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2 **BENNINGTON SELECT BOARD**

3 **BENNINGTON FIRE FACILITY**

4 **130 RIVER STREET**

5 **BENNINGTON, VERMONT 05201**

6 **MARCH 23, 2020**

7 **MINUTES**

8 **SELECT BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT BY VIDEOCONFERENCE:** Donald Campbell-Chair (at the Fire
9 Facility); Jeannie Jenkins-Vice Chair; Jeanne Conner; Jim Carroll; Bruce Lee-Clark; and Chad
10 Gordon.

11 **SELECT BOARD MEMBERS ABSENT:** Bill Scully.

12 **ALSO PRESENT BY VIDEOCONFERENCE:** Stuart Hurd-Town Manager; Daniel Monks-Assistant
13 Town Manager and Planning Director and Director of the COVID-19 Response (at the Fire
14 Facility); Thomas Dee-SVMC CEO and Dr. Trey Dobson-SVMC Chief Medical Officer; Megan
15 Herrington-Department of Health Asst. Director-Bennington Office; Jim Culkeen-SVSU
16 Superintendent; Paul Doucette-Police Chief; Sarah Perrin-Newly Elected Board Member; Mike
17 Cutler-CAT-TV; Jim Therrien-Bennington Banner (at the Fire Facility) and Nancy H. Lively-
18 Secretary.

19 At 6:01pm, Chair Donald Campbell called the meeting to order and explained that the
20 meeting is being conducted via Zoom videoconferencing to be able to conduct Town business
21 while adhering to all of the recommendations of social distancing related to the COVID-19
22 pandemic. Mr. Campbell and Mr. Monks are at the Fire Facility as an open meeting needs to
23 have a physical location.

24 Mr. Campbell added the following advice to the community:

- 25
- 26 • Take this very seriously. You might survive it but the person you have transmitted it to
27 may not.
 - 28 • Your health is Bennington's health.
 - 29 • Take care of yourselves - be well, wash a lot, avoid personal contact if you can, if you're
30 sick, stay home and seek necessary medical assistance, and if you're healthy, get
31 outside, exercise and clear your head.
 - 32 • Support your neighbors with care. Keep in touch with those you safely can and don't let
33 anyone slip through the cracks, especially the elderly and the less fortunate.
 - Ask for help - there is no shame in it. The sooner you ask, the better things go.

- 34 • Call your bank if you are unable to make a payment. Most are being flexible at this
35 time.
- 36 • Be patient. The State has implemented measures until April 6th, but by all accounts, this
37 will be a much longer haul. Make decisions both personal and financial as though we
38 are going to be at this for months, not weeks.

39 1. COVID-19 UPDATE

40 Megan Herrington, Assistant Director of the Vermont Department of Health-Bennington
41 Office did the following presentation:

- 42 ➤ Over the last few weeks, Governor Phil Scott has called upon Vermonters to protect our
43 most vulnerable - the elderly and the ill.
- 44 ➤ Schools, child care facilities, bars and restaurants are closed, and there is restricted
45 visitor access at long term care facilities. As of 8:00pm this evening, hair salons, nail
46 salons, fitness centers, barbers, and spas are also closed.
- 47 ➤ Mass meetings are restricted to 10 or fewer in attendance.
- 48 ➤ The COVID-19 virus travels through the air and cannot be contained without a vaccine
49 without our social distancing practices.
- 50 ➤ If you have mild symptoms - cough, fever, and shortness of breath - assume you have
51 COVID-19 and stay home.
- 52 ➤ Most people can be treated at home without testing. Presenting for testing exposes
53 health care workers and the vulnerable unnecessarily. Self-isolate for at least 7 days
54 after the first symptoms appeared, and at least 72 hours after recovery.
- 55 ➤ A major concern is the availability of our Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) and we
56 must preserve what we have for our health care workers and patients that may develop
57 severe COVID-19 over the coming months.
- 58 ➤ As of 1:00pm today, there have been 4 confirmed cases of COVID-19 in Bennington and
59 more are expected.
- 60 ➤ As of 1:00pm today, there have been 1,170 tests conducted with 75 positive results, 336
61 being monitored, and 5 deaths in Vermont.
- 62 ➤ All information is changing quickly. Keep up-to-date by visiting the Department of
63 Health website, and helping those who have limited technology abilities.
- 64 ➤ "We encourage social distancing, not social isolation."

