



www.shaftsburyvt.gov

Town of Shaftsbury

Municipal Offices at Cole Hall

PO Box 409
61 Buck Hill Road
Shaftsbury, VT
05262-0409
(802) 442-4038

Meeting Minutes

Town of Shaftsbury Select Board Meeting

Date of Meeting: Monday, July 21, 2025, at 6:00 PM, in person at Cole Hall and remotely via Zoom.

1. Call to Order

The meeting came to order at 6:00 PM. Present were selectpersons Zoe Contros Kearn (Chair), Naomi Miller (Vice-Chair), Mike Cichanowski, and Brad Peacock. Also present were Town Administrator Paula Iken, Treasurer Melanie Dexter, prospective Special Projects Coordinator Martha Cornwell, and Art Whitman, Water Dept. consultant.

2. Conflict of Interest Statement

No conflicts of interest with any item on the agenda.

3. Minutes

The July 7th minutes were reviewed. Ms. Contros Kearn asked for a motion to approve. Mr. Cichanowski moved; Ms. Miller seconded. The July 7th minutes were approved without amendment 3-0-1. Mr. Peacock abstained as he was not present at the July 7th meeting.

4. Announcements and Updates

Ms. Iken gave an update on progress at the new town office building. Wiring, including for phones and computers, is being worked on this week, then the next project will be determined.

Ms. Iken forwarded an update on reappraisals from Gina Jenks: Reappraisals are in full swing with assessors going door to door in the community. Postcards are mailed out a week or 2 before the assessors visit a street. Some of the residents that did not get the interior looked at will receive an additional postcard that includes the assessor's office phone number to call and set up time for an interior visit. Residents who have not received a postcard for an interior visit but know that the assessors have visited their street can call the assessor's office at 1 802 442-4038. Option 103 to schedule. Information is also on the Town website. Ms. Jenks reminded residents to file HS 122 (Homestead), even if they don't need to file state taxes. The Assessor's office is always happy to answer any questions.

Ms. Holley noted that this Sunday is 4th Sunday for Veterans, at the Center Cemetery at 9:00 AM.

5. Warrants

Check warrant report #26003 \$115,621.69

Items over \$1,000.00:

A & K Agri Services: \$2,429.60 Gravel

Bennington County: \$34,638.23 and \$5,975.10 taxes

Casella Waste Systems: \$9,645.48 transfer station

Innovative Surface Solutions: \$5,436.92 calcium chloride

MVP Health Care: \$15,690.11 employee health plan

Tyler's Turf: \$10,500.00 demolition at new town building

Wholesale Distributors: \$4,750.00 fire department repairs

Ms. Contros Kearn asked for a motion to approve. Mr. Cichanowski moved; Ms. Miller seconded. The warrant was approved 4-0-0.

Check warrant PR 01: Payroll 7/2/2025, check date 7/3/2025. Ms. Contros Kearn asked for a motion to approve. Ms. Miller moved; Mr. Cichanowski seconded. The warrant was approved 4-0-0.

Check warrant 26001: \$3,390.00 Tyler's Turf for removal of flooring in new town offices. Ms. Contros Kearn asked for a motion to approve. Mr. Cichanowski moved; Mr. Krulikowski seconded. The warrant was approved 4-0-0.

PR2: \$19,279.81 payroll Ms. Contros Kearn asked for a motion to approve. Mr. Cichanowski moved; Ms. Miller seconded. The warrant was approved 4-0-0.

PRW12: \$20,296.94 Social Security payments Ms. Contros Kearn asked for a motion to approve. Ms. Miller moved; Mr. Peacock seconded. The warrant was approved 4-0-0.

6. Public Comments

Martha Cornwell brought up that the Bennington County Regional Commission (BCRC) is undergoing their regional plan update and are requesting residents fill out a survey about the future of Bennington County. There is a link on Front Porch Forum and on the BCRC website. She requested that a link be placed on the Town of Shaftsbury website so that residents can easily add their voices to the survey. Responses help shape the next 10 years of planning for Bennington County as a whole. Ms. Cornwell said she'd love to have Shaftsbury have a big role in deciding what it's going to be in the plan.

A resident mentioned the gathering at Lake Paran on Saturday, July 26th from 3:00 – 9:00 PM with live music and fireworks. This is open to the public with donations to benefit Lake Paran, which is in both Shaftsbury and North Bennington.

7. Treasurer's Report

Ms. Dexter skipped the cash flow and reserve accounts report because there was nothing new. Cash needs to be moved around to cover warrants just signed. Ms. Dexter will transfer from the reserve account before sending out those checks. It's urgent that tax bills are sent out extra early this year which will result in revised bills when information is received from the State. As soon as taxes are out, people will start paying, so the tax rate needs to be set. There were some changes to calculations, but Ms. Dexter believes in the report. The estimated tax was going to be .5997, it's coming in at .6002 \$2,486,938 is to be raised by taxes. Divided by the grand list value the rate 0.5951, or 59.51 cents per \$100 of assessed value. That must be amended by certain exemptions that the town has voted to extend to veterans, and the Taconic Grange and Community Hall which have been voted to be tax exempt on a 3 year basis. That results in what's called the local agreement rate. Add that to the calculated straight calculation to arrive at that 60.02 cents per \$100 of assessed value municipal tax. Although the municipal tax rate is going up by 6.4%, that is dwarfed by the reductions in the education rates. The total homestead tax bill in in Shaftsbury is going up less than 1%. In all other cases it's going down between 2.5 and 4.6%. Ms. Dexter primarily used fiscal 2025 in her calculations, trying to err on the side of being as transparent as possible. She is happy to answer questions. Ms. Dexter said that the next step would be to make a motion to approve the tax rate. Ms. Contros Kearn called for a motion to approve the new municipal tax rate at 0.6002. Mr. Peacock moved; Ms. Miller seconded. The new municipal tax rate was approved 4-0-0.

