

**Bennington Free Library
Board of Directors
Special Meeting Minutes March 4, 2026**

Members Present: Bruce Smith (Chair), Kelley Legacy, Wendy Sharkey (Director).

Members Present via Zoom: Brian Cunningham, Jon Goodrich, P.J. Venti, Rebecca Sentner, Mike Munson, Deirdre Ryan, Sarah Blizzard, David Newell, Beth Tegart, Jim Sullivan (Select Board Liaison)

Visitors via Zoom: Gary Corey (Centerline Architects), Jason Parkhurst (Engineer DuBois & King)

Welcome & Call to Order: Meeting started at 16:01 - Bruce Smith

Public Comments/Presentations:

- Gary Cory spoke at length on the status update document. Reproduced here.

PROJECT #:	PROJECT NAME:	MEETING#:	DATE:	LOCATION:
24839	Bennington Free Library – HVAC improvements	Project review	03-04-26	Virtual
	Special Board Meeting			

Project Goals:

- Provide fresh air to the public spaces of the library.
- Stay within the budget available based on the grant amount.
- Complete the project in the time frame to meet the grant requirements.
- Secondary goals: measures to make the building more energy efficient, update or replace existing equipment that is near the end of life.

Project bidding history:

- November: Project out to bid (Nov. 18th) with bids due December 16th.
- January:
 - Bid date extended by request of Russell (extended to Jan. 7th).
 - One bid received – Russell, over budget
 - Centerline Created additional deduct scope items (January 20th)
- February:
 - Final receipt of alternate pricing from Russell (February 12th)
 - Budget gap still roughly \$360,000 – project duration extended to 10 months
 - Russell not willing to suggest other alternates for cost reductions to meet

- the budget. Not willing to use BC&H to reduce costs.
- Began preliminary discussions with Bennington Cooling and Heating about leading the HVAC scope with them overseeing electrical and carpentry.
 - Spoke with Hayden P&H (informally) about value engineering and identified engineer approved ways to reduce the cost. Brad sounded optimistic and willing to go back to his equipment supplier and find an alternate package for the 1936 system that could save us significant money.
 - Got chastised from Russell for speaking to their consultant without them.
 - March:
 - Discussed with John Russell (March 2nd) the project and his willingness to negotiate. He said he would still take on the project but:
 - Expressed he was taken aback in the committee meeting of someone suggesting he absorb \$600,000 to make the project work.
 - Said it was a 10-12 month construction job, (after signing of the contract).
 - Must have fully revised drawings before signing a contract.
 - Said getting revised numbers from Hayden is not something that can be just dumped into the bid numbers and will take vetting of impact to electrical, finishes, demolition etc. It will take some time.
 - Conversation with BC&H – they are eager to help in the best way possible.
 - We have to be cognizant of their abilities to work as a General Contractor and I feel we have to simplify finish disruptions to make it easier for them to be successful.
 - Conversation with Naylor and Breen:
 - They would be willing to submit a bid if we were to put it out for rebid. (We don't have time for that).
 - I suggested them acting as a CM and they were interested and thought they could hit the ground running and have numbers in 2 weeks.
 - They prefer Hayden as an HVAC contractor but would work with BC&H. (with either they would have to vet the scope of work to make sure pricing is apples to apples).
 - They have plans and specs for the project.

Possible solutions to resolve budget gap:

1. Look to get additional funds to complete the project: Not feasible.
2. Attempt to re-bid the project: Unlikely to meet grant deadlines.

3. Negotiate with Russell for a reduced scope of work to meet budget: Not productive.
4. Attempt to redefine the scope such that we can use BC&H as our main contractor.
5. Attempt to get a Construction Manager involved for repricing the project.

Current status - pursuing several options in parallel:

- Discussions with Russell for alternate pricing on revised scope to find out if they can complete the project on budget and on time. Does not appear they are able to meet the budget or the timeline.
- Discussions with BC&H to assemble a team to complete an adjusted scope of work.
- Providing information to an independent CM to review the project budget and schedule. (Naylor & Breen).

Recommendations:

- Terminate negotiations with Russell based on updated construction schedule/duration and budget.
- Meet with Naylor and Breen to review the plans and provide them with assistance to estimate the construction costs and project scope.
 - Structure a contract with them for Construction Management services.
 - Cut them loose to begin forming a team and pricing the project.

Gary and Jason were asked some points of clarification.

Mike Munson proposed that the Board enter executive session for financial reasons, Dave Newell seconded the motion. All were in favor.

It was stated that the meeting would be adjourned from within executive session.

The Board entered executive session at 16:43

Board Meeting Schedule (third Tuesdays at 5:00 p.m.)

March 17, 2026 - Board
April 21, 2026 - Working Group
May 19, 2026 - Board
June 16, 2026 - Board

Respectfully submitted, Wendy Sharkey