

Village of Old Bennington
Trustees' Meeting Minutes
July 1, 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/kgnaEo9B6PvL6V8urspssmUq5CWUKhRZ_kH-lysCFKvmGMv6HUtqMWdkC0q-IXWt.II7IdPEVSslPp4Av?startTime=1751410813000

Passcode: 92\$?No.6

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

Officials absent: Administrator David Kiernan.

Citizens present: Nancy Coseo, Brian Scheetz, and Tom Scheetz at the Barn; Sheila Scheetz and Megan Schwarzkopf on Zoom.

Guest: Norman LeBlanc, Highway Superintendent of the Village of North Bennington.

1. Call to order: EW called the meeting to order at 7 p.m.
2. Changes or updates to the Agenda: In response to a question from EW, BS said he would provide information about activities at 3 Seminary Lane and the Walloomsac Inn.
3. Approval of the minutes from the June 3, 2025, Trustees' meeting: SW, who was unable to attend that meeting, confirmed that she was willing to serve another term as Parks and Sidewalks Commissioner. TW moved to accept the June 3 minutes; TM seconded the motion, and the minutes were unanimously approved.
4. Citizens' comments not related to the Agenda: NC said that the Village had updated its Bylaws last summer, but the changes had not been incorporated into the older version of the Bylaws, which is still available online. She said that there should be an updated version of the Bylaws available and the older version should be removed.

There was a discussion of the correct procedure. RR said he would merge the updates into the older Bylaws and let the Planning Commission review his updated version.

BS said he had been told by Administrator DK that the Planning Commission should expect to get an application soon for work being planned for 3 Seminary Lane. EW said

that a “change in use” application was expected in connection with making the existing house into an inn.

EW said the owners of 3 Seminary Lane had also recently purchased the Walloomsac Inn, with plans to restore it. KW pointed out that everyone in the Village would like to know who bought it and what they’ll do with it.

[Clerk’s note: the Vermont Property Transfer Tax Return for the purchase, available at the Town Clerk’s office, says the Buyer is “The Walloomsac Property LLC,” a private company registered in Salisbury CT. The planned use is “Commercial.”]

BS said that owners of 3 Seminary Lane have so far submitted just an application for a design review, and it was approved. Other applications are expected. He said the owners seem very interested in historic preservation and are working with an architect and other professionals.

5. Reports of Commissioners

a. Roads Commissioner, TM:

First, TM provided answers to four questions that were raised at the June 3 Trustees’ meeting:

--He said Matt Bowdoin has been filling potholes and is doing a good job.

--He said he had inquired about the street repairs needed on Monument Circle and learned that the State will take responsibility. He expects the State to provide a repair plan in about a month.

--He had a discussion with the Zoning Board’s presiding officer, David Silver, about paving needs after the lead pipes running under Village streets have been replaced. So far, the affected places have been filled in with rock but not repaved. MSK Engineering has told TM that the paving will be done in the spring.

--He checked on why the swales on some streets extend beyond the Village boundaries. VTrans offered the theory that the builders were trying to connect the swales with pre-existing drains. In any case, it’s the Village’s responsibility to maintain the swales, even when they extend beyond the Village limits.

Next, TM said he’d been working with North Bennington officials on a possible collaboration on road repairs. Renny Ponvert introduced TM to Mary Rogers, chair of the North Bennington Board of Trustees, and Norman LeBlanc, North Bennington’s Highway Superintendent. TM and NL then held a very productive meeting on June 20 with Patrick Wilson, the project manager for VTrans Maintenance District 1, and Michael Bacon of RM Bacon LLC, a bidder that responded to TM’s request for proposals to repair Bank Street. PW’s role in the June 20 meeting was to explain the State’s expectations for

the Bank Street work. NL served as an ad hoc consultant who could “speak the language” of road construction. NL told the Trustees that he hadn’t yet read RM Bacon’s bid, and that he may also bid on certain parts of the Bank Street project, such as tree pruning and removal.

TM said RM Bacon’s proposed total price was \$230,100. He said he believed the bid was an opportunity for the Village to save money. NL said that price was for “zipping the whole road,” or completely rebuilding it, and that a “mill and overlay” process would be inadequate and would cost more in the end. NL’s full discussion is available on the Zoom recording.

There was also a discussion of the project timetable, and whether it might be disrupted by the removal of at least one lead pipe that still runs under Bank Street. TM said it appeared that RM Bacon and MSK Engineering (which is doing the removal) could find a way to replace the pipe[s] without tearing up RM Bacon’s repairs.

In response to a question, EW said the State had granted up to \$200,000, to cover a maximum of 80% of the Bank Street repairs. That is, if the total cost is \$250,000, the Village would get the whole \$200,000. (80% of \$250,000 = \$200,000.) If the total cost ends up being \$230,100, the State’s grant would reimburse \$184,080 of that. TM said he thought Old Bennington was able to get an attractive bid because of VTrans’s involvement.

