

Village of Old Bennington
Trustees' Meeting Minutes
April 1, 2024

NOTICE:

The Trustees have scheduled a special meeting of the residents of Old Bennington. The purpose of the special meeting is to hold a nonbinding vote* of the registered voters of Old Bennington to authorize the Trustees to transfer the duty and authority of Village roads over to the Town of Bennington.

**Date and time: April 22, 2025 at 7 p.m.
Planned location: Old First Church Barn**

***Voting must be done in person at the meeting, not by Zoom.**

There will be time for residents to ask questions about the planned transfer prior to voting.

The regular minutes follow:

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/Lzu5dRyK3rQw7zUxqS7DqzAcsWF73Z3BjaY9vV8jR4qfaMcPX2mJs3ziUyG5IuTD.9Z9eavsJ3Yqm6Rn6>

Passcode: 2m!.*w8N

Officials present: Presiding Officer Anne Slattery; Trustees Than Marcoux, Ed Woods, Tom Woodward, and Susan Wright; Treasurer Ron Rabidou; Auditor Kathy Wagenknecht; Clerk Mary Walsh; and Zoom operator McKinley Keaffaber.

Officials absent: None.

Village residents in attendance: Renny Ponvert, Megan Schwarzkopf, Christine Costello and Mark Vaughn, Colleen Kelley and Nino Mendolia in person; Lucy Baldwin, Thomas Scheetz on Zoom.

1. Call to order: AS called the meeting to order at 7 p.m. Zoom operator MK noted that the proceedings were being recorded.
2. Changes or updates to Agenda: SW asked to review last month's vote on the Museum's building permit, since she had been absent. AS said it would be part of the Approval of Minutes agenda item.
3. Approval of Minutes, Trustees' meeting of March 4, 2025: SW asked to confirm whether there was a quorum for the meeting. AS told her that with four Trustees present there was a quorum. SW asked about the implications of the tied vote on the motion to waive the Museum's building permit fee. AS and EW explained that for the motion to carry, there would have had to be a majority in favor. A tied vote meant the motion had failed. RP said the Planning Commission had already sent the Museum a bill for the full building permit fee. There was consensus that the matter could not be revisited. TM moved to approve the minutes of the March 4 meeting, TW seconded the motion and the minutes were approved unanimously.
4. Citizen comments not related to Agenda: CC said the Village ought to publicize meetings more proactively to boost turnout. EW said this had been discussed at the March meeting and there was no need to discuss it further, but CC was welcome to publicize the meetings as she saw fit.
5. Reports of Commissioners
 - a. Roads Commissioner: TM said that as a traffic calming measure, VTrans will stop painting yellow center lines on Village streets. The Village is in compliance with all State road requirements. TM also said that the Bennington County Regional Commission had asked for an inventory of

all road improvements. They're trying to keep track of what's being fixed. EW said the BCRC was responsible for all traffic studies, and it made sense for them to want to inventory all roads they'll be studying.

TM said he had had a talk with MSK Engineers about their 2019 estimate of the possible cost of the work on Bank Street, which was approximated at \$300,000. In 2023 they revised that estimate to \$501,000 for a full-depth replacement. The most recent estimate is \$753,000 for a full-depth replacement. However, this seems to be based on the original 2019 estimate, which did not include the findings of any borings or other investigations of what lay under the road.

TM said he also spoke with VTrans, which wants to make sure small municipalities use their road grant money effectively. VTrans said it could do an initial survey of the Bank Street work, take measurements, and provide the Village with details needed to put the Bank Street work out for bid. It could also monitor the project to make sure it's done according to VTrans' standards.

TM said that he, AS and MSK had also met to discuss the coming lead-pipe remediation, some of which will take place on Bank Street. MSK is the contractor for that work. One of the lead pipes that must be replaced runs crosswise underneath Bank Street, and TM said the last thing anybody wanted was to do the road repairs first, then dig up the repaired road to replace the lead pipe. MSK thinks it can do the lead-pipe work in the spring, but in case there's any delay, the Village has been given an exception to the previous requirement that the Bank Street repairs be finished in 2025. Now the Village can do the work by the end of 2026 and still get the State's \$200,000 grant.

RR said VTrans would be able to help the Village in a number of ways, but it can't do the detailed engineering work that's required in a complex project. AS confirmed that VTrans does not do the engineering, it just oversees it. TM told RR the Village is eager to get the work done in 2025 if possible, and it would put out a request for bids.

