

Building and Grounds Committee

Date and type of meeting 28 JAN 2022 Zoom Zoom

Members Melissa Jackson, Pete Niles, Asa Morin, and Jon Endres

Meeting start (convening) time: 1415

Strategic Goal(s) addressed: Capitalize on the Bennington Asset

Contents and summary of discussions: This special meeting focused on the OCT 2021 lock down of Mount Anthony High School and subsequent securing VVH due to a rumored active shooter in the area. Some items discussed will not be put in this report, but will be discussed in executive session with the Board to ensure that any vulnerability is not put out to the public:

1. The incident at the High School gave an excellent chance for VVH and the High School to create a lock down of both facilities:
 - a. In future incident, the High School would recommend closing Park St due to the number of families congesting that street and impacting response vehicles.
 - b. There is no indication that student families were using VVH roads to try to gain access to the High School.
 - c. In today's social media posture, it is next to impossible for VVH administrators to stay in front of a developing situation. As in this case, multiple scenarios were being put out on social media platforms ranging from "crazed people with AK-47's" to "there is something going on at the High School". Rumor control is so critical in crisis situations. Facebook/Instagram/twitter will beat an external affairs press release every time.
 - d. There is a real concern for drug transactions and use in the parking lot by Deer Park. Multiple scenarios could play out anytime illicit activity is involved. This is not just a nighttime event and used syringes have been found in the parking lots.

Way Ahead:

1. Meet with emergency responders to “tabletop” a response to VVH to ensure that everyone is aware of their roles using an Incident Command System structure. In a unified command structure, VVH has a critical role in this system.
2. As COVID eases, discuss conducting various drills at VVH with first responders. Caution being the most critical thing as any drill may spark PTSD reactions amongst residents.
3. Look into the possibility of getting VVH administrators ICS-410 (crisis communications) certification.
4. Continue with the door replacement project; while it looks like May 2022 to get materials and a 1-year completion. All depending on parts availability. It is just going to take time.

Findings and Recommendations: Capitalizing on VVH as a Bennington asset has some growing consequences. The lands within VVH and the High School encompass perhaps the largest flat lands in town where people use as transit zones at times. Good people walking the grounds and being seen by residents is so critical to their happiness as it brings them joy. Closing the grounds from dusk to dawn only keeps the honest people out.

A more thorough explanation will be provided to the board in executive session.

The one thing that impressed me was how dedicated the staff is to resident safety and their willingness to respond at all hours in an emergency. We are so very fortunate to have them.

Attachments none

Meeting end time (adjournment): 1500

Peter Niles 29 JAN 2022

Committee Chair