

**TOWN OF BENNINGTON, NEW HAMPSHIRE
MINUTES OF THE FEBRUARY 9, 2022 TOWN MEETING
DELIBERATIVE SESSION-SESSION 1
AND
MARCH 8, 2022 TOWN ELECTION RESULTS-SESSION 2**

Session 1 of the 2022 Bennington Town Meeting convened on February 9, 2020 at the Pierce School Multi-Purpose Room in Bennington New Hampshire. John J. Cronin III, the Town Moderator called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.

The meeting was opened with the reciting of the Pledge of Allegiance and there was a moment of silence for Joseph Cuddemi and John Paradise. The Moderator, as mandated under Senate Bill 2, which the Town of Bennington adopted on March 12, 1996, briefly explained the procedures and rules of conduct for the Deliberative Session. Each warrant article will be read and discussed and any amendments proposed from the floor must be submitted in writing to the Moderator. It was noted that the articles will be heard out of order as there was a representative from Grapevine in the audience.

All voting on the Warrant Articles, Town and School District Officials, and the Conval School District Warrant Articles will be voted on at the polls on March 8, 2022 at Pierce School in Bennington, New Hampshire. The polls will be open from 8:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m.

To the inhabitants of the Town of Bennington in the County of Hillsborough in the State of New Hampshire qualified to vote in town affairs are hereby notified and warned that the two phases of the Annual Town Meeting will be held as follows:

First Session of Annual Meeting (Deliberative Session):

Date: February 9, 2022

Time: 7:00 p.m.

Location: Pierce Elementary School Multi-Purpose Room

Details: 19 Main Street

Second Session of Annual Meeting (Official Ballot Voting)

Date: March 9, 2021

Time: 8:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m.

Location: Pierce Elementary School

Details: 19 Main Street

Note: The casting of absentee ballots will begin at 2:00 p.m. The polls will close at 7:00 p.m.

1. To choose all necessary Town Officers for the year ensuing.

Selectman (3 years)	Thomas James
Town Clerk (3 years)	Debra Belcher
Library Trustee (3 years)	Jill Wilmoth
Cemetery Trustee (3 years)	Karen Belcher
Planning Board (3 years)	Todd Wheeler
Planning Board (3 years)	Luke Hardwick
Trustee of Trust Funds (3 years)	David Parker
Water and Sewer Commissioner (3 years)	Melissa Clark
Zoning Board of Adjustment (3 years)	Melissa Clark
Zoning Board of Adjustment (3 years)	Jeffrey Rose
Zoning Board (2years)	Christopher Maple
Moderator (2 years)	John Cronin III
Supervisor of Checklist (6 years)	Brenda Gibbons

When the polls opened at 8:00 a.m., the Voter Checklist contained 889 registered voters. During Election Day, 11 new voters were added to the checklist. When the polls closed at 7:00 p.m., the Voters Checklist contained 900 voters. A total of 251 voters cast their ballots in this election, which was an 27% voter turnout.

The Deliberative Town Meeting, Session 1 was attended by 20 registered voters.

The Moderator initiated the following articles:

2. Shall the Town of Bennington raise and appropriate as an operating budget, not including appropriations by special warrant articles and other appropriations voted separately, the amounts set forth on the budget posted with the warrant or as amended by vote of the first session, for the purposes set forth therein, totaling one million, seven hundred seventy-one thousand, eight hundred fifty-three dollars (\$1,771,853.00). Should this article be defeated, the default budget shall be one million, seven hundred ninety thousand, four hundred eighty-eight dollars (\$1,790,488), which is the same as last year, with certain adjustments required by previous action of the Town or by law; or the governing body may hold one special meeting, in accordance with RSA 40:13, X and XVI, to take up the issue of a revised operating budget only.

