

1 **BENNINGTON SELECT BOARD MEETING**

2 **130 RIVER STREET**

3 **BENNINGTON, VERMONT 05201**

4 **JULY 26, 2021**

5 **MINUTES**

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

8 **SELECT BOARD MEMBERS ABSENT:** Sarah Perrin.

9 **ALSO PRESENT:** Stuart Hurd-Town Manager; Dan Monks-Assistant Town Manager; Shannon
10 Barsotti-Community Development Director; Carrie Fabricius, Kayla Becker and Taylor Haynes-
11 Senior Citizen Programing; Representative Mary Morrissey, John Miner, and Rose Telford-
12 Agenda Restructuring (Pledge Allegiance); David Pilachowski; Nancy White; 18 citizens; Jim
13 Therrien-Bennington Banner; Josh Boucher-CAT-TV; and Nancy H. Lively-Secretary.

14 At 6:00pm, Ms. Jenkins called the meeting to order and asked those not vaccinated to
15 wear a mask or social distance if unable to wear a mask, and that there are wipes to wipe down
16 the microphone if you wish to speak.

17 **1. AGENDA RESTRUCTURING**

18 Ms. Jenkins explained that the Board has looked at the order/format of the Agenda's.
19 There are two basic roles for a Select Board meeting - 1. To do the business of the Town which
20 is mostly financial; and 2. To meet community needs through Public Comments, Presentations,
21 Upcoming Agendas, Community Policing Update, Manager's Report, and other standing items
22 on our agendas. The Pledge of Allegiance and Vision Statement would also be standing items.
23 Not all town agendas are the same - for example, some ask at the start of the meeting if there
24 are any conflicts of interest and all must do Public Comments but some do that in the beginning
25 of the meeting and some do it at the end.

26 The Subcommittee of Ms. Jenkins and Mr. Carroll researched the Pledge since it has
27 been a long standing tradition to have this as a standing item on our agenda's. They discovered
28 the following and have heard pros and cons from the public as to whether or not we should
29 continue this tradition:

- 30
- It is not required by the Secretary of State's Office.
 - 31 • It is not in Robert's Rules.
 - 32 • It is not part of Open Meeting law.
 - 33 • It is a tradition that has mattered to this community.

34 The Subcommittee has recommended that we continue to say the Pledge of Allegiance at
35 the beginning of our regular Select Board meetings. "For many in our community it is an
36 expression of love and honor for our country, for veterans, and for those who currently serve.
37 It does not mean that communities that do not say the Pledge are any less patriotic or love
38 their country less. Instead it says that this is a meaningful tradition in this community and we
39 want to honor that."

40 Mr. Carroll shared the importance of the Pledge to him personally.

41 *It was the consensus of the Board to have the Pledge of Allegiance a standing item at the*
42 *beginning of regular Select Board meetings.*

43

44 **2. VISION STATEMENT**

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

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

49 **3. CONSENT AGENDA**

50 **A. MINUTES OF JULY 12, 2021 AND JULY 15, 2021**

51 **B. WARRANTS**

52 *Jeanne Conner moved and Tom Haley seconded to approve the Consent Agenda with*
53 *the Minutes of July 12, 2021 amended as follows:*

54 *Minutes of July 12, 2021 - Line 167, Change "presented. The" to "presented.*
55 *Ms. Perrin asked whether or not funds for the Rec Center could be requested and if so would*
56 *they be approved? Ms. Perrin voted yes after asking this question. The"*

57 *Minutes of July 12, 2021 Select Board Minutes Addendum - Paragraph 5, Line 1,*
58 *Change "no", but" to "no", however my vote would not effect the outcome. I believe*
59 *Bennington can benefit from the settlement money, but"*

60 *The motion carried with Sarah Perrin absent.*

61 *Jeanne Conner moved and Jim Carroll seconded to approve the Minutes of July 15,*
62 *2021 as presented. The motion carried with Bruce Lee-Clark abstaining and Sarah Perrin*
63 *absent.*

