officers and on all ballot articles at the North Bennington Village Office on
45 Main Street in North Bennington. The Bennington Fire Facility above mentioned, is hereby
46 established as the central polling place for those on the checklist to vote in said Bennington.
47 Residents of Bennington and North Bennington may register to vote at the Town Clerk's Office,
48 205 South Street, Bennington, Vermont. Eligible residents registering on Election Day must do
49 so at the polling place where they will cast their Town Meeting ballot.

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51 **BUSINESS TO BE TRANSACTED FROM THE FLOOR**

52 *Monday, March 4, 2019* 7:00
53 *P.M.*

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

56 Tom Jacobs introduced Zirwat Chowdhury, recently resigned Community Development
57 Director, to share a slide show presentation on some of the achievements in the Town during
58 2018 that have affected the following areas and departments:

- 59 • Putnam Block
- 60 • Department of Public Works - Highway Division
- 61 • Water Department
- 62 • Sewer Department
- 63 • Merchants Park
- 64 • Start Street Playground
- 65 • Office of Community Development
- 66 • Berkshire Family YMCA
- 67 • 219 Pleasant Street
- 68 • Police Department
- 69 • Citizen's Survey

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Charles Koslosky asked why the permit dollar volume went from \$47M in 2017 to \$9M in 2018, and Dan Monks answered that inflated amount in 2017 was due to the Putnam Block.

Albert Ray asked why the involvement with the Berkshire YMCA at the Recreation Center and if the rates will be increased. Stuart Hurd responded that we are in a transition period to see if we can benefit from the programs that the YMCA has for both youth and seniors, and the rates will not change this year. We have a Recreation Budget that we can use to subsidize rates should they increase in the future to keep rates to the members at a minimum increase, if any. The Select Board will control the rates.

Jim Carroll added that the Town will not be relinquishing ownership of the Recreation Center.

Tom Legacy asked about the substantial variance between \$7.8M actual vs. \$3.7M budget in the Highway Fund, and Mr. Hurd answered when there is a large expenditure for equipment the annual cost is in the budget but the entire cost is in the actual. It has to appear this way from an auditing prospective.

It was moved and seconded to accept ARTICLE 1. TOWN REPORT as presented. The motion carried unanimously.

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

It was moved and seconded to accept ARTICLE 2. SELECT BOARD MEMBERS COMPENSATION with the compensation to remain at \$1,400/year/member. The motion carried unanimously.

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

BUSINESS TO BE TRANSACTED BY BALLOT

TUESDAY, MARCH 5, 2019

THE POLLS TO BE OPEN FROM 7:00 A.M. TO 7:00 P.M.

AT THE POLLING PLACES SPECIFIED ABOVE

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

TOWN MODERATOR ELECTION. A Town Moderator, an individual residing in the Town shall be elected for a term of three (3) years.

TOWN TREASURER ELECTION. Town Treasurer, an individual residing in the Town shall be elected for term of three (3) years.

103 ARTICLE 1. Shall the Town appropriate for the next fiscal year, July 1, 2019 through June 30,
104 2020, the total sum of \$13,222,500.00 consisting of the following: \$4,135,250.00 for the laying
105 out, maintaining, and repairing of the highways and bridges of the Town; and \$9,087,250.00 for
106 the payment of the following: Any indebtedness not otherwise specifically provided for, interest
107 on indebtedness, legally authorized State and County taxes, the prosecution and defense of the
108 common rights and interests of the inhabitants of the Town, and for other necessary incidental
109 expenses?

110 The proposed budget includes \$60,000.00 for fire equipment, \$20,000.00 for parking
111 improvements, \$7,500.00 for regional economic development, and \$463,610.00 for healthcare
112 reserve and workers compensation insurance, any unexpended portion of which will be reserved
113 to subsequent years for that purpose.

114 ARTICLE 2. Shall the bonds of the Town of Bennington in an amount not to exceed \$1.2 million
115 be issued for the purpose of purchasing a ladder truck for the Bennington Fire Department to
116 replace the current 1997 Smeal ladder truck?

