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# Town of Shaftsbury

Municipal Offices at Cole Hall

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Shaftsbury, VT  
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## Meeting Minutes

### Select Board and Water Board Meeting

**Date of Meeting:** November 18, 2024 in person at Cole Hall and remotely via Zoom

**Members Present:** Naomi Miller (chair), Martha Cornwell, and Brad Peacock. Also present were Melanie Dexter (treasurer), Jen Holley (operations manager), and Paula Iken (town administrator) as well as citizens.

1. Call to Order

The meeting came to order at 6:00 p.m.

2. Conflict of Interest Statement

There were none reported.

3. Minutes

Mr. Peacock moved to approve the minutes for the November 4 select board meeting. Ms. Cornwell seconded the motion, which passed 3-0-0.

4. Warrants

- Check warrant 25-013, \$71,818.83. Mr. Peacock moved to approve the warrant. Ms. Cornwell seconded the motion, which passed 3-0-0.
- Water warrant #1, \$369.08. Mr. Peacock moved to approve the warrant. Ms. Cornwell seconded the motion, which passed 3-0-0.
- Payroll warrant 24-012, \$25,020.46. (This check was signed the day following the November 4 meeting but was not approved at that meeting.) Mr. Peacock moved to approve the warrant. Ms. Cornwell seconded the motion, which passed 3-0-0.

5. Announcements

There were none.

6. Public Comments

Mr. Fran Kinney spoke. He said he'd been harassed by election workers on election day over his wearing of a Trump hat. He offered details. He said, additionally, zoning administrator Shelly Stiles left a message the next day regarding a "structure." He considered the call, too, a form of harassment. Ms. Cornwell pointed out that a sign prohibiting political expression at the polling place was located on the door to the polling place. Select Board members suggested Mr. Kinney contact his state representative should he wish the state to change its laws regarding political expression at the polls.

7. Treasurer's Report

Ms. Dexter commented on the cash flow report. She noted she took in \$3.7+ million in the first twelve days of November. She noted that some taxpayers took advantage of paying online, allowed until midnight on due day. She answered questions regarding the state's PILOT program and a "Hold Harmless"

account. The cash balance is \$7+ million. School taxes have not been distributed so this figure will go down significantly in the near future.

Regarding the reserve funds, a truck that Mr. Yannotti auctioned off brought in more than \$9000 for the equipment fund. Water bills went out so water payments will begin coming in.

8. DPW Report

The crew is preparing for winter.

9. 43 Buck Hill Road tax abatement

Ms. Dexter reported that our professional auditors and VLCT have advised that a tax abatement is not allowed for the property purchased by the Town after the Grand List was "frozen." (Our accounting system has assigned "taxes due" to the property of a little more than \$3000, yet the Town cannot reasonably tax itself.) Ms. Cornwell moved to have Ms. Dexter make a journal entry in NEMRC reducing to zero the taxes owed on 43 Buck Hill Road. Mr. Peacock seconded the motion, which passed 3-0-0.

10. Discussion of SES Generator

Ms. Iken said the elementary school could indeed serve as a Red Cross shelter as long as it has an alternative energy supply. As long as the generator is maintained and fueled, the school has that energy supply. Ms. Iken suggested that the town has a paucity of emergency shelter options, and that every one should be kept functional. Emergency management director Paul Dansereau told Ms. Iken he would recommend conducting a joint assessment with the school and Red Cross of the use of the school as a shelter. Following that, he would recommend that formal MOUs be drafted between all three parties, outlining specific personnel roles and responsibilities pertaining to opening, staffing, and supplying the facility for use as the shelter. Mr. Peacock asked about solar power for the school site. Ms. Miller pointed out that the Town owns the land under the school but not the school building. Ms. Iken said the issue could be tabled, and that an Local Emergency Management Plan committee could be established after the holidays to consider what to do going forward. Meanwhile, Ms. Iken will look into the costs of maintenance.

