

# Benson Bulletin

Benson, Vermont's Community Newsletter

February 2010

## WILL YOU BE ABLE TO HOOK THE BIG ONE?

As this issue of the Benson Bulletin "went to press", weather had not yet determined the fate of this year's "Lake Champlain Down Home Derby". Be sure to check with your bait store or local businesses for information before venturing onto the lake or call: 537-2468.

## TOWN MEETING 2010

The informational meetings for both the Town Budget and the Benson School Budget will be held on Monday, March 1<sup>st</sup> starting at 7:00 p.m. in the Community Hall.

On Tuesday, March 2<sup>nd</sup> the polls will open at 10 a.m. and close at 7 p.m. If you plan to vote, be sure you are registered (deadline for registering is February 24<sup>th</sup>). Town Meeting starts at 10 am. The annual Benson Town School District meeting will follow Town Meeting.

There's a lot more information, including who's running for Town Officers as well as previews of both the Town and School budgets, inside this issue.

## MEETINGS/EVENTS THIS MONTH

<u>DATE</u>	<u>DAY</u>	<u>TIME</u>	<u>PLACE</u>	<u>ORGANIZATION/EVENT</u>
January 30-31	Sat.-Sun.		Benson Landing	Down Home Derby
February 7	Sunday	2:00 pm	Benson School	Bingo
February 8	Monday	11:30 pm	Community Hall	Senior Luncheon
February 8	Monday	7:00 pm	Town Office	Selectboard
February 9	Tuesday	6:30-8 pm	Community Hall	Benson Busy Buddies
February 9	Tuesday	7:00 pm	Benson School	School Board
February 11	Thursday	6:00 pm	Community Hall	VerdMont FCE
February 11	Thursday	6:30 pm	Town Office	Energy Committee
February 11	Thursday	6:30 pm	Benson School	Playground Committee
February 20	Saturday	1 – 3 pm	Community Hall	Chowder Cook-Off
February 22	Monday	7:00 pm	Town Office	Zoning Final Public Hearing
February 22	Monday	7:00 pm	Town Office	Selectboard
February 23	Tuesday	6:30-8 pm	Community Hall	Benson Busy Buddies
February 28	Sunday	2:00 pm	Benson School	Bingo
		<b>LOOKING</b>	<b>AHEAD</b>	
March 1	Monday	7:00 pm	Community Hall	Informational Meetings
March 2	Tuesday	10:00 am	Community Hall	TOWN MEETING
March 15	Monday		Town Office	Property Taxes Due

**Monthly Senior Luncheon**  
**at the Benson Community Hall on February 8<sup>th</sup>**

We can't promise you that you'll meet your Valentine at the Senior Luncheon – e-Harmony we are not – but we can guarantee that you'll be able to enjoy good food and good company! Proposed menu: Tossed Salad, Spaghetti & Meatballs, Spinach, Garlic Bread, Valentine's Day Cookies, Milk, Coffee, Tea.

**For reservations, please call Deanna Britton by Friday, February 5<sup>th</sup> : 537-2971.**

**FOOD ASSISTANCE FOR VERMONT SENIORS**  
**in TIGHT TIMES**

In this challenging economy, nutritious food and extra food money is available for Seniors and retired folks who qualify. The Commodity Supplemental Food Program and Three Squares Vermont are two important food benefits for people over the age of 60. The Commodity program provides a 30 lb box of healthy food, distributed each month at several locations in Rutland and Bennington counties. To qualify for Commodities, the monthly income limit for people age 60+ is \$1,174 for an individual and \$1,579/couple. There is no limit on savings.

Three Squares helps people of all ages to eat better. For a person age 65+, the monthly Three Squares benefit is directly deposited into the bank account of the recipient. Those under 65 are issued debit cards, for purchasing groceries, which are refilled automatically each month. Purchases are subtracted each time the card is used. It is easier for older adults to qualify for Three Squares because the allowable monthly income limit is higher than for younger folks. If a household monthly income is below \$1,604 for an individual and \$2,159 for a couple, there is no limit on the amount one can have in savings. People with higher incomes can still possibly qualify, but a savings limit of \$3,000, excluding retirement accounts, is applied. In determining if a Senior is eligible for the Three Squares Vermont benefit, the following living expenses are taken into consideration: medical bills and copays; insurance, rent, mortgage, property taxes, home owner's insurance and utilities.

