

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

***MONDAY, OCTOBER 10, 2016***

**MINUTES**

**BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT:** Tom Jacobs – Chair; Michael Keane-Vice Chair; Jim Carroll; Jeanne Conner; Jeannie Jenkins; Donald Campbell;

*Absent: Justin Corcoran*

**ALSO PRESENT:** Stuart Hurd, Town Manager; Dan Monks, Zoning Administrator & Assistant Town Manager; Michael Harrington, Economic & Community Development Director; Patrick McArdle, Rutland Herald; Keith Whitcomb, Bennington Banner; Linda E. Bermudez – Secretary; (8) Citizens

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

**1. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE**

**2. CONSENT AGENDA (A-B)**

*A) Minutes – September 26, 2016*

*B) Warrants*

There were no questions.

**MOTION:** Jim Carroll motioned and Donald Campbell seconded to accept and approve the minutes of September 26, 2016 as presented, as well as the warrants as submitted.

**Motion passed unanimously** (*Justin Corcoran absent*)

*C) Proclamation: White Cane Safety Awareness Day*

Michael Keane read the proclamation. By consensus, the Select Board agrees to sign proclamation. It was circulated for signatures.

### 3. CITIZENS

There were no citizen comments this evening.

### 4. MADISON'S SIDEWALK SEATING DESIGN REQUEST – 2<sup>nd</sup> MEETING

Tom Jacobs noted this was the second meeting on the sidewalk design request. Jim Carroll stated when he had his food cart on Main Street his fee for seating was \$300 per year. The Manager stated this would be different because Mr. Carroll's was seasonal. The Madison's proposal would be for a permanent year round location not accessible to anyone else. He has asked the Chief Assessor to evaluate the value of this space. At this time the cost is estimated at approximately \$2,000.00 per year.

Dan Monks stated tonight's vote will simply be on the acceptance (or not) of the sidewalk seating design. If this accepted by the Board, negotiations will begin between the Madison's and the Town on an annual agreement based on value etc. A policy will be developed moving forward for future requests.

**MOTION: Jim Carroll motioned and Michael Keane seconded to approve the sidewalk seating design for 421 Main Street as presented.**  
**Motion passed unanimously (*Justin Corcoran absent*)**

### 5. APPELATE/WILLOW BROOK PATHWAY PUBLIC HEARING

Dan Monks stated that this agenda item is a formality for public comment. The local paper never posted the last meeting's announcement. We have confirmed tonight's posting for open comment.

Tom Jacobs asked those present for comment on this project. No citizens stepped forward for comment.

Dan Monks stated with no further public comment, no additional motion is necessary. The Board approved the grant application at the last meeting.

*\*\* Encore Development agenda item was pushed forward as the representative was still in transit at this time.*

### 7. HOTEL STUDY PROPOSAL

Michael Harrington reminded the Board that tonight's discussion is simply to establish interest and/or consensus to move forward with obtaining a proposal. The details of the proposal and who would provide it can be discussed at a separate time.

Jim Carroll asked when the most recent data for this was collected. Mr. Harrington stated there was the "Kennedy Study" conducted within the last year. However, it was a general market plan for downtown. There were no real details related to hotels/lodging etc. Michael

Keane agreed and stated there were no hard numbers in the report, only indicators. Tom Jacobs stated the report was anecdotal. We would want something more in depth.

Jeannie Jenkins stated this new report would tell us the conditions and assets now. She would like to know if the answer is “no” (to supporting a downtown hotel) why that would be.

Jeanne Conner stated the company who initiated a proposal to Bennington is from Boston. We are different here. She would like to see a more local company, who is familiar with smaller town (New England) conduct the study.

Lynn Green and Ed Woods stepped forward to make a presentation. Lynn Green introduced herself as the owner/operator of the Four Chimney’s Inn and gave her additional background including education in Finance and consulting work. Ed Woods noted he is the President of the Chamber of Commerce and a part owner in the Knotty Pine Motel.

Ms. Green continued by stating we are all in this together. She showed graphics of occupancy rates throughout the year. This showed several weekends throughout the year full but leaving the rest scarcely booked. She would like to see what the impact would be on the other motels and inns in the area if a downtown hotel were built. If the model used is a “competitive market share” than that means taking business away from other local establishments such as the Paradise or the Southshire Inn. We must be mindful of this. If a hotel developer came to us on their own to conduct the study then that is “Free Market”. This forces them to use their own money; not Town resources or Town money and then the Town would pick the winner.

Discussion continued on how new ways to lodge in an area are also effecting their businesses. For example, “Air B & B”. When searching Bennington on “Air B & B” there are (194) locations available. If we assumed they were all (1) bedrooms that would be (194) rooms or the equivalent to a large hotel. This is already our competition.

Ms. Green and Mr. Woods explained that hotels don’t draw people, reasons do. They listed some of the top bookings are related to the following events: Bennington College Graduation & Family Weekend, GarlicFest, Van Gogh exhibit at the Clark in Williamstown and the Williamstown Theatre Festival. Right now Bennington attracts a more mature crowd who is interested in the History of Bennington. We are missing out on the “Milleniums”. We need to focus on the Town’s resources and the hotel developers will follow.

