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# Town of Shaftsbury

Municipal Offices at Cole Hall

## Meeting Minutes

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### Special Select Board Meeting Minutes

#### Town of Shaftsbury Special Select Board Meeting

**Date of Meeting:** Tuesday, February 17, 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), 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:

No one expressed a conflict of interest with any item on the agenda.

3. Minutes

Minutes from the February 2, 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 announced that there will be a potluck dinner before the Town Meeting on Monday, March 2, 2026. Ms. Kearl later added that dessert is being provided, so bring main and side dishes. She also noted that children are welcome, but no childcare is being provided.

Ms. Iken gave an update for the new town building. Flooring has begun to be installed, and the walls are being prepped for painting.

Ms. Iken also said that she had looked into the Green Mountain Power bill from the very expensive blinking light and found that the Town is being charged for the lighting of 66 lights. Buck Road does not have 66 lights. She has called Distribution Designer to investigate what the very expensive bill was for. Ms. Kearl said that the Town will probably take a deeper look at all its GMP bills, particularly suspicious ones, possibly with Distribution Designer present.

Ms. Kearl had an announcement regarding the demolition of the Stanley Tools/Eagle Square property. After seeing some comments, she wanted to clarify that the Town does not own that building or that property, and the town is not demolishing that structure. The structure is privately owned. The Town has no control over what takes place on that property. Permits do not go through the Town; the project is controlled by the Agency of Natural Resources. If anyone has complaints or concerns that is the agency to contact. The case is entirely public, anyone can look at the filings throughout the process. The Town of Shaftsbury is not tearing down Stanley Tools/Eagle Square. The Town does not own it and is not involved in the process in any way. The Town does hope to do some positive projects with some of the salvaged stone.

5. Warrants

Ms. Kearl noted that the Select Board should discuss changing the threshold of announced warrants from \$1000.00. She then called for a motion to consider CWR 26019 for \$84,771.13. Mr. Krulikowski moved; Ms. Miller seconded.

Items over \$1,000:

AFLAC \$1,557.08. Employee Supplemental insurance

BCRC \$9,973.38. Quarter 2 Solid Waste Implementation Plan payment

Bennington County Sheriff's Department \$9,320.00 January fee for sheriff services

G. A. Bove Fuels \$ 2,694.68 fuel DPW

Consolidated Communications, \$300.48 Wi-Fi for Cole Hall and the Fire Department.

Cot Systems, \$155.00 Town clerk expense for software support

Eastern Salt \$ \$2,557.83 Salt

Hometown Heating & Cooling \$ 1,365.00 New building HVAC (Monies from ARPA)

Hulett Electric & Father \$ 1,576.52 and \$2,783.50 New building electric work

Linde Gas and Equipment, \$160.00 DPW

Madison Repair Services, \$1,050. DPW truck number 3, parts and repairs

MVP Healthcare \$17,770.20 Employee healthcare

NEMRC \$7,750.00 Assessment services for February

Peckham Industries \$7,642.22 Sand and salt

RCS Consulting, \$1,689.90 Network maintenance monthly fee

RK Miles, \$1,700.52 Town Clerk and Town Administrator office doors in the new building (Monies from ARPA)

Warrant CWR 26019 for \$84,771.13 was approved 5-0-0.

Ms. Kearl called for a motion to approve payroll check warrant report PR17 in the amount of \$23,362.59.

Mr. Krulikowski moved; Mr. Cichanowski seconded. Warrant PR17 was approved 5-0-0.

6. Public Comments

An unidentified member of the public reminded the board that there were several members of the Apartheid-free Town group who wanted a vote on the proposal.

7. Treasurer's Report

Ms. Dexter opened with the cash flow. She said not much was going on except a "nice chunk from Holly" i.e. a \$23,851.04 collection of delinquent taxes. She then said that the Town is ahead of budget on spending, mostly "dealing with the weather" and noted that the Town needs to closely monitor expenses between now and June 30th. There is only \$500,000.00 in the general fund. She will have a more accurate update in March. Ms. Dexter said that tax bills were now accessible online.

8. DPW Report

Roads are being cleared in snow and ice. This explains the expenditures for salt, sand, gravel and fuel. Ms. Miller noted that Shaftsbury's roads are in better shape than many other towns.

