

1 **BENNINGTON SELECT BOARD MEETING**

2 **130 RIVER STREET**

3 **BENNINGTON, VERMONT 05201**

4 **JULY 12, 2021**

5 **MINUTES**

6 **SELECT BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT:** Jeannie Jenkins-Chair; Jeanne Conner-Vice Chair; Bruce  
7 Lee-Clark; Jim Carroll; Sarah Perrin; Tom Haley; and Gary Corey.

8 **SELECT BOARD MEMBERS ABSENT:** None.

9 **ALSO PRESENT:** Stuart Hurd-Town Manager; Shannon Barsotti-Community Development  
10 Director; Susan Plaisance, Michael Keane, Michael McDonough, and Eric Peterson-Better  
11 Bennington Corporation; Linda Donigan, Carrie Gutbier, and Diane Howard-Bennington Free  
12 Library; 1 citizen; Josh Boucher-CAT-TV; and Nancy H. Lively-Secretary.

13 At 6:03pm, Ms. Jenkins called the meeting to order and asked those not vaccinated to  
14 wear a mask or social distance if unable to wear a mask, and that there are wipes to wipe down  
15 the microphone if you wish to speak.

16 *Jeanne Conner moved and Bruce Lee-Clark seconded to add #9. Executive Session, A.*  
17 *Legal Matter to tonight's agenda and action will be taken after coming out of Executive*  
18 *Session. The motion carried unanimously.*

19 **1. VISION STATEMENT**

20 Ms. Conner read the Town's Vision Statement that was adopted by the Select Board on  
21 August 24, 2020:

22 "Bennington is a welcoming, engaged, inclusive, resilient community where everyone  
23 regardless of identity shares in our vitality and benefits from an outstanding quality of life."

24 **2. CONSENT AGENDA**

25 **A. MINUTES OF JUNE 23, 2021 AND JUNE 28, 2021**

26 **B. WARRANTS**

27 *Bruce Lee-Clark moved and Sarah Perrin seconded to approve the Consent Agenda*  
28 *with the Minutes of June 23, 2021 and June 28, 2021 amended as follows:*

29 *Minutes of June 23, 2021 - Line 58, Change "We use" to "We rarely use"*

30 *Minutes of June 28, 2021 - Line 69, Change "ordnance" to "ordinance"*

31 Mr. Corey asked why there is a gap in check numbers, and Mr. Hurd explained that that  
32 is due to the two fiscal years.

33 *The motion carried unanimously.*

34 **3. PUBLIC COMMENT**

35 The following Public Comment Practices to make the experience for all involved a  
36 productive and informative use of the Public Comment period at Select Board meetings was  
37 placed on the podium for those that wish to make Public Comments to reference:

- 38 1. Public Comment is to allow residents an opportunity to share information or  
39 make announcements that benefit the community at large.
- 40 2. The topic should **not** be related to an agenda item. If a member of the public  
41 wants to comment on an agenda item they can do so during the discussion of  
42 that item.
- 43 3. Comments should be 3 minutes or less.
- 44 4. You are required to state your name and town of residence.
- 45 5. Sharing comments, announcements and concerns are encouraged rather than  
46 asking questions. Public Comment is not a time for discussion. If you have  
47 specific questions it is best to call the Town Manager to get a full explanation  
48 and accurate information.
- 49 6. If the topic requires much discussion the item will be considered as an agenda  
50 item at a future meeting.

51 Linda Donigan: Shared the following activities going on at the Bennington Free Library:

- 52 • The library opened fully on July 12<sup>th</sup>. Everyone is excited about more in person access.
- 53 • We are continuing Outreach and Takeout.
- 54 • We have sent 1,600 packets to children for our Summer Reading Program where they  
55 can earn free books to pick up at the library with 200 more going to Child Care Centers.
- 56 • We have in-person yoga classes, story hour, and the out-of-box program, as well as, 9  
57 holes of mini golf coming in August.
- 58 • We also do much collaborative work with other agencies, such as the Bennington  
59 Museum.

60 Kudos to the Library for the work that they do.

61 **4. BETTER BENNINGTON CORPORATION - BUDGET AND WORKPLAN PRESENTATION**

62 Susan Plaisance, Michael Keane, Michael McDonough, and Eric Peterson did the  
63 following presentation on the Better Bennington Corporation (BBC):

