

1 **BENNINGTON SELECT BOARD MEETING**

2 **130 RIVER STREET**

3 **BENNINGTON, VERMONT 05201**

4 **NOVEMBER 8, 2021**

5 **MINUTES**

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

8 **SELECT BOARD MEMBERS ABSENT:** Tom Haley.

9 **ALSO PRESENT:** Stuart Hurd-Town Manager; Dan Monks-Assistant Town Manager; Shannon  
10 Barsotti-Community Development Director; Jonah Spivak-Communications Coordinator;  
11 Representative Mary Morrissey; Norman LeBlanc-VFW Commander; Rick Zadle; Joseph  
12 Krawczyk, Jr.; Gary Martin; Phil Young; Dr. Trey Dobson-SVMC Medical Director; Alexina Jones;  
13 Jennifer Jasper; Nancy White; Jim Vires-CAT-TV; Jim Therrien-Bennington Banner and Nancy H.  
14 Lively-Secretary.

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

18 **1. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE**

19 The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

20 **2. VISION STATEMENT**

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

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

25 **3. CONSENT AGENDA**

26 **A. MINUTES OF OCTOBER 25, 2021**

27 **B. WARRANTS**

28 *Jim Carroll moved and Bruce Lee-Clark seconded to approve the Consent Agenda with*  
29 *the Minutes of October 25, 2021 amended as follows:*

30 *Line 245, Change "The Town of Bennington received" to "The Bennington Police*  
31 *Department received"*

32 *The motion carried with Tom Haley absent.*

33 **4. PROCLAMATION-PURPLE HEART COMMUNITY-VFW**

34 Mr. Carroll read the Town of Bennington Proclamation Purple Heart Community as  
35 presented.

36 Representative Mary Morrissey cited the many people and organizations involved with  
37 the Purple Heart award and the four recipients that were present for the sacrifices they have  
38 made for our country during their military service. They are Rick Zadle, Joseph Krawczyk, Jr.,  
39 Gary Martin and Phil Young.

40 Norman LeBlanc, VFW Commander, explained that the Purple Heart is the oldest award  
41 still given to all ranks of military service to those that were wounded or died in the line of duty,  
42 and thanked the Town for supporting our Purple Heart recipients.

43 *The Select Board signed the Town of Bennington Proclamation Purple Heart Community*  
44 *recognizing August 7<sup>th</sup> of a given year as Purple Heart Day in Bennington.*

45 **5. COVID UPDATE**

46 Dr. Trey Dobson, SVMC Medical Director, did the following COVID update:

- 47 • Even though COVID cases had increased last week, those in the hospital have not.
- 48 • 25%-30% of the positive cases are coming from the under 12 age group who are not  
49 eligible to be vaccinated with the rest from the elderly with underlying conditions.
- 50 • Several thousands in the 5-11 age group have already signed up for the vaccine when it  
51 becomes available.
- 52 • We should be vigilant about this but it is not as dire as it would seem.
- 53 • The areas with more cases rotates throughout the State.
- 54 • IV treatment of COVID is expensive but prevents people from being hospitalized. Oral  
55 treatments are expected to be available in early 2022.

56 *Board questions/comments answered by Dr. Dobson:*

57 Mr. Carroll: Are those getting COVID primarily the unvaccinated? Yes, about 5:1 unvaccinated  
58 to vaccinated with 100% of the ICU admissions unvaccinated.

59 Ms. Conner: We're not hearing much about new variants. Is that still the case? Yes.

60 Ms. Conner: Do you have any advice for our holiday plans? Vaccinated people spreading COVID  
61 to vaccinated people is extremely rare, however, unvaccinated transmitting to vaccinated is  
62 where the risk lies.

63 Ms. Perrin: Has the hospital reached their goal of 100% vaccinated by November 1<sup>st</sup>? We will  
64 be 100% compliant with a small group of people that are unvaccinated because of exemptions  
65 for medical or religious reasons.

66 **6. PUBLIC COMMENT**

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

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

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84 Alexina Jones, Bennington Museum Director of Advancement, described the Soul Steps  
85 performing group from New York City noting their performances all over the world. The New  
86 York Times stated their performances were "electric and joyeous" as it was when they  
87 performed in Bennington in June. We have received grants to support diversity in Bennington  
88 and Soul Steps has begun a Go Fund Me campaign, as well.