65 Dr. Trey Dobson, SVMC Chief Medical Officer, and Thomas Dee, SVMC CEO, did the
66 following presentation:

- 67 ✓ The hospital is putting an additional 99 beds in operation fully staffed and with
68 additional isolation, and are looking for other locations to set up in, if needed.
- 69 ✓ The outpatient testing has been suspended due to the risk of exposure and testing is
70 limited to those cases that may require hospitalization.
- 71 ✓ Our PPE needs to be saved for staff usage.

- 72 ✓ Based on models from the disease so far, our patient numbers are expected to increase
- 73 by 300% from what we normally treat.
- 74 ✓ We have split our Emergency Department (ED) to isolate those with respiratory
- 75 complaints from those that would present at the ED for other reasons.
- 76 ✓ 50%-75% will get COVID-19 and some of those will be our staff. Due to that, we are
- 77 deploying staff to areas that they may have not worked in for quite some time.
- 78 ✓ Of the 75%, 5% are expected to be hospitalized and that is over 2,000 people. We could
- 79 not accommodate all of these people at once, however, since we have some time and if
- 80 we follow the precautionary social distancing, this number would potentially be spread
- 81 out over 6 months.
- 82 ✓ As of tomorrow, we will be limiting visitation to certain individuals and there will be a
- 83 Press Release going out explaining this to the public.

84 *Board questions/comment:*

85 Mr. Campbell: Asked for an explanation of the isolation period, and Dr. Dobson answered that
86 14 days has been the recommended standard, but some hospitals and areas are using 7 days
87 after the symptoms first appear and 3 days after recovery, or a total of 10 days. These isolation
88 periods are only for outpatients and not for those that have been hospitalized.

89 Ms. Conner: Mobilizing non-working nurses? - That is being done, and they can contact
90 OncallVermont.com or the SVMC Human Resources Department.

91 Ms. Conner: Ventilator availability? - SVMC currently has 9 and are looking for more. To be able
92 to accommodate more than 9 patients, a ventilator can be shared if the patients have similar
93 conditions, and we also have non-invasive ventilators. Unfortunately, there is a shortage of
94 ventilators throughout the country.

95 Ms. Conner: Asked if a family member were in a "hot spot", would it be better for them to stay
96 put or to come to Bennington? This was inadvertently overlooked and not answered.

97 Mr. Carroll: Does the virus live longer on different services? - Because this virus is new, we don't
98 have exact data as to how long it will live on certain surfaces, however, it probably lives on
99 surfaces for "more than a day", so the recommendation is to keep cleaning with normal
100 disinfectants.

101 Mr. Lee-Clark: The Governor was talking this afternoon about what might be a "Shelter in Place
102 Order" and what is the rationale for that? - To help slow the spread however we can, i.e.,
103 working from home, have the same person go to the grocery store, etc.

104
105

106 Jim Culkeen, SVSU Superintendent, did the following presentation:

- 107 ❖ Schools closed on March 16th until April 6th.

