

1 **BENNINGTON SELECT BOARD MEETING**

2 **130 RIVER STREET**

3 **BENNINGTON, VERMONT 05201**

4 **AUGUST 22, 2022**

5 **MINUTES**

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

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

9 **ALSO PRESENT:** Stuart Hurd-Town Manager; Dan Monks-Assistant Town Manager; Shannon
10 Barsotti-Community Development Director; Jonah Spivak-Communication Coordinator; Sara
11 Pelkey-Consolidated Communications/Fidium Fiber; Todd Salvesvold, Alex Figueroa, Ralph
12 Bennett-Opioid Task Force; Jenny Dewar-Better Bennington Corporation; Matt Harrington-
13 Chamber of Commerce; Jennifer Jasper-Bennington Performing Arts Center; Deb Matte; Clark
14 Adams; Ned Perkins; Kelly Carroll; Tordis Isselhardt; 5 citizens; Jim Vires-CAT-TV; and Nancy H.
15 Lively-Secretary.

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

17 **1. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE**

18 The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

19 **2. VISION STATEMENT**

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

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

24 **3. CONSENT AGENDA**

25 **A. MINUTES OF AUGUST 8, 2022**

26 **B. WARRANTS**

27 *Bruce Lee-Clark moved and Gary Corey seconded to approve the Consent Agenda*
28 *amended as follows:*

29 *Line 329, Change “Ms” to “Mr”*

30 *Rail/Trail Site Visit Addendum, Line 4, Change “Dr.” to “Robert” and “Laura” to “Lora”*

31 *The motion carried unanimously.*

32 **4. PUBLIC COMMENT**

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

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

47 _____
48 Clark Adams: Would like to see Town Government encourage people to vote. *The Town Clerk*
49 *sends a sample ballot to the Banner before each election, and this coming election, every*
50 *registered voter will receive an absentee ballot.*

51 Jenny Dewar-BBC: Made the following announcements -
52 ○ Thursday Night Live performer on August 25th is Kristen Montgomery and on September
53 1st is Tendae Muparutsa. The last Thursday Night Live will be September 29th with
54 Malcolm Paine as DJ. Bringing your chairs would be an added comfort during the
55 performances.
56 ○ Alex Taurus will be at Merchants Park on August 27th.
57 ○ Harvest Fest will be October 15th from 10:00am-5:00pm in the same footprint as
58 Mayfest.
59 ○ Thank you to Fidium Fibers for sponsoring many of our events.

60 Ned Perkins: Is concerned about the safety of People’s Park and those that are camping out
61 there even though the sign says “Park Closed at Dusk”. Is the Town enforcing that? *We patrol*
62 *the area in the evening but those that are camping out are not on Town property. We could*
63 *have the Police Department make this part of their next presentation.*

64 Matt Harrington-SW Chamber of Commerce: Made the following announcements about Garlic
65 Town:

- 66 ○ Garlic Town will be Saturday, September 3rd, from 10:00am-5:00pm.
- 67 ○ There are 5 cloves and 125 vendors with 60-70 vendors/clove.
- 68 ○ We will have more food than last year with more choices.
- 69 ○ There will be performances going on all day with alternating stages among the cloves.
- 70 ○ Parking will be on the outskirts of Town and Green Mountain Express will have 6 buses
- 71 to transport people to the event, as well as, the tractor hayrides.
- 72 ○ Tickets can be purchased ahead of time at www.GarlicTownUSA.com with credit card
- 73 and cash purchases are available at our Depot Street location.
- 74 ○ Sponsorships were made more affordable with many small businesses taking
- 75 advantage of that. However, our two prime sponsors are Coggins Auto Group and the
- 76 Bank of Bennington.
- 77 ○ It takes 125 volunteers for this event and we are always looking for volunteers.

78 Jennifer Jasper-Bennington Performing Arts Center: Made the following announcements:

- 79 ○ Sheepdog performances will be from August 26th through September 4th.
- 80 ○ Conversations for those that have attended will take place on August 28th and
- 81 September 1st at the end of the performances at 9:00pm.
- 82 ○ Pay as You Will is on August 31st and September 1st. General Admission is \$25 and
- 83 Premium Preferred Seating is \$35.
- 84 ○ Bennington Community Theatre has a free performance on August 30th and auditions
- 85 for Slide Show are on August 27th and August 29th.
- 86 ○ Family entertainment will be on September 24th with magician Chris Lengyel “Faster
- 87 Than The Eye Tour” with admission \$20 and students \$10.

88 **5. FIDIUM FIBER PRESENTATION**

89 Sara Pelkey from Consolidated Communications/Fidium Fiber did the following
90 presentation:

- 91 ● Consolidated Communications is the umbrella for Fidium Fiber. They are the
- 92 same company.
- 93 ● Fidium Fiber was launched in 2021 to satisfy the need for fiber that was brought
- 94 to light by COVID.
- 95 ● Southern Vermont Communication Unions District (SVCUD) and Consolidated
- 96 Communications have formed a partnership.
- 97 ● Vermont has 9 CUD’s.
- 98 ● Consolidated has already begun building fiber in Bennington, North Bennington,
- 99 Shaftsbury, Pownal, Wilmington, West Dover, and other surrounding towns as
- 100 Phase 1.
- 101 ● We have launched over 14,000 addresses in the last 3 weeks.

