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Town of Shaftsbury

Municipal Offices at Cole Hall

Meeting Minutes

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Town of Shaftsbury Select Board Meeting

Date of Meeting: Monday, October 20, 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 Kearl (Chair), Naomi Miller (Vice chair), and Mike Cichanowski. Also present were Town Administrator Paula Iken and Town Treasurer Melanie Dexter.

2. Conflict of Interest Statement

There were no conflicts of interest with any item on the agenda.

3. Minutes

Ms. Kearl noted that the Select Board was behind in approving minutes because there had not been a quorum at previous meetings. Ms. Kearl asked VCLT about approving minutes and found that the Board is not legally required to do so in meetings. She continued that the Select Board will continue to approve minutes in meetings but will not require a quorum of Select Board members who are at a meeting to be at the next meeting to approve the minutes. Ms. Kearl said the reason for this change is that there is state mandate to have minutes online and finalized within a certain number of days after each meeting, and that the Town is not in compliance. Minutes will be sent to Select Board members for review and a member can send an email with amendments if they will not be at the Board meeting. There were 4 sets of minutes to be approved: Tuesday, September 2, 2025; Monday, September 15, 2025; Monday, October 6, 2025, and special meeting Tuesday, October 14, 2025. All were approved without amendment 3-0-0.

4. Announcements and Updates

Budget hearing dates- Ms. Iken will present the budget for fiscal year 2027 at Select Board meetings on Mondays November 3, 2025 and November 17, 2025.

New building updates- Ms. Iken said that flooring has been ordered and a few choices need to be made on molding etc. Wiring will start going in next week. The project is still well within the budget due to cost-efficient, if painful, project management by the Town.

Tractor and truck parade- Ms. Kearl noted that there are local tractor parades on November 22nd, December 7th, and December 13th, leaving dates at the end of November or mid-December. She continued that the state has not yet provided information on shutting down a section of road. Staging was discussed with possibilities of the elementary school and church. A member of the public, Charlie Royman (?), brought up the possibility of using Dailey's (Dailey Precast/Peckham Industries) as a staging area. He has a contact. Mr. Whitman added that there is plenty of room for parking trucks and

trailers at that location. A date is needed. There needs to be a point person, and the Recreation Committee will be asked to help with coordination.

Howl-O-Ween- The Howl-O-Ween dog costume parade & contest was a success. There are photos on the Town website and Facebook pages

5. Warrants

Ms. Kearl called for a motion to approve CWR #20009 for \$283,907.81, with grants paying \$144,296.57 of that amount. Mr. Cichanowski moved; Ms. Miller seconded.

Items over \$1,000:

Bennington House of Tile and Carpet \$13,000.00 Deposit for new municipal building flooring

Casella Waste Systems Invoice 1587593 \$9,509.15 Transfer station removal of trash

Contact Engineered Solutions 2 invoices- Invoice 32098587 for \$81,839.00; Invoice 32184507 for \$35,750.00. Paid through Grant BC2351. Materials for DPW culvert project

Innovative Service Solutions Invoice 10767 \$5,448.91 DPW calcium chloride

Invoice 110325 \$1,353.36 M & T Bank Town credit card for Adobe, Zoom, phones etc.

MVP Healthcare, November coverage, \$16,507.41 Employee health insurance

New England Enterprises Invoice 44, \$2,500.00 DPW shipping container.

NMREC Invoice 57825 \$7,750.00 Assessment of the appraisal fee for October; Invoice 57857 \$5,811.26 annual support payment.

Northeast Municipal LLC \$1,026.01 and \$1,254.80 Road signs for the Horton Hill bridge project

Peckham Industries Invoice 222128 \$3,834.70 Gravel

Southworth Milton Incorporated, \$8,308.55 paid by Grant BC2351 DPW culvert work

Ultra Modum Industries LLC Second vault payment, \$28,620.00 and third vault payment \$28,620.00.

Both payments were allocated from The Hawkins Funds for municipal use.

Wallingford Crushed Stone \$4,149.02. Crushed stone- paid by grant money

Weaver Excavating \$1,500, paid by grant BC2351 Excavating costs.

Ms. Kearl called for a motion to approve. Ms. Miller moved; Mr. Cichanowski seconded. Warrant approved 3-0-0 without further discussion.