A member of the public asked when the reappraisal was going to hit the list. Ms. Dexter and Ms. Contros Kearn said that they thought it would be statewide to be equitable.

8. DPW Report

Ms. Iken read an email from DPW Foreman Mike Yannotti stating that roadside mowing will continue on the east side of Shaftsbury, starting on Old Depot, Maple Hill, Birch Hill, and Hidden Valley development this week, and Cider Mill and Airport Road next week. Road grading will be done on LeClair Road, Blueberry Hill Road, and Old Depot. DPW will be replacing culverts on Mountain View Drive, Glastenview Drive, and at both intersections of Daniels Road. Both existing culverts are not meeting the State standards for hydrology on logically connecting road segments. While this work will be funded by VTrans State grants received last fall. We'll be working in this area for the next 2 weeks, starting 7/21. This project will take most of the crew to complete. Ms. Iken thought it would be useful to put this information on the Town website as highway updates. The board agreed.

9. Special Projects Coordinator: Interview

Martha Cornwell, who is the Shaftsbury Representative on the Executive Committee of the BCRC, applied for the special Projects Coordinator, because Shaftsbury is going through an incredibly exciting time, and she would love to help keep pushing things forward and be of service to the Select Board. She believes she can coordinate multiple committees to organize projects so that things are progressing in a way that the Select Board and town residents want and expect. Ms. Cornwell has served on the Select Board and other boards and is game for the future. There were no questions for Ms. Cornwell. Mr. Cichanowski said that there was probably no better person since Ms. Cornwell knows how the pieces fit together. Ms. Contros Kearl called for a motion to appoint Ms. Cornwell as the Shaftsbury Special Projects Coordinator. Ms. Miller moved; Mr. Cichanowski seconded. Ms. Cornwell was appointed 4-0-0.

10. Discussion of Twitchell Hill Speed Limit

There was a speed report conducted that showed a history of speeding on Twitchell Hill Rd. Ms. Contros Kearl called for a motion to lower the speed limit on Twitchell Hill Rd. to 25 miles per hour. Ms. Miller moved to open discussion. Mr. Cichanowski noted that this had been previously discussed then Mr. Whitman questioned whether a town can just arbitrarily change the speed limit. Ms. Iken and Ms. Contros Kearl stated the Town had investigated that and was advised that, because the Town has a speed study, the Town would make the change, and then file paperwork with the State to request the change. The State would enact the change. After discussion on procedures, the Board decided that they would announce an opportunity for comments on the speed limit change at the next Select Board meeting on August 4, 2025.

11. Eagle Square demolition update

The Eagle Square demolition project is under Act 250 review at this time so the demolition is likely not imminent. It is a slated demolition of the entire structure. The town has been in touch with the construction company about taking some of the original rocks from the structure to perhaps make a monument to Eagle Square and the people who worked there. Mr. Whitman questioned why the Shaftsbury Historical Society wasn't involved, noting that when it comes to Act 250, they can stop a lot of projects. He also noted that there are unique artifacts in the building that Eagle Square and Stanley Tool enthusiasts might help preserve. Ms. Contros Kearl said that, after much research, she could not find the building listed on any historical register. There was further discussion on the preservation of artifacts and use of stones, possibly as a fundraiser for Town projects.

12. Other Business

Ms. Iken brought forward an errors and omissions certificate from the assessors for Select Board signatures. She also noted that the grant of \$6,453.00 for tennis/pickleball courts resurfacing had been received. She solicited 3 bids and received 1 reply from Vermont recreational for \$9,311.00 for repairs and resurfacing. The Park reserve fund will be used to match the grant and cover the remaining cost of court repair and for purchase of pickleball equipment and a shed. The DPW will build a bench and backboard to keep costs down. Ms. Contros Kearl called for a motion to approve the use of the grant as stated. Mr. Cichanowski moved; Mr. Peacock seconded. The tennis/pickleball courts resurfacing and equipment purchases were approved 4-0-0. Mr. Whitman mentioned the death of Helen Howard Olney, founding and long-time member of the Recreation Committee. The board offered its condolences to her family.

Ms. Iken noted that Deena Ruege, Chair of the Recreation Committee, received a reply from Peckham Industries to the committee's thank you note for the new Howard Park sign saying that Peckham was aware of its impact on traffic and was happy to help the Town.

13. Review of Action Items

Twitchell Hill Rd. speed change- public comments at next Select Board meeting

Ms. Miller will reach out to the Shaftsbury Historical Society about preserving artifacts from the Eagle Square/Stanley Tools building

Ms. Iken will offer Tiffany Mays extra hours to be the delinquent water bill collector.

14. Adjournment

Ms. Contros Kearl asked for a motion to adjourn. Mr. Cichanowski moved; Mr. Peacock seconded. Motion to adjourn passed 4-0-0.