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Town of Shaftsbury

Municipal Offices at Cole Hall

Meeting Minutes

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Select Board

Date of Meeting: July 15, 2024

Members Present: Naomi Miller, Mike Cichanowski, Martha Cornwell, and Tony Krulikowski

1. Call to order

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

2. Conflict of interest statement

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

3. Minutes

Mr. Cichanowski moved to approve the July 1 2024 minutes. Mr. Krulikowski seconded the motion, which passed 4-0-0.

4. Warrants

Check warrant 25-002, \$71,098. 85. Mr. Cichanowski moved to approve the warrant. Mr. Krulikowski seconded the motion, which passed 4-0-0.

Payroll warrant 24-002, \$6721.48. Mr. Cichanowski moved to approve the warrant. Mr. Krulikowski seconded the motion, which passed 4-0-0.

5. Announcements

There were none.

6. Public comments

There were none.

7. Treasurer's report

Ms. Dexter announced that this is the day the select board will set the tax rate. Ms. Dexter explained that she had to adjust the taxes to be raised as shown in the town report by adding funds voted on at the

floor meeting, and by changes in three community appropriations as voted on via Australian ballot. The changes totaled an increase over the original published amount of about \$7,000, for an adjusted total of \$2,330.119. The latest grand list value as calculated by the assessor's office is \$4,181,477. (This total may change slightly in the weeks ahead.) After applying a number of "local agreement exemptions" on the grand list total (including homestead veterans, and grange and Shaftsbury community hall exemptions), the total municipal tax rate will need be 0.5616. For comparison, the municipal tax rate for the previous fiscal year was 0.5137. Also for comparison, a homestead taxpayer in the Shaftsbury school district will pay 5.4% more in the new fiscal year as compared to last; in the North Bennington school district, 9.6%. For non-homestead taxpayers in the Shaftsbury school district, the change will be 9.4%; in the North Bennington school district, 10.2%. Ms. Dexter asked for a vote, with the proviso that should anything change in the grand list value, the rate could be adjusted. Mr. Cichanowski moved to approve a tax rate of 0.5616 per \$100 assessed value for FY 2025. Mr. Krulikowski seconded the motion, which passed 4-0-0.

Ms. Dexter discussed the final cash flow report for FY 2024. The year ended with a balance of \$653,000+, which includes the transfer of ARPA funds to the general fund. Expenditures for the last year came in at about 101.3% of budget.

The reserve fund report included a large water payment to North Bennington, an economic development fund grant, and a transfer of ARPA funds to the general funds.

8. Development Review Board report (Ms. Miller asked that items 8 and 10 on the agenda be reversed to allow the chair to present.)

Michael Day reported on DRB activities in calendar year 2024 to date. He said it has been a very slow period as compared to previous years. He said the board has been authorized to have two alternate members, and while it would be nice to have them, the lack of such has not hindered the board in its work.

At Ms. Miller's request, Mr. Day described the duties of the DRB. He said the DRB routinely reviews some changes to uses, home occupations, variances, and other items. It does so via a hearing process, which includes a warning to the general public and abutting landowners. A decision must be rendered within 45 days of the close of the hearing. He mentioned a denial of a short term rental application that was appealed and then withdrawn by the applicant.

Mr. Day reassured the select board that the DRB didn't expect an increase in their stipend and would be glad to accept something much smaller.

9. Opening of bids to tear down 43 Buck Hill Road and the old barn

Ms. Iken said no asbestos has been found in either structure.

Matt Mose Excavating bid: \$48,000 for both

Fletcher's Excavating bid: \$58,500 for both

Weaver Excavating bid: \$49,000 for both

Kurtz Excavating: \$37,500 for both structures

Trevor Mance Excavating: \$28,925 for both structures

The bids will be passed along to the DPW foreman for his recommendation to be given at the next meeting.

10. CCDC report

Ms. Cornwell said the CCDC represents the merging of the former Town Green and Cole Hall committees and their missions. How to maximize the former ARPA funds and how to prioritize the actions needed to implement the ARPA committee's recommendation is top of their list. The recent opening of bids

is a step forward in that process. She noted that the sewer feasibility committee is also contributing to plans for the Cole Hall “campus.” She asked the Select Board to think about timelines and guidelines.

It was suggested that the mold issue in Cole Hall be addressed soon.

It was suggested that the land the town owns across Buck Hill might be kept in Town ownership. It might be needed for parking, or perhaps it could be rented for more than it would sell for.

11. Open meeting policy update

Ms. Iken shared a draft with the board. The board will review it.

12. Scheduling hearings on Enhanced Energy Plan (EEP)

As an aside, Ms. Iken asked whether the Select Board should schedule a third regular meeting in July. All agreed that the Board would permit the chair to sign warrants if that were all that were needed.

The EEP is an amendment to the existing Town Plan. It does not need to go to the voters for approval. The Select Board can make changes to the proposed EEP if it deems necessary.

It was agreed to schedule the first hearing on August 19. The Select Board will meet on September 9 and September 23. The second hearing on the EEP will be held on September 23.

13. Discuss on CCDC guidelines and vision

Mr. Cichanowski said he’d like to see some proposed costs for the various project ideas. Ms. Cornwell noted that funds can’t be expended until after the March 2025 town meeting. The town meeting could be the deadline for presenting a project proposal for both Cole Hall and the green. She explained that the CCDC would attempt to re-envision what should happen at Cole Hall, since we have learned that much of the original plans are unaffordable. Ms. Miller suggested that perhaps some of what Cole Hall was going to provide could instead be provided by the community center. Ms. Miller said she imagines that many community partners will be willing to write letters of support for future grant requests. Ms. Cornwell said perhaps phase 1 could be the renovation of Cole Hall, possibly with a MERF grant (that to date has been stalled). Perhaps phase 2 could be the community green and center, and phase 3 housing. Ms. Cornwell said the CCDC should outline by January what functions each of the spaces – Cole Hall, town green and community center, and 43 Buck Hill Rd. – should serve. Mr. Cichanowski noted that the sewer feasibility study will impact all plans. Everyone agreed that going forward Ms. Miller would serve as the Select Board representative on the CCDC. Also due by March, suggested Ms. Cornwell, should be a visualization of plans for the campus so Town Meeting voters might have something more concrete to vote on.

14. Other business

Ms. Iken said Ryan Jones of a clothing recycler asked if he might move the recycled clothing bin in front of the Country Store to Cole Hall so the Store could add a parking space. Mrs. Watson said her daughter Gabrielle owns the land on which the dumpster sits. She isn’t interested in providing more parking there for the Country Store. The board did not approve locating the dumpster at Cole Hall.

A resident asked about salvaging materials inside 43 Buck Hill. It was agreed that it is an unsafe location and no one should be allowed in to salvage items.

Ms. Iken said Mr. Yannotti has found a truck he’d like to purchase for \$15,050. It has a utility box. It would replace the water truck. It would be used for both DPW and water department activities. The price could be offset by the sale of the old water truck. Mr. Cichanowski moved to purchase the truck for up to \$15,050. Mr. Krulikowski seconded the motion. The board discussed how the purchase and sale will be handled in the treasurer’s office. The motion passed 4-0-0.

15. Review of action items

Mr. Yannotti will review the bids for the demolition.

Reach out to the CCDC, schedule a meeting.

The open meeting policy will be reviewed and adopted at the next meeting.

Warn the EEP hearings for August 19 and September 23.

The next meeting will be held August 5.

16. Adjournment

Mr. Krulikowski moved to adjourn at 7:42 p.m. Mr. Cichanowski seconded the motion, which passed 4-0-0.