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Town of Shaftsbury

Municipal Offices at Cole Hall

Meeting Minutes

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Special Select Board Meeting

Date of Meeting: December 9, 2024 in person at Cole Hall and remotely via Zoom

Members Present: Naomi Miller (chair), Martha Cornwell, Mike Cichanowski, and, via Zoom, Brad Peacock and Tony Krulikowski. Also present was Paula Iken (town administrator) as well as several citizens.

1. Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 6 p.m.

2. Conflict of Interest Statement

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

3. Presentation of CCDC Recommendations

Committee chair Zoe Contros Kearn and committee member Ben Benedict presented via a Powerpoint presentation the committee's recommendations re a new community center. Ms. Contros Kearn started by recounting a short history of the committee.

- The CCDC is an ad hoc committee combining the former Cole Hall committee and the community center committee. Membership represents staff, town boards and commissions, and various citizen constituencies.
- In 2022, the former ARPA committee conducted a survey of citizens as to how to spend ARPA funds. A follow up survey in 2023 found that citizens wished to create a community center and Town Green.
- The CCDC explored just what a community center should provide. Various uses were suggested – a meeting space, health care and social services, regular meals served from a warming kitchen – and others.
- While the CCDC was meeting, the ground floor of Cole Hall became unusable for permanent office space.
- CCDC members met with modular building companies and explored stick built structures and found that a new community center of a size and with the facilities needed by the citizens could cost more than a million dollars.
- The committee recommends the acquisition of the former Shaftsbury Medical Center for town offices/community center and that Cole Hall, once renovated, becomes the community center. The former medical center can offer meeting space, picnic areas, social services, clinics, meal services and other uses as well as town office space.

Mr. Benedict described the Medical Center.

- It is a 4413 s.f. condominium that shares a two-acre lot with a dental office.
- There is parking for about 24 vehicles.
- Built in 1978, it is a combination wood post and beam structure with exterior fiberglass.
- There are several skylights.
- Flooring is a combination of carpet, vinyl flooring, and quarry tile.
- There are three bathrooms, none technically ADA compliant.
- Several exam rooms and a procedure room contain sinks.
- The site is bright and airy, even serene. It is an easy walk from there to the post office, school and other downtown features.
- Roof replacement is on the horizon at a cost of about \$20,000.
- The carpet needs replacing, all walls need repainting, and some walls need moving to make room for the vault or to reconfigure office spaces, all at a cost of \$90,000.
- The Town clerk is looking into what a new vault would cost.
- The existing propane HVAC system is functioning but seems to be nearing the end of its useful life. Replacement could cost \$16,000/unit and could be energy efficient. Energy costs when the building was fully used were about \$500-600 monthly.
- If the Town were to buy the building at the asking price and expend up to \$150,000 on renovations the cost would be about \$120/s.f., about half the cost of a new building.

Mr. Benedict guided board members through a review of the site plans for the building. Ms. Cornwell noted that some of the walls could be easily removed and the spaces reconfigured. Town Clerk Marlene Hall said she thought the building could be used for elections. The medical center occupies 70% of the building, the dental clinic 30%. The utilities are separate, except for the septic system. Ms. Iken reported that the Vermont League of Cities and Towns advise that there is no concern with entering into a condominium purchase. Rob Steuer on Zoom said he thinks it would be good idea to purchase the building.

4. Executive Session: Legal and Personnel

Mr. Cichanowski moved to enter executive session at 6:37 p.m. Ms. Cornwell seconded the motion, which passed 5-0-0.

On return from executive session, Mr. Cichanowski moved to appoint Missy Johnson as the new zoning administrator. Ms. Cornwell seconded the motion, which passed 5-0-0.

Mr. Cichanowski and Ms. Cornwell recused themselves from the vote on the former medical center building as they both have a personal relationship with the owner David King. Mr. Krulikowski moved to enter into negotiations to purchase the former medical center building. Mr. Peacock seconded the motion, which passed 3-0-0.

5. Review of Action Items

6. Adjournment

Mr. Krulikowski moved to adjourn at 7:12 p.m. Mr. Peacock seconded the motion, which passed 3-0-0.