To learn more about these programs and how to apply, call the Senior HelpLine 1-800-642-5119 or 786-5991, a community service of the Southwestern Vermont Council on Aging serving Rutland and Bennington counties since 1974.

Web site [www.svcoa@svcoa.org](http://www.svcoa@svcoa.org) or e-mail [seniorhelpline@svcoa.org](mailto:seniorhelpline@svcoa.org)

If you want more information – minutes of meetings, schedules, opportunities in Town - please remember to visit our Town's website: <http://www.benson-vt.com>



## BENSON PUBLIC LIBRARY



**Open Wednesdays, 3 pm – 7 pm and Saturdays 11 am – 2 pm**

Do you need some FREE, LOCAL ideas for entertaining your children during their winter break? Why not come in and choose some books and movies for them before the break – and then bring them in during their vacation to pick out some more? We have great selections that are guaranteed to appeal to every age and interest group. Come check us out!

### CHURCH NEWS

Our Bible Study group is starting up again on Wednesday, February 10<sup>th</sup> at 10 a.m. We will be studying Revelations and if you would like a study book, please contact Holly so that she can order one for you.

During Lent we will be once again collecting money for One Great Hour of Sharing. This organization provides immediate monetary help when disasters occur. Our contributions from last year have already gone to help the victims in Haiti.

We are now worshipping downstairs for the winter. Everyone is welcome to join us.

9:30 a.m. Choir Practice

9:30 a.m. Sunday School

10:00 a.m. Worship

**Questions? Please contact Holly Noble: 802-446-3575 or**

**[hollyberry530@yahoo.com](mailto:hollyberry530@yahoo.com)**

### BENSON VLLAGE SCHOOL NEWS

It's a short month but there's a lot going on at Benson Village School. On February 3<sup>rd</sup>, Grades 3 and 4 will be going to Castleton for a program called "Introduction to Opera". On February 23<sup>rd</sup> our 7<sup>th</sup> grade students will go to Castleton for a Career Day program. Also on February 23<sup>rd</sup>, VSO will be coming to our school at 1:30 p.m. to present a program called "A Cappella". The public is welcome to attend this event.

We also hope that our loyal Bingo following has noticed that we have changed the day and time for our games to Sunday afternoons. At 2 p.m. on Sunday, February 7<sup>th</sup> and 2 p.m. Sunday, February 28<sup>th</sup> our 8<sup>th</sup> grade fundraising Bingo games will be held.

Need more information – or are you interested in our sports schedule? Be sure to visit our web site: <http://benson.arsu.org>.

### HELP WANTED: BENSON VILLAGE SCHOOL SCHOOL BUS MONITOR SUBSTITUTE

We are looking for someone to assist the bus driver in monitoring student behavior on the bus in the mornings (6:30 – 7:30 a.m.) and afternoons (2:30 – 3:30 p.m.) each day.

Please call Kim Doty at BVS for more details: 537-2491.

## YOUR CHOICES FOR TOWN OFFICERS

On Tuesday, March 2, 2010 from 10 a.m. to 7 p.m. you can vote for the following:

Agent to Prosecute: one 1 year term – *no one submitted a petition*

Auditors: two 3 year terms – *no one submitted a petition*

Benson Village School Board: one 3 year term

Mike Ellis

Benson Village School Board: two 1 year terms (vote for 2 people)

Bobbi Jo Bean, Eric Hults

Benson Village School Moderator: one 1 year term

John Hill

Cemetery Commissioner: one 5 year term

Don Parker

Delinquent Tax Collector: one 1 year term

Daryl Burlett

First Constable: one 1 year term

Dean Hanson

Grand Juror: one 1 year term

Daniel Britton

Library Commissioner: one 5 year term

Jean Butman

Lister: one 3 year term

Les Burlson

Selectboard: one 3 year term

Guy Charlton

Selectboard: two 1 year terms (vote for 2 people)