- 64 ○ The mission of the BBC is to lead and support public and private efforts that promote  
65 and enhance downtown as the vital commercial and cultural heart of the Bennington  
66 Community.
- 67 ○ The BBC's response to the pandemic is to help businesses owners and the community  
68 stabilize, survive and grow.
- 69 ○ We have focused on constant communication with businesses, face-to-face interactions  
70 and assistance, and providing up-to-date information from multiple sources.
- 71 ○ Design Committee Accomplishments -
  - 72 ➤ Advocated for/assisted with the Vermont Downtown application of easterly  
73 expansion of the downtown district and 336 Main
  - 74 ➤ Participating member of the Energizer Redevelopment Steering Committee
  - 75 ➤ Provided input on Franklin Lane expansion, enhancement, design, and location  
76 of the History, Arts, and Recreation kiosk
  - 77 ➤ Developed programming analysis and plan for Putnam Plaza
  - 78 ➤ Collaborated with Bennington Arts Council on The Gateways Project
  - 79 ➤ Partnering with the Grow Bennington Initiative, Friends of the Walloomsac  
80 Riverwalk, and Citizens for a Great Bennington Community
  - 81 ➤ Collaborating with the Town of Bennington on the Downtown Planting Program  
82 of Bennington In Bloom, streetscape furnishings and design elements
- 83 ○ Economic Vitality Committee Accomplishments -
  - 84 ➤ Disseminated COVID information - Best Practices Handbook, COVID compliant  
85 signs, and State of Vermont regulations
  - 86 ➤ Downtown is coming out of COVID in a better state
  - 87 ➤ New businesses are being added with youthful entrepreneurs and with the  
88 largest expansion in apartments in decades
  - 89 ➤ Event announcements will be made soon for Grand Opening celebrations after  
90 16 months of lockdown.
- 91 ○ Promotion Committee Accomplishments -
  - 92 ➤ Visitor Center remained open the entire year
  - 93 ➤ Marketing grants supported holiday events with Safe and Sound Santa
  - 94 ➤ Non-physical contact activities with art exhibits (Vermont Reflections and Seeds  
95 of Hope)
  - 96 ➤ Gift certificates on St. Patrick's Day and the Holiday Season
  - 97 ➤ Website, Welcome Center, social media presence, Thompson Stage protocols  
98 and bookings, diversity poster, and brand marketing
- 99 ○ Grow 2021-22 and Post-Pandemic -
  - 100 ➤ Must implement ways to make up for the \$60,000 lost from 2 cancelled Mayfests
  - 101 ➤ Must work on enhancement grants, capitalize on downtown investments, and  
102 give marketing assistance/training
  - 103 ➤ Must maintain the BBC mission while expanding our concept of "Downtown"
  - 104 ➤ Work with the Town on marketing to people of color

- 105           ➤ Do multi-year (3-5 year) planning and budgeting to include higher compensation  
106           for the Executive Director, to be able to hire an Assistant Executive Director, and  
107           more staff/consultants to bring more versatility, youth, and expertise to the BBC.  
108           ➤ We assume that the Putnam Block will have a positive impact on us financially  
109           but we don't know how much at this time.  
110           ➤ How will Bennington benefit? -  
111                 ✓ With an increased external awareness of our community and its  
112                 potential  
113                 ✓ Will help foster a diverse population and business mix  
114                 ✓ With increased patronage and participation and more street life and  
115                 activity  
116         ○ The Budget -  
117           ➤ The budget is level funded except for a 3% salary increase and is adequate for  
118           our needs this year.  
119           ➤ Mr. Lee-Clark: It would be more helpful to have year-to-year comparisons and  
120           projections instead of the month-to-month presentation.  
121           ➤ Mr. Hurd noted that he and his wife have not been asked to renew their BBC  
122           membership for 2 years.  
123           ➤ Ms. Jenkins is the liaison from the Select Board to the BBC but doesn't serve on  
124           their Board so has no conflict in voting on the budget.

125     *B        Board comments/questions:*

126           Everyone is excited about the energy in the Downtown, the presence of younger people,  
127           and the overall activity that is not just the result of the pending end of the pandemic, but is the  
128           result of the years of collaboration between the BBC and the Town.

129           *Jim Carroll moved and Gary Corey seconded to approve the Better Bennington*  
130           *Corporation Annual Budget for July 2021 through June 2022 as presented. The motion carried*  
131           *unanimously.*

132     **5. COMMUNITY POLICING UPDATE**

133           Ms. Jenkins noted that the NACOLE Presentation will be in person on July 15, 2021 at  
134           the Fire Facility in the Multi-Purpose Room-3<sup>rd</sup> Floor from 6:00-7:30pm. It will be open to the  
135           public to educate the community on what a Citizen Review Board may look like and will be  
136           recorded by CAT-TV, as well.

137     **6. MANAGER'S REPORT**

138           Mr. Hurd reported the following:

- 139           ✓ Street Naming - Northeastern Baptist College's (NEBC) new housing development  
140           private drive was not named. The Board is required to name the drive and NEBC would  
141           like to name if Ed Wright Way. The Town will provide the sign at NEBC's cost.

