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Town of Shaftsbury

Municipal Offices at Cole Hall

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Meeting Minutes

Select Board Meeting

Date of Meeting: December 16, 2024 in person at Cole Hall and remotely via Zoom

Members Present: Naomi Miller (chair), Mike Cichanowski, 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. Minutes

Mr. Krulikowski moved to approve the minutes of the special meeting held December 9. Mr. Cichanowski seconded the motion, which passed 4-0-0.

4. Announcements

There were none.

5. Warrants

Check warrant 25-016, \$164,094.16. Mr. Krulikowski moved to approve the warrant. Mr. Cichanowski seconded the motion, which passed 4-0-0.

6. Public Comments

David Durfee, state representative, reported that he'd heard feedback from Town residents during the campaign and thought he would share those comments, which focused on speeding on Town roads, drug activity on Twitchell Hill Rd., property taxes, and fuel costs. To elaborate, he noted that speeding State contractors on White Creek Road required attention from the Sheriff's office. Mr. Durfee reached out to Vtrans about this. He noted the statewide average education tax increase was about 14% last year, but in Shaftsbury only about 3%. He noted that citizens vote on school taxes. Finally, a false rumor started by big oil companies circulated that a \$3/gallon tax was going to be imposed on fuel oil. This is not true.

7. Library Representatives

Kyra Howard of the Martha Canfield Library in Arlington spoke. She said they are asking for \$2,200. More than 145 patrons are Shaftsbury residents. She mentioned the library's meeting room, the Russell Collection of local history, and their computers and books.

Wendy Sharkey of the Bennington Free Library said they are requesting \$19,282, an increase of 3.5% over the last two years. Insurance costs have gone up 30%, even the cost of books has gone up. The number of Shaftsbury residents the library serves has increased by 12% over the past year. An increasing percentage of traffic to the library is digital, even as the number of visitors to the library has gone up 10% in the last year. The library has received a \$1.5 million grant to upgrade their HVAC system. She said she hopes it will help provide some major savings and stabilize their budget in years to come. The library hopes to encourage young people and young adults to visit the library. Ms. Sharkey will let the Select Board know how many of its patrons are Shaftsbury residents.

Jenny Rozicki of McCullough Library in North Bennington spoke. The library requests a 3% increase over last year's request. About one third of its patrons are Shaftsbury residents. Use of the library, physical and digital, keeps growing. The library received a \$20,000 grant for accessible shelving. They are working on improvements to the youth room. They are establishing a fund so the library staff can be appropriately and reasonably compensated for their work. The fund will be managed by the Vermont Community Foundation. The library is holding an owls presentation at the Elementary School in February.

8. Park McCullough House Request

Kelly Clark Harrington spoke on behalf of the McCullough House. She asked to increase the amount from the town from \$1,500 to \$3,500. The House's grounds are open to free to the public 365 days a year. Parking is provided as well for Mile Around Woods. She said revenue from renting out the space is challenging, because it requires additional staff time. And it has been hard to keep staff on, as everyone is part-time and often move on full time jobs. To reduce costs they are thinking about cutting back the hours the museum is open. They are holding off on replacing employees that have had to resign. Their programming will have to be cut back.

9. Treasurer's Report

Melanie Dexter reported on the cash flow report. Some late changes were made to tax bills resulting in later tax receipts. Delinquent taxes usually and this year came in shortly after the due date.

The reserve fund report illustrates the zeroing out of two accounts. Water bills are due December 20.

10. DPW Report

Ms. Iken reported for Mr. Yannotti that the crew is working on filling potholes, preparing for the next storm, and filling the sand shed.

11. Opening, Cemetery Mowing Bids

Ms. Miller opened the bids. Cutter Landscaping bid, for one season, \$45,000 at a rate of \$75/hour. Sycamore Landscaping bid, for one season, \$38,500 at a rate of \$85/hour.

12. Medical Building Purchase

Ms. Iken said an offer was made last week for \$375,000, the asking price. A letter of intent was signed by the Town and the owner Dr. King. A \$10,000 deposit was placed in escrow. The inspection will be held December 17 at 1 p.m. Mr. Krulikowski and Mr. Peacock will attend. Ms. Miller said we have been advised to get an environmental inspection.

13. Jim Henderson, BCRC, update

Mr. Henderson said he is the environmental planner at the Regional Commission and manages its brownfields program. He said the old medical center isn't a typical brownfield site but is of concern because of the building's age and the building materials that were probably used in its construction back in the 1960s. He is in discussion with the firm Weston and Sampson, which has experience with PFOAs, for example, in Pownal. They have agreed to fast track a Phase 1 environmental assessment on the medical center. Mr. Henderson described the sort of concerns they'd be looking to identify. Why the assessment? It would be needed, for example, to secure future access to funding. If concerns are identified, the assessment would move to a Phase 2, involving water and soil testing among other possible actions. Should it be necessary, it would be followed by a corrective action plan. The BCRC can help fund the two assessments and the corrective action plan – as long as the Town has enrolled in the brownfield re-use limited liability program, at a cost of \$500. It would protect the Town from most contaminants that haven't yet been discovered, including hazardous chemicals. An application must be submitted to the State Department of Environmental Conservation. It comes with a 30-day comment period. He said Weston and Sampson would handle the application process. Mr. Henderson explained who would do what if it were learned that a deeper investigation was needed. He said Weston and Sampson could promise to present the results of the assessment verbally by February 7. He said it is fortunate that the landowner has agreed to participate and has signed the paperwork required. He said it usually takes a couple of weeks for DEC to review the Town's application.

14. Community Appropriations, schedule of meetings

Ms. Iken said she's still waiting to hear from six organizations. Anyone wanting an increase must appear before the Select Board no later than the next meeting.

15. Budget Update

Ms. Miller said two budget meetings will be held in January.

16. Other Business

Mr. Henderson said the DPW will be submitting through the BCRC a grant request to upsize a culvert on Murphy Hill Road.

17. Executive Session, personnel

Mr. Cichanowski moved to enter executive session. Mr. Krulikowski seconded the motion, which passed 4-0-0.

On return from the executive session, Mr. Cichanowski moved to enter into the agreement with the State of Vermont, with the assistance of BCRC and at a cost of \$500, to pursue an environmental assessment of the old medical center building. Mr. Krulikowski moved to second the motion, which passed 4-0-0.

18. Review of Action Items

19. Adjournment

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