Mr. Woods also noted that he and his wife (owner) did a complete overhaul of their motel. They were sure to use local contractors and purchase from local merchants for all that they could. An outside business would come in with their own outside resources bought in bulk. Local owners feel passionate about where and how they spend their discretionary money.

Jim Carroll suggested local hoteliers join together and sponsor the resurgence of the Hotel Putnam.

Tom Jacobs stated we haven’t articulated what we need yet. Perhaps we should let the Greenberg Redevelopment Group move forward and see what happens.

Michael Keane wanted it in full disclosure that he had met with Ms. Green and Mr. Harrington earlier this day and discussed some of this. He too thinks that this study can wait.

Jeanne Conner thanked both Ms. Green and Mr. Woods for their presentation. It was good information.

Donald Campbell stated he would like to see what the impacts would be on other businesses. Dan Monks stated an Impact Study is a possible request.

Jeannie Jenkins stated we are chasing something just not sure what. What makes a downtown vibrant? She would like to see the discussion continue. Jim Carroll suggested that Dan Monks and Michael Harrington partner with Ms. Green and Mr. Woods along with others to find some answers to the impact questions.

Tom Jacobs asked a focus group be created to look into some of these items and report back.

## **6. ENCORE REDEVELOPMENT SOLAR PROJECT / MURPHY ROAD – 2<sup>nd</sup> MEETING**

Tom Jacobs and Donald Campbell recused themselves from this discussion.

Dan Monks stated that tonight's discussion is to comment (or not) to the Public Service Board (PSB) on this application. We are currently in the (21) day period allowed for comment. This period will end before the Select Board's next regularly scheduled meeting; therefore a decision on comment must be made this evening.

Derek Moretz from Encore Redevelopment stepped forward for questions. Michael Keane asked Mr. Moretz to conduct a narrative of the screening for this project as discussed with the Planning Commission. Mr. Moretz stated among the addition of (108) shrubs, additional trees such as Maple, White Spruce, Canadian Hemlock and Eastern White Pine would be added. Full density would be reached at approximately five years time. Natural primary screening already exists; these plantings are to complement those already existing.

Mr. Keane asked who would be responsible for their maintenance. Mr. Moretz stated it is a condition of the permit once it is granted to maintain them. The Town or the PSB can enforce this if it is noticed we are out of compliance. Mr. Keane then asked about a decommissioning plan. Mr. Moretz stated that because they are below a (1) megawatt project no decommissioning plan is required. The cost of the equipment will cover the cost of the decommissioning.

Citizen Michael Fitzgerald stepped forward for comment. He believes it would be a disservice to our town if this were passed. He drives this route often. People come to our area for the beauty and a solar array in this field would detract from that beauty. It doesn't compliment the community. Mr. Fitzgerald encourages the Board to move slowly on this, if at all.

Jim Carroll agreed with Mr. Fitzgerald. He would like to see the elevations on this to see the real picture. Mr. Fitzgerald encouraged the Board to take a drive to the site. Jeanne Conner agreed and asked if the Board members could take a ride out together to look at the site and understand it better.

Jeannie Jenkins asked about the agricultural fence. Mr. Moretz explained it is to prevent public access to the equipment. It would consist of eight-foot wooden posts and a wire mesh.

The Manager suggested a "Special Meeting" be warned for the site visit with Dan Monks. Michael Keane agreed.

## **8. MANAGER'S REPORT**

The Manager noted there was only one item this evening. Bennington Pizza House on Main Street will change ownership. A new liquor license is necessary. The license was circulated for signatures.

The Manager announced the Semi-Annual Townwide Hydrant Flushing would begin on Monday October 17, 2016 and run for two weeks, through Friday October 28, 2016. If your water appears discolored, this is normal and to run your cold water only till it runs clear.

Lastly, the Manager noted a draft of the first quarter analysis is almost ready. He should have that to the Board in the next few days. It can be discussed at the next regularly schedule meeting.

## 9. OTHER BUSINESS

Michael Keane asked about the Citizen Survey. Michael Harrington noted that it is scheduled for a November/December release. A draft will be in the Board's next packet for review. The goal is to launch it on the Town's website and/or have a computer set up at the Poll's in November. Paper copies will be available to those without access to computers; however we would like to make this as electronic as possible. Paper responses will have to be manually entered for proper calculations.

Donald Campbell spoke of the ACT 77 presentation at Bennington College. He noted it was inspiring. He thanked Bennington College for their space and participation. It is a new and innovative approach to education.

Tom Jacobs stated there was a need for Executive Session.

**Motion: Jim Carroll moved and Michael Keane 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 persons involved at a substantial disadvantage. Motion passed unanimously**

## 10. Executive Session

### A. Contracts

Respectfully submitted,

Linda E. Bermudez  
Secretary