Note: Selectmen Cleary spoke to the article noting that the proposed operating budget is a decrease from last year. Ronald Clough asked about the French scholarship. At this time there is \$1,000 in principal, but that cannot be spent. Bethany Craig, Trustee of Trust Funds, noted that a scholarship had been given last year, however, adequate funds were not available in the trust; the balance was taken from the general fund to be dispersed. The account can either be closed or added to. Ronald Clough asked about Fire

Department spending and if the town goes through the State for bids. Fire Chief Foster explained that the tanker needs 6 tires as guidelines require every truck should have tires replaced every 5 years and the tankers tires are the originals. He has received an outside quote for \$7,300. Ronald Clough recommended that the Town seek a municipal discount through the State. No amendments were introduced and the article was accepted as written/

2022 RESULTS: YES- 181 NO- 47

THE ARTICLE PASSED

3. Shall the Town raise and appropriate the sum of thirty thousand dollars (\$30,000) to be added to the Fire Truck Capital Reserve Fund previously established?

Note: Selectmen Foster spoke to the article noting that the warrant article is in order to keep building funds for a projected 2025 replacement. No amendments were introduced and the article was accepted as written.

2022 RESULTS: YES-185 NO- 58

THE ARTICLE PASSED

4. Shall the Town raise and appropriate the sum of two thousand five hundred dollars (\$2,500) to be added to the Rescue Vehicle Capital Reserve Fund previously established?

Note: Selectman Hardwick spoke to the article noting that the warrant article is in order to build funds for the future replacement of the rescue vehicle. No amendments were introduced and the article was accepted as written.

2022 RESULTS: YES-189 NO- 53

THE ARTICLE PASSED

Moderator Cronin asked the public to hear the warrant articles out of order as there was a representative from the Grapevine in the audience.

21. Shall the Town raise and appropriate the sum of six thousand dollars (\$6,000) in support of The Grapevine Family & Community Resource Center - a nonprofit organization? The appropriation would provide \$4,000 funding for The Grapevine Family & Resource Center and \$2,000 funding for The Teen Center's programs and services.

Note: Selectmen Hardwick asked Melissa Gallagher from the Grapevine to speak to the article. Melissa Gallagher, Director of The Grapevine spoke to the article noting the many services provided by The Grapevine. In the past year 213 individuals from Bennington residents have taken advantage of services offered by the Grapevine. The Grapevine received a grant this past year in emergency funds that allowed them to provide money for groceries, emergency bills, winter boots for students at Pierce School. Tom (Henry) Badgley noted that they are a good community resource to help the local teens stay away from drugs. No amendments were introduced and the article was accepted as written.

2022 RESULTS: YES-173 NO- 69

THE ARTICLE PASSED

5. Shall the Town raise and appropriate the sum of fifteen thousand dollars (\$15,000) to be added to the Police Cruiser Capital Reserve Fund previously established?

Note: Selectmen Cleary noted that at this time there is \$33,400 in the fund. The additional money from this warrant article this year would provide enough for a new cruiser to be purchased this spring. No amendments were introduced and the article was accepted as written.

2022 RESULTS: YES-158 NO- 84

THE ARTICLE PASSED

6. Shall the Town raise and appropriate the sum of forty thousand dollars (\$40,000) to be added to the Highway Heavy Equipment Capital Reserve Fund previously established?

Note: Selectmen Foster spoke to the article noting that the warrant article is in order to keep building funds. Joseph MacGregor asked what equipment is the department looking to replace. Matthew Blanchard, Road Agent, replied that the backhoe is first on the list to be replaced. No amendments were introduced and the article was accepted as written.

2022 RESULTS: YES-174 NO- 72

THE ARTICLE PASSED

7. Shall the Town raise and appropriate the sum of one thousand dollars (\$1,000) to be added to the Mower Capital Reserve Fund previously established?

Note: Selectman Foster spoke to the article noting that there is \$10,000 in the fund and the mower is projected to be replaced this year. No amendments were introduced and the article was accepted as written.

2022 RESULTS: YES-165 NO- 78

THE ARTICLE PASSED

8. Shall the Town raise and appropriate the sum of twenty-five thousand dollars (\$25,000) to be added to the Town Buildings Expendable Trust Fund previously established?