- 102 • SVCUD and Consolidated have applied for a Vermont Community Broadband
103 Board (VCBB) grant to be able to serve all of the underserved residents in the
104 CUD as part of Phase 2 or 6,401 addresses.
- 105 • The entire project is expected to be completed in 2025 - a 5-year plan - for a
106 total of 20,085 addresses.
- 107 • Anyone can sign up and see the status of their address on our website,
108 www.fidiumfiber.com .
- 109 • We have established partnerships with the Southwest Chamber of Commerce
110 and the Better Bennington Corporation, and will have a table at Thursday Night
111 Live on September 15th .

112 *Board questions/comments answered by Ms. Pelkey:*

113 Ms. Conner: Is the last step for an individual being connected to the pole closest to their house?
114 *Yes, or it could be underground.*

115 Mr. Haley: “Your customer service department is the best I have every dealt with.” *Thank you.*

116 **6. OPIOID TASK FORCE PRESENTATION**

117 Todd Salvesvold-SVMC Blueprint Nurse; Alex Figueroa-Asst. Director UCS; and Ralph
118 Bennett-Turning Point did the following presentation:

- 119 ➤ The purpose of our presentation is to provide updates from our response team
120 of community partners.
- 121 ➤ We have received \$125,000/year from the larger OD2A Community Action Grant
122 that Bennington County was targeted for based on OD rates. The grant year is
123 9/1/22-8/31/22.
- 124 ➤ First Initiative - when the police receive a non-overdose call, they in turn call in
125 Turning Point who works with the patients and their families.
- 126 ➤ Second Initiative - Messages for Me is a platform where substance use people
127 and their families can sign up for inspirational messages 3 times/week.
- 128 ➤ Third Initiative - Advanced CPR is Rescue Squad training family members in CPR
129 because fentanyl is often requiring 3 doses of Narcan to bring them around and
130 people can’t go without breathing for 30 minutes or more.
- 131 ➤ Fourth Initiative - Medication Safety Program for adolescents where providers
132 have prescribed potentially addictive drugs and parents can keep them in locked
133 bags to prevent overdoses.
- 134 ➤ Fifth Initiative - Treatment Navigator who will work with the police department
135 in working with people with substance use disorders for treatment options that
136 are not overdoses.
- 137 ➤ There are sub-committees within our Opioid Response Team. They are Youth
138 (targeting youth specific problems), Behavioral Health (recruiting clinicians to

- 139 come to the area to aid UCS in the work they do), and Recovery Housing (Shires
140 Housing has secured 95% of the \$1.6M of funding).
- 141 ➤ Our partnerships are with SVMC, Turning Point, the Collaborative and Line for
142 Community Transformations, UCS, and several smaller agencies and individuals.
 - 143 ➤ Turning Point gets called to 1-2 overdoses/week and there are many more.
144 Overdoses are an “epidemic” in Bennington. “We have to be proactive.” The
145 good news is we see and help a lot of people and families.
 - 146 ➤ Recovery housing will help but Turning Point is waiting for the water and sewer
147 calculation from the Town and the municipal impact form from the Police for Act
148 250. This has been a 2 ½ year process starting with the application for a HUD
149 grant.
 - 150 ➤ The State of Vermont overdose statistics continue to trend down since 2021
151 including Bennington County.

152 *Board questions/comments:*

153 Ms. Conner: Do the programs have a level of flexibility? *They do, especially with the Community*
154 *Action Grant as the dynamic may change halfway through the grant year as we watch*
155 *outcomes closely.*

156 Ms. Conner: Who calls Turning Point? *The Police Dispatcher.*

157 *Public questions/comments:*

158 Ned Perkins: Where are we at with getting a HUB in Bennington? *The process on a HUB is at the*
159 *State level and there will be a formal announcement when a decision has been made. There*
160 *should be, however, additional SPOKE services.*

161 Ned Perkins: Will there be adequate staffing at the recovery house? *Yes.*

162 Clark Adams: When did you start your process for the information from the Town? *Mr. Monks:*
163 *All of the local permits have been granted for “quite some time”. The issue is with Shires. Ms.*
164 *Barsotti added that the application for recovery housing funding with a Community Block Grant*
165 *took place this spring.*

166 Kelly Carroll: Who will be hiring the treatment navigator and is it a long or short term position?
167 *This person will be a UCS employee that will be subcontracted to SVMC currently funded for one*
168 *year with the hope of continued funding after that.*

169 No Name Given: Is any of the opioid settlement money coming our way? *Mr. Hurd: We have*
170 *been notified by the State of Vermont that there will be money coming to Bennington from 5 to*
171 *15 years. Every town in Vermont will be getting a portion of the \$4M settlement based on*
172 *population and Bennington’s portion is ~\$8,000.*

173 **7. IMPLEMENTING THE TOWN VISION**

174 **A. INCLUSION, DIVERSITY, EQUITY, ACTION, AND LEADERSHIP (IDEAL) VERMONT**

175 Ms. Jenkins explained that Bennington, in the last month, was invited to join two
176 statewide programs that would further our work on equity and inclusion. Both involve working
177 with other municipalities and the Abundant Sun organization. One is the Vermont League of
178 Cities and Towns that has a welcoming and engaging community cohort that we would be one
179 of 15 municipalities in, and the other is IDEAL Vermont that comes from the State’s office on
180 Racial Equity.