- 108 ❖ The SVSU.org website has help for parents and a technology helpline is staffed Monday
109 through Friday from 8:00am-1:00pm for assistance in remote learning.
- 110 ❖ Our buildings are also open Monday through Friday from 8:00am-1:00pm as required by
111 the Department of Education, however, they will be closing and run as remotely as
112 possible in the near future.
- 113 ❖ Our schools are in a “holding pattern” with our teachers working on the “practice of
114 learning” via remote learning if we don’t open back up on April 6th. There are no new
115 learning topics and remote learning doesn’t work for everyone.
- 116 ❖ Anyone can have access to the schools WiFi in any of our school parking lots.
- 117 ❖ We are getting direction daily from the Federal and State governments on how we
118 conduct our schools.
- 119 ❖ Our Continuity of Education Plan has to be sent to the Agency of Education by April 6th.
- 120 ❖ Our Meals for Students began on Wednesday with 600 breakfasts and lunches delivered
121 to our students. Today we delivered 1,974 and is available to any child 18 or younger
122 within the Supervisory Union including those that are home schooled or attend private
123 schools. The bus routes are on svsu.org.
- 124 ❖ Kudos to all of our staff - teachers, facilities, etc. - for all they are doing and the flexibility
125 that they have shown.

126 *Board comments/questions:*

127 Ms. Conner: How are you addressing the special needs population? - A letter has been sent to
128 the families with special needs children that is also on the website. We are not deploying our
129 staff to the student homes so it is a challenge to provide physical and emotional therapy to
130 them. Our efforts will be documented in our Continuity of Education Plan.

131 Ms. Conner: Do you need help delivering meals? - We are limiting exposure so we are not
132 accepting any assistance from the public. If we do need help, we have 100 staff who are not
133 working which would be where we would solicit volunteers from first. We are following State
134 guidelines and are continuing to pay everyone, including our hourly workers.

135 Ms. Conner: Fears for the children where school is “their safe place”, and Mr. Culkeen shares
136 that fear and is addressing it the best we can.

137 Paul Doucette, Chief of Police, did the following presentation:

- 138 ○ Assured everyone that the Town and Police Department will keep our community safe
139 throughout the pandemic emergency.
- 140 ○ We have stationed an officer at the hospital for everyone’s safety since areas of the
141 hospital will be inaccessible to the public as the COVID-19 presence increases in
142 Bennington.
- 143 ○ We are following the guidelines from the Center for Disease Control (CDC) and the
144 Department of Health (DOH) to keep our officers as safe as possible to be able to serve
145 our town, as well as, other towns.

- 146 ○ If you call the police station, the dispatcher will ask additional questions about the
- 147 health of those where the incident is that you're calling about. Please be patient.
- 148 ○ The police station is on lockdown. You will be asked some questions through the
- 149 outside buzzer/intercom system and, depending on your answers, will be allowed to
- 150 enter. If not, an officer wearing PPE will come out to speak to you.
- 151 ○ We are currently "OK" with supplies and PPE. We will, however, eventually run out and
- 152 will accept any donations of the N95 masks that contractors may have.
- 153 ○ We are ensuring that people have food. Price Chopper, Hannaford, and Walmart are
- 154 opening from 6:00am-7:00am for seniors, and an officer will beat Walmart tomorrow
- 155 morning to assist with the elderly and seniors as needed.
- 156 ○ Also, we are routinely checking the many vacant buildings due to business closures.
- 157 ○ Kudos to all of our staff, as well as, all of the Town staff for what they are doing and the
- 158 flexibility that they have shown.

159 *Board questions/comments:*

160 Mr. Campbell: Has some N95 masks that he will donate to the Police Department.

161 Mr. Campbell: With the potential 50%-75% of the population getting sick, what is the plan for
162 police coverage? - We have a mutual aid agreement with the Vermont State Police and the
163 Sheriff's Department.

164 *The Board is thankful for the work done by all of the organizations, and all of the*
165 *organizations are appreciative of each other with the cooperation displayed among them during*
166 *this unprecedented time.*

167 **2. CONSENT AGENDA**

168 **A. MINUTES - MARCH 9, 2020**

169 **B. WARRANTS**

170 **C. LIQUOR LICENSES**

171 *Jeannie Jenkins moved and Chad Gordon seconded to approve the Consent Agenda as*
172 *submitted. The motion carried with Bill Scully absent.*

173 **3. PUBLIC COMMENTS**

174 None.

175 **4. AUTHORIZE CHAIR AND/OR VICE CHAIR TO SIGN FUTURE WARRANTS**

176 Mr. Campbell stated Attorney Jim Barlow recommended that the Chair and/or Vice
177 Chair be authorized to sign future warrants as a precautionary measure should Board members
178 start to get sick.

