

1 **BENNINGTON SELECT BOARD MEETING**

2 **130 RIVER STREET**

3 **BENNINGTON, VERMONT 05201**

4 **JUNE 27, 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; Shannon
10 Barsotti-Community Development Director; Michael Wajda and Ken Milman-Appalachian
11 TrailFest; Linda Donigan and Lynne Fonteneau-McCann-Bennington Free Library; Jenny Dewar,
12 Susan Plaisance, and Bill Clark-Better Bennington Corporation; Tordis Isselhardt; Nancy White; 5
13 citizens; Jim Vires-CAT-TV; and Nancy H. Lively-Secretary.

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

15 **1. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE**

16 The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

17 **2. VISION STATEMENT**

18 Ms. Conner read the Town’s Vision Statement that was adopted by the Select Board on
19 August 24, 2020:

20 “Bennington is a welcoming, engaged, inclusive, resilient community where everyone
21 regardless of identity shares in our vitality and benefits from an outstanding quality of life.”

22 **3. CONSENT AGENDA**

23 **A. MINUTES OF JUNE 13, 2022**

24 **B. WARRANTS**

25 ***Bruce Lee-Clark moved and Tom Haley seconded to approve the Consent Agenda with***
26 ***the June 13, 2022 Minutes amended as follows:***

27 ***Lines 218-220, Change “Ms. Perrin was disappointed that Bob Walker wasn’t***
28 ***appointed to the CPARB Board as she felt that his years of service in the Police Department***
29 ***would have brought balance to the board.” to “Ms. Perrin was disappointed that the***
30 ***individual that came with federal law enforcement experience wasn’t appointed to the CPARB***

31 ***Board as she felt that would have brought balance and experience to the background of the***
32 ***Board.”***

33 ***The motion carried unanimously.***

34 **4. PUBLIC COMMENT**

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

- 38 1. Public Comment is to allow residents an opportunity to share information or make
39 announcements that benefit the community at large.
- 40 2. The topic should not be related to an agenda item. If a member of the public wants to
41 comment on an agenda item they can do so during the discussion of that item.
- 42 3. Comments should be 3 minutes or less.
- 43 4. You are required to state your real name and town of residence.
- 44 5. Sharing comments, announcements and concerns are encouraged rather than asking
45 questions. Public Comment is not a time for discussion. If you have specific questions it is best
46 to call the Town Manager to get a full explanation and accurate information.
- 47 6. If the topic requires much discussion the item will be considered as an agenda item at a
48 future meeting.

49 _____
50 Linda Donigan-Bennington Free Library (BFL): Oceans of Possibilities is the BFL summer reading
51 programs and events that began on June 13th. We have:

- 52 • Distributed summer reading information to 2,000 students in 12 public and private
53 schools ranging from kindergarten to middle school.
- 54 • 250 packets of information were distributed to families in early childhood programs.
- 55 • We have 16,000 books and publications available including bi-lingual books in Dari,
56 Spanish, and English.
- 57 • There is a day of the week for each age group of children, as well as, activities for adults
58 and families including a street dance in August.
- 59 • We are fully open to the public 6 days/week, have online services 24/7, and collaborate
60 with many local agencies.
- 61 • We can be contacted in many social media areas, our website, and by phone.

62 Nancy White: Objected to the fact that she wasn't able to speak on the Skate Park agenda item
63 because the Board had already voted prior to her asking to speak. *Ms. Jenkins: Explained that*
64 *she didn't see Ms. White in the back row prior to taking a vote. She also said that this was only*

65 *the beginning of the Skate Park conversation and that there would be other opportunities for*
66 *the public to speak to it. In addition, she asked Ms. White to ask her questions now but Ms.*
67 *White didn't ask any.*

68 Jenny Dewar-Better Bennington Corporation (BBC):

- 69 ○ Thursday Night Live this week is the Convergence Trio
- 70 ○ Midnight Madness has been changed from July 14th to July 21st 7:00pm-11:00pm
- 71 ○ The Town wide Tag Sale is July 24th for the Downtown and July 23rd and July 24th for the
- 72 home sales. Applications are on the BBC website.

73 Jenny Dewar and Susan Plaisance noted all of the services that Bill Clark does on a daily basis
74 for the BBC and the Town of Bennington recognizing that with a plaque that they presented to
75 him. Mr. Clark was very appreciative of the gesture.