142 ***Bruce Lee-Clark moved and Jim Carroll seconded to approve the Northeastern Baptist***  
 143 ***College's (NEBC) private drive to their new housing development be named Ed Wright Way.***  
 144 ***The motion carried unanimously.***

145 ✓ General Fund Budget Realignment - The realignment of budget dollars to properly show  
 146 future expenditures in the FY22 budget does not alter the total budget that the voters  
 147 approved in March. The anticipated recreation operating expense of \$147,360 was  
 148 decreased by \$137,360 leaving \$10,000 for the remaining recreation operating supplies.  
 149 These are dollars that the YMCA has not spent, but if they have the need to spend more  
 150 than has been realigned, they would go to Mr. Hurd with that request. That decreased  
 151 amount has been realigned as follows:

152	<u>Account</u>	<u>Before</u>	<u>Change</u>	<u>After</u>	<u>Comment</u>
153	01-3650.100	115,620	60,000	175,620	Add Comm. Coord.
154	Position				
155	01-3650.150-153	49,640	24,000	73,640	Add Comm. Coord.
156	Benefits est.40%				
157	01-3700.560	35,260	26,000	61,260	Website Upgrade
158	01-3710.100	476,060	15,000	491,060	P/T B&G position to
159	SVC				
160	01-7100.210	147,360	(137,360)	10,000	Rec. Oper. Supplies
161	Remaining				
162	01-7100.440	0	12,360	12,360	YMCA Scholarships
163					
164					Previously to 01-
165	7100.210				

166 ***Bruce Lee-Clark moved and Tom Haley seconded to approve the proposed General***  
 167 ***Fund Budget Realignment as presented. The motion carried unanimously.***

168 ✓ Recreation Center Improvements - The Rec Center main entrance is open and ready for  
 169 business. However, visibility from this area is restricted so that the person at the desk  
 170 has minimal visibility into the pool and the hallway leading to the locker rooms. A  
 171 camera system is planned to deal with this. The YMCA folks have mapped out positions  
 172 and will be meeting with Paul Dansereau and Mark Sawyer to finalize.

173 ✓ Town Offices Reopening - We have been monitoring the Town Office hours of operation  
 174 and will continue to do so through July. We have found that there is minimal business  
 175 between 4:30pm and 5:00pm. We are looking at a 7:30am opening and a 4:30pm  
 176 closing to determine if that better fits more customers' schedules.

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✓ Additional Information -

- We have received 5 applications for our new office position and will be interviewing 2 of them soon.
- Due to scheduling there is no update on the website upgrade. We should know more the first week of August.

**7. UPCOMING AGENDA**

- July 26, 2021 - Infrastructure Funding Discussion
- July 26, 2021 - Policy 1<sup>st</sup> Reading
- July 26, 2021 - Senior (50+) Programming
- July 26, 2021 - Create 3-Person Committee on Meeting Structure

**8. OTHER BUSINESS**

Ms. Conner: Reiterated the energy and activity there is in Town, as well as, the number of children that are playing outside.

Ms. Jenkins: Reminded everyone that Midnight Madness will be after the NACOLE Presentation on July 15<sup>th</sup> and that there will be an Energizer Public Meeting via Zoom on July 21<sup>st</sup> at 6:00pm.

**9. EXECUTIVE SESSION**

**A. LEGAL MATTER**

*At 7:22pm, Sarah Perrin moved and Bruce Lee-Clark seconded the adjournment of the meeting finding that an Executive Session be held on a Legal Matter as premature public knowledge would place a person involved in the subject matter at a substantial disadvantage. Action will be taken this evening following Executive Session. The motion carried unanimously.*

Respectfully submitted,

Nancy H. Lively

Secretary

**SELECT BOARD  
MINUTES ADDENDUM**

**July 12, 2021**

Present: Jeannie Jenkins, Chair, Jeanne Conner, V. Chair, Sarah Perrin, Jim Carroll, Tom Haley, Gary Corey, and Bruce Lee-Clark.


The Board went into executive session for a litigation matter at 7:22 pm. The Board came out of executive session at 7:45 pm.

There was a motion by Jim Carroll, seconded by Bruce Lee Clark to authorize the Town Manager to accept the Purdue Bankruptcy settlement. Bruce Lee Clark indicated he would vote in favor of the motion because the majority of the litigants have agreed to it. Bennington is just "a flea on the backside of an elephant". He feels the Sackler family has not paid what it should due to the harm opioids have done to our Town and the nation.

The Manager described the settlement. It is a \$6.0 billion plan with \$4.3 billion to be split among the many governmental entities involved in the litigation. The State of Vermont will receive 0.3% of the total depending on a number of variables estimated at \$11.7 to 14.7 million. Bennington will receive much less, the amount as yet undetermined. All funds must be dedicated to programs to abate the opioid crisis, which was Bennington's plan all along.

Sarah Perrin indicated she had planned to vote "no". but will now support the motion. The vote was unanimous. There being no other business, the meeting adjourned at 7:53 pm.

Respectfully submitted,



Stuart A. Hurd