



www.shaftsburyvt.gov

Town of Shaftsbury

Municipal Offices

Meeting Minutes

PO Box 409
677 Vermont RTE 7A
Shaftsbury, VT
05262-0409
(802) 442-4038

Select Board

1. Call to Order

The meeting was called to order on Monday, May 18, 2026, at 6:00 PM at the Town Offices at 677 VT Rte. 7A and on Zoom. Present were Select Board members Zoe Kearl (Chair), Naomi Miller (Vice-Chair), Mike Cichanowski, Marlene Hall, and Eamon Mulligan. Also present were Town Administrator Paula Iken, Town Treasurer Melanie Dexter, and Assessor's Clerk Gina Jenks.

2. Conflict of Interest Statement

There were no conflicts of interest with the agenda.

3. Minutes

The minutes for the May 4, 2026, Select Board meeting were reviewed. Ms. Kearl called for a motion to accept. Ms. Hall moved. Ms. Miller seconded. Hearing no discussion, minutes were accepted without amendment. 4-0-1. Mr. Mulligan abstained.

4. Warrants

Ms. Kearl called for a motion to consider CWR 26027 for \$63,565.07. Ms. Miller moved. Ms. Hall seconded. Ms. Kearl read out invoices over \$2500.00 and several random lesser items. Ms. Kearl asked if there was any discussion. Hearing none, CWR 26027 was approved 5-0-0.

Ms. Kearl called for a motion to consider PW23 for \$21,001.53. Mr. Cichanowski moved. Ms. Miller seconded. Ms. Kearl asked if there was any discussion. Hearing none, PW23 was approved 5-0-0.

5. Announcements

Ms. Iken announced that maintenance repair work for the railroad crossing located in the intersection of Paran Lake Rd. at VT Rte. 67E is scheduled for Tuesday, May 26, 2026. Lake Paran Rd. will be closed from 6:30 AM – 6:30 PM. This will be announced on the Town website, Facebook page, newsletter, and in the Bennington Banner.

Ms. Iken then reminded that the transfer station will be closed on Saturday, May 23, 2026, for the Memorial Day holiday. It will be open at regular hours on Tuesday, May 26, 2026.

6. Public Comments

There were no public comments.

14. EMS Week Proclamation

Ms. Kearl suggested moving Item 14, the EMS Week Proclamation up since 4 members of the Bennington Rescue squad had just arrived. This was agreed upon and she then called for a motion to

present the EMS Week Proclamation, to designate the week of May 17th through 23rd as Emergency Medical Services Week. Ms. Miller moved. Mr. Mulligan seconded. Ms. Kearl read the proclamation in its entirety, ending with “Whereas the members of the Bennington Rescue Squad, whether career or volunteer, engage in thousands of hours of specialized training and continuing education to enhance their life-saving skills, and whereas it is appropriate to recognize the value and the accomplishments of emergency medical services providers by designating Emergency Medical Services Week now. Therefore, the Town of Shaftsbury, in recognition of this event, hereby proclaims the week of May 17th to 23rd of 2026 as Emergency Medical Services Week.” She asked for a vote. The proclamation was approved 5-0-0. The board members signed a certificate and presented it to the Bennington Rescue Squad members present. Photos were taken and Ms. Kearl thanked them on behalf of the community. They left to a round of applause from all present.

7. Reappraisal Update: Gina Jenks

Assessor’s Clerk Gina Jenks began her update by holding up the Shaftsbury Official Notice of Change of Appraisal. She noted that some people’s parcels were combined so the appraised value went up a lot. Others had let her know they were having problems with the NEMRC website. Ms. Jenks said that the best way to get answers is to call or email her. Informal informational hearings are on May 27 – 29, 2026 between 9:00 AM and 3:00 PM. Call her for an appointment. Grievance hearings will be held after that on June 15 – 17, 2026. Ms. Kearl said there would be more updates, but Ms. Jenks needed to answer the questions because the information is specialized. Community member Mr. Sergeant said his biggest objection to the reappraisal is that after 2 years of working on it, there is just over a week to speak to NEMRC and make an appointment within a two-day window, of which one day apparently is already full. (Note: there are 3 days, not 2.) He continued that the next step is to make a 15-minute appeal in writing and in person 2 weeks after that. He said his listing has 2 major errors. He recognized that this must be done in writing but said that getting through the process in less than 30 days is going to be difficult for a lot of people.

Ms. Kearl thanked him for his comments and said that unfortunately the Town has no control over the timing. It’s set by the State. She continued that it’s unclear how Town tax rates will be affected and what the Education tax will be.

Another community member commented that there is fear of and distrust in the process, and that there doesn't seem to be information available on when residents will know the tax basis. Town Treasurer Melanie Dexter answered that the municipal tax rate will be set after all the grievances are concluded, because we will not have a finalized grand list until the grievance process is complete. She said it's then a simple math problem to take the agreed-on budget and divide it by the grand list to calculate the tax rate. The education tax, which is the bulk of a tax bill in any year, won't come from the State until after July 1st. She also noted that grievances are for appraisals, not for taxes. They are totally separate.