11. CCDC Update & Proposed Addition to Membership

Ms. Iken reported that in recent months the suitability of the basement in Cole Hall has come into question, causing the committee to wonder whether the building could continue to house all the staff now using it. The committee has looked into several options for the community center/town offices (such as modular and stick-built structures). All such options would require much more money than the Town currently has.

The committee has recently begun to consider purchasing the former Shaftsbury Medical Center for a community center and town offices. Mr. Ben Benedict, architect, has volunteered to serve on the committee and help with these tasks. Ms. Iken wished the board to consider his membership. Ms. Miller described him as a former Town facilities committee member, and an architect with experience in old and new buildings. His skills could be important to the committee, but it would necessitate changing the structure of the committee by adding the function of "architect" to the committee membership. Adding Mr. Benedict would result in a total of seven persons on the committee. Mr. Peacock moved to amend the structure of the CCDC to include an architect's function. Ms. Cornwell seconded the motion, which passed 3-0-0. Mr. Peacock moved to appoint Ben Benedict to the committee. Ms. Cornwell seconded the motion, which passed 3-0-0.

12. Other Business

The board discussed using ARPA funds to cover the Monument Electric bill to install new wiring throughout the upstairs. Ms. Iken reminded citizens that in the near future and for an indefinite time the zoning administrator and treasurer will be located in the trailer; the assessor will move to the treasurer's office; the town clerk will move to the administrator's office; and the administrator will move to the zoning

administrator's office. Mr. Peacock moved to expend \$4835 in remaining ARPA funds on the Monument Electric bill. Ms. Cornwell seconded the motion, which passed 3-0-0.

Ms. Cornwell asked Ms. Iken about progress on demolition downstairs. She said she'd spoken with Mr. Yannotti regarding the Town's requirement that contractors to have their own workers compensation insurance. He explained it was cost-prohibitive for many small contractors working, often, small jobs. Not all towns require this. Ms. Iken said she is still waiting for a visit from Jamie Duggan, the state masonry expert, before taking any action downstairs.

#### 13. Review of Action Items

- LEMP plan and discussion on use of batteries at SES
- Cost estimates for generator servicing
- Jamie Duggan

#### 14. Adjournment

Mr. Peacock moved to adjourn at about 6:50 p.m. Ms. Cornwell seconded the motion, which passed 3-0-0.

#### Water Board meeting

##### 1. Call to order

The meeting came to order at about 6 p.m.

##### 2. Conflict of interest

No one reported a conflict.

##### 3. Public comments

There were none.

##### 4. Discussion of meeting with North Bennington Water Commission

Ms. Miller reported that she, Ms. Iken, and Josh Brace (water superintendent) attended the meeting on November 6. She thought the Commission is willing to consider increasing our allocation once we understand the discrepancy between real use and metered use. They wish to remedy the divide that has occurred between the two towns. They'd like to work with us to determine what part of the missing water is due to leaks, and to encourage us to fix any leaks. They volunteered their water superintendent to help Mr. Brace find the leaks. Ms. Miller asked the water board whether this seemed a good plan.

Ms. Cornwell asked how this was to be accomplished, because Mr. Brace had indicated he had checked for leaks and thought they weren't particularly significant. He thought instead the discrepancy was caused by malfunctioning meters (caused by sediment accumulation). Ms. Miller said the N.B. commission asked for documentation to that effect. She also said she'd heard that state personnel have access to a kind of super leak-detection device, which might be of help to us. She would like to ask Mr. Brace to look into this. Mr. Brace suggests phasing in the replacing of the meters (while the pipes are being replaced), in part so they all won't fail at the same time. Ms. Iken wondered whether the older meters could be replaced first, as they might be causing the greatest problem. Board members discussed the cost of new meters, a total of about \$100 each plus a digital monitoring fee. Who would be responsible for the costs was unclear.

Ms. Miller and Ms. Iken will send a letter to North Bennington and counsel Mr. Brace to work with the North Bennington water superintendent.

##### 5. Other business

There was none.

##### 6. Review of action items

##### 7. Adjournment

Mr. Peacock moved to adjourn at a little after 7 p.m. Ms. Cornwell seconded the motion, which passed 3-0-0.