9. BCRC proposal for Town Plan revision: Callie Fishburn

Ms. Fishburn walked the Board through the proposal for a Town Plan revision, a standard proposal that BCRC put forward based on a request from the Town of Shaftsbury. Shaftsbury applied for a municipal planning grant to update the town plan but was not awarded the grant. BCRC then discussed putting in a proposal for a stripped-down Town Plan update because it expires in 2027 and a town plan update process can be a lengthy even when its only making necessary compliance updates. Ideally, members

of the public have a chance to provide feedback on the town plan. BCRC would work with the Planning Commission to identify any areas, in addition to the statutory requirements, to focus on. They have developed an outreach plan to allow for public engagement, probably a public meeting followed by a survey. After survey analysis, BCRC would present results to the Planning Commission to determine how public feedback would inform the town plan. BCRC, with the Planning Commission, would then start preparing the plan. The deliverable from BCRC to the Planning Commission would be the draft plan for the Town, ready for the necessary adoption proceedings. BCRC proposes to start the work in early May. BCRC qualifications, staffing, and samples of recent work are available. The standard contract with towns for this kind of work has a maximum amount of \$12,500 paid in 3 installments, the first one due on execution of the agreement. The next payment would be after task 4 - the presentation of outreach findings. The final payment is due when the project is complete. Ms. Kearn called for a motion to approve the Town of Shaftsbury engaging with Bennington County Regional Commission (BCRC) for the update of the Town of Shaftsbury's 2026 Town Plan, with a project total in the amount of \$12,500.00. Mr. Krulikowski moved; Mr. Cichanowski seconded. Motion passed 5-0-0. Ms. Kearn noted that the grant was for \$27,500, and that this is a very economical way to handle a legal update that is not optional. She thanked BCRC for coming up with the scope of work, for working with Town, and for helping the Town get the Town Plan update done in a way that's economically possible.

#### 10. Follow-up on Apartheid-free Town proposal

Ms. Kearn said that the Board received a presentation on the Apartheid-free Town proposal 2 weeks ago. The Select Board members took some time to discuss and reflect on the proposal. Ms. Kearn called for a motion for the Town of Shaftsbury to adopt the Apartheid Free Community Pledge. Ms. Miller moved. Mr. Krulikowski seconded. The motion passed 5-0-0. After the vote Mr. Art Whitman asked to comment. He noted that the vote had not followed Robert's Rules of Order as there was no call for discussion. Ms. Kearn apologized and offered to put the motion to revote with discussion. Mr. Whitman said that was not necessary but that he would like to comment on the Apartheid-Free Community Pledge. He pointed out that the Town has a Declaration of Inclusion on the Home page of the Town website. It states that as a town, we formally condemn discrimination in all forms. He questioned the need for another document. He also asked if the Apartheid-Free Community Pledge discriminated against another group of people. Mr. Whitman noted that in the last meeting Mr. Jorgensen (of Apartheid-Free Community Pledge group) said that this document would be non-binding, but then said the next step would be to identify and implement measures. Mr. Whitman said this sounds like something binding. He went on to say that the Town has immediate problems that need solving more than "spending time trying to figure out if the next town truck or a piece of equipment has a component that may have been made or designed by an Israeli company", mentioning safe drinking water, a water system held hostage, and the destruction of Eagle Square without Town input. His last point was to note that the U.S. Constitution clearly states there must be a separation of church and state. Ms. Kearn responded to Mr. Whitman's comments regarding Eagle Square saying that the Town did show a vested interest in this and that the Town Administrator and Vice-chair of the Select Board received every issued document from the Agency of Natural Resources and weighed in. Because of the water systems involved in that project, the Department of Environmental Conservation and the Agency of Natural Resources had absolute control over the Eagle Square project. Ms. Kearn then said that she felt that by affirming the Apartheid-Free Community Pledge, she was standing with pre-existing views that the town has already embraced, just being more specific. She noted that the Town already said this (Declaration of Inclusion) and if we do not affirm this, we are in opposition to ourselves. This concluded the discussion. There was no revote.

#### 11. Schedule Special Meeting: PFAS litigation finalization and Community Resource Center update

Ms. Kearl said that the Select Board has scheduled a Special Meeting on Monday, February 23<sup>rd</sup> at 6:00 PM in Cole Hall to discuss some potential litigation regarding the PFAS situation. There will also be some brief updates on the Community Resource Center, which will be part of the new Town building.

12. Other Business

Ms. Kearl said that the Bennington County Regional Commission alerted the Town that we need to appoint or reappoint our town's representative to the Regional Transportation Advisory Committee. This committee is our line of communication to the Agency of Transportation and peer municipalities regarding transportation issues. Ms. Iken has been the representative and said she only had one or two meetings, at most six meetings a year. If this sounds interesting, please contact Town Administrator Paula Iken or Ms. Kearl, before March 16th, which will be the next regularly scheduled Select Board meeting, at which time the new Transportation Advisory Committee Representative will be appointed.

13. Review of Action Items

Ms. Iken will sign the BCRC contract and return it to them

For Shaftsbury residents: If you're upset about Stanley Tools/Eagle Square, please contact the Agency of Natural Resources and let them know.

14. Executive Session – Legal: Discussion of PFAS litigation

Ms. Kearl called for a motion to enter executive session. Mr. Krulikowski moved; Mr. Cichanowski seconded. Motion passed 5-0-0.

15. Adjournment

Ms. Kearl called for a motion to enter executive session. Mr. Peacock moved; Ms. Miller seconded. Motion passed 5-0-0.