117 ARTICLE 3. §103-407. Mayoral form of government

118 (a) In lieu of a town manager, the voters may adopt a mayoral form of government, by vote at a
119 duly-warned annual meeting, warned pursuant to a petition signed by five percent of the voters
120 or on the Select board's own motion. Once a vote in favor of this form of government is
121 successful, the voters shall elect a mayor at the next annual meeting for a three-year term. Once
122 the mayor takes office, the Town Manager system of governance shall end for Bennington.

123 (b) The mayor shall be responsible for the management of the administrative affairs of the
124 Town, in the same manner and with the same powers and responsibilities as the Town
125 Manager, as stated in statute and this charter.

126 (c) The mayor shall have the power to veto any action of the Select board.

127 (d) The Select board shall have the authority to override the mayor's veto by a vote of five
128 members of the board taken at a regular meeting. Within 30 days of the vote to override,
129 voters may petition for a binding referendum on the issue by a petition signed by five percent of
130 the voters. At a special meeting held within 60 days of the receipt of the petition, the voters
131 shall decide whether to uphold the mayor's veto.

132 (e) The compensation for the mayor shall be set by the Select board based on comparable
133 salaries and benefits for a town manager.

134 (f) The mayor shall serve as the voice of the Town of Bennington, taking responsibility for
135 implementing the policies of the Select board, leading the Town toward greater prosperity and a
136 healthy economy, and a better life for all its residents.

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138 *ARTICLE 4. Shall the voters increase the F.Y. 2020 General Fund by the sum of \$5,000.00 for*
139 *Bennington County Association Against Child Abuse?*

140 Joy Kitchell spoke to the work that the CAC's - as she called the organization - do and
141 that they have been in operation for 30 years. They provide counseling, family assistance, and
142 whatever supports people need from 1 day to 3 years for children that have been sexually
143 abused.

144 *ARTICLE 5. Shall the voters increase the F.Y. 2020 General Fund by the sum of \$5,000.00 for*
145 *Project Against Violent Encounters?*

146 Suzanne Fitzpatrick noted that PAVE provides a 24-hour hotline, legal services, financial
147 support, emergency housing, parenting support, supervised visitation, and school based
148 education. PAVE not only supports women but men and children alike.

149 *ARTICLE 6. Shall the voters increase the F.Y. 2020 General Fund by the sum of \$5,500.00 for*
150 *Green Mountain Retired and Senior Volunteer Program?*

151 Cat Albert, Director of the Green Mountain RSVP Program thanked the Town for its
152 support and cited all of the beneficial work that the 150 volunteers do for the community, such
153 as, Meals on Wheels, food drives, tax assistance, companionship, and more.

154 *ARTICLE 7. Shall the voters increase the F.Y. 2020 General Fund by the sum of \$6,750.00 for*
155 *BROC - Community Action in Southwestern Vermont?*

156 Seth Mumford, BROC Case Manager, stated that BROC has kept 75 families in Bennington from
157 homelessness, as well as, serving several other Bennington county communities. They also
158 provide tax preparation, food shelf, lodging, heat, electric, job training and help starting a
159 business.

160 *ARTICLE 8. Shall the voters increase the F.Y. 2020 General Fund by the sum of \$7,000.00 for*
161 *Vermont Center for Independent Living?*

162 Charlie Murphy noted that the Vermont Center for Independent Living has offices
163 throughout the State and has just celebrated their 40th anniversary. They help people to live
164 with all kinds of disabilities that include counseling, finding resources, financing, home access
165 program, Sue Williams Freedom Fund, Vermont Equipment and Distribution Program, Meals on
166 Wheels, American signing classes, and more. Thank you for your past support and please
167 continue to support the Center going forward.

168 *ARTICLE 9. Shall the voters increase the F.Y. 2020 General Fund by the sum of \$7,500.00 for*
169 *Southwestern Vermont Council on Aging, Inc.?*

170 Elizabeth, a member of the Board on the Council on Aging, thanked the Town for their
171 previous support and stated the various services provided by the Council on Aging, such as,

172 case management, Meals on Wheels, counseling, etc., and requested the continued support
173 from the Town.

