

Shaftsbury Economic Development Committee

July 13, 2023

Held remotely via Zoom

1. Call to Order

Present were members Martha Cornwell, Rick Bennett, Emily Cowperthwaite, and Marita Cockburn. Town administrator David Kiernan was also present.

2. Conflict of Interest

There were none reported.

3. Minutes

None were distributed.

4. Mission Statement

Ms. Cornwell read the draft statement. "The Shaftsbury Economic Development Committee develops and implements plans ensuring continued economic revitalization and provides support for any new and existing business opportunities." Mr. Kiernan will ask the webmaster to place the statement on the town website. Mr. Bennett moved to adopt the statement. Marita seconded the motion, which passed 4-0-0.

5. Press Release

The press release was tabled to a later meeting.

6. Health Assessment Survey

Ms. Cornwell and Mr. Kiernan met with folks from the Equitable Cities Program which they hope will assist with health-related projects related to the new community center, and shared with them their take on a health assessment. The next step will be outreach to townsfolk with a survey which the committee members will tailor to Shaftsbury. Ms. Cornwell asked committee members to review the survey and suggest which portions to save. Ms. Cornwell said survey responses have ranged from 20 responses to 250, but usually less than 5%. Mr. Kiernan said results in general are usually low. Ms. Cornwell suggested the recent loss of Shaftsbury Medical might make the response rate a little higher since health care is more top of mind for residents. Ms. Cornwell asked that responses be submitted in time for the next meeting in August.

7. Statewide Economic Development Meetings Discussion

Ms. Cornwell reported that Mr. Bennett, she, and Andrea Bacchi attended meetings relevant to the committee's work in recent months. Ms. Cornwell said she got some ideas as to how to assist the new owner of the former Country Store. She said they were able to publicize the town's outreach re spending ARPA funds.

Mr. Bennett said he attended a conference was attended largely by younger people. He participated in a talk on how Londonderry and neighboring towns worked together to create a jointly managed recreation area. He said he also attended a workshop on "steal this idea." Two projects profiled included craftsperson markets in the Putnam Hotel and a First Friday event in downtown Bennington (an idea stolen from Brattleboro).

A Preservation Trust workshop he attended was attended by mostly older people in a structure used as a meeting house by Strafford since 1790. (It made him think of the Shaftsbury Baptist Church; like it, the building has no running water or toilets.) He learned there that 90% of Vermonters live in

communities of fewer than 5000 people. Another thing learned: most towns attending had cemetery committees, but many fewer had housing committees. What works? Perseverance. Luck. (Among other things.) Mr. Bennett will share a compilation of resources he's created.

8. Other business

Ms. Cockburn shared photos of parks and town greens from around the country, including in Middlebury, Adams MA, Saxtons River, Woodstock, Dundas Driving Park, ON, RBG Royal Botanical Garden, ON, Franklin Children's Garden, ON. Mr. Bennett noted that his favorite park at his former home was simply green. A greensward might be a good place to start. Mr. Kiernan said the DPW crew brought in top soil and hydroseeded the former gravel lot behind Cole Hall just that day. He expects to be able to use the green by September.

Mr. Kiernan said he spoke with BCRC who will have a presentation on economic development ready next month.

He hopes to get a planning grant of about \$80,000 to enable them to hire a designer. They will hear about that grant around November.

He said the architect they hired to work on Cole Hall has begun work. The proposed elevator will cost nearly \$1 million.

Ms. Cornwell summarized to-dos:

- She will send out the health survey to committee members for their comments
- Mr. Kiernan will have the mission statement posted on the website.
- Ms. Bacchi will send out the draft press release.
- Ms. Bacchi will send out the survey she worked on a few weeks ago. Ms. Cornwell asked that the committee members fine tune the survey.
- She asked Mr. Bennett if he could develop a timeline to schedule the completion and compilation of the survey results so that they can share it with the designer upon receipt of the planning grant.

The next meeting will be held Thursday August 3, 3 p.m., a hybrid meeting. Ms. Cornwell thought BCRC would be present to offer a presentation.

8. Adjournment

Mr. Bennett moved to adjourn the meeting at 4:20 p.m. Ms. Cowperthwaite seconded the motion, which passed 4-0-0.