- b. Tree Commissioner: TW said he had no news to report.
- c. Parks and Sidewalks Commissioner: SW said she also sits on the steering committee for the 250th anniversary celebration for the Battle of

Bennington. The committee wants to be sure the Village Trustees are aware of their interest in the meetinghouse marker, and believe it should include lighting and fencing to protect the site. AS said the anniversary planners should come to one of the monthly Trustees' meetings and describe their plans, and SW should check with Dave Kiernan to make sure everything is compliant.

- d. Police Commissioner: EW said he had no news to report.
- e. Other: MS said the Garden Club has 13 Village addresses on its list for the tour on June 21. They are on Monument Avenue and Walloomsac Road. There will have to be No Parking signs on the west side of Monument Avenue, starting the night before the tour, which will run from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. TW moved for the Trustees to approve the use of No Parking signs on Monument Avenue and part of Walloomsac Road. EW seconded the motion and the use of No Parking signs was unanimously approved.

AS outlined the chores that needed to be done in time for the Annual Meeting on May 13, and said anyone wishing to run for the positions of Trustees or Officers should announce their intentions to AS or MW. Three Trustees' two-year terms will be up this year, but two of those Trustees, SW and EW, plan to seek new terms. AS will not seek a new term. All three seats are up for re-election AS and RR urged all residents to speak with their neighbors about possibly being candidates. RR said that the Moderator of the Annual Meeting, Pat Winbern, will announce the volunteer candidates at the meeting and ask if anyone else wants to run, so people can announce their candidacies right up to the time of the vote.

- f. Treasurer: RR described the expense items listed in the Warrant for the past month, which can be viewed on his Treasurer's report, posted on this site. RR said we had not yet received bills from Jerome for plowing and salting in January, February and March, which made completing the FY 2026 budget difficult.

RR said he was finalizing the FY 2026 budget and described his projected values for the various line items. The final amounts will be listed in the Annual Report, available at the Annual Meeting on May 13. Residents wishing to hear the provisional items as discussed at the

current meeting are directed to the Zoom recording, linked at the top of these minutes.

RR said that at this point it appeared that the Village's year-end cash reserve would be \$366,000. (The fiscal year ended on March 31, but we had not received bills from Jerome, meaning our actual reserves would be less.) He said he had also analyzed what portion of our road-tax revenues were actually spent on roads in the past: about 87%. The remaining 13% of the road taxes were used to subsidize the general expenses of the Village.

There was a discussion of the complexities involved in turning some portion of the Village's road-tax revenues over to the Town of Bennington if the transfer goes through. Residents wishing to hear the discussion in full are directed to the Zoom recording linked at the top of these minutes. There will be further discussion and explanation at the April 22 special meeting, as well as in the budget portion of the Annual Meeting on May 13.

g. Auditor: KW had no news to report.

6. Village/Town roads update: AS recalled that at the March meeting the Trustees were given the text of VT H404, the bill that would repeal the 1959 "Acts and Resolves" giving the Village responsibility for its roads. Since then, AS and Town Manager Stu Hurd were asked to provide testimony to the Government Operations Committee on what the two municipalities hoped to accomplish with the transfer of roads. AS said SH told the Committee that the current division of labor between the Village and the Town is very inefficient. For example, a Town's snowplow currently plows up to the point on Bank Street where Bank Street becomes a Village road, then it lifts its plow and drives to the point on West Road where the Village's responsibility stops, then lowers its plow again and resumes plowing. At the same time, the Village has to find a contractor who's interested in the job of plowing the Village's relatively tiny stretches of road, which is difficult, as evidenced by the fact that the Village has been contending with inadequate plowing and delayed, handwritten plowing bills for the past two years. Such practices don't make sense. The Town has a strong internal infrastructure team that can provide plowing and other road work more efficiently and at a lower cost. AS and SH also reported to the Committee what they have been doing to keep their respective residents

informed about the planned transfer. The Committee seemed satisfied with the information AS and SH had provided, and the next step was for the Village to conduct its vote at the special meeting on April 22.

7. Old business: None.
8. New business: EW said he had heard from a resident who said it was hard to hear everything that was said in the Trustees' meetings on Zoom. He said that after the election, the new Board should look into getting better equipment that would allow all taxpayers to participate. AS said David Kiernan had already been putting together a list of such equipment and pricing it.
9. Adjourn: TW moved to adjourn the meeting at 8:37 p.m. EW seconded the motion and the meeting was unanimously adjourned.