

Village of Old Bennington
Annual Meeting Minutes
May 8, 2018

Officials present: Trustees Andy Buchsbaum, Susan Wright, and Ron Rabidou as well as Treasurer Kathy Wagenknecht, Administrative Officer Dennis McCarthy, and Moderator Pat Winburn.

Officials absent: Trustee Charles Edson, Clerk Donna Berry, and Auditor Dale Cobb.

1. **Call to Order.**

Pat Winburn called the meeting to order at 7:04 pm.

2. **Reading of the Warning.**

Acting clerk Ron Rabidou read the warning.

3. **Introductions.**

- a. The trustees and the treasurer introduced themselves to the residents.
- b. Ron Rabidou introduced the new administrative officer Dennis McCarthy and reviewed his background and qualifications for the position.
- c. Ron thanked former administrative officer Kim Gould for her service to the village.
- d. Pat Winburn mentioned that trustee Charles Edson was absent for health reasons.
- e. Pat also thanked former trustee and presiding officer Don Miller for his long service to the village.
- f. Pat noted that our clerk Donna Berry has apparently stepped down from her position as clerk. He thanked her for her more than forty-five years of service to the village.
- g. Pat reminded participants that only qualified voters could vote at the meeting.

4. **New Residents.**

Pat Winburn recognized new resident James Gallen. James and his wife Erica live at 46 Bank Street.

5. **Deaths in the village.**

- a. Pat Winburn noted the death of longtime resident Arnold Ricks.
- b. Charles Kozlosky offered a brief appreciation of Arnold's long service to the community.

6. **Reports (except road commissioner's report)**

- a. Ron Rabidou presented the tree commissioner's report.

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- i. Ron discussed the plan to plant two trees this spring at a cost of about \$2,000.
 - ii. He briefly noted the dead or diseased trees removed from the public right of way or front yards during the past year.
 - iii. He reminded residents that they need to obtain permission to remove trees in the public right of way or their front yards.
 - iv. He reported on the partial survey of village trees that he recently completed with the assistance of Megan Schwarzkopf.
 1. There are numerous trees requiring maintenance.
 2. Over the past ten years, we've averaged just \$1,700 per year on maintenance.
 3. Given the condition of many trees, we'll likely need to spend more in future years maintaining, removing, and replacing trees.
 - v. Current year tree budget is \$4,000.
 - vi. Colleen Kelly reported on her plans to replace the tree that recently came down in her yard at 72 Monument Avenue.
 - vii. Martha Kozlosky moved to accept the tree commissioner's report, Marianne Peters seconded the motion, and voters unanimously approved the motion.
- b. In the absence of police commissioner Charles Edson, Pat Winburn referred residents to Charles's report in the Annual Report.
- i. Pat introduced police officer Andy Corey.
 - ii. Ron Rabidou noted that, according to a report on VPR, the village ranks number four in the state in terms of ticket revenue per capita.
 - iii. Ron moved to accept the police commissioner's report, Ann Kremers seconded the motion, and voters unanimously approved the motion.
- c. Susan Wright presented the parks commissioner's report.
- i. She described initial efforts to restore the historical marker on village green.
 - ii. She also discussed past efforts and future plans to raise the marble around the marker.
 - iii. Finally, she raised possibility of installing benches on the village greens.
 - iv. Charles Kozlosky commended Susan on the flowers on the greens.
 - v. Charles Kozlosky moved to accept the parks commissioner's report, Martha Kozlosky seconded the motion, and voters unanimously approved the motion.
- d. In the absence of village auditor Dale Cobb, Pat Winburn referred voters to his report in the Annual Report.