Gina Cull, Sue Janssen

Town Clerk: one 3 year term

Daphne Bartholomew, Bobbi Jo Bean, Daniel Britton, Barbara Burlett, Jon Dodd,

Diane Drake, Tammy Simmes

Town Moderator: one 1 year term

John Hill

Town Treasurer: one 3 year term

Daphne Bartholomew, Bobbi Jo Bean, Daniel Britton, Barbara Burlett, Jon Dodd,

Diane Drake, Tammy Simmes

Trustee of Public Funds: one 3 year term

Wesley Bowen

## ARE YOU REGISTERED YET?

If you plan to vote on Town Meeting Day - from the floor or by Australian ballot - you need to be a registered voter. The deadline for becoming a registered voter in the Town of Benson is February 24, 2010 and the Town Office will be open until 5 p.m. that day. Questions? Call Jan Ladd at 537-2611 Mon. – Thurs., 8 a.m.–noon or 1 p.m.–4:30 p.m.

## HOME ENERGY-SAVING PROGRAM COMES TO BENSON

Are you interested in saving energy in your home? Benson residents may be eligible for a free home energy visit. A trained volunteer from our community will come to your home, install free compact fluorescent light bulbs and water-saving devices, review your home heating usage and provide information and special incentives to save more energy.

The Benson Energy Committee is partnering with Efficiency Vermont to bring a new energy-saving program to local households. The Vermont Community Energy Mobilization Project (VCEM) is a volunteer program designed to help residents save money and energy in their homes.

The number of home energy visits is limited and on a first-come, first-served basis. Interested? Please call Karen Barber at 537-3155. All home energy visits will be completed by the end of April.

## CENSUS

Soon after Town Meeting, the 2010 Census will begin. The Constitution of the United States requires a Census every 10 years. You will receive a questionnaire and it is **extremely** important that you complete and return this questionnaire. If you do not return the questionnaire by mail, the Census Bureau has to send a representative to collect the information and that costs taxpayers a lot more money. The information you provide is confidential: by law, the Census Bureau cannot share information gathered from individuals with any other government agency or person. The data that you provide is used to allocate \$400 billion annually to states and localities for programs such as social services, health care, education and infrastructure. If our community's population figures are off, we may not receive all the federal dollars to which we are entitled.

## ARE YOU WORRIED...

...that you may lose your balance, darting and dashing to avoid Cupid's arrows? Why not improve your chances of remaining upright? Come and visit us at Bone Builders and see what we're all about. Free frolic and fitness, right here in downtown Benson every Monday and Thursday morning, from 9 – 10 am at the Community Hall.

## TOWN OF BENSON OPEN POSITION PLANNING COMMISSION

There is an opening on the Town of Benson's Planning Commission for a term which will expire in 2011. If you are willing to fill this position, please submit a letter of interest to the Selectboard by February 8, 2010.

## CHOWDER COOK-OFF

Benson's next fundraiser is scheduled for Saturday, February 20<sup>th</sup>. All money raised at the Chowder Cook-Off will go toward Family Day and the Fundraising Committee is also looking into raising money to build a pavilion over the cement slab between the Community Hall and the Town Office. But back to the Chowder Cook-Off.

### What do we need?

We still need more judges, so if you're a better consumer than cook, let us know. And a few more chefs so the judges don't have it too easy!

Vendors: we plan to set up vendor booths downstairs. Interested? Call Gina.

Advertisers: If you would like to purchase a 10x12 space to advertise your business – an advertisement that will be displayed at all fundraising events up to and including Family Day – for \$10, call Gina.

### What do you need?

Five dollars, a spirit of adventure and a HUGE appetite!

Contact Gina Cull for more information: 537-2063.

## PLAY GROUP IN BENSON

The Rutland County Parent Child Center hosts a playgroup downstairs in the Community Hall every Wednesday from 9:30 – 10:30 am. Any child, age 0 – 5, from any town, is welcome to participate. Please bring a snack.

Questions? Call Lori at 775-9711.

## BENSON BUSY BUDDIES 4-H CLUB

The Benson Busy Buddies 4-H Club has been getting ready to start our 4-H sewing projects. At our last two meetings, we learned how to measure for patterns. We also elected our officers: President – Sam Massey; Vice President – Kelsi Bean; Secretary – Sadie Brown; Treasurer – Raven Collett. All members of the club will take turns, on a rotating schedule, being the News Reporter.

