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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, February 2, 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 Kearn (Chair), Naomi Miller (Vice-Chair), Mike Cichanowski, Tony Krulikowski, and Brad Peacock. 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

The minutes from the January 13, 2026, vicious dog hearing were reviewed. Ms. Kearn called for a motion to approve. Ms. Miller moved; Mr. Cichanowski seconded. Minutes were approved 3-2-0. The minutes from the January 20, 2026, Select Board meeting were reviewed. Ms. Kearn called for a motion to approve. Ms. Miller moved; Mr. Cichanowski seconded. Minutes were approved 3-2-0.

4. Announcements and Updates

Ms. Kearn had one announcement regarding the vicious dog hearing. She said that the owner of the dog has appealed to the Vermont Supreme Court, so the matter is in their hands. It's a civil appeal, which is a normal process. The Select Board has been in touch with the Vermont Supreme Court, the Town attorney, and the Town animal control officer, to understand what the next steps are for the Town of Shaftsbury, depending on the appeal decision. This doesn't happen often, so the Select Board is figuring it out.

Ms. Kearn then made an announcement, regarding the town budget. She said that the Bennington Banner and the Shaftsbury Revitalization Digest published a statement that the town budget is not voted on the floor in Shaftsbury. The Town budget is voted on the floor in Shaftsbury and has been historically. This was a mistake made by the reporter. He was contacted and he has issued a correction to this statement, and any other mention in the article that referred to the vote taking place on Australian ballot. He also updated the article online. Ms. Kearn said she had not yet contacted the Shaftsbury Revitalization Digest, but they will be asked to follow-up. Ms. Kearn repeated that voting on the Town budget is a floor vote at Town Meeting.

5. Warrants

Ms. Kearl called for a motion to consider CWR 26018 for \$98,131.90. Mr. Cichanowski moved; Ms. Miller seconded.

Items over \$1,000:

G. A. Bove Fuels \$1,463.80 for Fire Dept. hose and \$1,618.25 Fire Dept. heating fuel

Chapel Tractor Sales Incorporated, \$1,176.95 DPW machinery and equipment

Eastern Salt \$7,948.71 and \$2,721.38 Salt

Four States Enterprise \$62.95 DPW parts for Truck 1 & Truck 2

Green Mountain Power \$1,116.70 Shaftsbury Village traffic light

Hulett Electric & Father \$2,993.19 New building electric work (Monies from ARPA)

Kimbell Midwest \$8,846.95 DPW Reserve Fund for equipment and parts

Northeast Municipal LLC \$75.00 DPW machinery and equipment, plows and sanders, tree removal

Peckham Industries \$13,358.26 and \$11,781.88 Sand

Primo Brands \$66.46 Water cooler at DPW garage

Suburban Propane \$1,389.26 Sycamore Landscaping \$3,208.00 for cemeteries, \$1,600.00 Town offices

Tri County \$2,200.00 Sidewalk tractor machinery and parts

VLCT Property and Casualty \$25,851.80 Q1 insurance

Tom Wandrei \$1,259.99 and \$74.99 machinery, equipment and detailing

There was a brief discussion around the payment to Green Mountain Power for the traffic light and rising electricity rates. Ms. Kearl then called for a motion to approve CWR #26018 for \$98,131.90. Ms. Miller moved; Mr. Cichanowski seconded. Warrant approved 5-0-0.

Ms. Kearl called for a motion to approve payroll warrant PR 16 for \$24,738.97. Ms. Miller moved; Mr. Cichanowski seconded. PR 16 was approved 5-0-0.

Ms. Kearl called for a motion to approve PRW 07 for \$39,907.82. Ms. Miller moved; Mr. Krulikowski seconded. Ms. Kearl noted that the employer expense portion of this \$39,970.82 is \$14,416. The rest is pulled from paychecks. PRW 07 was approved 5-0-0.

6. Public Comments

Andrea Bacchi, author of the Shaftsbury Revitalization Digest, (in response to Ms. Kearl's earlier announcement of incorrect information on Shaftsbury voting), said that whatever is in the digest is public knowledge from the Town of Shaftsbury website, so if there was a mistake, it was pulled from the website. Ms. Kearl said that the only information about voting on the website was the Town Meeting warning. Ms. Bacchi and Ms. Kearl agreed to discuss this further.

State Representative, David Durfee, provided an update on the PFAS situation on the State level. The State has developed a new threshold for eligibility for water treatment for PFAS at 4 parts/trillion, matching what is allowed in drinking water. Previously, 20 parts/trillion was the threshold. So now, if a well is tested and results show there are 4 parts/trillion or more of PFAS, the resident is eligible for a water treatment system. The State will soon contact residents whose wells have previously been tested and weren't eligible but will be under the new threshold. Rep. Durfee continued to say that he is still waiting for a clear answer on the process for wells that haven't been tested. Anyone who has a question about that can reach out to Rep. Durfee. The state can fund these systems at the moment with existing funds that were collected from the alleged polluter. He concluded by saying that, now that new areas have been identified, the state is continuing to negotiate through the Attorney General's office to get more funding. He then thanked the DPW for keeping sidewalks clear and spoke briefly about other concerns in the legislature, including ICE. Ms. Kearl commented about testing for PFAS and suggested testing wells in other areas. Rep. Durfee said that if private citizens do have their wells tested, to please send the results of those tests to the town administrator, because those results can be forwarded to the Department of Environmental Conservation.