Note: Selectman Cleary spoke to the article noting that there is \$163,000 available in the fund. This fund was used this past year to remove the bat guano, and to make repairs and paint the ceiling upstairs at the Town Hall. The VFW has been primed and the plan is to paint it this year. The money left from David Glynn is approximately \$270,000 and was left to the town with the wishes for the installation of an elevator and sprinkler system in the town hall. No amendments were introduced and the article was accepted as written.

2022 RESULTS: YES-155 NO- 86

THE ARTICLE PASSED

9. Shall the Town raise and appropriate the sum of five thousand dollars (\$5,000) to be added to the Dodge Memorial Library Capital Reserve Fund previously established?

Note: Selectmen Foster spoke to the article noting that it is an annual article. Leslie MacGregor, librarian, noted that with the funds in this article in the past it has allowed the library to replace rugs and flooring, add a bathroom and sink, etc. This past year the library was able to replace 19 windows. There is 1 more window that will need replacing. No amendments were introduced and the article was accepted as written.

2022 RESULTS: YES-161 NO- 83

THE ARTICLE PASSED

10. Shall the Town raise and appropriate the sum of fifteen thousand dollars (\$15,000) to be added to the Road Rehabilitation Capital Reserve Fund previously established?

Note: Selectmen Hardwick spoke to the article noting that there is \$93,000 in the fund. The plan is to use the fund in 2022 for North Bennington Rd by Pine Meadow. No amendments were introduced and the article was accepted as written.

2022 RESULTS: YES-179 NO- 66

THE ARTICLE PASSED

11. Shall the Town vote to raise and appropriate the sum of twenty-five thousand dollars (\$25,000) to be added to the Water Department Maintenance & Repairs Capital Reserve Fund previously established?

Note: Selectmen Cleary spoke to the article noting that there is approximately \$91,000 available in the fund. Some areas of the water line are over 100 years old and will need to be addressed. No amendments were introduced and the article was accepted as written.

2022 RESULTS: YES-158 NO- 73

THE ARTICLE PASSED

12. Shall the Town vote to raise and appropriate the sum of one thousand dollars (\$1,000) to be added to the Sidewalk Capital Reserve Fund previously established?

Note: Selectmen Foster spoke to the article noting that there is \$3,000 available in the fund. Leslie MacGregor asked if the fund could address the sidewalk near the library that needs repairs. The funds can be used to address repairs to sidewalks or to install new sidewalks, for example along Antrim Rd. No amendments were introduced and the article was accepted as written.

2022 RESULTS: YES-149 NO- 92

THE ARTICLE PASSED

13. Shall the Town raise and appropriate the sum of ten thousand dollars (\$10,000) to be added to the Bridge Maintenance Expendable Trust Fund?

Note: Selectmen Hardwick spoke to the article noting that this is an annual article. There is currently \$87,000 available in the fund. The bridge that is owned by the town on South Bennington Rd is estimated to cost \$200,000. No amendments were introduced and the article was accepted as written.

2022 RESULTS: YES-181 NO- 61

THE ARTICLE PASSED

14. Shall the Town raise and appropriate the sum of two thousand dollars (\$2,000) to be added to the Fire Department Breathing Apparatus Capital Reserve Fund previously established?

Note: Selectmen Cleary spoke to the article noting that the Fire department plans to replace bottles this year. There is currently \$7,300 available in the fund. No amendments were introduced and the article was accepted as written.

2022 RESULTS: YES-190 NO- 55

THE ARTICLE PASSED

15. Shall the Town raise and appropriate the sum of six thousand dollars (\$6,000) to be added to the Fire Department Protective Gear Capital Reserve Fund previously established?

Note: Selectmen Foster spoke to the article noting the fund is used to purchase gear for the fire fighters and EMS personnel. There is currently \$22,000 available in the fund. No amendments were introduced and the article was accepted as written.

2022 RESULTS: YES-188 NO- 56

THE ARTICLE PASSED

16. Shall the Town raise and appropriate the sum of twelve thousand dollars (\$12,000) to be added to the Revaluation Capital Reserve Fund previously established?

