

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

MONDAY, JANUARY 11, 2016

MINUTES

BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT: Tom Jacobs – Chair; John McFadden -Vice Chair; Sharyn Brush; Jim Carroll; Michael Keane; Donald Campbell; Justin Corcoran

Absent: None

ALSO PRESENT: Stuart Hurd, Town Manager; Michael Harrington, Economic & Community Development Director; Linda E. Bermudez – Secretary; Keith Whitcomb, Bennington Banner; BNN – Bennington Network News; (15) Citizens

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

1. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

2. CONSENT AGENDA (A-B)

A) Minutes – DECEMBER 28, 2015

B) Warrants

There were no questions.

Motion: **Jim Carroll motioned and Donald Campbell seconded to accept and approve the minutes of December 28, 2015 as well as the warrant as submitted.**

VOTE: **Minutes December 28, 2015 - Motion passed**
(Sharyn Brush & Justin Corcoran abstained)

Warrants - Motion passed Unanimously

3. CITIZENS

Tom Jacobs began by asking the Town Manager to update the Board & the public on the string of incidents over the weekend.

The Manager stated there had been three armed robberies over the past weekend. The Police Department is investigating and aggressively following all leads on these events. The

Town has reached out to all merchants that use a “drop-box” for their nightly deposits. We encourage them to request a police escort for that deposit. The Police Department will also be changing their patrols. At this time it is believed that the person(s) responsible are residents of Bennington and will be brought to justice quickly.

The Manager continued by asking the community if they know or suspect someone involved to please contact the Police Department with that information. They need as much information as possible to ensure justice.

Tom Jacobs encouraged the community to look out for their neighbors; we need to be vigilant. Jim Carroll stated he was good friends with the owners of Martin’s Mobile. They had a clear pattern each night. Someone obviously watched and learned that pattern. They need to change that pattern.

Michael Keane expressed concern that we are a border town. It is very easy for someone to cross state lines within minutes of an event such as this. We need to be more vigilant of who comes and goes in this town.

Justin Corcoran stated these were very unfortunate. He however trusts the Police Department will find them. Everyone needs to keep their eyes open.

Sharyn Brush stated she has faith in our Police Department. She agrees we must stay vigilant.

Chris Wright, citizen, stepped forward. He stated everyone is doing a great job, however we need more help from the public. Has a reward been discussed?

The Manager stated the only reward set so far is from private donations for the Willy’s Variety robbery. This weekend’s events are too early to discuss. The Police Department is still investigating. If anyone has information they would like to give the Police Department they can call the main police line. They also have a website, a Facebook page and an Anonymous Tip line. All leads are taken seriously; it takes times.

Mr. Wright stepped forward and donated a sum of money he would like to be put towards a reward. He then questioned recent rumor of counterfeit money in the area. The Manager stated he has not been made aware of any counterfeit money. When something like that is present and confirmed, the Town does a press release. He will follow-up on this.

The Manager then matched the donation made by Mr. Wright for a reward.

David Taylor, citizen, then stepped forward. He stated he is a resident of North Street and questioned the response time to the Subway Restaurant robbery. He would like the “scanner application” returned to the Internet. If he had heard the call on the scanner he could have been there in an instant and helped. Tom Jacobs explained that we need to be vigilant but do not need vigilantism. We do not want anyone to get hurt. The employees did what they were supposed to, simply hand over the money.

Lisa Rose, citizen, stepped forward. She is a North Bennington Firefighter and expressed concern regarding these robberies. She feels it is now unsafe to take kids out. She is requesting more police presence. Ms. Rose also stated residents need to keep their eyes on the street, do not turn your head when you see something.

Michael Stern stepped forward. He stated he loves this town but hates what’s happening. He suggested more hi-tech solutions. Install video cameras on the streets that can be reviewed each week or day.

Tom Jacobs stated we are not alone in this fight. Many similar towns in the area are facing the same troubles. We need to be pro-active and keep an eye out for what’s going on. We want success stories and maintain the quality of our town.

There were no further citizens.

4. EXPOSITION BENNINGTON 2016

Greg Van Houten stepped forward to present. He is a member of the Cultural Planning Committee and is present tonight to ask for support for the EXPOsion 2016 event.