At our last meeting in January, we worked on our Project Record books and we did a fun Valentine's Day craft.

The Benson Busy Buddies meets the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> Tuesday of every month at 6:30 p.m. at the Community Hall. If you have any questions, please call 537-2089.

## NEWSLETTER DEADLINES

For the **March 1st** newsletter, please submit your news and ads no later than **February 19th**. To submit your news, please either e-mail the information to

[bensonnews@shoreham.net](mailto:bensonnews@shoreham.net) or call Sue Janssen at 537-3111

Submit your ads to Shirley Vladyka: [ShirleyV@shoreham.net](mailto:ShirleyV@shoreham.net)

## THE MONEY HOLE STORY<sup>concluded</sup>

*In the January issue, we left off at the point at which Old Man Jones had forced Milo to tell him the true story of why he wanted to dig on Jones' land. Milo told Jones what the old man, whose life Milo had saved in Spain, told him:*

The old man had saved the map for many years, hoping to go out and hunt the treasure himself but now, old and crippled, he had given up all hope. Now in payment to Milo for saving his life, he gave the map to him with his blessing.

That is the story that old Jones heard and it must have been convincingly told, for Jones, crusty old tightwad that he was, insisted on Milo coming to board with him free – but he must dig every day. The work went on for some time till at last both agreed to give it up and the money hole, as it had been dubbed was soon forgotten.

One day years later, came a garrulous old Scot and after scouting around the country asked permission to dig at the same spot where Milo and Jones had dug before. Old Jones' grandson the owner of the land, told him to dig and be damned. There was, however, some excitement when one day the Scot dug up an old rusty cannon ball. Nothing else rewarded his efforts, he too soon went the way of the Spaniard, and the old money hole again became a memory.

Last Fall (*please remember that this story dates from 1934-35*) two boys trapping in the vicinity of what is still called the money hole and having heard the old story decided to look at the place. When they noticed coon tracks going into a den in the rocks quite near, they set a trap at the mouth of the hole.

The next morning as they neared the set they could hear the trap chain jingle and found that Mr. Coon was fast in the trap which he had pulled inside as far as the chain would admit. They decided one would pull up the stake and drag him out while the other clouted him over the head with a club. Mr. Coon had different ideas, however, for as soon as the stake was out, he gave a yank and disappeared, trap, chain and all down the hole. The boys, determined to have their prey at any cost, started to burrow through the soft sand at the bottom of the den. As they dug, the hole got larger and larger, until at last they found themselves in quite a cave so dark that they decided to go home and get a lantern.

In the excitement of the exploring they nearly forgot the coon. Farther and farther down they went until at last one of them tripped on something which proved to be an old rusty chain.

Stories of the money hole and pirate treasure filled their minds and again the hunt was on. One of the boys sat down on what appeared to be a large rock at the side of the cave and as he rested his hand down beside him, he suddenly leaped to his feet with a cry "It's a box! It's a box!" It was – a rotten old chest heavily bound and studded with iron. Its cover pried off easily, however, and the boys gazed into the long lost treasure.

What it consisted of only the boys and their immediate family know. The fear that it will be taken away from them still keeps the Pirate's secret; and as far as most people are concerned the mystery of the money hole will remain a mystery.

## **BENSON SCHOOL BUDGET PREVIEW**

Due to the small increase in the school budget the board would like to show where that increase has come from. The board worked very hard to minimize the increase by cutting anything that was not directly related to education. Much of the increase was not in our control with the exception of the expanded curriculum.

We realize not everyone can attend town meeting or the informational portion, hopefully having this information early will allow those with questions to attend the February 9<sup>th</sup> school board meeting.

Listed below are the main factors that contribute to the budget increase in expenditures and decrease in revenue.

### **Revenue Decreases**

- Significantly less carry forward funds
- Decrease in equalized pupils from 129.99 to 119.16 (largest decrease in district)
- Decrease in common level of appraisal from 97.49% to 92.31%
- Increase in homestead base tax rate from .86 to .882

### **Expenditure Increases**

- Negotiated teacher salary and benefits per contract
- Changes in health insurance plans
- Increased time for nursing position to teach health curriculum
- Increase time for Spanish curriculum to include 6<sup>th</sup> grade
- Increase in legal fee expenditure
- Increase for principal and interest payments for water project

Thank you in advance, your support is truly appreciated by the students, staff and board of directors.