64 **4. PUBLIC COMMENT**

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

- 68 1. Public Comment is to allow residents an opportunity to share information or
69 make announcements that benefit the community at large.
- 70 2. The topic should **not** be related to an agenda item. If a member of the public
71 wants to comment on an agenda item they can do so during the discussion of
72 that item.
- 73 3. Comments should be 3 minutes or less.
- 74 4. You are required to state your name and town of residence.
- 75 5. Sharing comments, announcements and concerns are encouraged rather than
76 asking questions. Public Comment is not a time for discussion. If you have
77 specific questions it is best to call the Town Manager to get a full explanation
78 and accurate information.
- 79 6. If the topic requires much discussion the item will be considered as an agenda
80 item at a future meeting.

81 David Pilachowski, Interim Director of the Bennington Museum shared the following on
82 the Museum:

- 83 ○ We have 30 outdoor sculptures around the 10-acre campus that includes the George
84 Aiken Wildflower Trail.
- 85 ○ We are restoring our Civil War Memorial that is on campus and that should be done this
86 week. We will be having a celebration of it in September when the first Bennington
87 soldiers headed off to the Civil War.
- 88 ○ We have free concerts on Fridays from 5:00pm-7:00pm and there is no admission
89 charge after 4:00pm. There is never a charge to use the grounds.
- 90 ○ We are reaching out to Headstart and others to establish programs/events for children.
- 91 ○ We have a Robert Frost Exhibit, a Love, Marriage, Divorce Exhibit, and an Exhibit on the
92 environment.
- 93 ○ We're open 6 days a week (closed Wednesdays) and admissions is free to anyone under
94 18, students at local colleges or anyone over 60 pay \$10.00, and younger adults pay
95 \$12.00.

96 Kudos to the Museum for their work.

97 -----

98 Representative Mary Morrissey spoke in favor of the Board reinstating the Pledge of
99 Allegiance as part of the agenda's but regret that a Subcommittee had to be formed to do that.

100 Ms. Conner felt that a lot was learned about the history of the Pledge because of the
101 process that the Subcommittee performed.

102 John Miner, a 100% disabled vet, stated that the information about the Pledge should
103 have been taught in schools instead of throwing it out. "We have forgotten who we are."

104 Rose Telford also noted that we used to be taught to respect the Pledge when we were
105 young.

106 -----

107 Nancy White is concerned about the direction that the Board has taken over the last
108 several years by not allowing the public to ask questions during Public Comment and asked if
109 the Board had voted on the Public Comment procedure. Ms. Jenkins answered that there was a
110 Committee that came back with recommendations that were approved by a consensus of the
111 Board. We allow the public to speak on any agenda item and do not allow a back and forth
112 discussion during Public Comment. This is the time for the public to speak on what "will serve
113 the public good", and if a comment is made that needs to be an agenda item, it will be put on a
114 future agenda.

115 -----

116 Kayla Becker stated that both the 8-10 year old and 11&12 year old Little League teams
117 are currently playing in the State tournaments. The 11&12 year olds are hosting the
118 tournament at the Little League Complex this weekend and next weekend, and the 8-10 year
119 olds played in St. Johnsbury this past weekend and will play again this coming weekend.

120 **5. SENIOR CITIZEN PROGRAMMING PRESENTATION**

121 Kayla Becker and Taylor Haynes from the YMCA and Carrie Fabricius, Director of the
122 Senior Center did the following presentation on Senior Citizen Programming:

- 123 ➤ Seniors could use the pool for exercises when it reopened in June.
- 124 ➤ Yoga classes were started back up in August and, as of March 2021, are being done at
125 the Old Benn High.
- 126 ➤ Currently there are multiple pool exercise classes with more people allowed in the pool
127 at the same time.
- 128 ➤ Silver sneakers is being held at the Old Benn High with more classes being planned for
129 the future.
- 130 ➤ Boot Camp is a multi-age outdoor activity that currently has 50% of the participants'
131 senior citizens.
- 132 ➤ Indoor walking classes, physical therapy classes, and Tai Chi will be available for those
133 not ready for yoga or silver sneakers.
- 134 ➤ We are working on having daycare available for grandparents.
- 135 ➤ We provide all of the equipment that is needed for the respective classes.
- 136 ➤ We have 320 members between the ages of 51-69 and 139 members that are 70 and
137 over.
- 138 ➤ Seniors are given a 10% discount on top of their membership fee.