89 Jennifer Jasper, Bennington Performing Arts Center Executive Director, added that on  
90 December 11<sup>th</sup> at 7:30pm the Bennington Performing Arts Center will have a Public Reading of  
91 Excerpts of Their Municipal Work in Progress - tickets are \$15/adults and \$10/students - as well  
92 as, two free workshops on December 12<sup>th</sup> from 11:00am-Noon and 2:00pm-3:00pm. Also, free  
93 on November 14<sup>th</sup> at 2:00pm the AAUW Bennington Chapter will present Bennington-World  
94 War II- The Women and Men Who Served, and Community Theatre, Voices from the Grave on  
95 November 20<sup>th</sup> at 2:00pm and 7:00pm, and on December 14<sup>th</sup> we have Jingle Jangle Jingle-eve  
96 at 1:00pm and 4:00pm for \$10/adults and free for children under 10. Masks are still required in  
97 the theatre.

98 **7. PUBLIC HEARING - NINJA TRAIL GRANT APPLICATION**

99 Mr. Monks did the following presentation:

- 100 o We are requesting approval of a \$200,000 grant application to the VTrans  
101 Transportation Alternatives Grant Program for additional funds for the Ninja Path  
102 Project.

- 103 ○ The funds will allow completion of Phase 1 - a link to Morse Road, a bridge across
- 104 Furnace Brook, and a bridge across the drainage way behind Hannaford.
- 105 ○ The hope is to get the permits for the Phase 1 work this winter for the construction to
- 106 begin during the next construction season. We will pursue getting the permits for the
- 107 entire project regardless of whether or not we are awarded the grant.
- 108 ○ He is giving us a 50% chance of getting the grant. The State often looks favorably on a
- 109 project that is ready to go and we are ready to go.
- 110 ○ The application is due by the end of November and it will be anywhere from 60 days to
- 111 6 months before we know if we will get the money.
- 112 ○ Phase 1 includes all project elements that cannot be done by the Town Highway
- 113 Department.
- 114 ○ Phases 2 and 3 will be to pave the trail that is currently dirt to what is paved by
- 115 Bennington College.
- 116 ○ The Ninja Trail runs behind Walmart (is complete), between the river and Morse Road,
- 117 underneath Route 279, behind Hannaford to the entrance of Bennington College,
- 118 through Bennington College to North Bennington, and connect to the Rail Trail.
- 119 ○ This would ultimately be a 1.5 to 2 mile pedestrian trail from Bennington to North
- 120 Bennington.
- 121 ○ The Board will decide what modes of transportation will be allowed on the trail.
- 122 ○ Ninja = method of doing work, so based on the method by which work began on the
- 123 path ~25 years ago, several volunteers lead by Joanne Erinhouse began constructing the
- 124 Ninja Path.
- 125 ○ The map shared with the Board will be put on the Town's website.

126 ***Gary Corey moved and Bruce Lee-Clark seconded to approve applying for a \$200,000***  
 127 ***VTrans Transportation Alternatives Grant as presented. The motion carried with Tom Haley***  
 128 ***absent.***

129 **8. PUBLIC HEARINGS HIGHWAY DISCONTINUANCE**

130 **A. BROOKSIDE DRIVE**

131 **B. THE FOOTHILLS (TH29)**

132 Mr. Hurd stated that the Board did site visits on Brookside Drive at the entrance to  
 133 Brookside Apartments on South Street and on The Foothills (TH29) driveway south of Corey  
 134 Lane on Monument Avenue prior to tonight's meeting. The State of Vermont has identified  
 135 them as "not real highways" and the Town hasn't serviced them in years. Both will go back to  
 136 the property owners.

137 ***Bruce Lee-Clark moved and Jim Carroll seconded to discontinue Brookside Drive and***  
 138 ***The Foothills (TH29) as highways. The motion carried with Tom Haley absent.***

139 **9. DOWNTOWN FUNDING STRUCTURE**

140 Ms. Jenkins stated that the Board will further discuss the Downtown Funding Structure  
141 and bring it back as an agenda item at a later date.