Mr. Sergeant had a further comment about parcels being combined in the assessment. Ms. Hall explained that the State required this for assessors because the State pays an amount to the Town by the parcel, so fewer parcels mean less expense for the State. She continued that parcels were not combined on paper, so they would not need to be separated to sell or divide.

Angela Milligan asked if there were any hours for appointments with the Assessor’s Clerk other than between 9:00 AM – 3:00 PM. She said she would have to take vacation or sick time to make an appointment during those hours, as would many others who work full time. Ms. Kearl thanked Ms.

Milligan for bringing this up and said it would be discussed with Ms. Jenks to see if something could be worked out. Any outcome will be posted on the Town website and Facebook page.

8. DPW Report

There was no DPW report.

9. Treasurer's Report

Ms. Dexter gave a brief mid-month report, starting with cash flow. She said that most of what's coming in is from water bills. They are due in June. She mentioned that the Treasurer's lockbox is now located outside the new offices. Delinquent taxes were the other larger amount. She continued that the general fund is now underwater, which she had predicted. Ms. Dexter said it's not alarming, but it has happened. She also noted that the water expense deficit is not as far negative as it has been. Ms. Dexter then made a point about the reassessment saying if you imagine that everyone's assessment doubled and everything else was kept exactly the same then the municipal tax rate would be cut by 50% and tax bills would be unaffected. She said people shouldn't get worried about the assessed value. It just means that the tax rate is going to go down.

10. Welcome to Shaftsbury Sign Update: Carrie Crawford

Ms. Crawford had a cleaned up old sign with her, not the one she was originally going to refurbish. She said that the original sign was in bad shape, but when she went to the DPW Mike Yannotti had found a sign that just needed a good cleaning. She said the sign post needs to be painted and wasn't sure if trimming had been done around the post. Ms. Kearl said that the board would check on that and she could leave the old sign with the DPW. They also didn't feel a vote was necessary to rehang the sign since there had already been a sign in the location. The entire board thanked Ms. Crawford for her initiative and hard work in improving the sign.

11. Recreation Committee Update: Deena Ruege

Ms. Ruege said that Ms. Costin would present an update on the dog park. Ms. Costin referred to a revised map of the dog park that showed the fenced dog park as 1 acre, with 0.8 acre for large dogs and 0.2 acre for small dogs. Gates, paths, parking, and drainage were also noted on the map. However, none of the labels had printed so Ms. Costin shared her computer with the board. Ms. Kearl read through the labels. Ms. Costin then went over the revised costs, including raising fencing height for big dogs to 5' and changing pressure treated posts to locust posts. The total is estimated at \$4900 - \$5500 before adding in a memorial bench and other small items. The dog park fund has approximately \$5300. Ms. Costin noted that labor would need to be done by volunteers. This will be discussed at the next Recreation Committee meeting.

Mr. Mulligan asked if a big dog might potentially jump the 4' fence into the small dog area. Ms. Costin said that hopefully the park rules, which include having your dog under control, would prevent that. She went over proposed rules: no aggressive dogs, dogs under control, no food or treats, no glass containers, use at your own risk, and clean up after your dog.

Ms. Ruege noted that the DPW had put in a lovely parking area, drainage, and a path over a culvert. Ms. Kearl said it would be helpful to post the map and information on the Town website and Facebook page. Ms. Costin said she would send a labeled copy. A member of the public asked if Ms. Costin had looked into aluminum posts. Ms. Costin answered that she had priced them, as well as chain link and other fencing. Locust posts and wire was the least expensive option that worked for the

use. Ms. Costin noted that a tractor with an auger would be helpful for digging post holes and there would be multiple volunteer days needed to put up fencing. Volunteer information will be posted on the Town website and Facebook page.

12. Update Zoning Fees: Carlyn Mickle

Ms. Mickle was unable to attend so the update was moved to the next meeting on Monday, June 1st.

13. Act 181 Update: Rep. David Durfee

Rep. Durfee said he thought that legislation on Act 181 would have been complete by this time, but it was not. He went into the history of Act 181 and Act 250, noting that Act 181 was signed into law during the 2023 – 2024 VT legislative session as an update to Act 250. Act 181 is over 170 pages designed to streamline the Act 250 process. He said that the biggest thing that Act 181 did was to overhaul the governance structure for Act 250 and create a new board consisting of 5 full-time professional people who, ideally, make going through the Act 250 process less of a burden. He cited the sale of Southern Vermont College as an example.

Rep. Durfee continued that Act 181 is legislation that gives towns and cities with a designated village center or downtown the ability to, within the village center, put aside Act 250 rules for housing development. This is referred to as Tier 1 status in Act 181. Tier 1 would be taking a permitting requirement away. He said what has been more controversial are 2 provisions that were designed to add permitting requirements: Tier 3, under which an Act 250 permit is required to build in ecologically sensitive areas, and the “Road Rule”, where an Act 250 permit is required to build a road over 2,000 feet, or a driveway over 800 feet. During this current legislative biennium, they are at the threshold of passing legislation that will remove both Tier 3 and the “Road Rule”. People involved are very confident that it will happen. Tier 3 and a road rule will be not just delayed implementation, they will be removed. Ms. Kearl announced that the Tier 1 process has been completed for Shaftsbury and asked if anyone had questions.