- 139 ➤ Some insurances, such as Blue Cross/Blue Shield and United Health Care may cover
140 some activities and/or memberships for seniors.
141 ➤ We also have financial aid available if needed so cost never is the reason for not
142 becoming a member.
143 ➤ All programs and classes are included in a membership.
144 ➤ We are working with SASH on how corporate memberships can benefit seniors.
145 ➤ Currently the Senior Center membership starts at age 50, the Rec Center membership
146 senior starts at age 55, and the YMCA membership starts at age 62. The Select Board
147 will be looking at this in the future.

148 Carrie Fabricius added:

- 149 ✓ The Senior Center on Pleasant Street is upstairs and Meals on Wheels is
150 downstairs.
151 ✓ We're open 8:00am-4:00pm, Monday thru Friday, for seniors aged 50+.
152 ✓ Many of the physical programs that were done there are now done by the YMCA
153 so we are now focusing on bringing in more art, and cultural and educational
154 programming.
155 ✓ We are also trying to convince more men to come in as we only have a few that
156 come in with their wives.
157 ✓ We have a Coffee Talk group in the morning, painting, crafts, Bone Builders,
158 Trivia and Bingo.
159 ✓ We also have a potluck once a month, normally a picnic in July, a Pizza and Ice
160 Cream Social in August, Coffee with the Chief of Police in September, and a Block
161 Party with Meals on Wheels in October.
162 ✓ The potlucks for Thanksgiving and Christmas at the Fire House are up in the air at
163 this time.
164 ✓ We also do trips with Green Mountain Express, such as shopping trips to
165 Crossgates and farther away trips, such as Hampton Beach, theatre in Chatham,
166 lunch and cruise from Burlington, the Big E in Springfield, and 3 days in
167 Lancaster, PA.
168 ✓ Mr. Hurd will share the weekly spreadsheet that has who went to the Senior
169 Center and what programs they participated in with the Board.

170 *Board comments/questions:*

171 Mr. Lee-Clark: Encouraged to work on more collaboration with the recreation/senior
172 programming.

173 Ms. Jenkins: Develop a draft of the best collaboration scenario for seniors.

174 Ms. Conner: Encouraged to make more trips with a cultural theme. Ms. Fabricius noted that
175 many of the trips are theatre oriented.

176 *Public comments/questions:*

177 Rose Telford: Prefers not to have the Grandparent Daycare in the same room as the seniors.

178 Nancy White: Are we keeping the building on Pleasant Street for seniors? Mr. Hurd answered
179 that the Senior Center will continue to be there for the time being and the budget for seniors
180 will always be used for seniors.

181 **6. COMMUNITY POLICING UPDATE**

182 **A. TASK FORCE UPDATE**

183 Ms. Conner reported that on July 15, 2021, Brian Corr, a NACOLE Board member, did a
184 well-received presentation on civilian oversight that is now available from a link on the home
185 page of the Town's website. The application to apply for the Task Force is also on the home
186 page of the Town's website and applications are due to Michele Johnson at the Town Office by
187 the end of business on August 20, 2021. We are requiring a reference recommendation in
188 addition to the application and interviews will take place early to mid-September. The Task
189 Force will be made up of 11 people.

190 **7. ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT PRIORITIES & TOOLS**

191 Mr. Monks stated that Bennington will be receiving a significant amount of funds as part
192 of the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) - possibly \$4M or more in total. Although broad
193 criteria outlining eligible uses are contained in federal statute, final rules regarding how the
194 funds may be spent are still not available.

