

Village of Old Bennington  
Trustees' Meeting Minutes  
May 5, 2026

The meeting was held at The Barn and on Zoom. To watch the Zoom recording, click this link:

[https://zoom.us/rec/share/LcqxcP1oCWXv-Ky\\_Wxc5PgYgXjCYCnzJBUUD3DrnlRCJfcOBPT1s1ukcOAAkNnrk.ZyXmwpGzNlvY3QP4?startTime=1778021614000](https://zoom.us/rec/share/LcqxcP1oCWXv-Ky_Wxc5PgYgXjCYCnzJBUUD3DrnlRCJfcOBPT1s1ukcOAAkNnrk.ZyXmwpGzNlvY3QP4?startTime=1778021614000)

Passcode: hy%<sup>0</sup>pNW65

Officials present: Trustees Than Marcoux, Jim Thatch, Ed Woods, and Susan Wright, with Jim Thatch presiding and Ed Woods, the usual Presiding Officer, filling in as Zoom operator; Treasurer Ron Rabidou; Auditor Kathy Wagenknecht, and Clerk Mary Walsh.

Officials absent: Trustee Tom Woodward.

Village residents participating via Zoom: Andrew Buchsbaum, Lucy Baldwin, Megan Schwarzkopf, Betsy Woods, and three others whose full names were not visible on the Zoom screen.

1. Call to order: JT called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.
2. Changes or updates to the agenda: JT reported that a scheduled public meeting on repairing the Bennington Battle Monument recently took place, with more than 100 people in attendance. The State presented six options, including tearing down the Monument, privatizing the Monument, partially restoring it, and fully restoring it. The only option that would include a working elevator was the full restoration option. There will be more meetings to come, but for now, there's nearly unanimous support for full restoration. JT said the Town Select Board agreed with the public sentiment.

JT said the problem with full restoration is that State said it will take ten years. Some people initially wanted partial restoration, in the hope that it

would be a path to full restoration later on, but they learned that partial restoration wouldn't work that way. It meant that once the partial restoration was done, that would be the end of any repairs or restoration. When they learned that, the supporters of partial restoration began to favor full restoration.

EW said he was struck by the large turnout and the lack of public support for any option short of full restoration.

Separate from that, JT said he needed to know if the Trustees would support having an ice cream truck present on Monument Circle for the Fourth of July, and the Trustees said they did.

3. Approval of the minutes from the April 7 meeting: SW said a correction was necessary where the minutes described sidewalk-repair costs for the FY 2027 Budget. The minutes should have said the quote was for repairs to the section of sidewalk running from Walloomsac Road down to Bank Street on the East side of the Avenue (not from the Walloomsac Inn to Bank Street). MW has made that change.

TM moved to approve the minutes with that correction. SW seconded the motion and the minutes were unanimously approved.

#### 4. Reports of Commissioners:

- a. Roads Commissioner TM said he had spoken with Ron at Pembroke, who said he didn't want to provide plowing and salting services in the future. This was disappointing, and there was a discussion of what the problem was and whether the Village could take steps to persuade Ron to renew Pembroke's contract after all. TM said he had been trying to schedule such a discussion and hoped he could have on in the coming week.

TM said that he and Norm LeBlanc (head of North Bennington's public works department) had met with a company to review road-maintenance needs. The company said there were foundational problems with Seminary Lane, which would cost around \$61,000 to fix. But Seminary Lane isn't a top priority, since it's not a through street and doesn't ever have very much traffic.

Catamount Lane also needs work. It's starting to get ruts, due to heavy shade-tree overhang and falling debris that prevents the road from ever really drying out. The quote for this work is about \$186,000, which is less than NL had expected but more than the \$120,000 that the Village budgeted for road repairs in FY 2027. The \$186,000 figure is uncertain because fixing Catamount Lane involves work that a paving company wouldn't do, like addressing excessive vegetation. Also, NL hasn't hired this company for work in North Bennington until now, and he wants to assess their performance. The Village won't have his assessment in time for the budget vote at the annual meeting. Also the quote, \$186,000, is based on the assumption that the company will do both NL's work in North Bennington, and our work in Old Bennington, on the same schedule.

TM said he wanted to know how much flexibility the Village would have if the budget said \$120,000 for roads and fixing Catamount turned out to cost \$186,000.

RR said that if the Village found out that NL was satisfied with this company's work for North Bennington, it would be possible to amend the budget. The original budget called for spending \$120,000 in FY 2027 and more in FT 2028. The tax rate would be the same because the Village already has the money in reserve. It could turn out that by spending more than \$120,000 in the first year, the Village would save money overall. We would spend down the reserves, and end up with a reserve of \$80,000 less than originally planned. On the other hand, RR added, if NL doesn't like this company's work in North Bennington, then the Village wouldn't opt for the increase in spending in FT 2027.

EW said the board needed a motion to develop an alternate budget, contingent on whether the Village would carry out the \$186,000 worth of road work, as contemplated by NL. RR said the Board had to present the higher number. JT moved in favor of putting the secondary road budget to a vote at the annual meeting, setting the expenditure at \$200,000, to leave a cushion. TM seconded the motion after clarifying that the estimate was for maintenance only, not full overhauls of the roads. He added that spending more in the first year could prove beneficial because prices were likely to go up in the future. The motion was unanimously approved with four votes.

