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Town of Shaftsbury

Municipal Offices

Meeting Agenda

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Water Board

1. Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 5:00 PM on July 20, 2026. Present were Water Board members Zoe Kearl, Naomi Miller, Mike Cichanowski, Marlene Hall, Eamon Mulligan, Water Dept. Superintendent Josh Brace, and non-voting member Art Whitman.

2. Conflict of Interest Statement

There were no conflicts of interest with items on the agenda.

3. Minutes

Minutes from the June 17, 2026, meeting were reviewed. Ms. Kearl asked for a motion to accept. Ms. Hall moved. Ms. Miller seconded. The minutes were accepted without amendment 5-0-0.

4. Announcements

Ms. Kearl said that Water Dept. Superintendent Josh Brace was delayed but would be at the meeting.

5. Public Comments

There were no public comments.

6. Discussion of quote for replacement of main pumps

Ms. Kearl noted that Mr. Brace had arrived and asked him to explain the pump replacement. Mr. Brace had a quote from Hayes Pump, Inc. for replacement of pumps and wiring at the Twitchell Hill super pump station. A leak was discovered last Fall and hours were found to be a lot more than what registered on the pumps, which was 2,000 hours. The computer board showed between 5,000 – 6,000 hours per pump. After replacement there will be a maintenance schedule created. He answered questions from Art Whitman and Eamon Mulligan, describing the set up and alarm system for the pump station and some of the history. Ms. Hall asked if this project had been part of the Water Dept. budget. Mr. Brace said he had tried to factor it in but planned quarterly water billing is starting a quarter behind schedule, so the budget has been affected. He emphasized that the pumps could stop functioning at any point. There are supposed to be two pumps, cycling on and off, providing a backup. Right now, there is no backup and there is a 12 week lead time

for the replacement. Mr. Mulligan asked if there was any sort of “band-aid option” to repair the pumps. Mr. Brace said the pumps were past their lifespan, and it wouldn’t be cost effective. All agreed that it was best to avoid an emergency with residents having no water. Ms. Kearl called for a motion to approve the quote of \$30,288.57 to Hayes Pump, Inc. for the necessary replacement. Ms. Hall moved. Mr. Mulligan seconded. The quote was approved 5-0-0.

7. Water Bond

Ms. Kearl announced that the application to the Vermont Bond Bank for Phase 1 of water system infrastructure replacement has been approved. It is a 40 year, no-interest term that is, and will continue to be, built into the budget. Mr. Brace described the area affected and work to be done during Phase 1. This information will be posted on the Town website. The oldest infrastructure is being addressed first and leaks will be fixed. Dates will be announced when determined, probably in Spring of 2027. There was some discussion of scope of the project, which is primarily the main but might include service lines and water meters.

8. North Bennington Water Bill

Ms. Kearl said that the Town has paid its water bill to the North Bennington Water Department, under protest, and at the old rate of \$6.50 for 1,000 gallons, as opposed to \$8.50 for 1,000 gallons. The reason for this is that the Town had such short notice of the rate change that it was not able to change its rates and give customers 90 days to prepare for the higher rate.

9. Water Allocation Approval

Ms. Kearl announced that the water allocation approved in August 2025 has been granted. Shaftsbury and North Bennington are now in compliance with State requests regarding water allocation. Mr. Brace said that he had sent the updated letter to the State, and had been providing updates throughout the process, so the State understood that the Town was actively addressing the matter. The Town is “good to go” now with State requirements. He continued that North Bennington had allocated 75,000 gallons per day. When water mains are replaced and some lost water is accounted for, the Town will have some leeway where it can add homes to lines or allow people to make improvements like an additional bathroom, without having to go to North Bennington.

10. Quarterly Billing Discussion

Ms. Kearl said that Shaftsbury Water Department is switching to a quarterly billing schedule at the recommendation of a consultant who worked with the Town and Mr. Brace. Mr. Brace said initially the switch was planned for July, when the fiscal year started. He had read meters in April and May, so it would have started the 3-month cycle. But, due to negotiations over rate hikes and allocations, notifications did not get sent out in a reasonable time to give the customers an update on the changes.

So, the new billing is starting a quarter behind, reading meters in October, even though the numbers won't be used until the next cycle. The consultant will work with Mr. Brace and Town bookkeeper Tiffany Mays to get the first bills done correctly.

11. Flushing Schedule

Ms. Kearl noted that for several months there have been conversations around flushing hydrants. This was not being done on a regular schedule. She said that Mr. Brace is creating a schedule starting in Autumn 2026. Hydrants will be inspected and flushed in a manner that will ensure hydrants are working without wasting water. Ms. Kearl clarified that the Shaftsbury Fire Dept. does not use the hydrants except as possible backup. The Fire Dept. is well prepared to handle emergencies throughout the town, including where there are no hydrants.

Mr. Brace described an annual flushing plan that includes inspections. Maintenance logs will be available for review. Emergency response hydrants will be flushed annually, all other hydrants semi-annually. All hydrants will be inspected annually. Flow will be checked and if hydrants don't drain, they will be pumped before Winter. There will be regular painting of hydrants and new flags on some for better visibility. Snow will be removed, and people can "adopt" a hydrant in front of their property and remove snow themselves.

Mr. Mulligan asked how many hydrants there were and if there was a list of them. Mr. Brace said there are about 20 hydrants in Shaftsbury and a map is being created. Water customers will be told ahead of time about hydrant flushing because their water may be temporarily discolored. There was some discussion of how hydrants hook into the water main and possible repairs done during Phase 1 of the mains repair/replacement.

Ms. Kearl asked if there were further questions. She continued that a hydrant list would be a useful document. She noted that recent updates such as the bond, water allocation, and proposed hydrant plan were posted on the Town website and other online media.

12. Other Business

There was no other business.

13. Review of Action Items

Mr. Brace will create a hydrant plan and forward it to the Select Board for feedback

14. Adjournment

Ms. Kearl called for a motion to adjourn. Ms. Miller moved. Mr. Mulligan seconded. Motion to adjourn approved 5-0-0.