He announced their new Chair as Pamela Corky, the owner of the Harwood Hill Motel and reviewed her background. Mr. Van Houten noted they meet twice a month with an average of 20-25 attendees of various backgrounds (artists, merchants and even college presidents). Their sub-committees are working on several other projects such as a "Downtown Arts District", a Bennington Historical Artistic Lineage and have even met with the Burlington Community Development Director for various discussions.

Mr. Van Houten reviewed the 2015 EXPOsion. He noted it was an event very well attended despite the small amount of time they had to pull it together. They are working to make this year's event even better. They want to make it more of a regional event and reach across borders. This year's EXPOsion will be held again at the Mount Anthony Country Club on April 20th, 2016 from 11:00am to 3:00pm.

The Cultural Planning Committee is asking the Town of Bennington to again support this event by becoming a sponsor at \$1,000. It would also show the Town recognizes the arts as an important part of our local economy.

Michael Keane asked how they are marketing. Mr. Van Houten stated they are working with Berkshire Homestyle, the local Bennington Banner, radio ads on WBTV, press release e-mails to over 500 in the Northeast, tour groups, in-flight magazines (out of Albany Airport), and even the local schools.

John McFadden asked where the Board took the money from last year. The Manager stated it came from the Contingency Fund. Mr. McFadden suggested that in order to keep supporting an event such as this perhaps a "Marketing Fund" be set up and the money be taken from there (in the future).

Michael Keane and Mr. Van Houten discussed Craft Producers. They are the organization that runs the Arts & Crafts Festival every August in Camelot Village. They are a big supporter of this event. At the EXPOsion they will be announcing plans for this year's weekend which is now becoming known as "Bennington Arts Weekend". This is because other events are also being held in town that same time.

Jim Carroll suggested these events be added to the Town's website for further exposure. Justin Corcoran and Mr. Van Houten continued by discussing some of the after effects of the events (visitorship up, membership up etc). Mr. Van Houten stated for EXPOsion, the cost is \$100 for an (8)ft table or \$60 for a ½ share table. This includes the use of all professional photos and videos taken during the expo to help further promote their own business. He noted you cannot change the world in a day, but this certainly creates excitement in what we have to offer.

Sharyn Brush stated that if this year is expected to be bigger than last year she would be happy to work with them regarding a shuttling system. Mr. Van Houten thanked Ms. Brush and noted that the Country Club's parking lot was certainly pushed to its limits last year. He also noted assistance was (and will be) needed to get Bennington College students to the event.

Tom Jacobs asked who should be contacted if people and/or vendors have questions. Mr. Van Houten suggested contacting John Shannahan at the Better Bennington Corporation (BBC).

MOTION: Jim Carroll moved and John McFadden seconded a motion to support the 2016 EXPOsion event by becoming a sponsor at the cost of \$1,000. Motion passed Unanimously

John McFadden continued by stating he would just like to make sure this money comes from the “right bucket”. Michael Keane asked for an update on this year’s event as soon as possible after the event.

Greg Van Houten then took a moment to thank both Sharyn Brush and John McFadden for their service on the Select Board.

In order to finish preparation for the Balanced Scorecard Discussion it was asked to move one agenda item up. The meeting continued as follows:

6. LIQUOR LICENSE APPLICATIONS 2016

The Manager noted there was one last minute addition to the original list for signatures. Dollar General on Main Street was added this afternoon.

**MOTION: Sharyn Brush moved and Michael Keane seconded a motion to accept and sign the revised list of Liquor License applications presented.
Motion passed Unanimously**

The new list was circulated for signatures.

5. BALANCED SCORECARD DISCUSSION

Michael Keane reviewed how the Board came to this point. One year ago it was discussed how to measure the Town’s accomplishments, spending goals etc. Mr. Keane stated he introduced a “business methodology” from the 1990’s as a way of doing this. It can measure not only financials but also customer service and effectiveness of operations.

Mr. Keane continued by introducing and reviewing the initial recommendations from the Manager and his team. He noted that VTDigger has now reported that the State of Vermont’s Chamber of Commerce will also be implementing something similar. He compared the format of scorecards verses traditional reporting and the reasons why to now have a scorecard format.

