

**TOWN OF SHAFTSBURY  
ANNUAL TOWN MEETING MINUTES  
Monday, March 5, 2012, Shaftsbury Elementary School**

**Select Board Present:** Craig Bruder; Lon McClintock, Chair; Bill Pennebaker, Vice-Chair; Karen Mellinger; Carl Korman.

**Moderator:** Thomas Dailey.

**Others Present:** Margy Becker, Town Administrator; Judy Stratton, Town Clerk; Alice Miller, Shaftsbury State Representative; Henrietta Billow, Town Treasurer; Joe Vadakin, Fire Chief; Richard Bump, Recording Secretary, Ben Benedict; Susan Coons, Lori Corell; and about 165 other Shaftsbury Residents and several non-residents.

**CAT-TV:** The meeting was filmed by Dan May and broadcast live on CAT-TV.

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After calling the meeting to order at 7:45pm, Dailey led everyone in the Pledge of Allegiance, and then asked for a moment of silence for those who have suffered in recent climatic events in Vermont and around the country as well as for all troops overseas and at home. Dailey then reminded those present of several housekeeping issues

- non-residents are not allowed to vote
- given that the meeting is filmed and broadcast live by CAT-TV, anyone wishing to speak should use the microphone, state their name, and address any and all questions or comments to the moderator.

A motion was then made and seconded to dispense with the reading of the Annual Warning, and, by voice vote, the motion carried unanimously.

**Special Recognitions:** After introducing Selectboard members, the Town Administrator, Town Clerk, and Recording Secretary, Dailey asked McClintock to announce special recognitions. McClintock then thanked

- Bill Pennebaker for his service to the town over the last 6 years as Selectboard member
- Marlene Barriere and all others who worked on the design and graphics for the Annual Report

and announced special recognition of Henrietta Billow, who is resigning her position as Town Treasurer after 21 years of service, noting that Billow, although independently elected, has worked with “good humor and patience” with an “ever-changing” Selectboard and has been a “joy to work with”. After an enthusiastic round of applause for Billow, Bruder presented Billow with a bouquet of flowers and a gift certificate to the West Mountain Inn. Mellinger also praised Billow for her “unending patience” and presented her with a plaque recognizing her years of service to the Town. Pennebaker also presented Billow with a card of appreciation, and after another round of applause, Billow then said that “it has been a real pleasure and joy” to serve the board and the town, and thanked everyone for her tributes. McClintock also invited everyone present to join in for coffee and a celebratory cake for Billow during and after the meeting.

McClintock also extended special recognition to

- the 250<sup>th</sup> Shaftsbury Town Anniversary Committee who, through hard work and a lot of fundraising, organized the parade and other activities celebrating the town’s 250<sup>th</sup> anniversary
- members of the Fire Department, Highway Department and the Emergency Management Team for successfully and efficiently coordinating all their efforts in response to the flooding and damage caused by Tropical Storm Irene, and repairing all roads within 4 days

- Brian Doxsee, Jim Secor and Art Carlucci for their donations to the town while repairing a section of the Fire Station roof
- Ron Daniels and George Chandler, who are retiring from service to the town after 15 years and 13 years, respectively.

**State Representative's Report:** Miller read aloud a State of Vermont House of Representatives Concurrent House Resolution (HCR 287) commemorating the 250<sup>th</sup> charter anniversary of the Town and "the outstanding committee in charge of the festivities, including Margy Becker, Faith and Mark Bollhardt, Tracy Galle, Norm Gronning, Nancy Holmes, Ben and Elaine Hulett, Charlie Jenks, Walt Klinger, Dick Lyon, Karen Mellinger, Jim Meskun, Helen Olney, Jeri Schoof, Tim Scoggins, Gina Shaler, Grace Sohn, and James Weber, and a copy of that Resolution is attached to and hereby incorporated into these Minutes, and thanked the Committee for a "grand time, a great day, and a wonderful parade". After asking residents to pick up and then give the completed Doyle Poll (available in the back of the meeting room) to the Town Clerk, and noting that she will e-mail residents the results of that poll once tallied, Miller reviewed various legislative initiatives currently under consideration in the House and Senate, including

- a state-wide redistricting effort, which "would not be in the best interest of Shaftsbury" and is vigorously opposed by the Shaftsbury Board of Civil Authority
- on-going response to provide funding for the repair of extensive damage state-wide caused by Tropical Storm Irene, including rebuilding a state office building in Waterbury as well as finding a "better resolution" to replacing the Waterbury state hospital, both of which were destroyed by floodwaters from Irene
- budget discussions that have the "smallest gap" between revenues and expenses in the last five years, despite reductions in federal funds and a 5.1% unemployment rate, and helped by Vermont's high bond rating and low foreclosure rate(as of 12/2011).

