

Village of Old Bennington
Trustees' Meeting Minutes
Oct. 7, 2025

The Trustees' monthly meeting was held at The Barn and on Zoom. A link to the Zoom recording is here:

https://zoom.us/rec/share/Vz_V6Phz2pJH14b_Pd3zpVZUn7_NF799M3wEx1RDPVgJrJzvtBtk0jiiEQBvBovd.EDP2Njr3-SHq7O4n?startTime=1759878044000

Passcode: L8gJa=Gf

Officials present: Presiding Officer Ed Woods; Trustees Than Marcoux, Jim Thatch, and Susan Wright; Treasurer Ron Ravidou; Auditor Kathy Wagenknecht; Clerk Mary Walsh; and Zoom Operator McKinley Keaffaber.

Officials absent: Trustee Tom Woodward.

Citizens present: Lucy Baldwin, Brian Scheetz, and Jim Therrieu of the Bennington Banner.
Citizens on Zoom: Betsy Woods.

1. Call to order: EW called the meeting to order at 7 p.m.
2. Approval of minutes: EW asked if there were changes to be made in the minutes of Sept. 9, 2025. No one requested any changes. TM moved to approve the Sept. 9 minutes, JT seconded the motion, and the minutes were unanimously approved.
3. Citizens' comments not related to the agenda: None.
4. Commissioner Reports:
 - a. Roads Commissioner: TM said the Village had received the State grant to reimburse the cost of repairing Bank Street, and the money was deposited in the bank. He said the reimbursement came quickly because he had been in close touch with VTrans along the way, and all necessary approvals were already made.

He said Green Mountain Landscaping had looked at the storm drain that now sits low on the surface of Bank Street and said that if a white line were painted on the edge of that part of the road, it wouldn't lead the traffic around the drain. The firm also said the Village could paint a yellow center line on Bank Street, but TM explained that the Village doesn't want to do that because of speeding concerns.

So we're going to see how that part of Bank Street works the way it is now (with no lines).

North Bennington's Public Works Dept. came to work on the Village's storm drains. They told TM that there were 40 to 50 storm drains in Old Bennington, more than twice what TM expected. A significant number of them can't be opened, or are likely to crack if they are forced open, and some of them need masonry repairs. TM said they decided not to work on these drains this fall, and the Village could put the needed repairs into the budget for the next fiscal year. The estimated cost is about \$15,000.

TM and Norm LeBlanc of North Bennington still plan to drive through Old Bennington and take an inventory of outstanding road repairs – filling cracks, adding sealant, and other repairs. The cost can also be added to the budget for Fiscal 2027.

TM said he got salt prices for the coming winter. Last winter the Village paid \$86 per ton. The bids this year ranged from a low of \$90 per ton to more than \$100 per ton. The low bidder was Apalachee Salt, which supplied the Village's salt last year. The Village will contract with Apalachee again for this winter too. Apalachee is able to store their supply of salt at Pembroke Landscaping.

KW said that while walking on Elm Street, she noticed a white line painted on the south side of the street, about four or five feet from the edge. She thought it might be there to calm traffic and wondered if something like that could be done on Monument Avenue, since speeding continues to be a problem. Concerns were expressed about whether Monument Avenue would then be compliant with road-width regulations. EW said white traffic lines might help, but there would have to be a lot of citizen input first. BS said white lines might make the roads too narrow for two-way traffic. EW said there was research showing that in fact, when drivers find themselves on too-narrow roads, they respond by slowing down.

MW asked whether the Village could complain to Google about its practice of routing non-local traffic through Old Bennington on Google Maps. EW said it would be good to try. KW asked whether cameras could be installed to tell passing drivers their speed. JT suggested adding decorative signs reminding drivers that they're passing through a historic district and should slow down and enjoy the views. EW called for a committee meeting to discuss these and other traffic-calming measures before the November Trustees' meeting.

- b. Tree Commissioner: TW left word that Pembroke had removed a large tree branch that fell on the public green.
- c. Parks and Sidewalks Commissioner: SW said the bench dedicated to Donna Berry on the public green had been cracked by the construction company working on the Old First Church steeple. They have insurance to cover the cost of a

replacement bench, \$1,059. The claim has already been approved and the Village will receive a check for that amount. SW said that she had also ordered a better plaque for the bench, which would be her donation to the Village.

- d. Police Commissioner: JT said his only Police news was one incident of trespassing at the Walloomsac Inn.

