

Shaftsbury Select Board Meeting

November 16, 2020

1. Call to Order

The meeting came to order remotely via the Zoom platform at 6:30 p.m. Present were select board members Tim Scoggins (chair), Tony Krulikowski, Ken Harrington, Joe Barber, and Art Whitman. Also present was town administrator David Kiernan and citizen Jeri Schoof.

2. Conflict of Interest Statement

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

3. Minutes

No minutes were circulated.

4. Warrants

Check warrant # 16, \$44,105.39. Mr. Krulikowski moved to approve the warrant. Mr. Whitman seconded the motion, which passed 5-0-0.

Payroll warrant # 9, \$23,182.18. Mr. Krulikowski moved to approve the warrant. Mr. Whitman seconded the motion, which passed 5-0-0.

Check warrant #15, the election warrant, \$1887.86. Mr. Krulikowski moved to approve the warrant. Mr. Whitman seconded the motion, which passed 5-0-0. All congratulated Marlene Hall on her terrific job during the election.

5. Announcements

Mr. Scoggins noted there are openings on the Development Review Board. If interested, citizens should email or call Mr. Kiernan or Mr. Scoggins.

6. Public Comments

There were none.

7. Treasurers Report

Ms. Dexter reported that she is pretty much done receiving taxes. She will prepare the delinquent warrant for Mert Snow later this week. It appears that the numbers will be higher than normal. Ms. Dexter said she'd gotten several angry calls about the taxes due date, which is not in agreement with either North Bennington or Bennington. Next year's might best be discussed at town meeting. She thinks the pandemic may have caused many people to lose track of time and so be late paying taxes.

A citizen donated \$5000 to the new dog park, which will show up in the Reserve spread sheet.

8. Town meeting 2021

Mr. Scoggins noted that the State has passed a law allowing towns to conduct town meeting via Australian ballot, and not hold an in-person town meeting in 2021 only. The law allows the selectboard to make that decision. Mr. Scoggins suggested thinking the issue over, and making a decision in December. Mr. Krulikowski wondered if a hybrid meeting could be held, with an informational meeting via Zoom in the evening and a vote the next day via Australian ballot. Mr. Kiernan said this is coming up now because the ballot must go to the printer in mid-January. Mr. Kiernan suggested asking Tom Daly, the elected moderator, what his wishes are.

9. 2020 Election

Mr. Scoggins noted that Marlene Hall, town clerk, and Gina Jenks, assistant town clerk, spent weeks counting absentee ballots and putting in time and effort above and beyond what is usually required. He and Mr. Whitman thought a stipend of \$1000 for the clerk and \$750 for the assistant clerk would be an appropriate “thank you” to the two, who brought off a hitch-free, very smooth election. Mr. Kiernan noted that the town has raised over \$30,000 in grants to cover the costs of the election, including a grant that Ms. Hall secured from the state clerk’s association. Mr. Whitman moved to give \$1000 to the clerk and \$750 to the assistant clerk in acknowledgement of the superb job they did handling the 2020 election. Mr. Krulikowski seconded the motion, which passed 5-0-0.

10. CUD update

Mr. Scoggins reported about 85% of Bennington County residents have Comcast cable. The recently completed feasibility study found that reaching the remainder will be an expensive proposition, and one it will be hard to finance alone. The CUD has entered into conversations with the Windham CUD to see what synergies might be possible.

Mr. Scoggins has learned that the cell phone coverage maps created for Shaftsbury can now be explored within the online state system. They could be helpful in choosing a carrier. A link to the interactive map can be found at shaftsburyvt.gov

11. DPW report

Brush cutting is continuing on Trumbull Hill Road. Laclair Road may need to be closed to address a culvert wash out which will require a head wall fix. Gravel is being added to parts of the road system in Hidden Valley. Clearing around a culvert at Hollow Hideaway is underway. Winter equipment is being readied. Demolition of the old garage began today. Thanks to DeLurey’s help, a \$9000 credit has been secured for a new International truck. A contingency plan that would allow the Town to operate with all crew members out because of Covid is being crafted. Private contractors would assist.

12. Community appropriations

Mr. Kieran is arranging for groups seeking community appropriations to present before the Select Board beginning on December 7.

13. Budget discussion

Mr. Kiernan said everything will be on the table this year. He’d like to hold a meeting on November 30 to kick off the budget discussion.

He will be asking for a new reserve fund this year, to replace the fire department’s **stock packs** on a rotating basis.

The state is imposing a communications fee for state police-based E911 fire dispatch, about \$1500 the first year, rising to about \$6000 in about four years, which the town will have to begin planning for. Alternative dispatch services are being explored. Chief Vadakin will report on those explorations at an upcoming board meeting.

14. Other business

Mr. Kiernan reported that he and Ms. Dexter will shortly have a Zoom meeting with the state bond bank to discuss a \$65,000 loan for construction planning for the water main project. It will affect only water customers. Design will take the bulk of 2021. Construction will take place in 2022 or early 2023.

Update on election grants: \$3700, \$20,000, and \$5000 grants have been received, which will go a long way toward covering extra personnel and equipment expenses for the election, and toward digitizing land records.

Mr. Harrington called Brown's Equipment for a price on a tractor this morning. Two other dealers haven't called back.

15. Public Comments

Jeri Schoof congratulated Melanie Dexter on her handling of taxes; she did a really great job. She also thought a hybrid virtual/Australian ballot town meeting was a good idea.

16. Review of Action Items

- Mr. Scoggins will work on why both Zoom hosts can't serve as hosts at the same time.
- Mr. Kiernan will schedule community appropriations presentations.
- A budget meeting will be held November 30.
- Joe Vadakin is researching dispatch options.
- The board will decide on what form Town Meeting should take during a December or very early January meeting.

17. Adjournment

Mr. Harrington moved to adjourn at 7:20 p.m. Mr. Whitman seconded the motion, which passed 5-0-0.