174 *ARTICLE 10. Shall the voters increase the F.Y. 2020 General Fund by the sum of \$10,000.00 for*
175 *The Tutorial Center?*

176 Peter Fish, Executive Director of the Tutorial Center, thanked the Town for their
177 support. Everyone that needs tutoring gets it. This past year we tutored 163 students in all
178 levels of curriculum and have 165 adults in our free education services with 108 of them from
179 Bennington that received 6,500 hours of instruction. Please continue to support the Center.

180 *ARTICLE 11. Shall the voters increase the F.Y. 2020 General Fund by the sum of \$11,000.00*
181 *Bennington Project Independence?*

182 Linda Putney stated that they provide adult day services to individuals and respite to
183 their families. We provide mental and physical stimulating activities, nutritious meals, art
184 induced therapy, and much more. We will be celebrating our 40th year in operation and the
185 10th year in our new building, on March 19th. We thank the people of Bennington for their past
186 support and are asking for the same amount this year.

187 *ARTICLE 12. Shall the voters increase the F.Y. 2020 General Fund by the sum of \$12,500.00 for*
188 *Bennington Free Clinic?*

189 Sarah Wilson and Janice Lerrigo thanked the Town for their support in the past. We are
190 now in a new building at 121 Depot Street and served 400 people without insurance last year
191 with a volunteer staff. This past October we have opened up a dental clinic at the Molly Stark
192 School which we hope to expand to Bennington Elementary because those two schools rank in
193 the bottom four for oral health outcomes. We hope that you will continue to support the Clinic
194 and our dental project.

195 *ARTICLE 13. Shall the voters increase the F.Y. 2020 General Fund by the sum of \$15,000.00 for*
196 *Sunrise Family Resource Center?*

197 Kathy Thompson spoke to the work of Sunrise Family Resource Center and the many
198 challenges that they face daily. They offer free services to “not give a hand out, but to give a
199 leg up”. Ms. Thompson thanked the Town for their support.

200 *ARTICLE 14. Shall the voters increase the F.Y. 2020 General Fund by the sum of \$21,600.00 for*
201 *Bennington Area Visiting Nurse Association & Hospice?*

202 There was no representative to speak on behalf of the Bennington Area Visiting Nurse
203 Association & Hospice.

204 *ARTICLE 15. Shall the voters increase the F.Y. 2020 General Fund by the sum of \$25,000.00 for*
205 *Bennington County Coalition for the Homeless?*

206 Dan Lucy stated that the Coalition has been serving the homeless for 19 years. We
207 currently have two facilities where we can house 54 people on any given night. This past year
208 we housed 102 men, 67 women, and 47 children. We also provide case management and skills
209 training to people to help them be able to provide themselves permanent housing. In addition,
210 we have also sponsored the Warm the Children program that provided over 300 coats to needy
211 children. Many thanks to the community for their support.

212 -----
213 Forest Weyen, Executive Director of the Bennington Rescue Squad, thanked the Select
214 Board and Town Administration for their work in getting the Rescue Squad on as a line item in
215 the budget this year, as well as, all of the residents in Bennington, Shaftsbury, and Woodford
216 for their support. The Rescue Squad has EMT and CPR classes available and is a 24/7 service to
217 the community.

218 -----
219 Melissa Deltufo stated that Lake Paran will be building a playground this year and have
220 asked Bennington for \$1,500.00 to support this, as well as, the towns of North Bennington and
221 Shaftsbury. Mr. Hurd explained the \$1,500.00 request is within a line item of the budget and
222 not a separate appropriation.

223 -----
224 Charlie Gingo asked what the amounts were for the agencies that are line items in the
225 budget, and Mr. Hurd answered as follows:
226 ➤ Bennington Free Library - \$488,000
227 ➤ John McCullough Library - \$32,000
228 ➤ Bennington Rescue Squad - \$187,500
229 ➤ North Bennington Recreation - \$6,000
230 ➤ Paran Recreation - \$2,700

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232 ***At 8:06 p.m., it was moved and seconded to adjourn the meeting until tomorrow,***
233 ***March 5, 2019, at 7:00 a.m. The motion carried unanimously.***

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236 Respectfully submitted,
237 Nancy H. Lively
238 Secretary