76 **5. APPALACHIAN TRAILFEST**

77 Michael Wajda and Ken Milman did the following presentation:

- 78 ➤ The trail head is where the Long Trail ends and the Appalachian Trail begins with
79 the Long Trail having preceded the Appalachian Trail (AT).
- 80 ➤ Making Bennington an Appalachian Trail Community has brought an awareness
81 of the Trail, education about hiking and safety, the health of outdoor recreation,
82 the history, and economic development.
- 83 ➤ All contributors/businesses can put an ad on the Appalachian Trail Conservancy
84 website.
- 85 ➤ AT communities are required to do an event each year. Last summer it was a pot
86 luck dinner with the Green Mountain Club and this year we are putting on
87 TrailFest on July 30th 12:00pm-3:00pm at the Bennington Rec Center.
- 88 ➤ Students from Southwest Tech did all of the designing and work on the logo,
89 signage, and advertising.
- 90 ➤ There will be live music, free food, and activities - Leave No Trace, 100'
91 Challenge, Trail Trivia, Bear Hanging Demo, and Backpacking Gear Demo, with
92 tables for the US Forest Service, US Fish and Wildlife, BATS, Bennington
93 Museum, Lake Paran, Green Mountain Club, Operation Copsicle Truck, and
94 Vermont Products with Bringing You VT.
- 95 ➤ Prizes and giveaways will be given for various things from various places
96 including a donation of 20 pair of Darn Tough socks.

97 *Board questions/comments:*

98 Mr. Lee-Clark: Clarified that the Bear Hanging Demo is how to hang your food so as not to
99 attract bears.

100 Ms. Conner: Suggested contacting the Bennington Free Library for them to put together
101 information for the event.

102 **6. IMPLEMENTING THE TOWN VISION**

103 Ms. Conner stated that the Juneteenth event on June 18th was cold but great and there
104 will be a Walk n’ Roll on the morning of June 29th touring the Town facilities for ADA
105 improvements.

106 Mr. Haley thanked those that organized the successful Pride Celebration on June 26th. A
107 good time was had by all.

108 Mr. Lee-Clark noted a ceremony to mark the memory of an enslaved woman when
109 slavery was over, Margaret (Peg) Bowen, was held in front of the former Catamount Tavern on
110 June 25th. The ceremony can be seen on CAT-TV and will be on the schedule for this Thursday
111 or Friday. Ms. Isselhardt added the significance of having her full name when other
112 communities have had only an individual’s first name.

113 **7. TOWN LOAN PROGRAMS PRESENTATION**

114 Ms. Barsotti did the following presentation:

- 115 ❖ The Revolving Town Loan Program is not funded by the taxpayers and began with a
116 grant from Vermont Housing Development in the mid-1970’s that had been reserved for
117 Economic Development.
- 118 ❖ The original grant served as seed money and, since then, the fund has been replenished
119 by the payment of the loans.
- 120 ❖ Town staff approve the loans. The Select Board is informed of the decision and can
121 request additional information if they want.
- 122 ❖ Loans are given to businesses to start or expand their businesses primarily in the
123 Downtown that have limited access to traditional financing.
- 124 ❖ The loans can be used for interior/exterior property improvements,
125 machinery/equipment, and furnishings/fixtures.
- 126 ❖ The loans cannot be used for refinancing or operating capital.
- 127 ❖ Loan amounts average ~\$35,000 with higher amounts given if warranted and funds are
128 available.
- 129 ❖ Interest rates are not to exceed 7% with most much lower. Applications are on the
130 Town’s website.
- 131 ❖ Loan repayment has never been an issue.
- 132 ❖ One requirement is to develop a business plan and Nancy Shuttleworth from the
133 Vermont Small Business Development Center works with us on that.
- 134 ❖ Other requirements are collateral, tax return, letter of rejection from the bank as to why
135 they can’t finance the entire project, credit score, estimates for the work to be
136 completed, and confirmation that they don’t owe anything to the Town.

- 137 ❖ Loans are also available for housing to encourage landlords to invest in their property
- 138 and property owners to rehabilitate and make energy efficiency upgrades.
- 139 ❖ The properties must be in the Town of Bennington and are to serve those with 80% or
- 140 less of the median income, which is \$47,000 in Bennington County, have sufficient
- 141 collateral and no outstanding balances with the Town.
- 142 ❖ Loan amounts are up to \$25,000 for single family homes or per rental unit with the
- 143 same interest rates as the small business loans.
- 144 ❖ Since 2017 the Town has given out \$1.1M in loans. We will let the Board know the
- 145 number of businesses this entails at a later date.
- 146 ❖ Current available balance to loan is ~\$500,000 per Mr. Hurd. We will let the Board know
- 147 the exact balance at a later date.