Ms. Kearl called for a motion to consider PRW #09 in the amount of \$20,890.65. Mr. Cichanowski moved. Ms. Miller seconded. Motion approved 3-0-0.

Ms. Kearl then called for a motion to approve PRW #08: \$22,689.56. Motion approved 3-0-0.

6. Public Comments

Bennington County Sheriff James Gulley introduced Corporal Scott Legacy who is now patrolling Shaftsbury. Corporal Legacy is a Shaftsbury native with 13 years of law enforcement experience. Sheriff Gulley noted that Corporal Legacy has assisted with a wide range of incidents, from barking dog complaints through narcotics and homicide investigations. Sheriff Gulley mentioned that the Sheriff's Dept. has been working with neighborhood watches on Twitchell Hill and Cleveland Ave. on speeding and noise complaints. They are actively addressing a dangerous speeding issue in the Bank Street area. They are adding a fourth officer this year for Halloween. It's on a Friday, and the Sheriff's Dept. will make sure that the road is shut down from 4.30 to 8:00, and the fourth person will be walking around with the kids, wearing a fluorescent jacket with a Sheriff's Dept. patch on it.

7. Treasurer's Report

Ms. Dexter said her report was a mid-month one that was not terribly informative, but the big number will show what she's been busy with. \$945,000.00 has been collected in taxes this month. The Town

remained the entire file, except for those who had already paid, or who pay through their escrow company, or who asked Ms. Dexter to not mail them another bill. She noted that the taxes due sign at the four corners kept getting blown over and needed replacement. November 10th at 5:00 PM is the last date to pay taxes on time. There was some discussion of late filing of Homestead Declarations and penalties. The first of the quarterly highway state aid payments was received for \$46,405.04 as well as a Better Roads grant for \$20,000.00. \$57,240.00 was paid out of the Hawkins Fund for ½ payment of the new vault. Ms. Dexter noted that Tiffany Mays continued to work with people still owing on water bills, setting up payment plans. The delinquent water bill amount is down about 60%. Water bills will be going out soon. Ms. Dexter then discussed disbursements and reminded the Board that the Reserve accounts had been combined into this checking account. She will have a presentation about monies going in and out of funds at a later Select Board meeting.

8. DPW Report

There was no new DPW report.

9. Hazard Mitigation Plan: Dara Zink

Dara Zink, Emergency Management Program Manager for BCRC spoke about avoiding mayhem and hazard mitigation planning. Mitigation falls right in the center of FEMA's emergency management cycle and can take place at any point during response, recovery, and preparedness stages. It focuses largely on building or rebuilding in ways that reduce risk permanently, and hazard mitigation planning is risk-informed decision-making that takes place generally during the preparedness phase. Ms. Zink then discussed monies, the state Emergency Relief and Assistance Fund, and how this affects Shaftsbury. Shaftsbury participates in NFIP, it has adopted the road standards, and created an LEMP, which is updated annually. Shaftsbury's hazard mitigation plan is currently valid. Shaftsbury has interim status for its river corridor adoptions. Eventually, they won't meet the state standard anymore, but they for are right now. Shaftsbury is working with BCRC to make sure that, if anything changes in its bylaws, it's not going to remove that interim status. Ms. Zink then said that Shaftsbury's hazard mitigation plan is only valid until May 28, 2026 and mitigation plans normally take about 18 months to complete. The way that ERAF works is that you need all 4 first steps plus the 5th to get 17.5%, but if you lose one of those first 4 steps, it immediately bumps you down to 7.5%. So, in May, if Shaftsbury doesn't have its hazard mitigation plan in place, it would drop down. Normally, you could do an update but FEMA has changed the requirements so significantly over the last several years that they suggest doing a whole new plan at this point. Once the plan is completed, Shaftsbury will go back up to 17.5% reimbursement. Shaftsbury is opted in for funding. There was continued discussion of FEMA funding for flood mitigation, grants, templates and options for filing.

10. Emerald Ash Borer Committee report: Art Whitman

Mr. Whitman presented the names of the Emerald Ash Borer Committee: Co-chairs David Mance III and Art Whitman, Denny Browe, Charlie Jenks, and Cinda Morse. DPW employees Mike Yannotti and Ian Harrington are consulting with the committee. Through volunteers, we took an inventory on almost every road and tallied the trees. Mr. Mance has a paper tally that shows the degree of severity of whether: dead, dying, etc. He also was given a phone app, stopped in front of each tree answered a few questions as far as the severity of it. Those been compiled and put on a map with little dots every place there's a concern. We have a visual representation of how serious this issue is. Mr. Whitman presented the Shaftsbury Emerald Ash Borer Management Plan.

