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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:** Tuesday, January 20, 2026, 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), Mike Cichanowski, and Tony Krulikowski. Also present were Town Administrator Paula Iken, and Treasurer Melanie Dexter.

2. Conflict of Interest Statement

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

3. Minutes

Minutes from the January 5, 2026, meeting were reviewed. Ms. Kearl called for a motion to approve. Mr. Krulikowski moved; Mr. Cichanowski seconded. Minutes were approved 3-0-0.

4. Announcements and Updates

Ms. Iken gave an update on the new town office building: Electrical work is almost complete. The subfloor is being repaired and flooring will go in after that.

Ms. Kearl gave an update, after the warrants were approved, regarding issues with the cardboard recycling dumpster filling up before the transfer station closed, particularly on Saturdays. The Select Board will contact Casella about possible solutions: changing the pickup schedule, getting a secondary dumpster, or changing to mixed recycling instead of separated. There will be an update at the next Select Board meeting.

5. Warrants

Ms. Kearl called for a motion to consider CWR 26017 for \$171,523.00. Mr. Krulikowski moved; Mr. Cichanowski seconded.

Items over \$1,000:

Apalachee Salt \$5,035.10 Salt and delivery

Attention to Detail \$4,160.00 New Town Clerk's office countertops and drawers (Monies from ARPA)

BearCom \$3,140.61 Fire Dept. communication equipment and installation

G. A. Bove Fuels \$1,522.21 and \$1,286.45 fuel DPW

Brett Mould Construction \$14,400.00 New building construction (Monies from ARPA & town approved)

Casella Waste Systems \$9,434.41 Transfer station

Comcast \$235.90 DPW Wi-Fi

Crosby Guetti \$200.00 Cleaning Cole Hall and DPW garage

Dufresne Group \$11,000.00 Wastewater engineering for the landfill

Eastern Salt \$7,638.25 Salt

Hometown Heating & Cooling \$2,171.96 New building HVAC (Monies from ARPA)

Hulett Electric & Father \$4,160.21 New building electric work (Monies from ARPA)

KAS, Inc. \$10,870.71 Groundwater PFAS monitoring near the landfill

M & T Bank \$3,796.76 Town credit card Examples: weather subscription dues; truck registrations; cell phone bills for DPW, town administrator & fire department; copy & mail for water department; training

MVP Healthcare \$17,770.20 Employee healthcare

NEMRC \$7,750.00 Reappraisal monthly fee

Peckham Industries \$9,518.76 and 9,163.60 Gravel and salt

Reynolds & Son \$3,948.69 Fire Dept. equipment

Southworth-Milton Inc. \$1,560.00 DPW part for CAT

Sullivan, Power & Co. \$5,880.00. Professional audit fee

VRS Sales Ltd. \$7,131.52 and \$4,925.22 Fire Dept. truck maintenance

Wholesale Distributors \$1,418.00 DPW Plow & sander parts

Woolmington Campbell \$475.00 Attorney's fees

Ms. Kearl called for a motion to approve CWR #26017 for \$171,523.00. Mr. Cichanowski moved; Mr. Krulikowski seconded. Warrant approved 3-0-0.

Ms. Kearl called for a motion to approve payroll warrant PR 15 for \$24,532.81. Mr. Krulikowski moved; Mr. Cichanowski seconded. PR 15 was approved 3-0-0.

## 6. Public Comments

There were no public comments.

## 7. Treasurer's Report

Ms. Dexter presented cash flow numbers and said that the first \$10,000 was the distribution from the trustees for fiscal 2025. She noted that this generally comes in close to the beginning of the fiscal year, but for various reasons it was late. She continued, saying that the delinquent tax is a large amount, probably one of the last big ones the Town will receive. Water receipts still coming in, although they're all overdue at this point. There are a lot of payment plans, so the Town receives small payments coming in steadily from a lot of people. It's not easy to manage, but it's made a big difference from 6 months to a year ago in terms of having some understanding of what's going on. The Town still has a substantial uncollected balance. The quarterly highway state aid was just received. The AFLAC overpayment was a clerical error which they paid back. The highway grant is a big amount that the Town has been waiting for to cover the culvert project, so it's paying back money already spent. Ms. Dexter was alerted that there was going to be another large warrant, so she included it in her report even though she hadn't written the checks yet. She wanted to give a sense of how much the Town has spent for the month of January so far, which is \$370,000. Cash by funds looks a little less dire than it did because the highway grant money came in. That money doesn't go to the general fund. The alarming number is the water department. Even with everything that the Town has done, it's still going in the wrong direction.

