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# Town of Shaftsbury

Municipal Offices at Cole Hall

## Meeting Minutes

PO Box 409  
61 Buck Hill Road  
Shaftsbury, VT  
05262-0409  
(802) 442-4038

### Town of Shaftsbury Special Select Board Meeting

**Date of Meeting:** Thursday, April 16, 2026, at 4:00 PM, in person at Cole Hall and remotely via Zoom.

#### 1. Call to Order

The meeting came to order at 4:00 PM. Present were selectpersons Zoe Kearl (Chair), Naomi Miller (Vice Chair), Mike Cichanowski, Marlene Hall, and Eamon Mulligan. Also present was Town Administrator Paula Iken.

Ms. Kearl stated that the board was there for a special working meeting, and that working meetings have a different structure from regular board meetings. One is that no action will be taken following this meeting. Another is that these meetings are for one topic only. The topic that the board would be working on was the human rights resolution. Another difference is that there will be no public comment, which is allowed by the Vermont statute specific to Vermont working group sessions.

#### 2. Conflict of Interest Statement

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

Ms. Kearl had 2 announcements: First, there was a fire at a solar array on Waite Cemetery Road. Chief Joe Vatican and his crew responded and put the fire out before it spread. Nobody was harmed. Ms. Kearl worked with the landowners to track down the ownership of the solar array and contacted a representative of that company, who took the Town's concerns very seriously. The owner said that his team was taking immediate action to mitigate the risk. Chief Vadakin and Rep. David Durfee were copied on the correspondence. Ms. Kearl thanked Chief Vadakin and the Fire Department crew for their "awesome" response. Second, Ms. Kearl noted that there was a sheriff in attendance to ensure the safety of the Select Board, the Cole Hall staff, and any members of the public in attendance. There was an incident at the Town offices earlier on Thursday involving an aggressive individual who was considered a danger. There is currently a warrant out for the individual's arrest, but he had not yet been located.

#### 3. PFOA Letter review

Ms. Kearl noted that since this was not a topic for the working session, it would be addressed at the regular Select Board meeting on April 20<sup>th</sup>.

#### 4. Work Session on Human Rights Statement

Ms. Kearl said the board was meeting to work on a human rights resolution to be ready for the regular meeting on Monday, April 20<sup>th</sup>. She continued that 2 statements were created in advance, by Naomi Miller and Mike Cichanowski. These encompass many of the ideas previously discussed. Mr. Cichanowski said that he took all 5 of the board members statements and ran them through ChatGPT to create a starting point for edits. Ms. Hall said she wouldn't change anything in that statement. Ms. Kearl said she felt it was a good use of AI. Ms. Miller said that she condensed all the board members words,

including her own, then reframed. Ms. Hall said, regarding Ms. Miller’s version, that she would remove the reference to concerns about use of federal tax money. There was some discussion about this. Ms. Kearl noted that item 6 in Mr. Cichanowski’s version considers ethical governance commitment stating: “which is to the extent consistent with its authority and fiduciary responsibilities, the Town will strive to ensure that its actions, policies, and procedures do not support or enable violations of human rights, including genocide or the denial of basic rights”. Mr. Eamon suggested adding “and administrative capacity” since a boycott or other action would consume administrative hours. Ms. Kearl asked that Mr. Cichanowski’s conglomerated statement be displayed so the board could work from that. Ms. Miller asked how people concerned about the statement could remind the board of its responsibility to reassess it, perhaps at the beginning of each new board year. This would allow for additions or rewording as human rights situations change. Ms. Kearl read through the document, highlighting ethical governance and the recognition of stateless persons, noting that if things change on a federal level, and certain Americans are suddenly without state, that this Town respects their rights as humans. The document was reviewed, and “administrative capacity” added. There was a discussion of the word reassessment or reaffirmation. Ms. Miller said reassessing would be seeing what was done during the year regarding the policy. It was agreed that reaffirmations will occur annually at the Select Board’s reorganizational meeting and an assessment of any implementation of the commitments in the resolution would be completed at the following Select Board meeting. After more discussion and rewriting, the board agreed on the following:

*Town Of Shaftsbury, Vermont Resolution Affirming Human Rights, Inclusion, And Community Commitment*

