

MINUTES OF THE SHAFTSBURY SELECT BOARD
JUNE 9, 2008 - COLE HALL
SHAFTSBURY, VERMONT

Board Present: Lon McClintock, Karen Mellinger, Cinda Morse, Bill Pennebaker

Board Absent: Wynn Metcalfe

Others Present: Ken Moriarty, Captain Chad Schmidt (Bennington Sheriff's Dept.), Mike Gleason (Bennington Banner), Aaron Chrostowsky (Town Administrator)

1. Call Meeting to Order:

Chairman Lon McClintock called the meeting to order at 7:00 PM. Chairman McClintock noted that the Board Secretary is not present. Karen Mellinger volunteered to take minutes.

2. Announcements:

Chairman McClintock announced that the Water Board had met this evening and reviewed the 5-Year Capital Plan and projected budget to meet the needs of the water system. The Water Board will meet in two weeks to approve both the Capital Plan and the 2008/2009 budget and to decide whether to change the current budget approval time line process.

Aaron Chrostowsky reminded citizens that Free Metal Week is the week of June 16th. Metal will be accepted for free on Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday at the transfer station during open hours. Hazardous Waste and Free Tire Day will be held on Saturday, June 21st. There is a limit of 4 free tires.

3. Conflict of Interest Statement:

Chairman McClintock asked if any Board member has a conflict of interest with any topic on tonight's agenda. None did.

4. Minutes:

June 2, 2008 Select Board minutes

Cinda Morse made motion to approve the June 2, 2008 minutes. Bill Pennebaker seconded.

The following correction to the June 2 minutes was requested:

On page 3, under item 9 (Fire Department), in the last paragraph, second sentence is changed to:

There was further discussion of how to handle the budget deficit in the next fiscal year.

Motion to approve June 2, 2008 minutes as amended carried 4-0-0.

5. Warrants:

The following warrant was presented for approval:

Payroll Warrant #49: \$6,128.95

Ms. Morse made motion to pay PR Warrant #49. Mr. Pennebaker seconded. Motion carried 4-0-0.

6. Public Comments:

There were no public comments:

7. Sheriff Department Update:

Chairman McClintock introduced Captain Chad Schmidt of the Bennington Sheriff's Department. The Chairman thanked the Sheriff's Department for the good work they have been doing for the Town. On behalf of the Board he thanked Capt. Schmidt for his guidance on how to optimize the use of the limited funds we are able to allocate towards sheriff patrols in Town.

Capt. Schmidt presented statistics for the current year to date relative to the patrols. He noted that the Town funds 10 hours of coverage weekly, which represents only 6% of all possible hours. Over the year, a total of 303 tickets was issued by all agencies (including State Police, Department of Motor Vehicles, Alcohol Control, Sheriff's, etc). Of that total, 122 were issued by the Sheriff's Department. Therefore, although present for only 6% of the time, the Sheriff's Department issued 40% of the tickets. These tickets represented everything from speeding violations to license suspensions and seat belt violations.

Capt. Schmidt noted that the number one complaint when the Town contracted with the department was traffic and speeding. When funding limits necessitated a decrease in contract hours, the Town requested the Sheriffs to be visible. For that reason, much of the patrol activity has been in the central areas of Town. Capt. Schmidt noted that more recently the problem areas being identified are in more rural areas. He stated that the patrols will accommodate the Town's desire, whether it be back roads or Town center. He also advised, however, that the Town should be aware that there will likely be a drop in revenue should the patrols be primarily based in the back road areas.

Ms. Morse asked whether there are ways citizens can be of assistance to the Sheriff's Department, considering the limited number of hours they are available. Would it be helpful to call the Department with license plates numbers if a citizen observes a possible violation? Capt. Schmidt said that this can be helpful in that the alleged violator could be warned that a witness complained of certain activity, but he or she could not be accused.

Mr. Chrostowsky asked if there is an "800" phone number that citizens could call with complaints. The following website resource was noted by Capt. Schmidt: www.benningtonsheriff.org He recommended that citizens go online to this site to post questions or concerns. This is the preferred route, although they can also call 442-4900, which is the non-emergency phone number.

Ms. Morse asked about the COPS grant funding. Capt. Schmidt noted that the COPS money has been depleted, but he is hopeful that it may be reinstated. His department has received some funding through the Governmental Highway Safety Patrol Grant and the CLICK IT OR TICKET Program. He will be arranging for an additional 5 hours of patrol time as a result of that funding.

The Chairman and Board Members thanked Capt. Schmidt for his presentation.

8. Town Survey Presentation:

Mr. Chrostowsky introduced Cody Buck, who presented the results of the Town Survey taken during the annual Town Meeting and next day voting. Mr. Buck is a Field Study student from Mt. Anthony High School who has been an intern at Cole Hall for one hour each day throughout this last school semester. His job was to implement the survey, collect the data, and develop a Power Point presentation of the results.

Mr. Buck noted that 217 surveys were collected and the responses tallied. He reviewed the survey highlights and noted that most respondents thought it was a good idea to ask citizens' opinions regarding the future of the Town. Many desire additional information regarding some issues, such as Cole Hall improvements, and also indicated a willingness to attend public meetings to discuss future needs.