A member of the public asked if the co-authors of the original bill are part of the subcommittee that is reexamining what was put forth into the subcommittee, why is Rep. Durfee confident that they will honor what the legislature said they wanted to eliminate from the original bill. Rep. Durfee answered that the House committee unanimously passed to remove both, but the Senate did not. Rep. Durfee is confident that the Senate will repeal them.

Another member of the public disagreed with Rep. Durfee, saying he didn’t trust the committee, but was “happy with the way it's going.” He said his property is his life savings, as it is for many others. The “Road Rule” would have cut the value of his land in half. Ms. Kearl said she knew that property value was a concern for many people, that their properties are their savings.

Rep. Durfee said that the legislature will have a final wording in place soon. Ms. Kearl requested that Rep. Durfee send the Town a brief statement when that takes place, and the board will deliver a report when it has the information. Rep. Durfee said if other questions come up or if he can be helpful in some way, just him know. Ms. Kearl asked if anybody had any comments or questions. Hearing none, she asked Mr. Scoggins if he had any comments.

Mr. Scoggins said he had been on the Act 250 Commission for the local District 8 and had heard stories about how horrible Act 250 is. He said he also hears from the people behind the scenes, the professional coordinators who collect applications, check that permits are legitimate, and then come to the commissioners with evidence and recommendations used to decide whether a permit goes forward. He said he was impressed with the quality of people that he’s met on the Act 250 board and

the coordinators in general. He noted that Act 250 sometimes takes the rap for things that are not its fault. Delays may be at a different agency. Mr. Scoggins felt it important to remember what Rep. Durfee said earlier, and a lot of people believe, that Act 250 is why Vermont looks the way it does. He commented that if you're going to protect the environment, you're not going to have free rein on building and commerce. He said Act 250 does put a strain on commerce, but residents of the State have decided that the environment is important and want to make sure it stays protected. Ms. Kearl thanked Mr. Scoggins for his comments.

14. EMS Week Proclamation – moved to after Public Comments

15. Other Business

Ms. Kearl asked if anyone had other business. Ms. Iken said she some. First, she had received the engagement letter from Sullivan Powers & Co. who do the outside audit for the Town every year. They ask the board to sign the letter, and then Ms. Iken scans it and sends it back to Sullivan Powers & Co., giving them permission to do the audit. They usually come the 2nd or 3rd week in July. Ms. Kearl called for a motion to approve the audit scope and objectives by Sullivan Powers & Co. Ms. Miller moved. Ms. Hall seconded. Ms. Kearl asked for discussion. Hearing none, the motion was approved 5-0-0.

The next item was the PFAS private well sampling surrounding the Shaftsbury landfill. She gave some history: the Town, monitors 3 POET (point of entry treatment) systems due to PFAS detections being above 20 parts per trillion, the town garage being one of them. A few months ago, the State matched the EPA's number of 4 parts per trillion, so now there are 7 more houses that need wells sampled. KAS Environmental Science and Engineering does all the testing and contacts all the neighbors. Their total estimated cost is \$5,780, so Ms. Iken asked for permission to approve, as it's over \$4,999. Ms. Kearl noted that the State is requiring the Town to do this since there was contamination of water found to be the result of town-owned activity and property at what is now the transfer station. As such, the Town of Shaftsbury is liable for the contamination of that water, and has been handling those 3 properties, and maintaining those expensive POET systems. These additional 7 properties may or may not meet the new criteria of 4 parts per trillion. This scope of work will test find out. If any well is above the 4 parts per trillion, the Town will take next steps to figure out remediation. Residents of those 7 addresses will receive notification from KAS if contamination over those 4 parts per trillion is found. At that point, the Town will reach out about next steps. Ms. Kearl called for a motion to approve the \$5,780 quote for KAS Environmental Science and Engineering to complete the testing on these 7 wells as is mandated by the State. Ms. Hall moved. Mr. Mulligan seconded. Ms. Kearl asked if there was any discussion. Hearing none, the quote was approved 5-0-0.

16. Review of Action Items

Discuss with Assessor Clerk Gina Jenks about the possibility of some extended hours or appointment hours.

Post to the Town website and Facebook the outcome of additional availability for the assessor to take appointments outside of her existing hours.

Contact Mike Yannotti about hanging the refurbished Shaftsbury sign.

Keep in touch with Rep. Durfee and provide an update when Act 181 is finalized. This update may be for the future, not at the next Select Board meeting.

Ask Deena Ruege or Sarah Costin for labeled dog park map. Post dog park map to the Town website and Facebook page along with a request for volunteers, and tractor with auger.

After the action items a resident asked about a Shaftsbury sign on 7A coming from the North or other roads. There was a brief discussion about which committee to contact.

17. Executive Session: Legal, Real Estate

Ms. Kearl called for a motion to enter executive session to discuss a legal matter with regards to a real estate transaction. Ms. Hall moved. Mr. Mulligan seconded. Motion to enter executive session approved 5-0-0.

18. Adjournment