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Town of Shaftsbury

Municipal Offices at Cole Hall

Meeting Minutes

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

Water Board

Date: Monday, November 17, 2025

Time: 5:00 PM

Location: Cole Hall and on Zoom

Water Board Members Present: Zoe Contros Kearn (Chair, on Zoom), Naomi Miller (Vice Chair), and Tony Krulikowski

Staff Present: Paula Iken (Town Administrator) Consultant: Art Whitman

1. Call to Order

Ms. Miller called the meeting to order at approximately 5:02 PM.

2. Conflict of Interest Statement

Ms. Kearn asked whether any members had a conflict of interest with items on the agenda. None were declared.

3. Minutes

Two sets of prior meeting minutes were reviewed.

July 21, 2025 Meeting Minutes

A motion was made by Ms. Kearn and seconded by Mr. Krulikowski to approve the July 21, 2025 minutes as presented. Motion carried unanimously.

August 18, 2025 Meeting Minutes

Ms. Kearn made a motion to approve the August 18, 2025 minutes as presented. Mr. Krulikowski seconded, and the motion carried unanimously.

4. Announcements

There were no announcements.

5. Public Comments

No public comments were offered.

6. Discussion of Work with Quantified Ventures

Ms. Iken summarized a Zoom meeting held on October 23, 2025 with Ashley Luft of Quantified Ventures, who is assisting the Town with evaluating the Water Department's financial condition and long-term sustainability.

Key discussion points included:

- Review of the Water Department's current financial standing and preparation for a more sustainable FY27 budget.
- Identification of discrepancies between budgeted and actual revenue, particularly low revenue reported in the FY25 ledger.
- Exploration of potential contributing factors, including insufficient water rates, historical delinquencies, low consumption, meter underreporting, billing cycles, and timing of payments.
- Discussion of outdated accounting practices and aging metering systems.
- Recognition that water rates are lower than neighboring systems and are not covering operating costs.

Ms. Iken noted that while delinquencies have significantly improved—nearly all customers are now on payment plans—the department remains in a deficit position. A draft FY27 “sandbox” budget has been created internally, with a more formal budget to be provided by Quantified Ventures.

Board members discussed the need for equitable rate structures, potential use of flat-rate or tiered billing, and lessons learned from other municipalities, including Arlington, Bennington, and North Bennington.

Ms. Kearn requested that a Treasurer's Report for the Water Department be presented at the next Water Board meeting to better understand current financial figures and progress made.

7. Discussion of New Billing Cycles

The Board discussed a recommendation from Quantified Ventures and Town staff to move from semiannual billing to quarterly water billing.

Discussion highlights included:

- Quarterly billing may reduce hardship on customers by spreading costs over smaller, more frequent payments.
- More frequent billing would improve cash flow and revenue consistency for the Water Department.
- Logistical and administrative considerations, including billing costs and staff time.
- Alignment of billing cycle changes with potential future changes to rate structures or tiered billing.

No formal action was taken; the Board agreed to continue evaluating this option and keep it on the agenda for future meetings.

8. Other Business

Additional discussion focused on:

- Ongoing concerns regarding responsiveness from North Bennington related to temporary increased water allocation requests.
- The lack of a finalized agreement meeting state requirements for increased allocation.
- Potential exploration of alternate water sources, including East Road and Buck Hill Road, pending grant funding and engineering review.
- PFAS/POET considerations, state thresholds, and potential future liabilities.

Nick Naiac, from the BCRC, explained that technical assistance is available to help the Town with water system management, billing practices, and administrative improvements over the coming years.

9. Review of Action Items

- Request a Water Department Treasurer's Report for the next Water Board meeting.
- Follow up with Quantified Ventures regarding the FY27 Water Department budget.
- Continue outreach regarding water allocation agreements and alternative water source options.

10. Executive Session: Legal

No executive session was entered.

11. Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned by consensus.