



**MEETING MINUTES
OCTOBER 18, 2017
OLDCASTLE THEATER COMPANY
331 MAIN STREET
BENNINGTON, VERMONT**

10:00 A.M. TO 2:00 P.M.

Members Present: Stephan Morse, Betsy Gentile, Michael Keane, Patricia Horn, Thad Richardson, Emma Marvin, Mark Nicholson, Jean O'Sullivan, and John Davis.

Members Absent: Rachel Smith

Staff Present: Fred Kenney, Executive Director; Abbie Sherman, Grants Program Manager; Casey Mock, Director of Strategic & Policy Initiatives, ACCD; and Ken Jones, Economic Research Analyst, ACCD.

Others Present: Members of the Bennington Select Board: Tom Jacobs (Chair), Donald Campbell (Vice Chair), Jeannie Jenkins, Jeanne Conner; Stuart Hurd, Bennington Town Manager; Dan Monks, Bennington Assistant Town Manager; Stephanie Hainley, White & Burke; Gail Henderson-King, White & Burke; Lynn Green; Jon Hale; Bill Colvin; Ed Sargood; Dimitri Garder; Mariko Silver; Tom Dee; John Shannahan; Jonah Spivak; Matt Harrington; Jason Dornetsch; and Sean-Marie Oller.

10:00 a.m. Tour of Bennington TIF District (VEPC Board and Staff only)

11:00 a.m. Roll Call and Agenda Review

Chair Stephan Morse called the meeting to order.

Chair Stephan Morse requested a roll call. Members present are noted above.

Chair Stephan Morse added to the agenda the introduction of Casey Mock as a candidate to fill the Executive Director position which is being vacated by Fred Kenney at the end of November. Stephen reminded the Board that the Governor appoints the Executive Director, but that he appreciated the Agency of Commerce including the VEPC Board in the decision process. Stephan, John, and Michael met with Casey last week. Casey provided the Board with a summary of his background.

Chair Stephan Morse inquired as to any other additions or deletions to the agenda, hearing none, moved to the next Agenda item.

11:07 a.m. Minutes – September 28, 2017

Chair Stephan Morse inquired as to any corrections or changes to the draft meeting minutes for September 28, 2017. Hearing none, requested a motion.

- ❖ At 11:08 a.m. Michael Keane moved to accept the September 28, 2017, meeting minutes as presented. John Davis seconded the motion. Chair Stephan Morse inquired as to further discussion, hearing none requested a roll call for the vote. All voted in favor and the motion passed. 9-0-0.
 - ◆ Aye: Chair Stephan Morse; Betsy Gentile; Michael Keane; Patricia Horn; Thad Richardson; Emma Marvin; Mark Nicholson, Jean O’Sullivan, and John Davis
 - ◆ Nay: None
 - ◆ Abstain: None

11:09 a.m. Tax Increment Financing District (TIF):
Presentation by Bennington Officials
VEPC Board Question & Answers

Dan Monks, Stephanie Hainley, and Gail Henderson-King provided an overview of Bennington’s Tax Increment Financing District. Stephanie noted that infrastructure projects are conservatively projected. Improvements to streetscape are needed to attract developers and to provide for accessibility. Dan anticipates going to the voters in March with their first bond vote. There is a high demand for market-value housing within the district, but the development of affordable housing is also being planned. Other topics that were addressed during discussion included floodplain and brownfields.

[Click here](#) for power point presentation.

Fred Kenney reminded the Board that the TIF district has already been created by the Bennington Select Board and that the VEPC Board’s role is to approve use of the incremental education property tax for the TIF District. VEPC will review the criteria in Vermont Statute and determine whether application meets that criteria to approve Bennington’s use of future the incremental education property tax. Fred is working with Ken Jones to analyze the information provided in the application and check the town’s assumptions of property values and future tax generation Fred is also working with Agency of Natural Resources and Agency of Transportation to determine the reasonableness of the infrastructure cost assumptions outlined in Bennington’s application. The details of this process will be made available at VEPC’s November meeting.

At 12:10 p.m. the Board recessed for lunch.

12:54 p.m. Public Comment

Chair Stephan Morse called the meeting to order and noted several members of the public were present to provide public comment.

[Click here](#) for audio and written testimony.