179 **Bruce Lee-Clark moved and Jeanne Conner seconded to approve the following:**

180 ***“For as long as the State of Emergency regarding COVID-19 is in effect, the Select Board***
181 ***authorizes the Chairperson and/or Vice Chairperson to approve orders for payments of bills***
182 ***and invoices including payment of payroll, warrants, and to approve liquor licenses. The***
183 ***summary of approved payments and licenses shall be sent to all members of the Select Board***
184 ***promptly after the approval by the Chairperson or Vice Chairperson.”***

185 ***The motion carried with Bill Scully absent.***

186 **5. COMMUNICATION UNION DISTRICT - APPOINT REPRESENTATIVES**

187 Mr. Campbell read the document to form the Southern Vermont Communication Union
188 District as presented for approval on March 23, 2020.

189 ***Bruce Lee-Clark moved and Jeanne Conner seconded to approve the formation of the***
190 ***Southern Vermont Communication Union District as presented. The motion carried with Bill***
191 ***Scully absent.***

192 Mr. Lee-Clark stated that this current crisis is a perfect example of why everyone needs
193 high speed internet access. Mr. Campbell concurred.

194 ***The motion carried with Bill Scully absent.***

195 **6. MANAGER’S REPORT**

196 Mr. Monks reported the following:

- 197 ■ We are adhering to all of the recommendations from the CDC and the DOH to keep our
198 employees and the public safe.
- 199 ■ All town facilities, including the Senior Center and the Recreation Center, are closed to
200 the public.
- 201 ■ The Town Office is available by phone, e-mail or mail, and our Buildings and Grounds
202 crew is keeping up with disinfecting all of our facilities.
- 203 ■ All public meetings have been cancelled except for the special arrangements made for
204 the Select Board meetings.
- 205 ■ FYI - the Bennington Free Library (which is not a town facility) has been closed.
- 206 ■ We continue to update our Emergency Services Plan as we must maintain our public
207 safety measures, purifying the water, and providing wastewater services no matter how
208 serious this pandemic gets.
- 209 ■ Our staff have begun split shifts so there are as few in the building as possible, and staff
210 meetings are limited and conducted by teleconference means as much as possible.
 - 211 ■ The BCRC has put together a COVID-19 Resource Page which is the most
212 comprehensive place to go for information on resources.
 - 213 ■ Mr. Hurd returned from his vacation in the Caribbean and it was recommended
214 by the Health Officer that he self-quarantine even though he did not show any

215 symptoms. He is in contact every day with staff and extended his appreciation for what
216 they have done and are doing.

217 **7. NEXT MEETING**

218 Mr. Campbell stated that the Board may do a completely remote informational meeting
219 on the Monday's that are not regular Board meetings that would be recorded by CAT-TV. More
220 to come on this.

221 Our regular meeting will be held via Zoom as this one is with hopefully an improved
222 mechanism for people to call in on April 13th.

223 **8. OTHER BUSINESS**

224 Mr. Lee-Clark: Hopes people are watching, and added that the Sunday supper served
225 ecumenically at the 2nd Congregational Church is still happening as a take out at 5:00pm on
226 Hillside Street.

227 Mr. Gordon: Hope people are watching and washing their hands. Not how he thought his last
228 meeting would be.

229 Ms. Jenkins: The Hunger Council is looking at food needs throughout the county and the
230 Northshire has been "amazingly generous" with volunteers and funding. The resource contacts
231 at BCRCVT.org are excellent, foodbanks are open with schedules on the BCRCVT.org website,
232 Meals on Wheels is still operating with the help of Green Mountain Express, emergency housing
233 is being worked on with 8 motels currently accepting vouchers and Green Mountain Express
234 providing transportation from those motels to the grocery stores, and providing transportation
235 to the grocery stores for the early 6:00am openings at no charge to anyone. It is astonishing to
236 see how people have come together in the town, county, and state in this time of need.

