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Town of Shaftsbury

Municipal Offices at Cole Hall

Meeting Minutes

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Shaftsbury, VT
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Select Board & Water Board

Date of Meeting: Monday September 9, 2024

Members Present: Naomi Miller (chair), Martha Cornwell, Mike Cichanowski, Brad Peacock. Also present was Town Administrator, Paula Iken and Operations Coordinator, Jen Holley.

Select Board

1) Call to order

The meeting came to order at 6 p.m.

2) Conflict of interest

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

3) Minutes

Mr. Cichanowski moved to approve the August 26 special meeting minutes. Mr. Peacock seconded the motion, which passed 4-0-0.

Mr. Cichanowski moved to approve the August 19 minutes. Mr. Peacock seconded the motion. Ms. Cornwell noted that Mr. DeTesso's name was misspelled. The amended motion passed 4-0-0.

4) Warrants

- Invoice warrant 25-0074, \$122,229.15. Mr. Cichanowski moved to approve the warrant. Mr. Peacock seconded the motion, which passed 4-0-0.
- Payroll check warrant 5, \$30,231.89. Mr. Cichanowski moved to approve the warrant. Mr. Peacock seconded the motion, which passed 4-0-0.
- Payroll/VT retirement/worker's compensation (PRWO) 2, \$18,097.31. Mr. Cichanowski moved to approve the warrant. Mr. Peacock seconded the motion, which passed 4-0-0.
- For a check already cut (and signed by Ms. Miller, after earlier approval by the Select Board), for the first of five payments on the DPW's new Ford 150 truck. Mr. Cichanowski moved to approve the warrant. Mr. Peacock seconded the motion, which passed 4-0-0.

5) Announcements

Ms. Cornwell noted that the last hearing on the enhanced energy plan will be held at the September 23 Select Board meeting.

She said a public meeting with Vtrans will be held on September 30 to discuss their proposed diversion of Route 7 traffic to Route 7A southward from Sunderland through Shaftsbury, to allow for the installation of a new culvert on Route 7. The meeting will be held at the elementary school beginning at 6 p.m.

A discussion of roads, their maintenance, and state guidelines regarding maintenance will be held September 11 at the town garage, beginning at 5:30 p.m. The state guidelines are posted on the website home page.

6) Public comments

Mr. Robin Outwater of Bennington spoke about traffic entering and leaving the Buck Stop (the former Paulin's) on Route 7A in town. He asked why the speed zone changes from 40 to 25 at the Buck Stop going southward. The north-bound route is signed differently. He said he asks because he had trouble seeing over trucks parked between the gas pumps and the edge of the road at the Buck Stop. He said he almost had an accident there recently. Mr. Outwater said he approached the state, who told him the Town of Shaftsbury must request any change in the speed limit. He asked if the Buck Stop might be asked to delineate a no parking area between the gas pumps and edge of highway. Ms. Holley said the problem is going to be that there are three different owners of the facility. The group discussed how action might be taken. Ms. Iken said she'd been trying to contact the owners for some time, and she would continue to do so.

Ms. Bacchi said the 2024 renewable energy conference will occur on October 16 and 17 in Burlington. Discounts are available to town committee members.

7) Treasurer's report

Tabled.

8) Assessors request for town map alignment

Gina Jenks, assessor's assistant, shared maps showing how our mapping program is un-aligned with the underlying orthophotography. She said Mr. Rossi, owner of CAI, prepared a quote of what it would cost to repair the issue in various zones in town that Ms. Jenks consider high priority. The total cost would be \$14,200 if done all at once. Ms. Jenks said we have enough money in the re-appraisal fund to cover these costs.

Ms. Iken noted that it isn't only Shaftsbury that has this problem, but instead it is most of the towns in the state. Ms. Jenks explained that the state gives the town \$8.50 annually for every active parcel. Those funds have been saved since the last reappraisal. Those funds far exceed the projected cost of the new appraisal. If we don't use all those funds, said Ms. Jenks, the state will take the remainder back.

Mr. Peacock moved to expend \$14,200 in reappraisal funds to address map realignment in zones considered high-priority by Ms. Jenks. Mr. Cichanowski seconded the motion, which passed 4-0-0.

Ms. Jenks shared a postcard that has been prepared to give citizens notice that the assessors will be visiting. The landowners can make an appointment if wished. She said the assessors do not take photos of the interior. If the resident is not there to let the assessors into the home, a card will be left with instructions as to how to get more information on the process and on the assessment for that particular piece of property. The resident can request the information be changed if it is incorrect.

Ms. Jenks noted that everyone's assessment is going to go up greatly. That will not mean, however, that the taxes will go up proportionally to the increase in the property's value.

She said the assessors are highly trained, having gotten at least six years of schooling in the procedures. They don't assign a value themselves, but instead input data which is analyzed by a program designed for such purpose. Ms. Jenks urged anyone with questions to contact her at assessors@shaftsburyvt.gov.

9) Energy Committee

Report from energy committee on proposed use of MERP grant

Andrea Bacchi, chairperson of the energy committee, reported that the Town has been awarded a Municipal Energy planning grant (acronym MERP) for \$4000. She said the energy committee is recommending that some portion of that grant be spent developing a bi-weekly or monthly email newsletter for interested persons on renewable energy and energy efficiency. It would provide resource information for interested persons such as news about upcoming events, rebate opportunities, various website links. She asked for approval for the effort from the Select Board. The Select Board granted their approval.