**Facilities Committee Report:** Benedict reported that he was "standing in" for Peter Olney, the Chair of the Facilities Committee, and whose other members include Margy Becker, Lon McClintock, Karen Mellinger, Terry Stacey, Rick Kobick, Dave Beach, and himself, noting that the Facilities Committee has been meeting regularly since 2007, and has focused primarily on

- maintaining the historic character of Cole Hall while at the same time making the building "function better" in the provision of a wide array of services provided there
- replacing the Town Garage which is "at the end of its useful life."

Benedict further noted that the committee, joined by architectural and engineering firms, completed

- site evaluations at both locations in 2009 and 2010
- preliminary designs for improvements at Cole Hall
- site evaluation for locating a new Town Garage to the east of the current landfill

and is currently reviewing permitting requirements for the building at that location. In closing comment, McClintock noted that the Selectboard and Facilities Committee hope to have an article on the November 2012 ballot asking if voters will approve a bond to construct a new garage at the new location, and that more information on this initiative is included in the Annual Report, pages 103-105.

**Selectboard Report:** Using a power-point format, McClintock then presented the FY12 Selectboard Report, and summarized as follows (a complete copy of the report is included in the Annual Report, pages 77-80):

- the tax rate and the tax amount collected has declined slightly last year to this year and will do so again next year, and finances "are in good shape"
- grant revenues were not as "robust" as in previous years, with 3 grants awarded totaling \$74,127 of which the town's share was \$13,377

- FY11 ended with a budget surplus of \$124,513 due, in part, to higher than expected state revenues, lower insurance costs (property, liability, health) as well as having a position remain vacant for several months
- administrative support for the Town Administrator was increased from 8 to 16 hours per week
- recommendations from the auditors include having the auditors reconcile bank statements, having the treasurer reconcile bank statements to the general ledger monthly, improve oversight of budget adjustment and journal entries, develop a schedule and accounting system for fixed assets, improve cash handling procedures at the transfer station, and prepare an accounting and procedures manual for town-wide financial operations
- highway improvements were completed on Airport Road (with the appreciated help of \$20,804 in private funding from Peckham Industries), Paran Road and Ehrich Road
- a highway truck and backhoe were replaced with leased vehicles at a very advantageous rate
- the FEMA grant received for damage caused by Tropical Storm Irene totaled \$58,063 from federal and state funds, with the town supplying an additional \$8,297 to cover the \$66,379 in total damages
- during FY12 the Selectboard so far has enacted an interim zoning bylaw to regulate commercial composting operations; implemented most audit recommendations; and reviewed and revised all town personnel policies into a single, coherent, and consistent set of policies (and thanks to Bruder for his focus on this effort)
- FY13 Selectboard goals include presenting voters with a bond request to fund construction of a new highway garage, salt shed and cold barn; installation of a computer system linking all town departments; implementation of an integrated financial management system for all departments (and complete training on that system by all town officials); and completion of the Church Street sidewalk

**FY13 Budget Overview:** McClintock then briefly reviewed the FY13 budget, noting that

- a budget is both a best estimate of revenues and expenses, based on prior year actual revenue and expenses, as well as a “policy document” which “honors existing commitments” (such as debts, contracts, salaries, benefits, etc)
- the tax rate for FY13 is estimated at \$0.3206 which is down from the current year rate of \$0.3231
- the tax rate is calculated by dividing the Grand List minus the Veterans Exemption and not-for-profit properties by the taxes needed (Shaftsbury has 180 eligible veterans with properties valued at \$440,000; the Shaftsbury Grange is valued at \$62,000 and the Shaftsbury Museum value has yet to be determined)
- the median appraised value of a home in Vermont is \$208,400 and the tax on this in Shaftsbury for the current year would be \$906 and \$899 next year
- this tax can be compared to the average social security benefit of \$987/month or \$11,844/year.

**FY13 Budget Amendment:** McClintock then reviewed a proposed amendment to increase the FY13 budget by \$21,000 to accommodate the sale of Fire Truck 66 and replacement of that truck with a new, more flexible and useful truck, and as follows

- truck 66 was purchased in 2000 for about \$300,000 and the \$40,694 final payment for the truck is scheduled for October 2012
- although truck 66 was planned to be replaced in 2015, repairs to the truck over the 12 years have totaled more than \$52,000, and repairs just in the last 12 months totaled \$21,213, with \$9,472 spent so far in the current fiscal year
- there are still unresolved problems with the truck with the transmission, body corrosion, and the electrical system

- the truck can be replaced next year with no actual budget impact in that the fair market value of the truck is about \$70,000, and the \$80,000 down payment (estimated) can be funded by using \$21,000 of the sale receipt and \$59,000 in the Fire Truck Reserve Fund (transferred into line item 65)
- the budget itself will need to be adjusted by increasing Debt Service (line item 465) by \$21,000 raising the total budget from \$1,802,771 to \$1,823,771.