237 Mr. Carroll: The Governor has made a decree that the rooms and meals taxes will not be due
238 for an indeterminate length of time without penalty, and the Federal and State taxes due date
239 has been pushed up to July 15, 2020. Also, let your legislators know if your bank is being
240 uncooperative in working with you if you cannot pay your mortgage and we will try to help.
241 Thanks to Senators Sears and Campion for working with the SVSU on the meals deliveries that
242 are going on now.

243 Ms. Conner: Restaurant Week is still happening with take out only with all of the information of
244 the participating restaurants on the Chamber of Commerce website. Mr. Campbell added that
245 we all want the restaurants to be there when we're through this, so buying a pay-it-forward
246 card, if you're able to do so, would be most helpful to them.

247 *The Board expressed their appreciation for Mr. Gordon and his contributions to the*
248 *Board during his tenure. This is his last meeting.*

249 *At 7:47pm, Bruce Lee-Clark moved and Chad Gordon seconded the adjournment of the*
250 *meeting. The motion carried with Bill Scully absent.*

251 Respectfully submitted,

252 Nancy H. Lively

253 Secretary



TOWN OF BENNINGTON

Approving the Formation of the Southern Vermont Communications Union District and Appointing a Representative to the Governing Board Thereof Resolution

WHEREAS, the Town of Bennington, at the annual meeting thereof held on March 3, 2020, elected to form the Southern Vermont Communications Union District ("District", "SoVT CUD") under the provisions of 30 V.S.A. chapter 82 and

WHEREAS, the Town of Bennington has good reason to believe that one or more other towns have elected to form the District at their annual meetings held on or near the same day and

WHEREAS, as provided in section 3059 of said chapter, the legislative body or each member town shall appoint annually on or before the last Monday in April a representative and one or more alternates to the governing board of the District for one-year terms, and

WHEREAS, as provided in section 3060 of said chapter, the governing board of the District shall hold its organizational meeting annually on the second Tuesday in May following the appointments contemplated in section 3059, and

WHEREAS, the Select Board of the Town of Bennington desires to accomplish the formation of the Southern Vermont Communications Union District,

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED THAT:

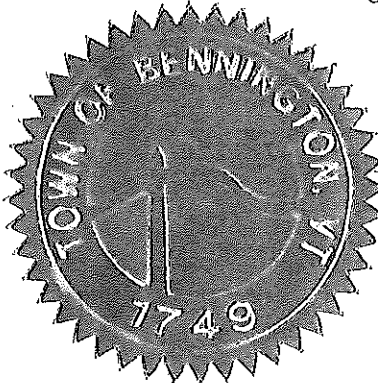
- (1) To the fullest extent permitted by law, the Select Board of the Town of Bennington hereby confirms the action taken by the Town at the March 3, 2020 annual meeting thereof whereby the formation of the Southern Vermont Communications Union District was approved.
- (2) The Select Board of the Town of Bennington hereby approves the creation of the Southern Vermont Communications Union District, and its qualification as a communications union district under the provisions of 30 V.S.A. chapter 82.
- (3) The Select Board of the Town of Bennington hereby appoints the following representative and one or more alternates to the Governing Board of the Southern Vermont Communications Union District for terms of one year each:

Representative: Eric Hatch Alternate: Ron Dubreuil Alternate: Beth Hardesty

Adopted at a regular meeting of the Select Board of the Town of Bennington duly held on the 23rd day of March 2020.

ATTEST:


Donald A. Campbell, Select Board Chair




Town Clerk

Date: 3-23-2020