- b. Tree Commissioner: JT said TW had told him he had no news to report.
- c. Parks and Sidewalks Commissioner: SW said that from the Barn, down Monument Avenue to Lucy Baldwin's house (at 18 Monument Avenue), was where the need was greatest for sidewalk repairs. She thought the work could be done for \$30,000 or a little more. EW confirmed that the planned repairs would continue down Monument Avenue to the Bank Street intersection.
- d. Police Commissioner: JT said he had spoken with a resident about a looting at the Luksus property. The resident, a neighbor, confronted two individuals, and JT reported the details to the Bennington police commissioner. He said people seemed to be getting a little more brazen. JT advised residents not to confront looters – just call the police.

EW said that in the past, Tzaims Luksus (the owner, now in Rangoon) had requested that police not be allowed onto the property. EW said that was not a good solution. People have to call the police and report trespassers or possible break-ins, and they should also call JT because JT maintains Village police records.

On traffic calming, JT said the Village still plans to buy the movable, data-collecting speed sign. EW said he would take a picture of such a sign in Manchester because that one said Please and Thank you and could be configured with things like a Santa hat during the holiday season, to make it less obnoxious. The sign will be placed on a permanent pole, and it can be removed and moved to another (permanent) pole as needed. There will always be two empty poles, and those can just have plain speeding signs affixed when the electronic sign is somewhere else. EW said the Village might have to get a new signage contractor because the current one has not yet replaced a speed-limit sign that was knocked down by a car months ago.

JT said he also wanted to let people know that later in the week, 18 fourth-grade classes would be touring the Village.

Presiding Officer: EW said he had no news to report.

- 5. Treasurer's Report: RR said that he had completed the transition to the modified cash-based accounting system that he had previously

recommended. As a result, the current month would be the last time the Village Warrant would have a timing mismatch with the actual spending. There was a short discussion of how the difference will look: Our book balance and our fund balance will be different, and RR will provide a short reconciliation.

RR presented the Warrant, which included legal bills resulting largely from the recent tax sale of 18 Walloomsac Road. RR said that the proceeds of the sale would eventually reimburse the legal costs, as well as covering the past-due taxes. In addition, the Warrant included a new \$9 per month fee paid to Zoom, which will allow the Village to keep a full year's worth of meeting videos available on Zoom. (The previous agreement severely limited the Village's storage space.) The entire Warrant can be reviewed in the monthly Treasurer's Report, under the "Board of Trustees" tab on the Village website. EW moved to approve the Warrant, TM seconded the motion, and the Warrant was unanimously approved.

RR reported on the outcome of the April 24 tax sale of 18 Walloomsac Road. The winning bid for the property was \$300,000, of which \$43,000 represented the taxes due to the Village and the Town. The difference has been put into an escrow account for one year, as required by State law, which gives the owner a year to find another solution and/or remove the contents. The catch is that the current owner, Tzaims Luksus, has to pay interest of 1% per month on the escrow amount.

MW pointed out that Tzaims Luksus has told his correspondents that he's being forced to pay interest of 12% per month. She pointed out that Old Bennington is a historic village, and the property has historic (and artistic) value; therefore, she wondered whether the Village had any responsibility to help with the preservation of the contents, which will remain in the empty house for the State's mandatory one-year interval. There was a discussion of the State's legal process, which supercedes Village rules, and puts protections in place. SW said that at least one of Tzaims Luksus's correspondents has advised him that the tax sale is the best possible outcome for him.

6. Auditor's Report: KW said she checked through the FY 2026 records and found one small omission: a check was sent to a payee with only two signatures instead of the required three. (The bank cleared the check

anyway.) She approved the Treasurer's Report. There was consensus that the Village should continue to have three Trustees sign all of its checks.

7. New Business: EW said the Trustees are still looking for a Zoom operator. He said it was be a good opportunity for the right young person, and there was no requirement that the person live in Old Bennington.

It was announced that there would be an informal reception after the annual meeting on Tuesday, and that the organizers would welcome any additional volunteers to provide refreshments.

RR expressed concern about the cumbersome procedures for mailing out postcards every year, announcing the annual meeting to each registered voter in the Village. He said it would be simpler to just mail out cards addressed to "Household." KW said they might be addressed to "Registered Voters," at each address in the Village. MW said the current State-directed process led to inaccuracies and wasted time and should really be improved. JT asked if it was possible to send the notification by email, but the answer was No.

RR also expressed concern about the process for finding new candidates for the Village Planning Commission. He said the Planning Commission was interviewing potential candidates in executive sessions, which seemed a little intimidating. He wondered why the Planning Commission couldn't instead work with the new Nominating Committee formed by the Board of Trustees this spring. JT said he agreed it would be helpful to formalize such cooperation.

EW said that from now on, every month's agenda should include an item for the Nominating Committee Chair to report on current activities.

8. Adjournment: EW moved to adjourn the meeting at 8:08. SW seconded the motion and the meeting was unanimously adjourned.