Lynn Green spoke in support of the Bennington TIF district, noting the benefits of a brightened downtown and those who have stepped up to improve Bennington's downtown.

Jon Hale, President of Hale Resources, a property management and development group, supports Bennington's application. He advised that the mission of his company is to bring young professionals to town to help businesses grow and with economic development. John detailed the issues in developing various properties within the district. Housing is another challenge within the TIF district. He believes creation of the TIF district will a great tool to help bring in private investors.

Bill Colvin, Assistant Director of Bennington County Regional Commission and Acting Director of Bennington County Industrial Corporation, spoke in support of Bennington's TIF district application. He spoke of Bennington's slow recovery from the 2008 economic downturn, the lack of quality housing, and the various planning efforts the Town of Bennington have already completed.

Ed Sargood, Senior Vice President and CFO of the Bank of Bennington, noted that the Bank of Bennington is a large employer and joined in the Putnam Block effort to assist in turning around the local economy. He believes a vibrant downtown will improve all economy and lead to additional significant investments. A TIF district in Bennington will be a vital tool in assisting in the process.

Don Campbell, Vice Chair of the Bennington Select Board, noted the various groups in Bennington working to make the Bennington community a better place and the durability of the community. He also spoke of the need of the TIF district as a financing tool to assist in meaningful, transformative improvements.

Dimitri Garder, CEO and founder of Global Z Technology, noted that the Putnam Project is the most important economic project to happen. The company will be relocating to the downtown as a tenant in the Putnam Project. He advised that for them to be a viable business, improvements in quality of life and social infrastructure are needed as it directly impacts their business operations.

Mariko Silver, President of Bennington College, believes the Putnam Block and the TIF district will provide for a transformative investment in downtown Bennington. She noted that roughly 30 percent of their graduates would like to stay in Bennington, but finding market-rate housing is a challenge. This challenge also applies in attracting faculty and staff.

Tom Dee, President and CEO of Southwestern Vermont Health Care, noted that their mission is to help create a healthy community. Tom advised that in order for SVHC to attract and recruit a talented workforce, Bennington needs to have a strong, vibrant, and walkable downtown with sustainable housing.

John Shannahan, Director of the Bennington Downtown Alliance, encouraged the VEPC Board to empower municipality to be the public part of the partnership to revitalize the downtown community by approving the TIF district application. John provided additional written statement to the VEPC Board.

Jonah Spivak noted that one of the biggest challenges for the downtown is the aging infrastructure and the TIF district is a necessary component to the changes that have been proposed to the downtown.

At 1:48 p.m., Chair Stephan Morse asked if anyone else from the public would like to add comments. Hearing none, he closed public comment. Stephan advised that written public comments may be submitted through November 8.

Stephan advised that the Board will review Bennington's TIF district application at their November 17, 2017 meeting and anticipates final action at their December 14, 2107 meeting. Both meetings will take place at the Board's regular meeting location in Montpelier.

Chair Stephan Morse inquired as any other business.

- ❖ At 1:48 p.m. Michael Keane made the motion that VEPC members express their wholehearted endorsement and support of Casey Mock's candidacy for the position of Executive Director of Vermont Economic Progress Council and to see that happen with a supporting letter from Chair Stephan Morse. Betsy Gentile seconded the motion. Chair Stephan Morse requested a roll call for the vote, all voted in favor and the motion passed. 9-0-0.
 - ◆ Aye: Chair Stephan Morse; Betsy Gentile; Michael Keane; Patricia Horn; Thad Richardson; Emma Marvin; Mark Nicholson, Jean O'Sullivan, and John Davis
 - ◆ Nay: None
 - ◆ Abstain: None

- ❖ At 1:50 p.m. Michael Keane moved to adjourn the meeting. Betsy Gentile seconded the motion. Chair Stephan Morse requested a roll call for the vote, all voted in favor and the motion passed. 9-0-0.
 - ◆ Aye: Chair Stephan Morse; Betsy Gentile; Michael Keane; Patricia Horn; Thad Richardson; Emma Marvin; Mark Nicholson, Jean O'Sullivan, and John Davis
 - ◆ Nay: None
 - ◆ Abstain: None

Minutes taken by Abbie Sherman: October 18, 2017
Revised by Fred Kenney: October 19, 2017
Approved by the Council: October 26, 2017