Ms. Dexter mentioned that all the treasurers are "in a tizzy" about the postmark issue that was discussed at an earlier meeting. Every day her inbox is full of email from other treasurers saying they're not accepting postmark anymore. Ms. Dexter said that she doesn't want to do that. She gets letters every day that have taken a couple of weeks to arrive. She doesn't think it's fair for somebody to mail their payment clearly in plenty of time and have it considered late. She would like to be on the Town Meeting agenda to discuss this and remind residents about getting homestead declarations in on time. The due date for homestead declarations is going to be November 10, 2026. This will be discussed again closer to the date.

## 8. DPW Report

Ms. Iken did not have a report from the DPW but noted that the DPW was keeping up with clearing snow from roads and preparing for next season.

## 9. Discussion of cost threshold on warrant review

Ms. Kearl said that this discussion was being tabled until the next meeting. She went on to explain what this discussion refers to: whenever the Select Board reviews check warrant reports, every item in excess of \$1,000 is read out loud. Because everything has gone up in cost, the \$1,000 threshold amount is now regularly exceeded. The discussion at the next meeting will be about possibly changing the threshold and reading more random smaller charges since fraud usually takes place in smaller sums.

## 10. Voting on the Town Meeting Warning

Ms. Kearl said that the only change she made to the draft distributed to Select Board members was to move the Zoom information to the bottom of the warning. Seeing Zoom information first thing didn't fit with the Town's usual formatting. Ms. Kearl asked what happened with the Martha Canfield library (in appropriations). Ms. Iken replied that the library is not in community appropriations anymore. Ms. Kearl then read the following first 2 paragraphs of the Town Meeting Warning:

*"State of Vermont, Bennington, Bennington County, town of Shaftsbury, March 2026, annual town meeting warning. Shaftsbury residents qualified to vote at the annual town meeting are hereby notified and warned to meet in person at the Shaftsbury Elementary School at 150 Buck Hill Road or virtually via Zoom on Monday, March 2nd, 2026, at 6:00 PM to hold a public information hearing. Upon completion of the information session, the meeting will stand adjourned until Tuesday, March 3rd, 2026, from 7:00 AM to 7 PM when voting by Australian ballot will commence at the town garage on North Road for the election of town officers in consideration of ballot articles.*

*Shaftsbury residents may submit an application to the town clerk to have their names added to the voter checklist no later than 12:00 PM Monday, March 2nd, 2026, at the town garage or at the town garage on Tuesday, March 3rd, 2026, from 7:00 AM to 7:00 PM to be eligible to vote on Tuesday, March 3rd, 2026, at the polls. Any voter unable to come to the polls may apply for an early voter ballot with the town clerk until 12:00 PM on Monday, March 2nd, 2026. Registration can be done online by going to [mbp.vermont.gov](http://mbp.vermont.gov). Residents registering on election day must do so only at the polling place of their physical residence."*

Ms. Kearl said that the warning also includes a summary of the business that will be transacted on the floor, the agenda and a list of the ballot items. The warning will be posted on the Town of Shaftsbury website and in physical locations, for example the post office. It will be warned as required by state law. She then called for a motion to approve the town meeting warning. Mr. Cichanowski moved; Mr. Krulikowski seconded. The town meeting warning was approved 3-0-0 and signed by Select Board members present. It will be signed by the other 2 Select Board members as soon as they are able.

## 11. Other Business

Ms. Kearl discussed progress on the sale of a piece of Shaftsbury Town property to Marie Watson and family. The Shaftsbury Select Board has voted to approve the sale, has set a price, and has the process in place per the Vermont statutes with how to transfer land. A remaining step is describing the physical parcel to post a warning in advance of the 30 days during which a petition could take place. The Select Board is working with a real estate agent to determine whether a survey needs to take place and description details that will be legally appropriate for the conveyance of land.

