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Town of Shaftsbury

Municipal Offices at Cole Hall

Meeting Minutes

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Shaftsbury Selectboard Meeting Minutes

Date: Monday, December 15, 2025

Time: 6:00 PM

Location: Cole Hall (with Zoom access)

Selectboard Members Present: Zoe Contros Kearl (Chair), Naomi Miller (Vice Chair), Brad Peacock, Mike Cichanowski, and Tony Krulikowski

Staff Present: Paula Iken (Town Administrator) and Melanie Dexter (Treasurer)

1. Call to Order

Ms. Kearl called the meeting to order at 6:00 PM.

2. Conflict of Interest Statement

Ms. Kearl asked if any members had a conflict of interest with items on the agenda. None were declared.

3. Minutes

December 1, 2025 Meeting Minutes

One minor amendment was noted, which is the correction of Ms. Kearl's name. A motion was made and seconded to approve the December 1, 2025 minutes as amended. Motion carried unanimously.

December 8, 2025 Meeting Minutes

No amendments were noted. A motion was made and seconded to approve the December 8, 2025 minutes. Motion carried, with one abstention, due to absence from that meeting.

4. Announcements and Updates

Ms. Kearl clarified that Item 16 (Executive Session) would not be needed this evening.

Ms. Iken reported continued progress at the new town building, including wiring and wall work.

5. Warrants

The Selectboard reviewed Check Warrant Export #26015 in the amount of \$332,723.02. Ms. Kearl noted that the total was higher than usual, due primarily to former community appropriations (rescues and libraries)

now being paid through the budget, and the purchase of a replacement dump truck body funded through the reserve fund.

Items over \$1,000 were reviewed, including but not limited to:

- A&K Agri Services (gravel)
- Arlington Rescue Squad (FY25 appropriation)
- Bennington Free Library (FY25 appropriation)
- Bennington Rescue Squad
- Fuel vendors (DPW and Fire Department)
- Martha Canfield Free Library (FY25 appropriation)
- Eastern Salt Company (salt)
- Hewlett Electric (new building wiring)
- M&T Bank (monthly statement and subscriptions)
- M&T/Wilmington Trust (bond payment)
- MVP Healthcare (employee health insurance)
- John G. McCullough Library (FY25 appropriation)
- Peckham Industries (sand)
- RCS Consulting (network maintenance)
- North Bennington Water Department (water service)
- ZWAC Inc. (replacement dump body)

A motion was made and seconded to approve the warrant as presented. Motion carried unanimously.

6. Public Comments

No public comments were offered.

7. Treasurer's Report

Ms. Dexter presented the cash flow report. She explained that water receipts were beginning to come in and that a significant delinquent tax payment (approximately \$50,000) had been received after the report was prepared.

She noted that the current cash flow presentation is less useful than in prior years, due to reserve funds being commingled with general fund balances, giving a misleading picture of available cash. She will work on developing a clearer reporting format going forward and invited the Selectboard to provide a wish list of specific financial items they would like to track. No questions were raised.

8. DPW Report

No DPW report was presented.

9. Request for Community Appropriation: Turning Point of Bennington

Laura Jarrett, Acting Executive Director of Turning Point Recovery Center, addressed the Selectboard regarding a request for a \$5,000 community appropriation. She described the organization's services, including substance use recovery support, emergency room and detox referrals, recovery coaching, probation and parole coordination, recovery dinners, and a recently opened eight-bed recovery house that is currently full.

Ms. Jarrett confirmed that the required petition signatures had been collected and submitted and that the request was already properly on the ballot. Ms. Kearl and Ms. Iken commented that their appropriations application had already been received, and they are already on the ballot.

10. Request from Kyrra April, Martha Canfield Library

Kyrra April, representing the Martha Canfield Library, presented a request for a 5% increase in the town's support, from \$2,200 to \$2,310. She reported continued growth in library usage, program attendance, circulation, and community reliance on library services. Statistics on annual visitor increases were shared.

The Selectboard discussed that the library is now a line item in the budget and that the budget had already been approved at last year's funding level. It was noted that an increase could potentially be proposed from the floor at Town Meeting. The Selectboard thanked Ms. April for her presentation and the library's services.

11. Discussion of the Dufresne Group 90% Report Directive

The Selectboard discussed providing clearer direction to the Dufresne Group regarding the upcoming 90% report. Ms. Miller read proposed language outlining two specific requests:

1. The 90% report should provide costs and details for the community septic system presented in the 60% plan.
2. The 90% report should also provide costs and details for a septic system serving a hypothetical multifamily development of up to approximately 20 units, discussed in terms of total bedroom capacity (ultimately focusing on a higher-end estimate of around 40 bedrooms).

Board members and members of the public, Art Whitman and Tim Scoggins, joined in discussing the importance of obtaining clear, usable cost data to inform future decisions, support potential affordable or workforce housing development, and strengthen grant applications. Consideration was given to unit size, bedroom counts, and alignment with regional housing needs. General consensus supported providing specific, focused guidance to the consultant. Ms. Iken will contact Dufresne Group to let them know the Selectboard's request.

12. Discussion of Budgetary Placement of Community Appropriations

Ms. Iken explained that, in prior years, the Community Appropriations were not included in the operating budget, as they are voted on the day after Town Meeting. She suggested that we go back to that process, and Mr. Scoggins and Mr. Whitman agreed that it's the better way of doing it. Doing so will mean that citizens will not be voting on Community Appropriations twice. They are voted on, individually, by the public. Doing so will also mean the budget will go down to 9%, from the current 11%. The Selectboard agreed that it makes more sense to do this.

13. Approval of Municipal Work Product Agreement

Ms. Miller asked for the approval of the Municipal Work Product Agreement. The Selectboard approved the document unanimously.

14. Other Business

No additional business was raised.

15. Review of Action Items

Ms. Iken reviewed all action items.

16. Executive Session: Personnel

It was reiterated that no executive session was needed.

17. Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned by consensus.