Mr. Chrostowsky stated that the survey results will be posted on the Town website. He informed the Board that Mr. Buck has been a tremendous help in the office throughout this semester and he will be missed. Mr. Buck has also been volunteering time to videotape the Selectboard meetings for CAT-TV on alternate Mondays. The Board thanked Mr. Buck for his good work for the Town.

9. Budget:

Mr. Chrostowsky distributed the latest projected year end budget figures, which tentatively project a shortfall of \$45,547. The Board expressed concern that this figure was much higher than the \$5,000 projected deficit presented two weeks ago. Mr. Chrostowsky stated that an overlooked payment of \$9,000 is due for gravel, \$25,000 was included for the current expense

note, and the thermal imaging camera expense of \$10,000 was applied to the General Fund and not the Fire Equipment Reserve Fund. These were line items that had not previously been accounted for in the original projection.

Chairman McClintock noted that, in addition to increased fuel, overtime and winter road material expenses, the budget revenue figures fell considerably short of expectations in the area of permit fees. With regard to overtime expenses, Chairman McClintock stated that Road Foreman Ron Daniels is in the process of preparing a proposal that will take into account future highway overtime concerns.

Ms. Morse noted that the Town Administrator is in a position to know what projections are, and to make recommendations to the Board accordingly. Ms. Mellinger agreed that it would be helpful to have the Town Administrator highlight any potential red flags in the budget at the time budget status reports are presented.

Chairman McClintock suggested that as we move forward, each Board member take responsibility for their liaison department regarding budget issues, and make sure those issues are highlighted to the entire Board. He also suggested that the presentation of the General Fund Ledger be revised so that all revenues and all expenses are included. Currently, for instance, the tax revenues and school revenues appear as "0" in the budgeted column but are represented in the "actual" column. In order to compare actual expenses to revenue you then need to do a different set of calculations. Chairman McClintock would like the figures presented in a clearer form.

Ms. Morse noted that as the Town goes into next year with a deficit, the Board must figure out where the money is going to come from.

Chairman McClintock stated that he has been in touch with Vermont League of Cities and Towns (VLCT) regarding management of a potential deficit. VLCT noted that many towns simply add the deficit to the upcoming approved budget figure and establish a tax rate to cover both. However, they do not recommend this method, because it bypasses any kind of voter approval process for the deficit amount. VLCT's recommended process is to add any deficit or surplus figures into the future proposed budget as a line item and allow the citizens to vote on it within the overall budget at the annual meeting.

It was agreed that although the Board will not meet next Monday, Mr. Chrostowsky will keep the Board apprised of any budget developments.

10. Town Administrator's Update:

Mr. Chrostowsky stated that he had received information from VLCT regarding a potential partnership between towns and the state for joint salt purchasing. The Board encouraged him to pursue this avenue for potential savings next winter.

Mr. Chrostowsky also noted that there is a state program called Municipal Park and Ride which could be a potential source of funding to improve the town lot across from Cole Hall. The Board agreed that he should develop a proposal after determining the status of the rental agreement with Dennis McCarthy regarding the lot.

11. Other Business:

Ms. Mellinger gave an update on the Sidewalk Project. She and Mr. Chrostowsky stated that that received word from the engineer that the project is currently held up in the State Right of Way Review Division of the Transportation Department due to reduced staffing and a build up of projects to be reviewed. State Representative Alice Miller was contacted. Rep. Miller, Ms. Mellinger, and Mr. Chrostowsky spoke with State Transportation Commissioner David Dill regarding the urgency of moving the project quickly through the right of way process so the Town may proceed to bidding the project for completion this construction season. Commissioner Dill advised that he will look into the matter to determine if he can help to expedite the review.

Ms. Morse reported that the Economic Development Committee continues to make steady progress on the Village Center Designation project.

Mr. Pennebaker reported on methane mediation efforts at the landfill. He said that an ant colony has taken up residence in the meter; no damage was done however. He noted that the pump is on order and pumping will begin when it comes in. He expects that we'll know within a couple of weeks whether the pumping system is adequate to handle the methane.

Chairman McClintock noted that, other than the budget, the Board has a relatively light agenda. He suggested that we skip next Monday's meeting unless any Board member feels the need to meet. Ms. Morse made the point that the primary concern is monitoring what is going on with the budget, considering there are only a few weeks left in the fiscal year. She requested that the Board be sure to receive an updated financial report on Friday. The consensus of the Board was not to meet next Monday.

Ms. Mellinger noted that the Water Board will meet on Monday, June 23rd at 6:00 PM prior to the Select Board meeting. Material will be available prior to the meeting for Board Members' review.

Chairman McClintock stated that the Chair of the Planning Commission, Craig Bruder, has advised him that the Commission is looking for general feedback from the Selectboard as they review the Town Plan for updating. One of the areas Chairman McClintock wants the Planning Commission to look at has to do with residential wind and solar power generation. He wants to be sure the Town is encouraging that type of activity rather than discouraging it. Mr. Pennebaker added the observation that state law allows for tax abatement to encourage such activities.

Ms. Morse made motion to adjourn. Mr. Pennebaker seconded. Motion carried 4-0-0.

Meeting adjourned at 8:47 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Karen Mellinger