181 After researching the two programs and finding out that IDEAL Vermont is a better fit
182 for Bennington as it targets communities that have already begun inclusion initiatives, Ms.
183 Jenkins, Mr. Lee-Clark, Ms. Conner, and Mr. Hurd recommend that the Board authorize joining
184 IDEAL Vermont.

185 IDEAL Vermont would like:

- 186 ❖ To meet monthly in various locations.
- 187 ❖ 2-3 members from the Select Board and senior Town staff.
- 188 ❖ For all of the member communities to work together.

189 ***Tom Haley moved and Bruce Lee-Clark seconded to authorize the Select Board Chair***
190 ***and Town Manager to pursue Bennington’s involvement in the IDEAL Vermont Program.***

191 Ms. Perrin asked if Town staff has the time to attend the required meetings at this time,
192 and Mr. Hurd answered that Town staff is willing to make these commitments to make this
193 work.

194 Ms. Conner clarified that the commitment of 2-3 people would be for the whole
195 program and not just “jumping in and out of meetings”. Ms. Jenkins verified that it would be
196 for the whole program and noted that she has signed up for a webinar to gather more
197 information on the program.

198 ***The motion carried unanimously.***

199 **B. CPARB AUGUST 25, 2022**

200 Ms. Jenkins stated that there will be a CPARB Meeting at the Bennington Fire Facility on
201 August 25, 2022 from 5:00pm-8:00pm that everyone is invited to attend and will be recorded
202 by CAT-TV. The Agenda item is 1. Open Meeting/Open Records Law Review by Merrill Bent.

203 **8. MANAGER’S REPORT**

204 Mr. Hurd did the following report:

205 ***Tom Haley moved and Jim Carroll seconded to approve a flowing close (after***
206 ***businesses have closed) of Depot Street and Washington Avenue from Main Street to Franklin***
207 ***Lane on September 3, 2022 for Garlic Town. The motion carried unanimously.***

208 ***Flood Insurance Rating Study Completed*** - FEMA has completed its review of the Town’s flood
209 protection and planning efforts resulting in a rating of CRS9 which we have held for a number of

210 years now. This will result in a 5% reduction (discount) in the cost of flood insurance for those
211 in the flood prone areas.

212 Willow Park Playground - There is no date set for the ribbon cutting but we hope to schedule
213 for early September to be announced at a Select Board meeting, if possible.

214 Election Signs - We have been flooded with election signs on Town property - especially at the
215 intersection of Benmont Avenue and Main Street. We will be working with those that are no
216 longer in an election race to remove their signs and for the current candidates to relocate their
217 signs to private property. Mr. Lee-Clark suggested, and Mr. Hurd stated, that he would have a
218 draft Ordinance to the Board at the second meeting in September that will address election
219 signage on Town property and rights of way.

220 Benmont Avenue/County Street Sewer - This project is out to bid for this Thursday, and we have
221 2 professionals capable of doing the job that have submitted bids so far.

222 **9. UPCOMING AGENDA**

223 September 12, 2022 - United Counseling Service - Mental Health and Substance Use
224 Services

225 Mid to Late September 2022 - Benn High Presentation and Limited Tour

226 October 3, 2022 - Bennington Police Department Quarterly Report

227 **10. OTHER BUSINESS**

228 Ms. Perrin: Wished her husband a Happy Anniversary.

229 **11. EXECUTIVE SESSION**

230 **A. REAL ESTATE**

231 *At 7:26pm, Bruce Lee-Clark moved and Jim Carroll seconded that the meeting was*
232 *adjourned finding that an Executive Session be held on Real Estate as premature public*
233 *knowledge would place a person involved in the subject matter at a substantial*
234 *disadvantage. There will be no actions taken on these items when going back into Open*
235 *Session. The motion carried unanimously.*

236 Respectfully submitted,

237 Nancy H. Lively

238 Secretary

**SELECT BOARD
MINUTES ADDENDUM**

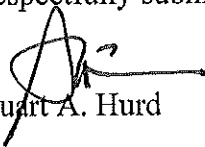
August 22, 2022

Present: Jeannie Jenkins, Chair, Jeanne Conner, V. Chair, Jim Carroll, Gary Corey, Tom Haley, Sarah Perrin and Bruce Lee-Clark. Staff present: Stuart Hurd, Town Manager, Dan Monks, Assistant Town Manager, and Shannon Barsotti

The Board went into executive session at 7:36 pm. for a real estate matter.

The Board came out of executive session at 7:52 pm. but took no action. There being no other business, the meeting adjourned at 7:52 pm.

Respectfully submitted,


Stuart A. Hurd