Kate Seaton had questions about accessing meetings: are we requiring people to log in moving forward for the virtual meetings? Is there going to be a telephone option for people who don't have phones? Is there a place where I can find all the PDFs for this easily? Where are the video recordings?

Ms. Kearl answered that there is a phone option. The number is at the bottom of every agenda. She continued that the video recordings are on the website for the 30 days past for each meeting. If you go to a committee or board, they're on the board page. For each year, the current meetings are in the archive. Ms. Seaton then asked if there has been any further consideration on the volunteer IP waiver. Ms. Kearl said that no changes have been yet. It was sent to the Town attorney, who said that the form was legally correct. There is the possibility it will be discussed further. Ms. Kearl said to contact Operations Coordinator, Jen Holley, for help navigating the website.

7. Treasurer's Report

Ms. Dexter said there was a question about what putting tax bills online was going to look like, and what it meant that they're redacted. She provided an example, a tax bill of a property that was recently sold.

Ms. Dexter redacted the name of the previous owner, the state payment and the net tax so that income cannot be inferred from the tax bill that will be posted on the website. The assessed value, description of the property, land and buildings, amount of acreage, will be available, mostly for realtors. Information necessary for filing a homestead declaration is also visible. Ms. Dexter continued that putting the whole file on the website, the way Lister's cards are now, had been discussed. This would help people when they're doing their taxes if they threw out their tax bill. She asked the Select Board make a proposal and vote on it. She noted that this is public information and is allowed to be posted.

Ms. Miller made a motion to post a redacted PDF file of the entire grand list of tax bills. Mr. Cichanowski seconded. Ms. Holley then asked how she would like the pdf to be made searchable by the public. There was a brief discussion and Ms. Holley said she could have it done by the following day. The board then voted 5-0-0 to approve the motion to post the files.

Ms. Dexter then went over the Town's cash flow, noting that there was less than \$600,000 to get the Town through the fiscal year. Money in the Lister's fund is being spent down monthly with the reassessment, and the Fire Department fund was going to be spent on a truck. Ms. Dexter said that the delinquent tax is a large amount, as seen at the last meeting, along with water receipts still coming in, and quarterly highway state aid. Ms. Dexter provided a budget status compared with 2023, the last "normal" year. The Town is spending ahead of budget, in large part due to the tough Winter using more fuel, salt, and sand.

8. DPW Report

Ms. Iken reported from Mike Yannotti that the DPW maintaining the trunks constantly, because this winter's being rough on them. They get involved in a project, then another storm comes.

9. Appointment to the Recreation Committee: Kate OKlein

Ms. OKlein was invited to the table along with Recreation Committee Chair Deena Ruege. Ms. Ruege introduced Ms. OKlein and then spoke briefly about the Moonlight Walk on March 3, 2026, at Howard Park. Ms. Kearl asked Ms. OKlein to tell the board about herself. Ms. OKlein noted that she was a docent at the Visitors Center in Bennington, had been a teacher in Sunderland, and has lived in the area for 56 years and thought it was time to get on a committee, and the Recreation Committee "seemed to be a fun one." Ms. OKlein said that she is a snowbird so only here half the year but will attend meetings on Zoom. Ms. Kearl called for a motion to appoint Ms. OKlein to the Recreation Committee. Mr. Cichanowski moved; Ms. Miller seconded. The motion was approved 5-0-0.

