

Shaftsbury Economic Development Committee

Thursday February 23, 2023

Via Zoom only

1) Call to Order by Town Administrator

Town administrator David Kiernan called the meeting to order. Others present were Martha Cornwell, Rick Bennett, Andrea Bacchi, Emily Cowperthwaite, and Marita Cockburn.

2) Nomination/Election of EDC Committee Officers

Chair: Andrea Baachi Martha Cornwell as chair. Mr. Bennett the motion, which passed 5-0-0.

Vice Chair: Martha Cornwell Nominated Andrea Bacchi as vice-chair. Mr. Bennett seconded the motion, which passed 5-0-0.

Clerk: Rick Bennett nominated himself. Ms. Bacchi seconded the motion, which passed 5-0-0.

3) Adoption Ethical Conduct and Conflict of Interest Policy

Mr. Kiernan sent the documents earlier. Mr. Bennett moved to adopt the policies. Ms. Bacchi seconded the motion, which passed 5-0-0.

4) Adoption of Roberts Rules for Committees

Ms. Bacchi moved to adopt. Mr. Bennett seconded the motion, which passed 5-0-0.

5) Committee goals and planning

Ms. Cornwell noted that Mr. Kiernan had sent out several background documents from the early 2000s. She urged members to review them.

Ms. Cornwell suggested that committee members visit the survey conducted regarding the use of ARPA funds. It can be found on the town website under "ARPA Committee." She noted that a subcommittee of the economic development committee will work on the Cole Hall renovation. Some of the ARPA funds will be spent on the Cole Hall work.

Ms. Cornwell noted that little has changed since the last economic development reports from 2003 and 2006: the workforce is shrinking, more folks are working from home, empty buildings remain empty, and there is no village wastewater system. (She noted that a 2006 wastewater feasibility study examined an area larger than the village; it found the prospect financially unfeasible and the matter was dropped.)

Mr. Kiernan noted that ARPA funds were used to purchase a vacant lot adjacent to Cole Hall, planning to turn it into a community gathering space as recommended by the ARPA survey. He said he would chair the smaller committee. It will work on the Cole Hall renovation, including making it ADA compliant. The economic development committee will work on all the other items prioritized in the ARPA survey.

He said the ARPA project does not need to be completed until December 2026.

Ms. Cornwell reported that she and Mr. Kiernan received a technical assistance grant to help with creating health equity in the village. That might include walkways, lighting, and other features.

Ms. Cornwell reported that she and Mr. Kiernan hoped to use some of the ARPA funds to hire a coordinator to help especially with seeking matching funds to extend the impact of the ARPA monies and to manage the committee process. The group discussed the proposal. Mr. Kiernan said he expected the person would not be local, but would be a professional with statewide experience. He said the request for proposal would be placed on the state's "big board." If committee members have recommendations as to personnel he asked that they share them. He recommended in-person interviews with the candidates to confirm a sense of comfort with one another.

Mr. Bennett suggested crafting a mission statement. Ms. Cornwell read the mission statement for an earlier version of the committee, which emphasized securing the benefits of Village Center designation. She noted that a community wastewater system will be crucial to any future development in S. Shaftsbury. Mr. Kiernan noted that ARPA funds would not construct the wastewater system but instead go toward planning for it.

Ms. Cornwell noted that developing the newly purchased parcel adjacent to Cole Hall would be a big part of the committee's responsibilities.

Mr. Bennett asked about commercial zones in the town. Ms. Cornwell responded. She also responded to questions about wastewater.

Mr. Bennett suggested focusing on businesses that don't need public wastewater systems. Ms. Cornwell noted that sole proprietorships and small businesses might fit the bill. She noted that high speed internet is widely available now. Ms. Bacchi suggested food truck festivals.

6) Public Comments

There were none.

7) Other Business

Ms. Bacchi suggested a press release announcing the formation of the committee and describing its goals.

8) Review of Action Items

Ms. Bacchi will draft a press release for review.

Mr. Kiernan will draft a RFP for an economic development consultant position for review.

Ms. Cornwell will draft a mission statement for review.

Mr. Kiernan said the Town is still waiting for word on the sewer feasibility study.

9) Next meeting

The next meeting will be held March 23 at 3 p.m. Mr. Kiernan will send out an agenda with Zoom link.

10) Ms. Bacchi moved to adjourn at 3:56 p.m. Ms. Cockburn seconded the motion, which passed 5-0-0.