

1 **BENNINGTON SELECT BOARD SPECIAL MEETING**

2 **130 RIVER STREET**

3 **BENNINGTON, VERMONT 05201**

4 **MARCH 7, 2022**

5 **MINUTES**

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

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

9 **ALSO PRESENT:** Stuart Hurd-Town Manager; Dan Monks-Assistant Town Manager; Stephanie  
10 Clarke-White + Burke; Nancy White; Michael Keane; 3 citizens; Jim Vires-CAT-TV; and Nancy H.  
11 Lively-Secretary.

12 At 6:00pm, Chair Jeannie Jenkins called the meeting to order.

13 **1. CONSENT AGENDA**

14 **A. WARRANTS**

15 *Bruce Lee-Clark moved and Jim Carroll seconded the approval of the Consent Agenda*  
16 *as presented. The motion carried unanimously.*

17 **2. PUBLIC HEARING - TIF DISTRICT SUBSTANTIAL CHANGE**

18 Mr. Monks explained that the Town adopted a Tax Increment Financing (TIF) Plan in  
19 2017 that needs to be renewed and introduced Stephanie Clarke from White + Burke who did  
20 the following presentation:

- 21 • TIF is a tool for a municipality to catalyze private investment into their community.
- 22 • It is the towns only way to grow its Grand List through infrastructure by removing  
23 barriers that private investors may have.
- 24 • The town takes out a bond to remove the barriers. The town then builds the  
25 infrastructure and the private investors build the development.
- 26 • The new taxes created by that investment go to repay the debt on that bond.
- 27 • The town not only retains the incremented municipal taxes but a portion of the State's  
28 new incremental taxes.
- 29 • These are taxes that would not have existed without the town's infrastructure  
30 involvement.
- 31 • There are boundaries for a TIF District which are, for the most part, in the downtown.
- 32 • Also, when a TIF District is adopted a town must have incurred their first debt within 5  
33 years.

- 34 • For Bennington, the TIF District plan that was adopted in 2017 should have incurred  
35 their debt by March 31, 2022. This hasn't happened so an extension must be applied for.
- 36 • If you are extended, the extension will be for 5 more years so your initial debt must be  
37 incurred by March 31, 2027.
- 38 • However, because of the pandemic, the window of borrowing has been extended for  
39 existing TIF Districts by 2 years which would change your new date to March 31, 2029.
- 40 • Once the initial debt has been incurred, the town has 20 years to payback the bond  
41 debt.
- 42 • Part of the submission for an extension to the Vermont Economic Progress Council  
43 (VEPC), are plans for the use of the TIF dollars.
- 44 • In addition, the recommendation is that Bennington get a "Master TIF" instead of a  
45 "Regular TIF" which is what you have now.
- 46 • The Master TIF means that you have your plan and your set projects but you have to  
47 come back to VEPC when you're ready to do your projects.
- 48 • A Regular TIF would require extensive report changes if there were any changes to the  
49 original project, whereas, the Master TIF allows a broader interpretation of the project  
50 plans.
- 51 • Our original list of projects for public investment was for \$5.7M in years 2019-2022 and  
52 the list for our current plan is for \$4.1M in years 2023-2025.
- 53 • The plan projects are:
  - 54 ➤ Bennington High School - 40 housing units; Town Infrastructure = a community  
55 recreation center including the relocation of the Bennington Senior Center,  
56 renovated gymnasium, locker rooms and rest rooms, auditorium, and class  
57 rooms.
  - 58 ➤ Putnam Phase 2 - Town Infrastructure = upgrades to Washington Avenue and  
59 West Main Street, on-site parking lot improvements and assumption of the  
60 entire parking lot as a municipal asset.
  - 61 ➤ Catamount School - 20 apartments; Town Infrastructure = storm water  
62 improvements, public parking lot, public park/green space, driveway, and  
63 lighting.
  - 64 ➤ Old Drysdale Building - Town Infrastructure = the benefit from the changes for  
65 Catamount School.
  - 66 ➤ 120 Depot Street - retail and commercial; Town Infrastructure = new water main,  
67 reconstruction of Depot Street Bridge, Streetscape improvements between Main  
68 Street and River Street, and driveway/circulation improvements at 120 Depot.
- 69 • The request this evening is for authorization to use the TIF tool and not a request for a  
70 particular project.
- 71 • We would submit our extension request by the end of this week and be eligible to be  
72 heard either at the April 28<sup>th</sup> or May 26<sup>th</sup> hearing which would put us in position for a  
73 bond vote in 2023 for one or two of the projects.

74 *Board questions/comments answered by Ms. Clarke:*

75 Ms. Jenkins: What do the locations CW, PW, CO stand for? That is VEPC language for  
76 Completely Within, Partially Within, or Completely Outside of the District boundary.

77 Mr. Corey: Confirmed that the District boundaries will not change from what they are now.  
78 They will not.

79 *Public questions/comments answered by Ms. Clarke or the Board:*

80 Michael Keane, member of VEPC since 2012: Asked for a further definition of a Master TIF. A  
81 Master TIF requires all of the same planning documentation as a Regular TIF, however, it  
82 doesn't require finality in each of the criteria allowing the Town to use the tool and come back  
83 with more specificity at implementation.

84 Michael Keane: What have we missed by not incurring the TIF debt sooner? If we had incurred  
85 the debt prior to 2022, we would have had to come back with detailed implementation and  
86 probably would have been converted to a Master TIF at that time. Also, the pandemic would  
87 have had an impact on the Town and private investors causing a lull in the tax incrementation.

88 Michael Keane: How will going into an inflationary period affect incurring the bond debt? The  
89 increasing rates are a factor, however, the increasing construction costs are more of a factor.  
90 Some municipalities are accelerating their projects and one is waiting. Ms. Jenkins added that  
91 the ARPA funding has allowed us to think more broadly with our projects in conjunction with  
92 TIF funding, as well as, other State funding.

93 Nancy White: Why hasn't TIF funding gone to a vote? Because we haven't started a project.

94 Nancy White: Did the BCRC put this together? No, it was the Town with the help of White +  
95 Burke as our consultants in 2017.

96 Nancy White: Did the Manager of St. Albans work on this, too? He was invited to Bennington by  
97 Mr. Keane 6 or 7 years ago and spoke to how TIF funding had helped St. Albans. When it was  
98 apparent that we needed an extension, he and White + Burke were hired as consultants going  
99 forward with the submission.

100 Nancy White: Has been told that the Putnam Block has private funding. Will the public be  
101 involved with the Putnam Block? The Town is not involved in building the Putnam Block, only  
102 for the infrastructure that will benefit the community.

103 Nancy White: Thinks the parking for 40 housing units at Benn High will be "a nightmare". It is  
104 too early to be considering that the parking will be a nightmare when we haven't even seen the  
105 plans yet.

106 Dan Monks: The citizens of Bennington will have the final say before any of these projects go  
107 forward.

108            ***Gary Corey moved and Bruce Lee-Clark seconded to approve the TIF District***  
109 ***Substantial Change Amendment to Extend Period to Incur Debt as presented. The motion***  
110 ***carried unanimously.***

111            ***Bruce Lee-Clark moved and Jim Carroll seconded to approve submitting the TIF District***  
112 ***Substantial Change Amendment to Extend Period to Incur Debt to VEPC. The motion carried***  
113 ***unanimously.***

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117            ***At 6:35pm, Bruce Lee-Clark moved and Sarah Perrin seconded the adjournment of the***  
118 ***meeting. The motion carried unanimously.***

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122    Respectfully submitted,

123    Nancy H. Lively

124    Secretary