

1 **BENNINGTON SELECT BOARD WATER AND SEWER BUDGETS WORK SESSION**

2 **130 RIVER STREET**

3 **BENNINGTON, VERMONT 05201**

4 **JUNE 22, 2022**

5 **MINUTES**

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

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

9 **ALSO PRESENT:** Stuart Hurd-Town Manager; Dan Monks-Assistant Town Manager; R.J. Joly-
10 Public Works Director; Larry Gates-Assistant Public Works Director; Jon D’Amour-Chief
11 Operator Wastewater Facility; Melissa Currier-Finance Director; Michele Johnson-Human
12 Resource and Contracts Administrator; Jim Vires-CAT-TV; and Nancy H. Lively-Secretary.

13 At 5:00pm, Chair Jeannie Jenkins called the meeting to order.

14 **1. WATER/SEWER FUND BUDGETS**

15 Mr. Hurd stated that the rate increases proposed for FY23 are 5% in the Water Fund and
16 10.5% in the Sewer Fund for a combined increase of 8.3%. We have worked hard to keep the
17 increases this low with inflation at 8.6%. Also, we had set a straight line increase in the Sewer
18 Fund of 10.5% four years ago to prepare for the bond payments and depreciation relating to
19 the upgrade project. This is the 4th year, and we have maintained that increase by committing
20 \$118,868 from the Sewer Fund Balance.

21 Everything is more expensive and the delivery of materials is often delayed. Our
22 insurance costs are up slightly because we have increased our property values but our workers
23 compensation is down because our modifier (measurement of injuries to lost time) is at .85% or
24 lower than the average of 1%.

25 *Board questions/comments answered by R.J. Joly, Larry Gates, and Melissa Currier:*

- 26 • Some of our supply issues are related to COVID due to workers being out and
27 inventory being used up. We have had parts on order for 6 months that are now
28 scheduled for July.
- 29 • 41-5900.720 - Includes real estate tax on lands that we own. Woodford land
30 encompasses the water filtration plant; some of Woodford and all of Stamford are
31 related to the Sucker Pond area; and some of Woodford and all of Pownal are
32 woodlots that we are logging. That income goes into the Capital Facilities Reserve
33 and we have made \$48,000 from the Woodford lot so far. The taxes for all three is
34 \$6.009.

- 35 • We have a forest management plan in place for indefinite sustainability.
- 36 • In FY21, why is the actual Pension Expense in the Water Fund \$58,362 over budget
- 37 and the actual Pension Expense in the Sewer Fund \$59,895 over budget? Ms. Carrier
- 38 will look into and answer later.
- 39 • The disposal of wipes costs ~\$5,000/year from the separator but more with service
- 40 calls. Can we communicate to the public how they can help reduce this cost on the
- 41 water/sewer bills by only flushing toilet paper down the toilet? We can't on the self-
- 42 sealing bills but we can put something on the website.
- 43 • 41-5910.760 - Electric use estimated to increase due to an addition of one new
- 44 pump station on Chapel Road. Can we consider using solar panels? Some time ago
- 45 we were told that metal buildings aren't designed to carry the weight of solar
- 46 panels, however, we will look into this again.
- 47 • We have high levels of biochemical oxygen demand (BOD) from the amount of
- 48 organics that are generated from farms, distilleries, restaurants, etc. The amount of
- 49 BOD coming into the plant is not controlled but we have a permit limit on the
- 50 amount of effluent that leaves the plant and we nearly surpassed that in May.
- 51 Staying in compliance is the issue.
- 52 • Pretreatment of BOD coming into the plant may be required and there may be
- 53 funding for businesses to do this.
- 54 • Sand filters are on order that will mitigate the effluent problem but those are not in
- 55 this budget.
- 56 • 42-5480.210 - The high carbon wood ash to improve our composting for \$10,000 will
- 57 make it go back to bio-solid and reusable.
- 58 • The compost goes to Houghton Lane at the Transfer Station and we make our own
- 59 top soil annually.
- 60 • The FY21 Water Fund Budget was \$3.2M and the actual was \$2.5M. Why do we
- 61 budget for a \$.7M higher amount? The budget amount includes both transfers to
- 62 reserve for capital asset purchases and is reflected in the rates, whereas, the total
- 63 amount of the purchased items go to our balance sheet with only the one year of
- 64 depreciation showing as an expense. The will reoccur every year, and even though
- 65 rates can be decreased to the public, it is not recommended as these reserves will
- 66 pay for planned and unplanned projects, now (i.e., Ben Mont Avenue sewer line),
- 67 and in the future.
- 68 • In the long run, the reserves will end up saving us money.
- 69 • Kudos to staff for taking the approach to build our reserves.

70 ***Bruce Lee-Clark moved and Jim Carroll seconded to adopt the FY2023 Water***
71 ***and Sewer Budgets as presented. The motion carried with Sarah Perrin absent.***

72 ***At 5:50pm, Jim Carroll moved and Bruce Lee-Clark seconded the adjournment***
73 ***of the meeting. The motion carried with Sarah Perrin absent.***

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77 Respectfully submitted,

78 Nancy H. Lively

79 Secretary