195 In order to develop thoughtful and feasible, community supported spending priorities
196 for ARPA, Town staff recommends a comprehensive review of: a)Town needs/opportunities;
197 and b) all available economic development tools, including ARPA, TIF, Tax Stabilization, Town
198 Loan Programs, Grant Opportunities, etc. Based on such a review, an Economic Development
199 Strategy, including spending priorities for ARPA and other strategic recommendations for
200 economic development actions and spending, can be developed to guide the Select Board and
201 staff over the next few years. The review must include meaningful engagement of citizens and
202 stakeholders to ensure that the plan reflects the priorities of the community and that it is
203 informed by local input. Town staff contacted White & Burke (who helped us with our TIF
204 District) and requested that they submit a proposal to work with the Town to develop an
205 Economic Development Strategy as described above. Management staff, Select Board
206 leadership, BCRC's Assistant Executive Director, and BBC's Executive Director recently met with
207 White & Burke and, Dominic Cloud, St. Albans Town Manager, who was contacted by the Town
208 to provide expertise in Municipal project development, to discuss the proposal. All supported
209 recommending that the Select Board proceed with the proposal.

210 **8. WHITE AND BURKE PROPOSAL**

211 Mr. Monks continued in saying that one thing that is clear is that the ARPA funds will
212 cover hiring expertise in helping us to find the most meaningful way to spend the funds so we
213 will not need any local taxpayer funds to pay for this expertise. White and Burke have worked
214 with Windsor, St. Albans, Springfield, and our TIF District. In addition, Dominic Cloud is “a
215 superstar”. The White and Burke Proposal estimates this could require approximately 8-10
216 hours per week for 10-12 weeks, including one in-person visit to the Town, and propose not to
217 exceed \$20,000 without explicit prior approval from the Select Board.

218 *Jim Carroll moved and Bruce Lee-Clark seconded to authorize the Town Manager to*
219 *enter into a contract for the services described in the White and Burke Proposal as presented.*

220 Discussion ensued:

- 221 ▪ We will have a separate agreement with Dominic Cloud that is intertwined with the
222 White and Burke proposal.
- 223 ▪ The Board will not see the contract that the Town Manager has entered into with White
224 and Burke.
- 225 ▪ If the White and Burke fee exceeds \$20,000, the Select Board must approve anything
226 over \$20,000.
- 227 ▪ Town staff will be working regularly with a Sub-Committee of the Select Board.

228 *The motion carried with Sarah Perrin absent.*

229 9. MANAGER’S REPORT

230 Mr. Hurd reported the following:

- 231 ❖ There will be a National Night Out at Willow Park on August 3rd from 5:00pm-7:00pm.
232 This is an opportunity to meet with police for food, apparatus for the children to enjoy,
233 and conversation.
- 234 ❖ Community Built Park - Town staff have worked diligently this Spring to rehabilitate
235 several segments of the playground to ensure its continued safe use throughout this
236 Summer. We are now looking at its replacement as a high priority project. It will be the
237 first project to use the “Pennies for Parks” funds approved by the voters last March
238 expecting to generate ~\$100,000 this fall. We may be able to use ARPA funds, as well,
239 but the eligibility criteria are still not known. We look forward to working with children
240 and families to find an affordable welcoming and enjoyable design - hopefully sometime
241 this spring.

242 10. UPCOMING AGENDA

243 August 9, 2021 - Dr. Dobson Update

244 August 9, 2021 - Policy 1st Reading - Nepotism and Fraternalization

245 August 9, 2021 - Set Tax Rate - (Mr. Hurd explained the tax process.)

246 **11. OTHER BUSINESS**

247 Mr. Carroll: Shared his personal loss with the passing of John McShane.

248 Ms. Conner: Reminded everyone of the Particulate Matter Warning caused by the wildfires in
249 Manitoba.

250 Ms. Conner: Thanked whoever is doing the wooden sculptures that are around town.

251

252 *At 7:36pm, Jim Carroll moved and Bruce Lee-Clark seconded the adjournment of the*
253 *meeting. The motion carried with Sarah Perrin absent.*

254

255

256 Respectfully submitted,

257 Nancy H. Lively

258 Secretary

259