

Village of Old Bennington  
Trustees' Meeting Minutes  
July 11, 2023

The meeting was held at The Barn, and on Zoom.

Officials Present: Presiding Officer Anne Slattery; Trustees Steve Anisman, Jim Warren, Ed Woods, Susan Wright; Treasurer Ron Rabidou; Planning Board Chair Nancy Coseo; and Clerk Mary Walsh.

Officials Absent: Auditor Kathy Wagenknecht.

Citizens Present: Thomas Scheetz, Christine Costello, and Mark Vaughan.

1. Opening: The meeting was called to order at 7:00 p.m.
2. Changes/updates to the agenda: None.
3. Minutes: There were no changes to the May 2, 2023, minutes, and the trustees unanimously approved them.
4. Reports of Commissioners and Committee Chairs:
  - a. Planning Commissioner:

Nancy Coseo reported on the new Vermont Home Act, which became law on July 1. The state's goal is to increase housing density in appropriate ways, to address the housing shortages. This has implications for the Village of Old Bennington. Increasing density does not negate our historic preservation bylaws or our Village Plan, and we will still have the responsibility to do design reviews. A summary of the new law from the Bennington County Regional Commission is available on this website, under "Other Documents." A link to the Act itself is [here](#).

Our bylaws need to be revised, to be sure they reflect the historic preservation mandate. The Planning Commission is working on revisions, and will present them in a public meeting, then bring them to the Trustees. The Trustees will also present them, in a separate public meeting.

The Planning Commission recommended the appointment of Renny Ponvert to the Planning Commission.

Ed Woods moved that the Trustees approve the nomination of Renny Ponvert. Steve Anisman seconded the motion. The trustees unanimously approved Renny Ponvert as a planning commissioner.

b. Road Commissioner:

Jim Warren said the Village received one bid for repairs of Fairview Street, from Weaver Excavating. The base cost is \$235,000, with an option of repairing a small stretch of road outside the Village limits for another \$19,000. MSK Engineering recommends that the Village accept the bid.

Ron Rabideau summarized his findings on financing the repairs. He did two scenarios: 1) the Village borrows as much as it can from the Vermont Bond Bank (which finances Class 3 roads like Fairview Street), and 2) the Village borrows from the Vermont Infrastructure Bank (which finances Class 2 roads like Bank Street). Either borrowing would be for 20 years.

The borrowing rate from the Vermont Bond Bank is 3.5%. The Infrastructure Bank cites a rate of 1% on their website, but that might be out of date.

In discussion, the trustees determined that the Village should not spend the additional \$19,000 for the stretch of Fairview that belongs to the Town of Bennington. Ed Woods said he and AS would consult with the Town to see if other financial alternatives might be feasible.

SA moved to accept Weaver's \$235,000 bid for Fairview repairs, unless otherwise instructed by the Presiding Officer by July 21. EW seconded the motion, and it was unanimously approved.

JW said the Trustees had to sign some routine AOT compliance forms. The Trustees signed them.

c. Tree Commissioner: There was no report.

d. Parks and Sidewalks Commissioner:

Susan Wright said there are cracked sidewalks that represent tripping hazards. She will get quotes on the cost of fixing them.

e. Police Commissioner:

EW said our police officer provided an invoice for 58 hours of work, and 29 tickets issued. Only 10 of the tickets were for speeding.

RR said in the past, the Village has received the money for tickets only when they involved moving violations.

f. Treasurer's Report:

RR said that we received \$138 for highway fines.

The total warrant was \$13,000, for five items.

JW moved to approve the warrant, EW seconded it, and the motion was passed unanimously.

RR said there are property taxes still payable from 2022. The Village has not put liens on the respective properties, but has the authority to do so. In discussion, the trustees said there was no reason not to put liens on the overdue properties.

5. Citizens' business:

Christine Costello and Mark Vaughan said there is excessive traffic on Church Lane, despite the "no exit" sign at the intersection with Monument Avenue. Drivers get stuck at the dead end because the street has no turn-around space. Some drivers say Google Map told them to go down Church Lane.

They asked whether Church Lane could be designated a private road, for use by residents only. They have discussed this with the Church, and they have no problem with churchgoers parking on Church Lane for services.

In discussion, trustees said that the Village could put up a "residents only" sign, and Mark Vaughan said the words "except Sundays" could be added. He asked if a penalty could be imposed on violators. EW said the Village does have the authority to fine violators. A potential solution will continue to be explored.

6. Old Business: None.

7. New Business: None.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:30.