Eric Hults, Chair, Board of Directors, Benson District School

## **SLOW DOWN**

Now, we know that no Benson driver would ever even imagine going beyond the posted speed limits, but...especially at this time of year we urge you to SLOW DOWN when you see someone walking. Going below the speed limit for the short distance it takes to go by a pedestrian won't make you really late and all of our dedicated walkers will truly appreciate not having your slush and dust thrown up at them. Being considerate doesn't cost anything!

Thank you.

## **JAMES WALKER CELEBRATES!**

On February 22, 2010, James Walker will be celebrating his 90<sup>th</sup> birthday!

His daughter, Margaret Bishop from Orwell, would like to invite you to share in the celebration by sending her dad a card:

James Walker  
1459 Alamo Drive  
Plant City, FL 33563.



## TOWN BUDGET PREVIEW

Our Town Report is at the printers and the informational meeting to discuss the Budget is scheduled for Monday, March 1, 2010 at 7 p.m. We would like to remind you, however, that you can come to either the February 8<sup>th</sup> or February 22<sup>nd</sup> regular Selectboard meeting if you have any questions that you would like answered.

At Town Meeting 2008, you voted to raise \$613,523 by taxes. At Town Meeting 2009, you voted to raise \$533,508. The significant decrease was, as we explained, the result of removing money for paving from the Highway Budget and we told you that that was a one time reduction. At Town Meeting 2010 we are seeking to raise \$585,292 (that amount includes the money requested in two articles for a scholarship fund and the creamery roof). Although this is still less than 2 years ago, why is there an increase from last year?

To begin with, at Town Meeting 2010 we will need to raise \$7,700 to cover the deficit for fiscal year 2008-09. Why was there a deficit? In Fiscal Year 2008-09, our State Highway Aid was reduced by \$5,000; the Transfer Station income was down \$4,000 and the expenses were up \$10,000 (we have corrected that problem by changing haulers); and we had anticipated using funds from the Community Hall savings account to pay for the new roof. Unfortunately, those funds were never transferred to that account in 2005-06 and 2006-07 and were used instead for general fund expenses during those years.

In addition to providing for that deficit, in the 2010-11 Budget some costs that we cannot control have risen. For example, our liability insurance premium (which covers our buildings and equipment) has risen \$5,000. We need to budget for three, rather than two employees' health insurance in the event that the new Town Clerk/Treasurer needs insurance. (All employee insurance expenses are now found under Payroll Expenses and, effective July 1, 2010, employees will contribute 5% of the cost of their health insurance.) For 2010-11 we have also budgeted 4 hours a week for an Assistant Town Clerk as well as 4 hours a week for an Assistant Treasurer. Since our new Town Clerk/Treasurer will not have the benefit of Jan Ladd's 15 years of experience, we believe this is necessary. Under the Highway Budget, we have restored paving - as we told you we would be doing last year.

This (2009-10) Fiscal Year we have been aggressively pursuing – and obtaining – grants. \$56,000 of the \$63,000 cost of the Sunset Lake Spillway project was grant-funded and another \$7,000 of work on Sunset Lake Road was funded completely by a grant from Better Backroads. Early this summer we will be replacing the deck on the Route 144 bridge (Bridge #17). 95% of this work (\$304,000) will be paid for with an ARRA grant. We have the 5% match in the bank. We have been awarded a \$10,400 grant to install the Rain Garden (a rainwater filtration system) at the northwest corner of the intersection of Stage and Lake Roads and Better Backroads will be funding \$10,000 of ditching work on North Stage Road this summer. We just received \$44,000 in Emergency Funds from VTrans to reimburse the 2009-10 Highway Budget for money we had to spend as a result of the damage from last summer's storms. The Fire Department and the Energy Committee have also been awarded grants.

If you can't wait until you receive your Town Report to see the proposed Budget, you can get it online at: [www.benson-vt.com](http://www.benson-vt.com).