

Village of Old Bennington  
Trustees Meeting Minutes  
November 5, 2019

Officials present: Trustees Andy Buchsbaum, Charles Edson, Ron Rabidou, Jim Warren, and Susan Wright, as well as Clerk Steven Anisman and Treasurer Kathy Wagenknecht.

Officials absent: none

Residents present: Richard Poeton, Marianne Peters, Jill Jones, Galen Jones

Guests present: Nick Myran & Nicholas Ratzler from MSK Engineering

1. Opening. Ron Rabidou called the meeting to order at 7:05pm.
2. Minutes.
  - a. There were no changes.
  - b. Ron Rabidou moved to approve the draft minutes for the October 1 trustees meeting, Andy Buchsbaum seconded the motion, and the trustees unanimously approved the motion.
3. Citizen Comments. Richard Poeton mentioned his hope that the Bank Street repairs might incorporate a walkway for pedestrian safety. He recommended paying for road repairs in portions, with whatever funds are available on an annual basis. Ron Rabidou mentioned that financing may be possible with some financial aid and other strategies, and the 4 most severe roads could potentially be repaired within 8 years on an every-other-year basis, if Village taxes are increased to match Town of Bennington taxes. This would allow us to maintain the current level of the reserves. Richard also indicated his enthusiastic support for allowing solar energy in the Village.
4. Reports of Commissioners.
  - a. Road Commissioner.
    - i. Andy Buchsbaum introduced Nick Myran and Nicholas Ratzler from MSK Engineering. Their complete report has not yet been released to the public but will be released in the near future, most likely after the next meeting in December, or after the holidays. Andy Buchsbaum and Charles Edson have met with Rob Faley (our District Road Manager) and Christopher Taft. They recommended re-identifying Bank Street as a Class 2 road, which would make it eligible for grants. Elm Street is already Class 2. An appeal to the state for reclassification will be pursued if possible (the regulations are fairly extensive).
    - ii. Nicholas Ratzler and Nick Myron from MSK summarized the report and answered questions from the Trustees and residents. They have examined the roads. Prices for contracting have risen significantly in the past few years, which is accounted for in the estimates. Most of the road damage is based on water erosion. The pavement on Bank St in particular is being damaged by poor water management and drainage, which has failed, and its reconstructive priority is high. Expected cost is ~\$280,000, but includes contingencies for engineering such as core samples.

- iii. Charles Edson raised the question regarding drainage ditches on Bank St, which were deeper in the past - and even when they were deeper, they were not accommodating heavy rains. He made a number of recommendations regarding specific pavement types and preferred contractors.
  - iv. Crowning the road with drainage on both sides would improve water flow. Pedestrian walkways would be possible within the right-of-way.
  - v. Marianne Peters asked if there might be state assistance for repair given that these roads are used to provide access to the Battle Monument. There was some skepticism regarding the state's willingness to help beyond current programs for Class 2 roads.
  - vi. Cost estimates are planned as essentially a "worst-case" scenario, short of complete excavation and new construction.
  - vii. MSK would be willing and able to help with grant applications.
  - viii. Andy Buchsbaum and Ron Rabidou will plan to write a brief introduction and explanation when the full report is released. Most importantly, if maintenance is done correctly going forward, costs such as the extensive reconstruction needed on Bank Street should be rare, and overall expenses will be much lower in the long term.
  - ix. The roads project has a number of payment options, and may be made easier if grants are obtained. The State Infrastructure Bank can help us to structure the budget and aid in financial support. Routine maintenance budgets should be increased for good stewardship. A long-term plan of action needs to be created and implemented.
- b. Tree Commissioner.
- i. Jim Warren reviewed the dead tree in the right of way on the corner of Walloomsac and Fairview. A written notification indicating its risk to traffic and pedestrians, and the need for it to be taken down, was discussed, and a letter will be sent. This is consistent with the Village bylaws.
  - ii. Pembroke was hired to help with storm cleanup, with total expenses of ~\$1,100. Reimbursement from FEMA may be available.
  - iii. A maple on the Village Green is in need of replacement, which will be pursued, and an adjacent stump needs grinding and re-sodding. These needs may be within the remaining tree budget.
- c. Parks and Sidewalks Commissioner.
- i. Susan Wright mentioned a stone marker by the brick academy which was damaged in the storm, which we may need to replace or repair.
  - ii. The streetlight in front of the academy building was replaced, which was the last bulb in reserve. In the future, bulbs should be more readily available, and therefore able to be purchased and replaced as needed, rather than needing to be stockpiled in advance.
- d. Police Commissioner.
- i. Charles Edson presented the report. Andy worked 82.5 hours, performed 48 property checks, and issued 16 tickets worth \$2,672 in fines.
  - ii. The Bennington School notifies the Bennington Police Department when someone goes missing, but there is no mechanism in place to notify residents.
  - iii. Traffic counts, which may impact our ability to obtain road grants, are now underway on Bank Street.

- iv. The police car is now being stored at Jerome's property with the thanks of the Trustees.
- e. Treasurer.
  - i. Multiple expenses were paid, details are in the Treasurer's Report.
  - ii. The audit, which was planned as a quarterly event, is being performed semi-annually. The next audit will be shared with the Trustees when available.
  - iii. One tax delinquency is being addressed and should be corrected soon. Another delinquency may be falling behind. A possible tax lien was discussed, and we will try to work with the town to ensure that no changes are made unilaterally.
  - iv. A CD recently matured, and the monies were moved into checking. That money should be moved into another 12-24 month CD. Some of our speeding fines were credited to us by the state.
  - v. Kathy Wagenknecht presented the warrant list. Ron Rabidou moved to approve the warrant list, Jim Warren seconded the motion, and the trustees unanimously approved the motion.
- 5. Old Business. Susan Wright will present prices for bench options to the Trustees at the next meeting.
- 6. New Business. There was none.
- 7. Adjournment. Ron Rabidou moved to adjourn the meeting at 8:36 pm, Charles Edson seconded the motion, and the trustees unanimously approved the motion.