

Shaftsbury Select Board Special Meeting

April 27, 2023

In person at Cole Hall and remotely via Zoom

Call to order

The meeting came to order at 6:30 p.m. Present were selectpersons Art Whitman (chair), Mike Cichanowski, Martha Cornwell, and Naomi Miller. Also present were Mark Anders, transportation planner for the Bennington County Regional Commission, and Chrissy Haskins of Dufresne Engineering.

Conflict of interest

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

Grandview and Hawks Avenue sidewalk planning

Mr. Whitman noted that the Town sought and received a grant to explore placing sidewalks in the neighborhood. He said tonight's presentation on that project would offer a few options for residents and the town to consider.

Ms. Haskins presented. The goals of the project are to increase safety for pedestrians and to increase connectivity between the neighborhoods and North Bennington village.

The study found no environmental constraints of substance. (These might include wetlands, archaeological resources, endangered species, brownfield sites, and others.)

Criteria for the project were connectivity, minimizing easement requirements, and ADA compliance.

Alternatives considered included

Alternative 1: placing a five-foot sidewalk on the west side of Grandview, throughout its length lying within the right of way. Some trees and landscaping would need to come down and utility poles would need to be relocated. Storm drainage infrastructure would be required.

Alternative 2: placing the sidewalk on the east side of Grandview, within the right of way. Several trees and shrubs would need to be removed and four poles relocated. Storm drainage infrastructure would be required

Alternative 3: placing a sidewalk on the south side of Hawks Avenue. This would include curbing and would be within the right of way. This would require removal of trees and shrubs and relocation of several utility poles and perhaps a fire hydrant. Storm drainage infrastructure would be required

Alternative 4: placing a sidewalk on the north side of Hawks. There would be no curbing. Two poles and one fire hydrant might have to be relocated. It would be entirely within the right of way. Storm drainage infrastructure would be required

Speed tables were considered, but slope and lighting need to be explored.

Several criteria will be considered in ranking the alternatives, including road crossings, cost, maintenance, and others. Dufresne estimates that the alternatives, in order, would cost, in 2023 dollars, \$649,000; \$830,000; \$387,000; and \$412,000.

Next steps: the Select Board would choose a preferred alternative. Dufresne would refine that alternative. A draft report would be produced for the Town and Vtrans. A final presentation will be given and a final report will be submitted.

Questions, from the audience and selectperson, and answers followed.

If a speed table were to be placed, it would probably be placed about half-way up Grandview. A speed table could be placed on Hawks Avenue, on which there is already a street light. Each will be added as a line item in the final proposal.

A resident of the west side of Grandview said her family would be glad to have trees taken down for a sidewalk.

Mr. Whitman said the state is reviewing a request to sign Grandview regarding the presence of a blind child.

Ms. Haskins said the sidewalks would not impact water or sewer, but the storm drains could possibly impact those utilities. There are ways to work around them. All service mains would be mapped and located before the final plans were prepared.

Ms. Haskins said the new drainage system would be along the curb line on the road's edge.

Residents complained about truck traffic on Hawks Avenue. A resident asked that Hawks Avenue be made one way east to west.

A resident asked for speed tables immediately.

Mr. Whitman said signage re the 25m.p.h. speed limit will go up shortly and the new sheriff will begin enforcing the limit.

A resident said a light is needed at Grandview and Hawks.

A resident asked if there are other neighborhoods with sidewalks that might be referenced in seeking public support for a bond for the project. Mr. Kiernan noted the village sidewalk project and said he could provide present-day costs for it for discussion purposes. Mr. Kiernan said if the project were to be funded by state and federal funds, with a twenty-percent match being provided by the town, a bond might not be needed. A sinking fund could be instituted instead, since the start date would be a few years off. Mr. Anders noted that the competition for state and federal funds is high. Ms. Haskins said the project would be much less expensive if Vtrans were not involved. She also said the projects could be phased, one road at a time, and that the smaller projects might be more competitive.

Ms. Haskins said Vtrans could not fund a drainage only project (with soil rather than a sidewalk on top) because their projects have to be ADA compliant.

Ms. Haskins said the design cost would be about half, depending on what the town wants, if Vtrans funds were not used. Construction costs would also be less.

Ms. Haskins said Vtrans sometimes allows asphalt instead of concrete and sometimes does not.

Mr. Kiernan summarized next steps: survey the residents (via mail); phase 1, speed table designs and costs for both streets; phase 2, Grandview; and phase 3, Hawks.

The select board entered a discussion of the presentation. Questions included how the citizenry at large would respond to a bond request. The board wondered whether speed tables would serve to answer citizen complaints and perhaps make sidewalks unnecessary.

Mr. Kiernan said the new sheriff's office has been extremely cooperative.

The next select board meeting will be held on May 1.

Mr. Cichanowski noted that the citizen's scale at the transfer station is not functional. Mr. Kiernan said a new one will be installed. Or maybe a fee based on bag size would be better. It was agreed that the Select Board will discuss that option.

Adjournment

Ms. Cornwell moved to adjourn at 7:50 p.m. Ms. Miller seconded the motion, which passed 4-0-0.