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- i. Kathy Wagenknecht reviewed the procedures that Dale performs with her each quarter during the year.
- ii. John Henderson moved to accept the auditor's report, Pat White seconded the motion, and voters unanimously approved the motion.
- e. Kathy Wagenknecht presented the treasurer's report and the tax collector's report.
 - i. She reviewed the tax rate information presented in the Annual Report.
 - 1. She explained the taxes we pay as Town of Bennington residents and the amount we pay as Village of Old Bennington residents.
 - 2. She pointed out that we pay less in combined taxes than we would if we lived in the town, about \$.15 per \$100 valuation.
 - 3. She said there would be no increase in taxes for fiscal year 2018-2019.
 - 4. There remains one unpaid property tax bill of \$866 for fiscal year 2017-2018.
 - ii. At Pat Winburn's request, Kathy explained the village reserve accounts.
 - iii. Kathy reviewed the charts and financial statements included in the Annual Report.
 - iv. Michelle Kimball moved to accept the treasurer and tax collector reports, Pat White seconded the motion, and voters unanimously approved the motion.

7. Road commissioner's report.

- a. Andy Buchsbaum presented the road commissioner's report.
 - i. Andy discussed conditions on Bank Street.
 - 1. He noted both the deteriorating pavement and drainage problems resulting from the inadequate swale on the north side of the road.
 - 2. He met with a representative from the state about possible funding for repairs. However, he learned that Bank Street was not a hydrologically connected roadway and, therefore, it was unlikely we would qualify for funding.
 - 3. He has spoken to contractors and others about potential solutions and funding. Andy will report back when he has more information, but nothing will happen this year.
 - ii. He discussed the Route 9 paving project as described in the Annual Report.
 - iii. Andy provided an update the status of the Bennington Museum crosswalk project, which will be completed soon.
- b. As part of his report, he also reviewed the sidewalk plans for the west side of Upper Monument Avenue.

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- i. Andy showed photographs of the existing sidewalk sections needing repairs.
- ii. Next, he presented Options 1, 2, and 3 as described in the Annual Report.
- iii. Andy noted that grant applications in connection with Option 1 are due June 22.
 1. Kathy Wagenknecht said that the grant terms required the village's \$30,000 share to be in the approved budget.
 2. Ron Rabidou explained that, according to the state's timeline, we won't know if we've received a grant until November, meaning we may not be able to complete the work during this fiscal year.
 3. Consequently, he said the trustees propose to place the \$30,000 in a reserve for sidewalk repairs so that the money will be available whenever the work is completed.
 4. In response to a question, Ron said the trustees would not proceed with Option 1 unless we received the grant from the state.
- c. Pat Winburn opened the floor for discussion of the three sidewalk proposals.
 - i. Several residents expressed views on or asked questions about the sidewalk proposals including Charles Kozlosky, Steven Anisman, Richard Poeton, Martha Kozlosky, Michelle Kimball, Galen Jones, Susan Wright, Jim Warren, Terrell Poeton, James Gallen, and Colleen Kelly.
 - ii. Several residents spoke in favor Option 1 noting the importance of properly maintained sidewalks to both the aesthetics and safety of the village. Others spoke against Option 1 feeling that the village should save money for future road repairs. Some felt the village should construct sidewalks on roads without sidewalks rather continuing to maintain sidewalks on both sides of Monument Avenue. Some suggested that marble sidewalks or sidewalks with marble inserts would be more appropriate for the village than concrete sidewalks.
- d. Pat Winburn closed the discussion and called for votes on the three options.
 - i. Martha Kozlosky proposed a fourth option: to postpone any action or funding this year and to investigate other material options such as marble inserts. She made a motion to do so. Charles Kozlosky seconded the motion. The majority rejected the motion.
 - ii. Pat read Option 3 as described in the Annual Report. Steven Anisman moved to accept Option 3, Terrell Poeton seconded the motion, and the voters unanimously voted against the motion.
 - iii. Pat read Option 2 as described in the Annual Report. In response to a question, Andy Buchsbaum replied that we would not likely get state funding for Option 2. But he didn't rule it out. Steven Anisman moved to

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- accept Option 2, Kathy Wagenknecht seconded the motion, and the majority rejected the motion.
- iv. Pat referred to Option 1 as described in the Annual Report and proposed the following motion: To budget \$30,000 in a sidewalk reserve fund with instructions to the board to pursue Phase 1 and Phase 2 of Option 1 to the extent possible in a manner they feel appropriate. In response to a question, the trustees agreed that we would not undertake Option 1 unless we received the grant. Steven Anisman moved to accept Option 1, Larry Ferguson seconded the motion, the voters unanimously approved Option 1.
 - e. Larry Ferguson asked about the previous plan to install curbing on the west side of Monument Avenue in front of the Caswell property. Andy explained that because of labor shortages the vendor was unable to complete the work last year and recently indicated he would not be able to complete it this year either. Consequently, the trustees decided to drop the project for now.
 - f. Kathy Wagenknecht moved to accept the road commissioner's report, Steve Anisman seconded the motion, and voters unanimously approved the motion.

