



Bennington County Regional Commission

MINUTES

Thursday – May 16, 2024

5:30 PM

The Arlington Inn

3904 Route 7a

Arlington, VT

Present: Cat Bryars, Brett long, Donald Campbell, Nick Zaiac, Ali Zaiac, Gordon Black, Scott Murphy, Dana Rozycki, Jennie Rozycki, Jim Hand, Mark Rondeau, Sheila Kearns, Rich Zoppel, Linda Schmidt, Nancy Faesy, bob Faesy, Richard Faesy, Ann Bove, Ellen Maloney, John Ezell, Mary Rogers, Jeannie Kronin Russell, Jim Sullivan, Dixie Zens, Martin Nadler, Irene Nadler, Joanne O'Connor, Tyler Yandow, David McAneny, Curan VanDerWielen, John LaVecchia, Emy LaVecchia, Catherine LaVecchia, Jim Ramsey, Rob Costantino, Jane Davies, Jed Rubin, Nancy Poletti, Denise Stroffoleno, Anthony MacLaurin, Zak Hale

BCRC Staff: Callie Fishburn, Bill Colvin, Janet Hurley, Mark Anders, Scott Grimm-Lyon, Jim Henderson, Dara Zink, Samantha Page, Jonathan Cooper

1. Commissioners and guests arrived at 5:30 and enjoyed a cash bar and food provided by The Arlington Inn.
2. BCRC Executive Director Bill Colvin called the meeting to order at 6:22pm, welcomed everyone, introduced new BCRC team members since last year's annual meeting, Samantha Page and Dara Zink and provided some highlight's of BCRC's work over the past year.
3. The 2024 BCRC Bongartz Award for Community Service was presented to two recipients – Nancy Faesy and John LaVecchia, Sr. (posthumously). Several family members of both recipients were in attendance to honor the awardees. Colvin made the following remarks when presenting the awards:

The Bongartz Award for Community Service has been awarded by the BCRC, beginning in 1997, to a

person who has “demonstrated ideals, beliefs and excellence in community planning and service.” The award is named after one of the BCRC’s founding members, Ferdinand “Nundy” Bongartz of Manchester, who epitomized those principles in his work for the town, region, and state over many years.

This year the Bongartz Award is being given to two most-deserving, long-serving BCRC Commissioners. Both were appointed to represent Dorset as BCRC Commissioners in 2013 and both retired from tireless and dedicated service to the Commission in 2023. Given their similar trajectories in service to BCRC, it seemed entirely fitting to make a double award this year.

If one were to create the ideal model of an effective BCRC Commissioner, they would be hard-pressed to come up with one even close to Nancy Faesy. Nancy was at nearly every BCRC meeting and event over her entire tenure as a Commissioner. Much more than that however was her effectiveness as a liaison between the BCRC and the town she represented. We could always count on Nancy to communicate BCRC activities to the Dorset Planning Commission, Select Board and others in the community. And when it was time for the BCRC newsletter to go out Nancy was always on our mind encouraging us to get it out no later than the first Tuesday of the month to be timely for the next Dorset Planning Commission meeting.

Nancy has been dedicated to community service her entire life – in Wilton, CT where she lived with her husband Bob and family for 49 years and most recently, of course here in our region. In Connecticut Nancy served on the Wilton Conservation Commission for 13 years, was an active member of the town Open Space Committee and served as secretary of the Connecticut Fund for the Environment for a decade. She was the first employee of what would become Weir Farm National Historic Site “next door” to the Weir Preserve when the Trust for Public Land was the owner in 1989. Putting her degree in library science to work, Nancy established the Save the Children library in 1976 and responded to requests from field offices for solutions to children's needs worldwide.

Nancy has an abiding passion for preserving open spaces, for energy conservation and the development of renewable energy sources and in promoting alternative modes of transportation. Her knowledge of these topics and her unwavering commitment to serving community was a boon to BCRC for more than a decade.

We miss seeing Nancy’s always-smiling presence at our BCRC meetings now but we are delighted she has had the opportunity to relocate closer to family and are honored to be able to recognize all she did for BCRC, Dorset and our region with this Bongartz Award this evening.

Sadly, the second 2024 Bongartz Award recipient is not with us to accept his award this evening, though he remains with us in spirit always. As many of us know, John LaVecchia Sr. passed away on March 6, 2024. John attended Princeton University and earned his law degree from Columbia University. John had a long and successful career with the Connell Foley Law Firm during which he was recognized as one of the finest trial attorneys in New Jersey.

In the 1970's John and his wife Emy began taking trips to Vermont with their children and in 1986 bought a second home in Dorset in 1986. John's commitment to community and volunteerism was vast and strong and included volunteering as a Guardian ad Litem for children in the courts of Bennington VT, working as zoning administrator of Peru, Landgrove, and Sandgate, serving on the Board and as President of the Southern Vermont Art Center, serving as President of the Dorset Field Club, and, of course representing the town of Dorset on the Bennington County Regional Commission, including several years as a member of the BCRC Executive Committee.

John possessed one of the kindest faces and most welcoming smiles of anyone I ever met, and his personality matched exactly. Despite a heralded career he was as humble as could be and it was always a joy to converse with him. Being a huge college basketball fan like John, I will always remember the sparkle in his eye as we spoke about his beloved Princeton Tigers advancing all the way to the Sweet 16 in the 2023 March Madness Basketball Tournament.

It is my honor to present, posthumously, a 2024 Bongartz Award to John LaVecchia, Sr. and we are delighted that several family members are here to accept the award.

5. The keynote address was provided by Ben Doyle, President of The Preservation Trust of Vermont (PTV). Mr. Doyle highlighted the work of PTV assisting communities around the state and in our region with the revitalization of some of their most iconic historic buildings and placing them back into productive reuse. He also announced the new Village Trust Initiative, a partnership between the Preservation Trust of Vermont and the Vermont Council on Rural Development. Mr. Doyle's presentation can be found [here](#).
7. There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 7:42 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

William Colvin
Director