Discussion of energy coordinator appointment

Ms. Miller said the new enhanced energy plan calls for the appointment of an energy coordinator. (Ben Hulett was at one time that person, but his appointment long ago expired though he continues to serve.) Ms. Miller said in other towns, the energy coordinator serves as a liaison between the committee and the Select Board. She suggested that the coordinator be an energy professional as that person may be asked to make timely recommendations to the Select Board. She suggested that person be a member of the energy committee. She said it is an appointed, voluntary position. She said the committee itself could recommend a member of the committee to serve in that capacity. Ms. Bacchi will ask the committee members to appoint a coordinator. Ms. Miller said the Bennington County Regional Commission has a job description for an energy coordinator on their website. The committee might want to pare down the description there to tailor it to the Town. Ms. Bacchi will report back to the Select Board via email once the process of securing an energy coordinator has been completed.

10) Rides to polls on Nov. 5th

Ms. Iken encouraged people to contact the town clerk should they wish transport to the polls on Election Day. Ms. Hall has applied for and received a grant for \$5000 which could be used in part to hire a driver to help such people. Ms. Cornwell said she'd noticed that some elders have trouble navigating from their cars over gravel to the doors to the garage. She asked that this issue be addressed by the driver or signage or other means. Ms. Miller said a small subcommittee will work on the matter with Ms. Hall in the next couple of weeks and describe their progress at the next meeting.

11) Other business

There was none.

12) Review of action items

- Ms. Cornwell reminded all that a few meetings and a hearing are described on the website.
- The Board and Ms. Iken will follow up with Buck Stop and Vtrans regarding, for the former, unsafe parking near the highway and for the latter, confusion over just what is the speed limit in front of the store.

- A subcommittee will be formed to work with the town clerk on getting rides for folks needing assistance on Election Day.
- In upcoming meetings, announcements re the need for volunteer drivers will be made.

13) Adjournment

Mr. Cichanowski moved to adjourn at 7:09 p.m. Mr. Peacock seconded the motion, which passed 4-0-0.

Water Board

1) Call to order

The Water Board meeting came to order at 7:20 p.m. Present were those in attendance at the Select Board meeting as well as Josh Brace, water superintendent.

2) Conflict of interest

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

3) Minutes

There were none.

4) Request for additional water allocation

Mr. Brace reported he'd talked with Ted Fela, the gentleman who conducted the so-called state sanitary survey (and the former North Bennington water superintendent). Mr. Fela has amended the required minimum capacity to 67,113 gallons per day (gpd). The new water system could reduce that amount significantly. Should any new connections be considered, the new minimum would need to be raised to 75,000 gpd. Any new connections would need to be approved by North Bennington.

Mr. Brace suggested writing a letter to the North Bennington Water Board asking for an increase in Shaftsbury's allocation to 67,114 gpd. Should they refuse to increase our allocation, the State will levy fines against Shaftsbury. Mr. Brace said Mr. Fela did not specify the size of the fines that might be levied, but he imaged they would be significant. Mr. Brace said no allocation increase had been requested for at least five years because during that time Shaftsbury, North Bennington, and the State had an informal agreement that the allocation need not be official. Things have changed for all parties, however, and now an official agreement is required by the State.

Mr. Brace said North Bennington does not have to agree to increase the allocation. When he asked some time back whether the superintendent thought the North Bennington Water Board would increase the allocation, he said "no." Mr. Brace said he gets along very well with the new North Bennington superintendent and staff and that when he needs help they are always glad to offer it.

Mr. Brace said there is no deadline for securing the allocation increase. He said he thinks the State will be patient as long as progress is being made.

Mr. Cichanowski said it was his understanding that the reservoir isn't big enough to meet the state's requirements. Mr. Brace essentially agreed, saying we could depend on getting all the water we need but not necessarily what the state says we might need. Mr. Brace said he would ask Mr. Fela when fines

might be levied should North Bennington say “no,” when they would be levied, and how much they would be. Ms. Iken will draft the allocation increase letter which the Select Board can sign at the next meeting.

The sanitary survey asked to see the system manual. Shaftsbury doesn't have one any longer. The State asks that it be submitted by January 1. Mr. Brace will write it up and submit it in a timely fashion.

Mr. Brace said he will be collecting lead and copper pipe samples in the next couple of months. Mr. Brace will follow up with residents with copper pipes should the samples indicate action is needed. The lead inventory is due October 17. The study done by Otter Creek Engineering not too long ago collected a lot of the necessary information but 71 addresses are as yet unsampled.

Mr. Brace said he hopes a new State regulation regarding having a plan for galvanized lines shouldn't be an issue because the system will be replaced shortly. Mr. Brace hopes to start phase 1 of the replacement in calendar year 2026. The second and third phases will be much harder to implement as funding must be secured.

5) Other business

Mr. Cichanowski moved to go into executive session at about 7:40 p.m. Mr. Peacock seconded the motion, which passed 4-0-0.