8. Budget.

- a. As the presiding officer, Andy Buchsbaum read Item 3 and Item 4 of the Warning concerning setting the taxes to be appropriated and authorizing borrowing in anticipation of taxes.
 - i. Kathy Wagenknecht noted the tax rates would be \$.04 per \$100 valuation for the general tax rate and \$.195 per \$100 for the road tax rate.
 - ii. Maryanne Peters moved to approve the tax rates, Terrell Poeton seconded the motion, and voters unanimously approved the motion.
 - iii. Michelle Kimball moved to authorize trustees to borrow money in anticipation of taxes, Richard Poeton seconded the motion, and voters unanimously approved the motion.
- b. Kathy Wagenknecht reviewed the budgeted revenues, expenses, and changes in reserves as described in the Annual Report. Significant items included:
 - i. She noted that actual snow removal costs were significantly higher than budgeted last year. She explained the snow removal budget for next reflected the average expenditure over the last ten years.
 - ii. She pointed out the planned decrease in the general reserves to partially fund our share of the sidewalk project.
 - iii. Pat Winburn asked for a motion to approve the budget including the funding of \$30,000 for a sidewalk construction reserve.

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1. During discussion, Ron Rabidou explained that in the absence of a volunteer to serve as clerk, we'll need to increase the proposed clerical budget by \$2,500 to hire an assistant to perform the tasks of the clerk.
2. James Gallen asked what the duties of the clerk were. Ron explained the duties of the clerk. James said he'd volunteer to serve as clerk to save the village money.
- iv. Pat asked for a new motion to approve the budget. Larry Ferguson moved to approve the budget, Michelle Kimball seconded the motion, and voters unanimously approved the motion.

9. Election of Officers.

- a. Pat Winburn asked for the report of the nominating committee. Speaking for the nominating committee, Ron Rabidou read the list of nominees:
 - i. Moderator: Pat Winburn for a term of one year.
 - ii. Clerk: James Gallen for a term of one year.
 - iii. Tax collector and treasurer: Kathy Wagenknecht for a term of one year.
 - iv. Auditor: Dale Cobb for a term of one year.
 - v. Three trustees: Andy Buchsbaum, Susan Wright, and James Warren for terms of two years.
- b. Pat asked for nominations from the floor. There were none.
- c. Since all the positions were uncontested, Pat directed the acting clerk to cast one ballot for each of the nominees. Ron cast one ballot for each of the nominees.

10. Adoption of website.

- a. Ron Rabidou explained the benefits of a website as described in the Annual Report.
- b. He demonstrated the operation of the website and explored its various features.
- c. He also discussed the costs, development, and maintenance of the website as described in the Annual Report.
- d. He explained that the website did not create any additional legal liabilities for the village except we would now be required to post documents to the website at the same time we posted them at other locations in the village.
- e. He noted that we would now provide access to village documents such as the Village Ordinances and the Zoning Bylaws on the website rather than printing and distributing documents to the community. This would save money while also insuring that everyone had access to the most recent versions of the documents. He added that residents could still request hard copies any documents from the village clerk.

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- f. In response to a question from Marianne Peters, he said that only the website administrator (currently himself) and the village clerk would have access to the administrative areas of the website, permitting them to make changes, post documents, etc.
- g. Terrell Poeton moved to approve adoption of the OldBennington.org as the official website of the village. Colleen Kelley seconded the motion, and the voters unanimously approved the motion.

11. Other business.

None.

12. Adjournment.

At 9:21 pm Steven Anisman moved to adjourn the meeting, Terrell Poeton seconded the motion, and the voters unanimously approved the motion.