*Whereas the Town of Shaftsbury recognizes that our community is composed of individuals with diverse backgrounds, perspectives, and life experiences; and*

*Whereas, all people are born free and equal in dignity and rights, as affirmed by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and such rights are inherent and not granted by governments; and*

*Whereas, the Select Board previously adopted a Declaration of Inclusion on February 6, 2023, condemning discrimination in all its forms and committing to fair and equal treatment for all; and*

*Whereas, the Town has affirmed its commitment to protecting constitutional and human rights, including due process and equal protection, regardless of citizenship status, national origin, political belief, race, religion, sex, gender identity or expression, sexual orientation, age, disability, or socioeconomic status; and*

*Whereas, the Town seeks to create an environment in which every resident feels safe, respected, and included, and has equitable access to town services, public spaces, and opportunities; and*

*Whereas, the Town acknowledges the concerns of its residents regarding human rights conditions and the ethical implications of governmental actions at all levels; and*

*Whereas, the Town recognizes the existence and vulnerability of stateless individuals and affirms that no person should live without rights, recognition, or a sense of belonging.*

*Now, therefore, be it resolved, that the Select Board of the Town of Shaftsbury hereby affirms its commitment to the following principles:*

*1. Commitment to Equality and Inclusion*

*The Town condemns all forms of discrimination and pledges to foster a community in which all individuals are treated with dignity, respect, and fairness.*

*2. Rights-Based Governance*

*The Town will strive to incorporate human rights principles—including participation, accountability, and non-discrimination—into its policies, services, and decision-making processes.*

*3. Access and Opportunity*

*The Town will endeavor to ensure that all residents are welcomed and have equitable access to municipal services, public spaces, and civic participation.*

#### *4. Protection of Fundamental Rights*

*The Town affirms the importance of fundamental human rights, including access to housing, healthcare, education, environmental safety, and equal protection under the law.*

#### *5. Community Safety and Belonging*

*The Town commits to ensuring that all residents, regardless of background or status, may live in safety and with full recognition of their humanity and rights.*

#### *6. Ethical Governance Commitment*

*To the extent consistent with its authority, fiduciary responsibilities, and administrative capacity, the Town will strive to ensure that its actions, policies, and procedures do not support or enable violations of human rights, including genocide or the denial of basic rights.*

#### *7. Recognition of Stateless Persons*

*The Town affirms that stateless individuals are members of the human community and supports efforts to promote their dignity, inclusion, and access to essential services.*

*Be it further resolved that the Town of Shaftsbury encourages all residents, organizations, and institutions within the community to uphold these principles and to treat one another with respect and compassion in daily life.*

*Be it further resolved that this Resolution reaffirms the Town's ongoing commitment to building an inclusive, just, and equitable community for all.*

*A reaffirmation of this Resolution will occur annually at the Select Board's Reorganizational Meeting.*

*An annual assessment of any implementation of commitments within this Resolution, including, but not limited to, quasi-judicial boards, including actions of the Development Review Board, any major fiscal changes, and other legal proceedings, will take place at the next meeting of the Board following the Reorganization Meeting.*

The board agreed that the resolution could be posted and public comments, but not rewrites, invited. It also agreed that the resolution might be passed as it is. Ms. Kearl said that the Select Board has worked many hours and has considered the commentary heard from many community members, to create the resolution as it stands. She hoped that the board could now move forward to consider other issues as Select Board members had put more than 12 hours of time into the resolution. She also noted that, contrary to some comments, Select Board members do not bill overtime, all their time is covered by an annual stipend.

#### 5. Review of Action Items

Ms. Iken will edit wording in the resolution as changed during the meeting.

The resolution will be posted on the Town website for citizen review prior to the April 20<sup>th</sup> Select Board meeting.

Postponed agenda items will be added to the April 20<sup>th</sup> meeting agenda.

#### 6. Executive Session: Legal- potential property sale

Ms. Kearl noted that since this was not a topic for the working session, it would be addressed at the regular Select Board meeting on April 20<sup>th</sup>.

#### 7. Adjournment

Ms. Kearl called for a motion to adjourn. Ms. Hall moved. Ms. Miller seconded. Motion to adjourn passed 5-0-0. The meeting was adjourned at 4:36 PM.