The initial four areas to be covered will be “Serve the Community”, “Manage Resources”, “Run Effective Operations” and “Innovation & Learning”. Some ways information will be gathered and tracked will be by customer surveys, evaluating response times (including permits & complaints), cost of services, job growth/decline, Grand List growth/decline, business surveys and employee satisfaction surveys.

Mr. Keane then showed how four other towns within the United States are already doing this. He compared Olathe, Kansas, Hillsboro, North Carolina, Manchester, CT and Gilbert Arizona. It is important to be honest when showing the results. We need to show the “failures” as well as the successes in these reports.

Michael Keane stated the next step is to have the Manager oversee the resource of data and, work on the format for visually reporting the results. He would like to see the Town acquire an automated tacking system (software). Then we could “benchmark” against similar towns/counties etc such as Brattleboro, White River Junction and Glens Falls, NY

Justin Corcoran stated it would be interesting to see the data as it comes in. Michael Keane stated it worked mostly for Corporations. Now he’s interested to see how it will work for Municipalities.

Jim Carroll asked how often the surveys would be done and who would be administering it. The Manager stated at this time the Town's staff would be distributing and accepting all the results. Citizen surveys at this time will be reported annually. Business surveys will be twice a year. We do not have the staff right now to handle surveys more than that.

The Manager continued by stating this year's annual report will begin the change. There will be less storytelling and some goals will be added. The Audit will always be included. Next year's report will be more of the graphics and the results.

John McFadden stated this could be used not just against other counties but so we can share information. It can bring the "regional atmosphere" together and can push the whole State forward by moving across town lines.

Donald Campbell asked if someone were hearing about this for the first time but wanted to provide input, who should they contact. Mr. Keane stated they could contact him or the Manager or Michael Harrington at the Town Offices.

Tom Jacobs thanked Mr. Keane for the presentation

At this time a representative from Dollar General wanted the Board to know that the Liqueur License application was a "new" license not a renewal. The Manager thanked the representative for that distinction. It had come through as a renewal.

Citizens requested to speak. Tom Jacobs asked them to step forward.

Delana Boutin stepped forward and asked about the scorecards and the surveys. Mr. Keane stated that initially they would be simple. We will refine them over time as citizens and businesses have input.

Mike Stern had questions about what was going on in town now. He wanted more specifics. Mr. Keane stated if we get too far into specifics now, nothing would get done.

7. MANAGER'S REPORT

The Manager presented the "Annual Certificate of Highway Mileage" for the Board to sign. He noted it is recorded each year with the State and in our land records. It is the basis for which we receive money from the State for Highway Funds. This year we have added approximately 4.3 miles with the addition of the Jelley Development roads (Bradley Drive etc).

The certificate was circulated for signatures.

The Manager then presented the board with a permit from Fairpoint Communications. The permit is to replace and maintain a pole in the Town's Right-Of-Way. The location is on Park Street. The permit was circulated for signatures.

The Manger then wanted to inform the public of the Police Tip line number discussed earlier. Citizens should call (802) 445-3937 with any crime tip they may have. It is also known as (802) 445-EYES. If you "see something....say something"!

8. OTHER BUSINESS

Jim Carroll wanted to discuss the possibility of a rewards program for crimes. He believes \$1,000 per robbery upon conviction would help. He feels someone is bound to "brag".

The Manager stated if the Board wanted to contribute money from the Contingency Fund to such a cause that is their decision.

MOTION: Jim Carroll moved to contribute \$1,000 from the Contingency Fund to a Reward upon Conviction crime.

****There were no seconds for this motion**

Donald Campbell stated he would like to hear more from the Police Chief. Justin Corcoran agreed and stated that these three incidents were too fresh for this.

Tom Jacobs stated he too would like to see how this is played out by the Police Department. He is however willing to revisit this at a later date. Right now it is too much of a “knee-jerk” reaction. Donald Campbell agreed and stated if the Police Chief thought it would help, he could support it.

Michael Keane stated he feels this is an issue of poverty and everyone being mobile. They can do something like this and be in another state in just minutes.

Tom Jacobs noted there was no need for Executive Session

Motion: Justin Corcoran moved and Jim Carroll seconded a motion to close the meeting. Motion passed Unanimously

Respectfully submitted,

Linda E. Bermudez
Secretary