148 *Board questions/comments:*

149 Mr. Carroll: What are some new businesses that have gotten loans? *Farm Road Brewery, Angry*
 150 *Egg 2, Putnam Block, and the Little City Cidery.*

151 Ms. Conner: To clarify, the bank rejection letter is because banks have their limitations and not
 152 because the project or applicant aren't worthy. *That is correct. The Town loans are often to fill*
 153 *gap funding.*

154 Mr. Corey: If \$35,000 is the average, what are the higher amounts? *The Putnam Block was for*
 155 *\$350,000 and that was a special circumstance.*

156 *Public questions/comments:*

157 Nancy White: How much is the account worth and feels that those getting \$100,000+ should
 158 present their project to the public. *\$1.5M-\$2M and these are private loans.*

159 **8. MANAGER'S REPORT**

160 Mr. Hurd did the following report:

161 *Willow Park Playgrounds* - The playgrounds' full design will be unveiled in an event scheduled in
 162 July just before the old playground structures are removed.

163 *Morqan Spring* - Fencing and landscaping are nearly completed and our first truck came in on
 164 June 22nd. We are able to take 2 trucks at a time and representatives were in Town on June
 165 23rd to view the site. They are servicing 3 different bottling plants.

166 *Former CTC 254 Benmont Avenue* - We are investigating our options for demolition and have an
 167 estimate of \$120,000 to demolish and clean the site. The former principal in the corporation
 168 has been unresponsive so court action will be required. The corporation is defunct and our
 169 current counsel has a conflict so we are working on it. There are two buildings - one is being
 170 rented out and the other is the one that burned and needs to be demolished. We hired an
 171 environmental consultant to do testing on the contents and the results are that there isn't

172 anything of a concern in the building. We will be seeking a letter from the State saying that, if
173 there are any environmental issues in the future, the Town is not held liable. A lot of decisions
174 need to take place and it is a long process.

175 WWTF BOD Sampling - We will be taking samples of the discharge from dairy manufacturers,
176 distilleries, breweries, and maybe others, to see if they are discharging an extremely high
177 Biochemical Oxygen Demand (BOD). Pre-treatment of the waste may be required. Some pre-
178 treatments may be inexpensive, however, if the costs warrant it, these businesses would be
179 eligible for the Town's Loan Program.

- 180 ✓ The State of Vermont received just over \$2M for the Opioid settlements to
181 distribute among the towns in the State. Bennington's portion is ~\$8,000 that
182 will go into a reserve account.
- 183
- 184 ✓ An anonymous person has requested copies of all subpoenas from California
185 attorneys in regard to criminal activity by the Town of Bennington, the
186 Bennington Police Department, and members of the Select Board. This person
187 has been informed that there were none as this was based on a bogus Facebook
188 post.

189 **9. UPCOMING AGENDA**

190 July 11, 2022 - Bennington Police Department Presentation on Violence

191 July 11, 2022 (the Board's preference) or July 25, 2022 - Opioid Task Force Update

192 **10. OTHER BUSINESS**

193 Mr. Corey: Happy 4th of July.

194 Mr. Haley: The flowers around Town are beautiful.

195 Mr. Carroll: Noted an individual that has difficulty walking commented on the placement of the
196 handicap parking at the Rec Center and the lack of railings on the walkways.

197 Ms. Conner: Verified that there will be fireworks on July 4th at dusk - around 9:30pm - and will
198 be larger than usual thanks to Price Chopper and Casella bringing it from \$13,000 to \$14,000.

199 Ms. Conner: Recognized the quality of the musicians on the Thursday Night events and urged
200 everyone to attend.

201 Ms. Conner: The series Dope Sick is an excellent education on the opioid crisis.

202 Ms. Perrin: Encouraged people to be mindful of the noise of fireworks too close to town and
203 the Declaration of Independence will be read at the Monument. Check the Banner and Town
204 Office for more information.

205

206

207 ***At 7:19pm, Bruce Lee-Clark moved and Sarah Perrin seconded the adjournment of the***
208 ***meeting. The motion carried unanimously.***

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210

211 Respectfully submitted,

212 Nancy H. Lively

213 Secretary