142 *Public questions/comments:*

143 Nancy White: Maintains that local approval is needed to change the Downtown Funding  
144 Structure.

#### 145 **10. COMMUNITY POLICING UPDATE**

146 Ms. Jenkins reported as follows:

- 147 ➤ The public review of procedures is ongoing until 5:00pm on November 17<sup>th</sup>.
- 148 ➤ Thank you to Jonah Spivak for keeping the Task Force up-to-date and giving them  
149 what they are asking for.
- 150 ➤ She and Mr. Haley are reaching out to a long list of towns, organizations and  
151 individuals to move the Declaration of Inclusion into action steps. We expect  
152 this process to take at least a couple of more weeks and then to bring some  
153 entry point recommendations to the Board for consideration.

#### 154 **11. EQUIPMENT BORROWING**

155 Mr. Hurd noted that this year we are borrowing \$301,953.00 to purchase several pieces  
156 of highway equipment all approved within the recently approved budget. Included in this Note  
157 are a Kubota Tractor with Boom Mower, a Western Star Dump Truck and a 1 Ton Pickup Truck.

158 *Sarah Perrin moved and Bruce Lee-Clark seconded to waive the reading of the*  
159 *Resolution, accept the Note for \$301,953.00, sign the Note, Resolution, and Tax Certificate to*  
160 *then forward onto the Treasurer and Clerk for their signatures where appropriate as*  
161 *presented. The motion carried with Tom Haley absent.*

#### 162 **12. MANAGER'S REPORT**

163 Mr. Hurd reported the following:

- 164 ✓ EPA Action - JARD Site, Bowen Road - The EPA will be installing monitoring wells at the  
165 JARD site to gather groundwater to further determine the impact on the surrounding  
166 environment. They had capped the site 3 years ago but there are still PCB's in the  
167 water. We don't expect them to find any hazards - such as on the baseball field. The  
168 work is expected to take 3 weeks.
- 169
- 170 ✓ Franklin Lane Update - The design plans are completed and a formal bid process has  
171 been delayed due to the unavailability of contractors in our region until Spring 2022.
- 172
- 173 ✓ Town Website Redesign - The plans to redesign the Town's website is slowly forming  
174 and hope to be ready to send out a request for proposals by January 2022. We have

175 ~\$24,000 in this fiscal year for this project and will have a better idea of the cost by the  
176 next meeting. This will be an agenda item for the November 22<sup>nd</sup> meeting.

177  
178 ✓ Citizen Survey - The Citizen Survey, begun in October, was closed on November 5, 2021.  
179 The process of consolidating and tallying the results will now begin. We currently have  
180 640 responses in with an additional 180 anticipated by the end of the week.

181 **13. UPCOMING AGENDA**

182 November 22, 2021 - Website Update

183 November 22, 2021 - Look At Our Progress Since the Vermont Housing and Rural  
184 Development Community Visit in 2012. (The report that was produced is on the Town's  
185 website under Government/Documents.) Ms. Jenkins read some of the comments that  
186 were made in that report from 2012, such as our leadership, concern for youth and their  
187 lack of engagement, non-residents think more highly of Bennington than residents do,  
188 and Bennington is a town "lined up to succeed".

189 November 22, 2021 - 1. Develop a Bennington Vision Statement, Developing Community  
190 Connections and a Positive Town Image. 2. Making Downtown Bennington a  
191 Destination and Building a New Bennington Town Green.

192 December 13, 2021 - Advancing a Bennington Community Center and Improving  
193 Recreation and Collaborating to Address Poverty and Building a Working Group.

194 **14. OTHER BUSINESS**

195 Mr. Corey: The Vermont Business Magazine announced their 40 winners under 40 years old.  
196 Congratulations to Beth Wallace and Mikaela Lewis.

197 Ms. Conner: Congratulations to everyone involved in the 10-year project to complete the safe  
198 and beautiful Orchard Village Path to Willowbrook and to Molly Stark School. There were  
199 several in attendance at the ribbon cutting last week.

200 Ms. Perrin: Volunteers are needed for families in need of gifts this year through the Spirit of  
201 Sharing put on by the Agency of Human Services partnered with the Rotary Club. Last year they  
202 served 473 children. If interested, please contact [www.gettoknowrotary@gmail.com](mailto:www.gettoknowrotary@gmail.com).

203 ***At 7:16pm, Bruce Lee-Clark and Jeanne Conner seconded the adjournment of the***  
204 ***meeting. The motion carried with Tom Haley absent.***

205 Respectfully submitted, Nancy H. Lively, Secretary

206