Note: Selectmen Hardwick spoke to the article noting that the next revaluation will be in 2024. If the Town does not have funds for revaluation, the state does it and it will cost the town more. No amendments were introduced and the article was accepted as written.

2022 RESULTS: YES- 131 NO- 105

THE ARTICLE PASSED

17. Shall the Town raise and appropriate the sum of forty-five thousand dollars (\$45,000) to provide additional Highway Department funds to address deferred road maintenance?

Note: Selectmen Cleary spoke to the article noting that this fund is to supplement the operating budget to address deferred road maintenance. North Bennington Rd will be addressed in 2022. No amendments were introduced and the article was accepted as written.

2022 RESULTS: YES- 166 NO- 75

THE ARTICLE PASSED

18. Shall the Town raise and appropriate the amount of two hundred dollars (\$200) from unassigned fund balance to be deposited in the Conservation Commission Fund, said amount representing 50% of the income derived from Timber Tax revenue in the preceding year?

Note: Moderator Cronin spoke to the article noting that articles 18 and 19 would be heard together, as 18, 19, and 28 all address timber and gravel tax, but with different percentages of the funds to be appropriated. Joseph MacGregor submitted a written motion "To see if the Town shall set-up a committee to consider how the timber and gravel tax has been utilized over the past five years." The motion passed and articles 18 and 19 will appear as amended.

2022 RESULTS: YES- 145 NO- 78

THE ARTICLE PASSED

19. Shall the Town raise and appropriate the amount of two hundred dollars (\$200) from unassigned fund balance to be deposited in the Conservation Commission Fund, said

amount representing 50% of the income derived from Excavation Tax revenue in the preceding year?

Note: This article was heard in conjunction with article 18. The article will appear as amended.

2022 RESULTS: YES- 130 NO- 77

20. Shall the Town raise and appropriate the sum of one thousand dollars (\$1,000) in support of "End 68 Hours of Hunger" - a nonprofit regional organization?

Note: Selectmen Cleary spoke to the article noting that this is an amazing nonprofit organization that provides food assistance for ConVal area students. The organization is currently helping around 200 kids. No amendments were introduced and the article was accepted as written.

2022 RESULTS: YES- 170 NO- 72

THE ARTICLE PASSED

22. Shall the Town raise and appropriate the sum of five hundred dollars (\$500) in support of the Community Volunteer Transportation Company - a nonprofit organization?

Note: Selectman Cleary spoke to this article noting that this is a nonprofit organization that the Town has been providing support to for a number of years. The organization provides transportation for grocery shopping, doctor appointments, etc. No amendments were introduced and the article was accepted as written.

2022 RESULTS: YES- 170 NO- 73

THE ARTICLE PASSED

23. Shall the Town raise and appropriate the sum of one thousand dollars (\$1,000) in support of the Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASA) - a nonprofit organization?

Note: Selectman Cleary introduced this article. Moderator Cronin and Debra Belcher noted that they cannot speak highly enough of this organization; they represent vulnerable and emotionally fragile children. No amendments were introduced and the article was accepted as written.

2022 RESULTS: YES- 163 NO- 73

THE ARTICLE PASSED

24. Shall the Town raise and appropriate the sum of eleven hundred dollars (\$1,100) in support of the Child Advocacy Center of Hillsborough County (CAC) - a nonprofit organization?

Note: Selectman Hardwick introduced the article. Moderator Cronin spoke to this article noting that this is another amazing organization that helps bring children hope. Police Officer Lepine also spoke to this article noting that the Police Department utilizes their services often. No amendments were introduced and the article was accepted as written.

2022 RESULTS: YES- 173 NO- 67

THE ARTICLE PASSED

25. Shall the Town raise and appropriate the sum of three hundred dollars (\$300) in support of the Contoocook Housing Trust - a nonprofit organization?

Note: Selectmen Cleary introduced the article. Jonathan Manley noted that the organization maintains 2 low to moderate income houses in town. He thanked the town for their support. No amendments were introduced and the article was accepted as written.