10. Apartheid Free Community Presentation: Richard Jorgenson

Mr. Jorgenson introduced the Shaftsbury residents present in support of Apartheid Free Community: Darcy Anderson, Naomi Bindman, Tess Cleary, Mary Hazelton, Cooie Kenyon, Erin Laboritz, Linda Marsha, Rachel Olmsted, and Grace Winslow. The movement is intended to grow awareness and have communities, churches, and organizations act against apartheid in Israel. He continued with a description of the group. It is a statewide, national, and international movement with 5 Vermont communities last year and 20 more Vermont communities seeking to become apartheid-free communities this year. They would like Shaftsbury to also be an apartheid-free community. The focus is on the criminal mistreatment of the millions of Palestinians living in Gaza and the West Bank. Mr. Jorgenson said that the United States has provided monetary support to Israel that helps enable these crimes and that "we" have an opportunity and responsibility to end this support. He then asked the Select Board to adopt the Apartheid Free Community Pledge, making Shaftsbury an apartheid-free community. The pledge is non-binding and does not create any legal or fiduciary obligations for the Town of Shaftsbury. He continued that the next step would be to identify and implement measures that fulfill the Apartheid Free Community Pledge to end all support to Israel's apartheid regime and that banking, investments, and equipment purchases are first places to look. Ms. Birdman then spoke from the perspective of a person of Jewish heritage. She said that Israel gets falsely comingled with Judaism and that there are many Jewish people, in Israel and in the USA, who don't support the genocide. She had supported Israel as a safe haven, but that shifted after October 7, 2023. Ms. Birdman then read a poem she had written. Mr. Jorgenson continued that this is something that is being viewed as a local issue here in Vermont. That's why they brought it here to Shaftsbury. He stated that in 2024 over 27 million Vermont tax dollars went towards war, including Gaza and the West Bank and that Shaftsbury's share was approximately \$215,000. He said it affects us locally, economically, and that we, as humans, are affected by these crimes against humanity. Ms. Miller then asked Mr. Jorgenson to speak about the specific actions they are recommending municipalities take. Mr. Jorgenson said that interested parties are looking at how they're investing municipal tax dollars, their banking, investments, and purchases. On a local level, it's looking at what equipment is purchased to care for the roads and purchasing from a company that doesn't support apartheid, looking at the banks the Town invests in. He noted that disinvestment is an economic tool used to make change happen. Ms. Kearn thanked the group for the presentation and said that the board would not take any immediate action. The board is considering the issuing a general human rights statement. Mr. Peacock suggested it might be more appropriate for the apartheid-free group to bring this matter to a floor vote at the Town Meeting. Ms. Winslow said that they would do that but that they also would have liked to have had the Select Board vote on it as a non-binding opportunity. Mr. Jorgenson then thanked the board and mentioned the tremendous road maintenance by the DPW. Ms. Miller then spoke briefly about her feelings as a person from a Jewish tradition and said that individually she would vote for it, but she also felt that it is most powerful when a board votes for something unanimously. She concluded that for various reasons the board had not been able to discuss this and that it ought to be processed together.

11. Discussion of demolition of Stanley Tools building

Ms. Kearn initiated a discussion on the demolition of the Stanley Tools building by reading the land use permit issued regarding the demolition. The permit specifically authorizes the demolition of the deteriorating building, removal of concrete foundation, restoration of the area, reconstruction of the culvert located under the existing building, and reconstruction of the wall between the remaining building and the structure proposed for demolition. The board was never able to weigh in on this, because there's a waterway that runs through the structure and any construction is controlled by the Department

of Environmental Conservation. The Town has been able to negotiate with the contractors who are handling the demolition to make arrangements to procure some of the original stone to make a monument to Eagle Square and Stanley Tools. The Shaftsbury Historical Society has done a lot of work trying to rehouse some of the old machinery. There have been a couple of museums that have had some interest, but it's hard to move something that weighs 40,000 pounds. As the board becomes more aware of what's happening, it will continue to issue announcements and updates. There will be a request for public input into the design of the memorial to the square should be. Some stone might be incorporated into something at the new Town building. Ms. Bacchi then mentioned Reclaimed Materials Resource Management, a Shaftsbury based non-profit, as being a possible contact. A member of the public asked about hazardous materials at Eagle Square. A discussion of the permit, historical review that was required, and future use of the building ensued.

12. Discussion of date of next meeting, due to Presidents' Day holiday

Ms. Kearl noted that the next meeting coincided with the Presidents' Day holiday. The meeting was moved to Tuesday, February 17, 2026.

13. Other business

Ms. Iken said that there was an ongoing project at the Village Cemetery of replacing the fence. The fence is falling down because of delayed maintenance. There was a question of how much lead is in the fence paint. A professional sampling was done and results showed 0.017% lead, which is well below the EPA maximum of 0.5% so the fence can be safely removed. She continued that the next step will be getting estimates from the companies. Ms. Iken noted that the cemetery has a reserve fund for this, so money is already there.

Ms. Bacchi asked to bring forward another item of business. She made an announcement that the Vermont State Rehabilitation Council, which partners with HireAbility Vermont, formerly Vocational Rehabilitation, helps Vermonters that have disabilities, and/or addictions, find work, whether it's self-employment or working for an employer. She said that if anybody has, or knows someone with, a disability and is seeking work, to reach out to HireAbility Vermont. There is a branch in every county, one in Bennington at the state building, and HireAbilityVT.com is the website.

14. Action Items

Discuss the Apartheid Free Community pledge.

Contact Marcus Jones of Reclaimed Materials Resource Management

Stay informed on the vicious dog situation

15. Adjournment

Ms. Kearl then called for a motion to adjourn. Mr. Krulikowski moved; Ms. Miller seconded. The motion passed 5-0-0. The meeting was adjourned at 7:17 PM.