

ALL ABOUT TOWN

Stuart A. Hurd, Town Manager

At long last, COVID infections are on the wane according to Governor Scott. That's great but let's continue to be careful and stay safe and healthy.

The Select Board has now filled the various Boards and Commissions open seats including the newly created Community Policing Advisory Review Board. Seven members have been appointed. They are Kelly Carroll, David Burch, Robert Ebert, Will Greer, Marsh Hudson-Knapp, Scott Richmond, and Jeff Vickers. Their training begins in July and lasts into October of this year. It is expected the Board will begin meeting formally in late October. I wish them well.

The Select Board has begun a review of the Town's ADA Plan working with the folks at the Vermont Center for Independent Living (VCIL). Paul Dansereau, our Facilities Director, is providing staff support. A walkabout is scheduled for June 29. The Plan was last updated in 1993, my first full year as Town Manager. Time flies when you're having fun!

The playgrounds designed for Willow Park are now fully underway. Removal of the old playground structures is scheduled for mid-July. The new equipment is scheduled to be delivered soon thereafter and construction will begin. If all goes well, the new playgrounds will be in place by August 2022.

The repurposing of the former Benn High is moving along. An environmental analysis found no PCB contamination in the building, very good news. Bids are expected soon for the construction management firm. Uses under consideration are a new, expanded Senior Center, an expanded Meals on Wheels kitchen and dining facility, offices to serve the senior population, and a new gymnasium with adjoining space for community recreation programming. The remainder of the building is projected to be housing for seniors and others. Shires Housing has agreed to partner with the Town in this endeavor.

Those working on the new skatepark made a presentation to the Select Board recently. The park is proposed to be constructed at the end of the Riverwalk adjacent to the municipal lot near MSK Engineering, the former Bennington Station Restaurant. It will have a sheltered portion for Winter use as well. The Board authorized up to \$5,000 of ARPA funds to create a final design.

The new Community Market has received its permits and construction is now moving forward. The new Burger King has received its local permits. It's still awaiting State permits but is closer to reality. There are several other developments coming soon. This is likely to be a busy summer.

On the Town's side, the DPW workforce has begun work on Maple Street, a complete rebuild with sewer lines, drainage, new sidewalk and paving. Paving off Bradford Street and Main Street associated with the relocation of the Morgan Spring delivery system is occurring as this is being written. Landscaping and fencing is also to be completed within the next several days. When all is done, we will remove the truck loading traffic from Bradford Street.

I offer a special shout out to the Bennington Police Department for the incredible work done so far this year. Our officers and dispatchers and professional staff work at a high level throughout the year.

Remember, if anyone has any questions or suggestions arising from this column or on any town matters, please contact me at 802-442-1037 or stop in at the Town Offices on South Street.

Stuart Hurd is Bennington's Town Manager. He writes a monthly column on town issues.

