

Town of Shaftsbury Select Board Meeting

Monday, June 3, 2024

In person at Cole Hall and remotely via Zoom

1. Call to Order

The meeting came to order at 6 p.m. Present were selectpersons Naomi Miller (chair), Mike Cichanowski, Brad Peacock, Martha Cornwell, and Tony Krulikowski. Also present were town administrator Paula Iken and webmaster and Zoom coordinator Jen Holley.

2. Conflict of Interest Statement

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

3. Minutes

Mr. Peacock moved to approve the May 2 minutes. Mr. Krulikowski seconded the motion, which passed 5-0-0.

Mr. Cichanowski moved to approve the May 30 minutes. Mr. Krulikowski seconded the motion, which passed 5-0-0.

4. Warrants

Check warrant #45, \$39,324.75. Mr. Cichanowski moved to approve the warrant. Mr. Krulikowski seconded the motion, which passed 5-0-0.

Water warrant #2, \$377.83. Mr. Cichanowski moved to approve the warrant. Mr. Peacock seconded the motion, which passed 5-0-0.

Payroll warrant #24, \$77,756.06. Mr. Cichanowski moved to approve the warrant. Mr. Krulikowski seconded the motion, which passed 5-0-0.

5. Announcements

Ms. Cornwell thanked all for attending the Memorial Day parade. Ms. Cornwell thanked the Town Clerk Marlene Hall and Victor Harwood, head of the veteran's committee.

6. Treasurers Report

Ms. Dexter reported that the cash balance at the end of May was \$190K+. She says she hopes the Town can get out tax bills in August or early September. The budget is very much on track. Our professional auditors will be visiting in August.

The reserve fund report shows a transfer to the Town Clerk's restoration fund. Ms. Dexter noted that the water board bookkeeper is struggling with her transition to the NEMRC accounting program.

7. Public Comments

There were none.

8. DPW Report

Ms. Holley reported on the DPW's activities on behalf of DPW foreman Yannotti. Two graders are on roads at once. The crew is mowing all the time. Ms. Iken noted that the crew is seeking a part-time person.

a. Opening of bids for paving White Creek Road

Ms. Miller opened two bids. The first, from Springfield Paving, was for \$215,234.80. The second, from Peckham Industries, was for \$266,268. The Select Board returned the bids to Mr. Yannotti, DPW foreman, for his review.

9. Brainstorming/Discussion of State guidelines on road maintenance

Ms. Miller introduced the discussion by saying, though Mr. Yannotti couldn't be present this evening, she decided to hold the discussion anyway. She thought the discussion would require a second, perhaps special meeting, at which time Mr. Yannotti can respond to comments received tonight in depth.

Ms. Carroll of Cold Spring Road spoke. She said she has concerns about the safety of the roads, particularly the size and depth of the ditches. She thinks they are wider and deeper than required by the state. They have virtually eliminated the shoulders, she said. Ron Jennings, from the audience, replied. He said he worked for the road crew for eleven years and said that when the crew ditches a road they maintain the width of the road, but go a little deeper in the ditch so it doesn't fill in before the crew can get back to maintain it. He also explained that removing trees helps roads dry out faster. It allows more sunlight to reach the road and reduces the length of time the road is covered in ice and snow.

Mr. Johnson from Cold Spring Road said he thinks trees reduce erosion and protect the road surface.

Ms. Carroll said that trees are very important, especially in a time of climate change. She notes that hundreds of trees have been taken down recently. Mr. Cichanowski noted that emerald ash borer is also an issue.

Ms. Iken noted there are programs that provide trees to landowners. Citizens might want to research such programs.

Mr. Whitman described the tree warden's authority, which is limited to "shade trees," Town-owned trees outside the road rights of way.

Mr. Peacock noted that the state requires that where tree roots are exposed by ditching, they must be trimmed back to avoid harm to the roots. He also noted that it appears that all ditches are not seeded immediately, as required. Selectboard members discussed seeding and hydroseeding.

Mr. Cichanowski said he thought the town's roads are a huge success story, created by the leadership of Mr. Yannotti. Ms. Miller said she thought there might be two or more priorities at work in re roads –compliance with state rules regarding their environmental impacts, and the safety of the driving public. Perhaps both can be addressed simultaneously.

Mr. Whitman noted that there are several pinch points caused by trees. Unless they are addressed, safety is compromised. He said the state has in effect ordered the town to take down all dead or dying ash trees in the right of way, as they are dangerous to drivers and tree workers. Emerald ash borer-infested trees must be taken down from the top down. He urged the selectpersons to pay more attention to taking down problem trees. He also recommended using the radar devices to target hot spots for speeding. He recommended the selectboard set priorities for the Town Administrator regarding road maintenance and public safety.

Ms. Carroll asked about restrictions on the size of vehicles that use the Town roads. Mr. Whitman said, after researching it, he testified that loaded town trucks are more destructive of town roads than multi-tire tractor trailers.

Ms. Miller suggested compiling the comments made in the gathering and reconvening a second meeting in the next few weeks to address the concerns.

10. Demolition of 43 Buck Hill Road

Ms. Iken asked for SB approval to pursue the demolition. She is working with Mr. Yannotti. Asbestos abatement will be involved. She will routinely update the board on their progress. She said she

also put the barn on the neighboring parcel up for auction, but unsuccessfully so far. It may also contain asbestos. Mr. Cichanowski moved to authorize the Town Administrator to explore the demolition of 43 Buck Hill Rd. and of the barn on the town-owned property. Mr. Krulikowski seconded the motion. The motion passed 5-0-0.

11. Grandview sidewalk next steps

Ms. Miller suggested two ways to move forward: citizens who would like a bond floated can get the bond on the ballot by petitioning (10% of eligible voters must sign the petition); or the Select Board could use its authority to decide whether to place the matter on the ballot. She thought the first option would maximize democratic involvement. Mr. Krulikowski agreed. Mr. Cichanowski also agreed and suggested that the process of securing petition signatures would build momentum for the idea, unlike an item simply placed on the ballot. Ms. Cornwell and Mr. Peacock also agreed. SB members thought it might require a special election. Ms. Miller will contact the Grandview neighbors to let them know a petition drive is needed.

12. Replacement of methane vent at landfill

Ms. Iken and Mike Yannotti are meeting with a representative from MSK on June 5. Another expert may be needed as well. She asked the selectpersons to approve proceeding on the repair, which was approved by the SB in 2023.

13. Other Business

Ms. Iken asked that the sale of a water truck owned by the Water Board be placed on the next Water Board agenda.

Mr. Peacock asked that the Town sponsor 1) a community garden and 2) the placing of a refrigerator at Cole Hall where Town residents could leave home-grown vegetables for the taking. Ms. Cornwell suggested speaking with the Growaway program at the Robert Frost Museum, which may have funds available. Ms. Cornwell and Mr. Peacock will explore.

14. Review of Action Items

Ms. Iken will reach out to Dave Mance III re danger trees.

A grant will be sought for a hydroseeder.

The conversation about road maintenance will be summarized and shared with the SB and the DPW foreman before the follow up discussion on those matters. Ms. Iken will reach out to Mr. Yannotti regarding checking in with other towns about those matters.

Ms. Miller will contact the Grandview neighbors.

Ms. Cornwell and Mr. Peacock will reach out to the Robert Frost Museum.

Shelly Stiles will compile the comments regarding road maintenance matters.

15. Adjournment

Mr. Cichanowski moved to adjourn at 7:31 p.m. Mr. Krulikowski seconded the motion, which passed 5-0-0.

16. Executive Session - Personnel