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Town of Shaftsbury

Municipal Offices at Cole Hall

Meeting Minutes

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Community Center Development Committee

Date of Meeting: October 10, 2024 in person at Cole Hall and remotely via Zoom

Members Present: Sarah Costin, Joan Dornhoefer, Marie Watson, Zoe Contros Kearn (presiding), and Naomi Miller. Also present was Rick Bennett, chair of the Economic Development Committee (EDC).

1. Call to order

The meeting came to order at 5:02 p.m.

2. Conflict of interest statement

No one reported a conflict of interest with any item on the agenda.

3. Minutes

The minutes from 9.12.24 and 9.19.24 were tabled.

4. Announcements

There were none.

5. Public comments

There were none.

6. Mr. Bennett, Q & A

Ms. Miller reported that hydrogeologist Paul Miller visited the day before to comment on the state of the basement and the source of the water problem. Some weeks ago, a basement remediation company recommended internal trenching and sheathing. Mr. Miller guessed that most of the water was coming from the sides rather than from below. Ms. Contros Kearn explained that the new community center would probably house at least some town staff, as it is likely the basement will have to be abandoned for anything except storage.

Ms. Contros Kearn said the new offices in the community center could require 1300-1800 s.f.

Ms. Miller said the town administrator applied for a State of Vermont preservation grant to caulk the windows and to put in a ramp and redo railings. Mr. Bennett noted that the potential vote

on the community center at Town Meeting 2025 could impact the EDC's marketing plan. The group discussed the kinds of uses which the community center and campus generally could support.

Mr. Bennett said the EDC talked about helping to raise funds for the community center at their recent meeting, and were leaning toward committing to matching the \$500,000 in former ARPA funds set aside for the community center.

Mr. Bennett summarized a recent article in Vermont News Guide about the Bennington Museum's redevelopment plan. He said he hoped to adapt it for the EDC's fundraising strategy. He wondered whether the materials should include mention of the upcoming vote at Town Meeting. Ms. Contros Kearn said the CCDC hoped to have ready a model of the proposed community center for Town Meeting.

Mr. Bennett said the EDC is creating a directory of all businesses in the Town, street-facing and home-based. Perhaps the directory could be used to raise funds for the community center. Businesses could advertise their financial support for the center. Peckham Industry's recent donation of a new sign for Howard Park was mentioned. Mr. Bennett would like to approach them personally for help with a "welcome to Shaftsbury" sign and a kiosk for the corner of Church and 7A. Ms. Contros Kearn suggested Peckham could make any number of precast items that could be useful for the Town. It could also simply make a large financial donation.

Mr. Bennett said the EDC will be getting a report from the Regional Commission soon summarizing business activity in the town and the contributions in taxes of each business.

Mr. Bennett asked for a rendering of the proposed community center. Ms. Contros Kearn said she could ask a couple of friends whether they might be willing to help with that task. All agreed that the center should be "barn chic" with an L shape or a T shape and a porch.

Ms. Miller said the sewer feasibility committee report is on hold. The committee will settle on a final recommendation after reviewing the report.

The group discussed a new restaurant/apartment facility going up in Manchester. Perhaps that builder would be interested in working with Shaftsbury.

What about timing? It was agreed that the EDC will swing into action in early January.

7. Review of action items

- Ms. Contros Kearn will reach out to Chris Ponessi after conferring with the town administrator.
- Mr. Bennett will report back to the EDC.
- Mr. Bennett will try to find the article on Peckham in the Vermont News Guide.

8. Adjournment

Ms. Dornhoefer moved to adjourn at 5:55 p.m. Ms. Watson seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.