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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: December 12, 2024, in person at Cole Hall and remotely via Zoom

Members Present: Paula Iken, Marlene Hall, Marie Watson, Zoe Contros Kearl (presiding), Ben Benedict, and Sarah Costin.

1. Call to Order

The meeting came to order at 4:59 p.m.

2. Conflict of Interest Statement

No one reported a conflict of interest.

3. Minutes

Ms. Hall moved to accept the November 25 minutes. Mr. Benedict seconded the motion.

4. Announcements

Ms. Iken announced that the Town made an offer for the former medical center, at the asking price, to Dr. King. Both the Town and Dr. King signed a letter of intent formalizing that offer. The Town put down \$10,000 as a retainer in escrow. The building inspection will be held Tuesday December 17 at 1 p.m.

Meanwhile, Jim Henderson of the Bennington County Regional Commission (BCRC) was in touch. He suggested the Town do a Level 1 Environmental Assessment, because of the center's history as a medical facility. He said BCRC has a grant that can cover the assessment. He said he can recommend a couple of people. The assessment probably won't be done until February. Mr. Henderson will be attending the December 16 Select Board meeting to talk about other steps the Town might consider taking to protect itself from liability.

Ms. Hall said a representative from a vault company is coming on Monday December 16.

Ms. Iken said she and the Select Board chair Naomi Miller met via Zoom with Shires Housing recently. They were pleased that the space is flat and empty and near Route 7A and surprised at how much progress the Town has made regarding it. Mr. Benedict said he used to be the chair of the Regional Affordable Housing Commission (the predecessor to Shires Housing) and might be able to be of help in discussions with Shires.

5. Public Comments

Ms. Contros Kearn summarized a lengthy email from a long-time prominent resident in which the following points as well as others were made: purchasing the old medical center is a good idea; should we really renovate Cole Hall?; the building could revert to ownership by the donor; perhaps the Town doesn't need another historic building which is expensive to maintain; thought should be given to how the "campus" would be best used; we seem to have more than enough park and recreation spaces.

6. Focus of work going forward

Ms. Iken said many grants she's reviewed required significant matching funds.

Ms. Miller asked and all agreed that the CCDC's next task is to turn to renovations at Cole Hall, to make it the new community center.

The committee discussed issues with hiring someone to handle the downstairs demolition.

Mr. Benedict said he thought one of the first steps is putting gutters on the roof.

Ms. Iken said a company out of Rutland, Criterion, was recommended by Maple Leaf Realty for commercial inspections. They also do environmental assessments.

7. Review of action items

- Discuss findings from meetings with vault company, with building inspector, with Jim Henderson.
- Mr. Benedict will get original medical center plans to Ms. Hall for review by the vault company representative.
- Waiting for opinion re vote from town counsel.
- Plan for Shires Housing visit to housing site. Mr. Benedict suggested thinking about engaging a landscape architect or site planner to help to think about the campus layout.
- Mr. Benedict suggesting composing a list of priorities for the new town hall so that when the sale goes through the renovations can begin immediately.

8. Adjournment

It was agreed that the Dec. 26 meeting will be cancelled. The committee will decide later whether to meet on January 2.

Mr. Benedict moved to adjourn at 5:41 p.m. Ms. Watson seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.