2022 RESULTS: YES- 161 NO- 78

THE ARTICLE PASSED

26. Shall the Town raise and appropriate the sum of seven hundred dollars (\$700) in support of the American Red Cross - a nonprofit organization?

Note: Selectmen Foster introduced this article. There was no discussion. No amendments were introduced and the article was accepted as written.

2022 RESULTS: YES- 161 NO- 80

THE ARTICLE PASSED

27. To see if the town will vote to raise and appropriate the sum of five hundred dollars (\$500) in support of Hundred Nights Shelter - a nonprofit organization?

Note: Selectmen Hardwick spoke to the article noting that the organization is located in Keene, NH. The organization helped one Bennington family this past year with shelter, meals, and helping find employment. No amendments were introduced was accepted as written.

2022 RESULTS: YES- 153 NO- 65

THE ARTICLE PASSED

Moderator Cronin noted that in past years 90% of voters have approved many of the nonprofit organization warrant articles and made the formal recommendation to the Board of Selectmen and Town Administrator it may be prudent to place these in the general budget. Jeffrey Rose inquired if the money that would be budgeted for would remain the same as what has been asked for in the warrant articles or if it could increase or decrease at the discretion of the Board of Selectmen.

28. To see if the town will vote to authorize 75% of the Timber and Gravel Taxes collected pursuant to RSA 79-A:25 to be deposited into the existing Conservation Fund in accordance with RSA 36-A:5, III, as authorized by RSA 79-A:25, II. If adopted, this article shall take effect April 1st, 2022 and shall remain in effect until altered or rescinded by a future vote of the town meeting. (Majority vote required)

Note: Joseph MacGregor and Jonathan Manley, Conservation Commissioners, spoke to the article noting that the Conservation Commission had approached the Board of Selectmen several years ago regarding allocating the timber and gravel taxes to the Conservation Committee with gradual increases to 100% of the taxes allocated. The unanticipated revenue could be used to purchase and protect property. The wording submitted by the Conservation Commissioners as a warrant article was suggested by the DRA and if approved the article would not be required to go to be voted on yearly. A majority vote is required for this article. Zachary Andersen asked how much money the article was authorizing to be collected. Selectmen Cleary noted that as the revenue is unanticipated it changed each year due to the amount collected in timber and gravel taxes. Karen Belcher noted that the amounts in articles 18 and 19 reflect the percentage difference and the amount is minimal. Keith Nason asked if the committee should look at the percentage being requested. It was explained that the article could be amended if a motion was made. The Selectmen encouraged the Conservation Commission to talk to the Selectmen. Ronald Clough asked what would happen if article 28 is defeated, especially given that articles 18

and 19 were amended. If article 28 is defeated, no money would be allocated. No amendments were introduced and the article was accepted as written.

2022 RESULTS: YES- 136 NO- 84

THE ARTICLE PASSED

29. To see if the town will vote to authorize 75% of the Land Use Change Tax collected pursuant to RSA 79-A:25 to be deposited into the existing Conservation Fund in accordance with RSA 36-A:5, III, as authorized by RSA 79-A:25, II. If adopted, this article shall take effect April 1st, 2022 and shall remain in effect until altered or rescinded by a future vote of the town meeting. (Majority vote required)

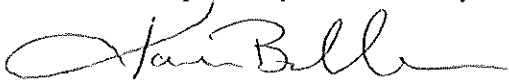
Note: Selectmen Cleary introduced the article. Joseph MacGregor and Jonathan Manley, Conservation Commissioners, noted that a majority vote is required for this article and would not need to be voted on yearly. It was also noted that many Conservation Committees receive 100% of the funds. No amendments were introduced and the article was accepted as written.

2022 RESULTS: YES- 128 NO- 87

THE ARTICLE PASSED

As there was no other business at hand, Selectmen Cleary made a motion to adjourn the meeting and all were in favor. The meeting was adjourned at 8:10 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted by



Karen Belcher
Bennington Deputy Town Clerk