## 12. Review of Action Items

Ms. Iken noted that the only action item was to move the cost threshold discussion to the next meeting.

## 13. Executive Session

Ms. Kearl called for a motion to enter executive session. Mr. Cichanowski moved; Mr. Krulikowski seconded. Motion passed 3-0-0 and the Select Board entered executive session at 6:27 PM.

Ms. Kearl called for a motion to exit executive session. Mr. Cichanowski moved; Mr. Krulikowski seconded. Motion passed 3-0-0 and the Select Board exited executive session at 6:40 PM.

## 14. Vicious Dog Determination

Ms. Kearl noted that the Select Board members present had left the executive session during which they discussed a Town of Shaftsbury vicious dog hearing which took place Tuesday, January 13th, 2026. She reviewed the considerations of that meeting and the requirements of the Shaftsbury Dog Ordinance relating to vicious dogs and dog bites. In this case, a dog belonging to Shaftsbury resident Melissa Brown attacked another resident of the town, Bethany Murphy. The Select Board has written and oral testimony from both parties involved. With regards to the vicious dog hearing decision and protective order on behalf of the town of Shaftsbury Select Board, Ms. Kearl read the following:

*Introduction and procedural history. 1- This proceeding involves a vicious dog complaint submitted by Bethany Murphy and received by the Select Board on Thursday, January 8, 2026. 2- On January 9th, 2026, public notice of the vicious dog hearing was posted in or near the town clerk's office, Shaftsbury post office, and North Bennington post office, to each Select Board member, and posted on the Town of Shaftsbury web page. 3- On January 9th, 2026, notice of this vicious dog hearing was hand delivered by Scott Legacy of Bennington County Sheriff's Department to Melissa Brown, the owner/keeper of Gunner. 4- On January 9th, 2026, notice of this vicious dog hearing was sent via email to Bethany Murphy, complainant present at the hearing on January 13, 2026, where the following members of the Select Board- Zoe Contros Kearl, chair; Naomi Miller, vice chair; Michael Cichanowski; and Brad Peacock, as well as Tony Krulikowski were on communications regarding this ongoing complaint. During the course of the hearing, the following exhibits were submitted to the select board: Written complaint by Bethany Murphy, photos of dog bites by Bethany Murphy.*

The Select board also has written testimony from Melissa Brown. All the written and oral testimony for this case will be filed together. This is the second complaint against this animal. The Select Board have come to a decision regarding the case, which took place on October 28, 2025, which is based on the foregoing findings and facts and conclusion of law. The select board finds that Gunner caused reasonable fear of bodily injury by attacking or threatening to attack by pursuit any person or pet lawfully at the place of attack and did bite and injure a dog belonging to Bethany Murphy as well as Bethany Murphy herself without provocation and therefore protective order will be rendered. The protective order is as follows. Based on the foregoing facts and circumstances pursuant to 20 VSSA 3546 C, the Select Board hereby orders that the domestic pet or wolf hybrid named Gunner and owned by Melissa Brown is to be disposed of in a humane way no later than February 16, 2026. Until such time as completion of the conditions set forth in this order can be satisfactorily verified, Gunner will remain with Melissa Brown until the animal control officer comes to retrieve him. Failure to comply with the conditions set forth within this protective order and decision shall subject Melissa Brown to the penalties provided for in Title 20 section 3546. This decision may be appealed to the Vermont Superior Court Civil Division within 30 days of the date of this decision pursuant to rule 75C of the Vermont Rules of Civil Procedure. Ms. Kearl then called for a motion to issue this protective order. Mr. Cichanowski moved; Mr. Krulikowski seconded. The motion passed 3-0-0. Ms. Kearl then noted that the reason the date for the humane

disposal of Gunner was pushed out to mid-February is that the Town of Shaftsbury animal control officer is currently unable to collect the dog. The Select Board will contact neighboring towns and ask for assistance from one of their animal control officers in retrieving Gunner safely within the set timeline.

15. Adjournment

Ms. Kearl then called for a motion to adjourn. Mr. Cichanowski moved; Mr. Krulikowski seconded. The motion passed 3-0-0. The meeting was adjourned at 6:48 PM.