Mr. Whitman said he thinks it's important that the Town get a number Ms. Iken noted that this will be addressed that in the first budget hearing in two weeks. It will be a line item. It will be separate from the

DPW ongoing tree removal budget. That line item will remain the same, and then emerald ash borer tree removal will be added as a new line item. Details of the plan were discussed, including first areas for removal, informing property owners, and who to contact with questions/concerns. Mr. Cichanowski moved to approve the Shaftsbury Emerald Ash Borer Management Plan, including the letter. Ms. Miller seconded. Motion approved 3-0-0.

11. Schedule development for committee liaison reports

Ms. Kearl proposed that the end of Q1 of 2026 be the first report date for each liaison. The Board will come up with a report structure, possibly a template.

12. Other Business

From Cemetery Superintendent Jen Holley: It's Fall cleanup time at the Town Shaftsbury Cemeteries. The town's cemetery superintendent is asking those who decorate grave sites in the town cemeteries to remove all decorations by November 1st. Any decorations not removed by that date will be disposed of. Some perennials may be cut down or trimmed to ground level. Decorations should always be kept close to headstones to facilitate the graveyard maintenance team.

Ms. Iken asked Board members to sign an amended resolution for the FY24 municipal planning grant that Ms. Iken needs to close out by December 30th. She was not the one who opened the grant, the previous town administrator did, so the grant was amended with Ms. Iken's name as the grant administrator, along with Ms. Kearl's name. This will allow Ms. Iken to access the portal to close out the grant. The grant was for the Economic Development Plan. All Select Board members present signed the amended resolution. Ms. Kearl called for a motion to approve the amended Resolution for Municipal Planning Grant for Fiscal Year 2024. Ms. Miller moved. Mr. Cichanowski seconded. Motion approved 3-0-0.

Ms. Iken brought up a proposal from the Shaftsbury Fire Department. They need to replace all tires on Engine 3, Truck 66, their 2013 fire apparatus. Fire Chief Joe Vadakin found the tires are worn to the point that they're not roadworthy or safe. The work will be done by Bennington Tire, the only big truck tire dealer in the Bennington area. The 4 rear tires are \$6,545.44, and the 2 front tires total \$3,178.00, for a grand total of \$9,723.44. The money is in the Fire Dept. budget, but the Select Board's approval is needed because the amount exceeds the \$4,999 that the Town Administrator can approve. Ms. Kearl called for a motion to approve the purchase. Ms. Miller moved. Mr. Cichanowski seconded. Motion approved 3-0-0.

13. Review of Action Items

Ms. Kearl will email Recreation Committee members Deena Ruege and Sarah Costin about the committees role with the tractor parade and the State about road closures

Someone will check in with Callie Fishburn about a grant for zoning by-law revision

Ms. Holley will put EAB docs on the Town website

14. Executive session: Legal

Ms. Kearl called for a motion to enter executive session. Mr. Cichanowski moved. Ms. Miller seconded. The Board came out of executive session with a last minute addition to the agenda.

15. Small Balance and Credits Policy for Property Taxes

Ms. Kearl opened discussion on a last-minute addition to the agenda concerning small balance credit policy. The town administrator, the treasurer, and the delinquent tax collector have been discussing

taking on a small balance credit policy. In the current system the cost of collecting small balances and credits outweighs the collections themselves. The policy proposed by the Town of Shaftsbury on October 20th, 2025, is for small balance and credits specifically for property taxes. This policy is to reduce administration time and expenses incurred with small balances and credits within tax administration. It will take effect starting tax year 2025-26. Per this policy, any small balances occurring in tax administration of \$5 or less will be written off or abated. Per this policy, any credits held in tax administration \$5 or less will be zeroed out. Any credits on a parcel ranging from \$5.01 to \$50 will be held and applied to the following year's property tax bill. Ms. Kearl called for a motion to approve the small balance and credits policy for Shaftsbury property taxes. Ms. Miller moved. Mr. Cichanowski seconded. Policy adopted 3-0-0.

16. Adjournment

Ms. Kearl called for a motion to adjourn. Mr. Cichanowski moved. Ms. Miller seconded. Motion passed 3-0-0.