There was a discussion of how the Bank Street repairs would affect trees. Certain trees will have to come down or be pruned back as part of the project. Tree Commissioner TW said he had already written a letter to the residents of Bank Street, letting them know about this. He said all of the trees to be removed are “trash trees.”

In response to a question about the division of labor, EW said that RM Bacon would do the actual road work, while NL had offered his expertise so far as an ad hoc consultant. TM added that NL would be both a consultant and a bidder. NL said he was going to serve, in effect, as Old Bennington’s Department of Public Works, trying to help Old Bennington get some advantages while also hoping there would be advantages for North Bennington. EW said he was comfortable with that approach. TW moved to approve RM Bacon’s bid, contingent on NL reviewing it and confirming that it was sound. After further discussion, TW amended his motion to authorize up to \$250,000 for the coming work on Bank Street, without naming who would be doing the work. JT seconded the motion and it was unanimously approved.

NC said she uses Bank Street regularly and she wanted to thank everybody involved in this project for working so hard to solve the problem that Bank Street has posed.

After that, TM turned to the subject of winter plowing. He said he had proposals from two companies, Pembroke Landscape and Reis LLC, which he thought were good.

Pembroke Landscape provided two proposals:

--In the first, Pembroke would treat the roads with salt just before snowstorms, then keep a minimum of one plow truck on site from 5 a.m. to 9 p.m., as long as the snow was accumulating; from 9 p.m. to 5 a.m. Pembroke would plow the roads enough to keep snow less than three inches deep. The contract would run from Oct. 1 to April 30 at \$10,500 a month, salt included, or \$73,500 total, which is over budget.

--In the other proposal, Pembroke would charge an hourly rate of \$125 per man and machine, with the Village paying a monthly minimum of \$3,750 for October and April, and \$7,500 per month for November through March. The minimum total cost for the seven months would be \$45,000, with Old Bennington paying for salt separately.

Reis LLC submitted one proposal, with different hourly rates for different services. Shoveling and salting the marble sidewalks by hand around Old First Church would cost \$65 an hour. Plowing and salting the other sidewalks by machine would be \$135 an hour per machine. Plowing and salting the roads would be \$165 an hour per truck. Reis would receive and store the Village's salt.

There was a discussion of the difficulties of comparing the proposals when no one knew in advance how much snow there would be. At the end, there was a unanimous agreement for Pembroke's second option.

b. Trees Commissioner, TW:

TW said some trees were chopped down by Monument Elementary School without the required permission. He thought it would be appropriate to send a strongly worded letter to the school, but no penalty. He also said that he had received some requests for tree removals, but none of them were on the Monument Avenue right-of-way.

c. Parks and Sidewalks Commissioner, SW:

SW said her only news was that the recent garden tour was very successful, attracting lots of visitors and praise. She thanked the organizers for doing a great job.

d. Police Commissioner, JT:

JT said he had no news to report, but he's expecting to take a crash course from the outgoing Police Commissioner soon. EW said he would introduce JT to the police chief and other officials.

e. Other reports:

EW asked TW for an update on the drafting of Village Plan of Development, since TW is the primary contact person for the State's grant. TW said the Bennington County Regional Commission is eager to get to work on the Plan, and they'd be able to do so as soon as some papers were signed. BS said he'd had a special mid-month meeting with the

BCRC people who are helping with the plan, and it went well. He said they were eager to stick to their timetable.

f. Treasurer, RR:

RR said the Warrant included six checks, described in the Treasurer's Report on the Village website. One payable, to PropertyRecords.com, is for RR's efforts to locate the owners of 57 Monument Avenue, who have stopped paying property taxes and dropped off the radar. They have tenants living in the house and are receiving rental income, but RR hasn't been able to locate them and the tenants refuse to help. There was a discussion of the Village's recourse. It was agreed that RR would get advice from attorney Merrill Bent. He said there was no news on the other three outstanding cases of tax nonpayment.

RR said that when the Village had moved its bank accounts to the Bank of Bennington, it left \$2,000 at HFCU as a goodwill gesture. But now HFCU is warning about the lack of activity, so RR had written a letter instructing HFCU to close the account. TM moved to authorize EW to sign the letter. JT seconded the motion, and it was unanimously approved.

g. Auditor KW said she had no news to report.

6. Other Business: RR said the Village needed update its listings of officers and commissioners, and that there were two seats on the Zoning Board of Adjustment that needed to be filled. EW said there were two candidates to go before the Zoning Board, Richard Caswell and Thomas Scheetz. The Zoning Board can't start working on applications until the two seats are filled.
7. Adjournment: The Trustees took several minutes to sign checks for the month's invoices. When that was done, TW moved to adjourn. JT seconded the motion, and the meeting was adjourned at 8:53.