In subsequent discussion, Mellinger clarified that Truck 66 has been paid for and that the \$40,694 payment is for another truck, and in response, McClintock noted that the \$80,000 down payment will be the only payment for a fire truck in FY13. Chief Vadakin also reported that the new truck will be used not only for fighting fires but will also function as a rescue/excavation vehicle responding to traffic accidents, which now account for 30% of the fire department's activity. Vadakin also noted that

- the Rescue Squad stopped excavating people from vehicles in 2003
- the new truck will be equipped with excavation tools and equipment
- Truck 66 has experienced significant downtime and is no longer "trustworthy"
- the problems in January 2012 were catalyst for a full analysis of finances and equipment replacement plans.

**FY12 Town Warning:** Dailey thanked McClintock for his presentation and then briefly reviewed house rules again, and reminded those present that a successful motion at the beginning of the meeting already dispensed with the reading of the Warning.

**Article 1:** A motion was made and seconded to waive the reading of and to accept the reports of the Town Officers as published, and the motion carried by voice vote and with no discussion

**Article 2, A-H:** A motion was made and seconded to pay an annual stipend in FY13 to be the same as the current year, and as follows

- Selectboard members of \$500
- The Town Treasurer of \$16,000
- The Town Clerk of \$8,000
- and to pay an hourly wage of \$10 per hour to each of the Board of Auditors, the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> Constables, and the Listers

and to also pay

- Ballot Clerks a minimum wage at \$8.46 per hour
- Planning Commission and Development Review Board members an annual stipend of \$100

and the motion carried by voice vote and with no discussion.

**Article 2, I:** A motion was made and seconded to establish a Park Reserve Fund, and after McClintock noted that

- funds designated for specific purposes can not be carried over from one year to the next unless held in a reserve fund
- there are grants available for improving town parks, which, in most instances, require matching funds
- this article simply establishes a reserve fund for the town parks, and does not in any way move funds into that reserve

the motion carried unanimously by voice vote.

**Article 3:** A motion was made and seconded

- to authorize the Town Treasurer to collect taxes
- to set the date by which property taxes should be paid for Friday, November 9, 2012 at 5:00pm.
- to authorize the Selectboard to borrow money from time to time, as needed, in anticipation of taxes

and the motion carried unanimously by voice vote, and with no discussion.

**Article 4:** A motion was made and seconded to amend the General Fund Budget by increasing that budget by \$21,000 from \$1,802,771 to \$1,823,771 an increase to fund the purchase of a fire and rescue truck to replace a fire truck (and as previously discussed in FY13 Budget Amendment paragraph above) and the motion carried unanimously and without discussion. A motion was then made and seconded to adopt the \$1,823,771 General Fund Budget for Fiscal Year 2013, and as presented and subsequently amended in the *Town of Shaftsbury Annual Report for the Year ending June 30, 2011* (pages 85-98, and the motion carried unanimously by voice vote and with no discussion.

**Article 5:** In response to Dailey's request for other business,

- a member of the Park McCullough House Board of Directors in North Bennington described some of the financial issues confronting the on-going operations of the historic location and noted that the Board of Directors is not only seeking support from local businesses and grant funding programs, but is also reaching out for the first time to surrounding communities for financial support (and as specifically requested in Article 31)
- Coons also spoke in support of the Park McCullough request, noting that the historic house, its outbuildings and grounds, are all part of the entire southern Vermont community, and that it is "everyone's house"
- Noting the absence of Ms Eleanor B Smith, a long-time participant at Shaftsbury's Annual Meeting, Mellinger said that Smith is now living in North Bennington and is "sorely missed"
- Mellinger thanked Pennebaker for his years of service to the town, during which he was instrumental in the successful award to the town of just under \$500,000 in grants, and was also instrumental in closing the landfill and with designing a system to monitor methane release at that location and at an extremely reasonable cost. And after noting that she enjoyed working with Pennebaker and that he will continue to be active on town committees, Pennebaker received a standing and enthusiastic ovation from all present.
- Covell reported that she is an employee of WBTV, a local not-for-profit radio station in Bennington serving the entire southwestern Vermont community, and noted that WBTV receives no federal or state funding, provides an eclectic variety of over 55 programs, presented detailed reports during Tropical Storm Irene as well as the recent teachers' strike, and that WBTV is currently experiencing financial hardship, and that she hopes the townspeople will support WBTV's request for \$2,000 in Article 49.

At 9:02pm, and after Daily reminded voters that the polls will be open at the Buck Hill Road Fire House 7am-7pm Tuesday March 6, 2012, and after an enthusiastic round of applause for the Selectboard and town administrators, a motion was made and seconded to adjourn the 2012 Town of Shaftsbury Annual Floor Meeting, and, by a strong voice vote, the motion carried unanimously.

Respectfully submitted,  
Richard G. Bump