Separately, JT said there would be a walking tour of the Village on Oct. 25, organized the Bennington County Regional Commission as part of its effort to gather public opinion for the Plan of Economic Development. Some Village residents have been asking about the BCRC's role in this process. The Village has hired the BCRC to help develop our Plan. Plans of Economic Development are required by the State, and they must meet certain State requirements. The BCRC has experience in developing these plans, and by working with them, the Village expects to complete a Plan that meets all State requirements.

BS said he had been working with BCRC on the project and wished to confirm that BCRC wasn't "taking over the Village." He said the Village Planning Commission, which he chairs, usually holds public meetings on the second Monday of every month. Citizens are welcome to attend and learn more.

JT suggested the Village use a social media platform to announce events like the walking tour. Concerns were expressed that running a social media platform takes time that people don't have. EW suggested MK start looking for a high school student who might want to operate a Facebook page for the Village.

- e. Treasurer: RR said that the Village's net cost of repairing Bank Street, after the State grant, was \$66,000, which will put the Village \$234,000 under budget.

RR went through the items in the month's Warrant, including \$5,470 to North Bennington for its work cleaning out the accessible storm drains this fall. (The rest will be done in the next fiscal year.) The Warrant can be reviewed in the Treasurer's Report, available on the Village website under the Board of Trustees tab. TM moved to approve the Warrant, JT seconded the motion, and the Warrant was unanimously approved.

RR said tax revenues have begun to arrive in response to the property-tax bills recently sent. Prior-year delinquencies are listed in the Sept. 30 Treasurer's Report. Tzaims Luksus continues to be delinquent on his taxes due to both the Village and the Town. The Village has been working with the Town on a foreclosure and tax sale to cure the delinquency. But the Town recently told RR that it wanted to take more time for the tax-sale process, to ensure compliance with a new State law. There was discussion of whether the Village ought to slow its own tax-sale process, to keep pace with the Town.

RR said that in November, the property at 57 Monument Avenue will be two years behind on its property taxes, a milestone that gives the Village authority to foreclosure proceedings there, too. BS said he wondered how many delinquent properties the Town has on its books, and how long the Town's delinquencies have lasted. He said that if the Town was carrying four- and five-year-old delinquencies, they might not see two-year delinquencies in the same light as the Village. For the Village, the unpaid amounts are getting to be a significant share of the budget.

- f. Auditor: KW said she had no news to report.
5. New Business: MW said she had been receiving multiple emails telling her to sign up Old Bennington to receive money through two new settlements of opioid lawsuits. (The lawsuits are being handled by state attorneys general, and the settlement money is, in general, to be divided among the various states' municipalities.) The first such settlement was reached a year or two ago with the Sackler family. In that case, the sign-up mailings included extensive information, and it was easy to see that Old Bennington shouldn't request any of the settlement money. That money had to be spent on local opioid-crisis mitigation activities, which the Village doesn't have, and the spending had to be rigorously documented. The current mailings don't contain comparable information.

After a brief discussion, there was consensus that Old Bennington shouldn't sign up to receive any money from these two settlements, because Old Bennington doesn't have any opioid-addiction facilities or programs to spend it on.

6. Old Business: None.
7. Future Agenda Items: Mary Rogers of North Bennington will come to the November Trustees' meeting to discuss possible collaboration on infrastructure maintenance and repairs. There will also be further discussion of traffic-calming measures.

JT said news about the Walloomsac Inn could also be a future agenda item, possibly as soon as November. Many Village Officers, Trustees, and residents have recently been able to go inside the Inn, and there is intense local interest in the new owners' intentions. The new owners would like to come before the Trustees and discuss their plans. The owners have withdrawn their application for a Zoning change at 3 Seminary Lane and want instead to focus on the Walloomsac Inn. EW said he had very positive feelings about what he saw while visiting the Inn. If the new owners will be presenting their plans at the November meeting, he recommended that all Village residents encourage their friends and neighbors to attend. JT said the owners were motivated and it would make sense for the Village to make it easy for them to move forward.

MW said it appeared the Berry sisters had never had the Walloomsac Inn's zoning changed from Commercial to Residential after they stopped running the building as an inn and made it their home. EW said the new owners had told him the Berry sisters had not reclassified the building as Residential because of the difficulty in getting the

required certificate of occupancy from the Town. The building's Commercial zoning status appears to make it easier for the new owners to move forward now, because they will not have to seek a zoning change. In general, they are planning to renovate it for use as an inn, and have already begun developing their plans for things like parking.

8. Adjournment: TM moved to adjourn the meeting at 8:20. JT seconded the motion and the meeting was unanimously adjourned.