

Shaftsbury Select Board

November 15, 2021

1. Call to Order

The meeting came to order at 6:30 p.m. Present were selectmen Art Whitman (chair), Ken Harrington, Tony Krulikowski, Joe Barber, and Mike Cichanowski. Also present was Town Administrator David Kiernan. Mr. Whitman noted that the agenda would be changed: Buck Hill Paving will not be going out for bid at this time.

2. Conflict of Interest Statement

No one reported a conflict of interest with any item on the agenda.

3. Minutes

Mr. Krulikowski moved to approve the minutes for October 18. Mr. Barber seconded the motion, which passed 5-0-0. Mr. Krulikowski moved to approve the minutes for November 1. Mr. Cichanowski seconded the motion, which passed 5-0-0.

4. Warrants

Payroll warrant #10, \$24,XXX.92. Mr. Krulikowski moved to approve the warrant. Mr. Barber seconded the motion, which passed 5-0-0.

Check warrant #14, \$45,152.77. Mr. Krulikowski moved to approve the warrant. Mr. Barber seconded the motion, which passed 5-0-0.

5. Announcements and public comments

Representative David Durfee reported that Health Commissioner Levine and others today called together the Bennington County delegation. They noted that Bennington County (and Rutland County) Covid infection rates are very high; they asked the delegation to urge residents to get vaccinated if they aren't already so, and to wear a mask when indoors for an extended period of time.

Mr. Durfee reported that Governor Scott is proposing to bring the legislature back into session, and if they wish to pass a temporary law allowing individual towns to pass a mask mandate for their communities. He reminded the board that it had passed a mask mandate earlier in the pandemic, in part upon the request of a local business owner – who was uncomfortable requiring masks on his own. Mr. Barber argued that the governor's actions were political theater, that the science shows that masks don't work, and that mask mandates are divisive and are causing people to leave their jobs. Mr. Harrington agreed with Mr. Barber. Mr. Krulikowski said we owe it to each other to take care of each other. We've got to talk about the common good. Mr. Cichanowski said he used to work for the NIH and every employee there is dedicated to public health. Mr. Harrington asked what portion of Vermonters who are acquiring the virus are immigrants from the southern border. Mr. Durfee said age is the great divider at this time; kids are getting it more than adults.

Mr. Durfee described a redistricting proposal discussed by the Board of Civil Authority at a recent meeting. The plan is to cut Shaftsbury in two pieces, with the southern part aligned with the Bennington delegation and the northern part with the Manchester delegation. Realignment will be difficult around the state. Mr. Whitman said the BCA agreed that so splitting the town in two was unacceptable. Mr. Durfee said the Town of Shaftsbury is only slightly short of the required minimum population. Mr. Whitman told the board it may need to go to Montpelier at some time to make its case.

7. Treasurers report

Ms. Dexter said we collected a little bit less than average in taxes, a little over 90% by dollar amount. That may be in part because more people used the online payment option. She said people were happy with the joint N. Bennington/Shafsbury date, and were grateful for the reminder sign.

Ms. Dexter said many pieces of taxes mail showed no sign of the Post Office having handled them. She said she and the delinquent tax collector agreed to review any ambiguous pieces as necessary.

Mr. Kiernan asked Mr. Durfee if he knows when the infrastructure funds will be released. Mr. Durfee said not until January, beyond that he doesn't know. Shovel ready projects would be most likely to be funded early.

Meaghan Snide on Zoom asked about the water issue. Mr. Whitman said the Water Board would hold a public meeting on December 6 beginning at 5:30 pm, at which time they would be glad to explain the situation as best they can.

8. DPW report

- RFP Buck Hill Paving TABLED
- RFP Culvert

Mr. Yannotti said the Town received a Better Roads grant to replace a culvert at the end of Shafsbury Hollow Road. We have until June of 2022 to complete the project. He would like to put the project out to bid. It would be a 40' x 8' x 5' metal pipe with fish baffles. The Town will need to pay only \$6000 of the total cost. The road provides access to one resident and several camps. Mr. Barber moved to approve putting the project out to bid. Mr. Krulikowski seconded the motion, which passed 5-0-0.

The crew will do some ditching on Cold Spring Road, where a farm access curb cut will go in. They've been grading. All but two of the items sent to online auction were sold, for a total of more than \$22,000.

9. Listers- Town Meeting vote to eliminate office of Lister and replace with Professional Assessor

Mr. Whitman introduced the agenda item, by noting that few people are interesting in running for lister, and that listers no longer do assessments, instead turning that task over to NEMRC. The only task left for listers is data input. Two long-serving listers are uncomfortable with this responsibility, for which reason a third lister was recently appointed to cover this need. Mr. Whitman asked for a motion to place on the ballot the following language shared by Mr. Kiernan: "Shall the voters authorize the elimination of the office of Town Lister in accordance with 17 V.S.A Section 2651c(b)(1) and replace it with a professionally qualified assessor who shall have the same powers, discharge the same duties, proceed in the discharge thereof in the same manner, and be subject to the same liabilities that are prescribed for listers or the board of listers under the provisions of Title 32?" Mr. Harrington so moved. Mr. Krulikowski seconded the motion. The Board discussed the matter.

Mr. Kiernan said an "assessor's clerk" would be employed to serve as the local face of the office for citizens, to do data input cost-effectively, and to refer problems to the professional assessor. He said he was happy using NEMRC to manage the grand list; the company has several staff; the Town uses NEMRC for its financial record-keeping.

The motion passed 5-0-0.

10. RFP Cemetery Mowing Contract 2022

Mr. Kiernan presented the usual annual contract with an option to extend to three years, with the addition of an add-on to hire out special projects at an hourly rate. Mr. Harrington moved to approve the contract. Mr. Krulikowski seconded the motion, which passed 5-0-0.

11. Cole Hall Accessibility – LULA/Elevator proposed RFP

Mr. Kiernan said that architects he has spoken with think it is necessary to replace the existing exterior staircase and the existing elevator. A LULA, however, may not be an option, due to complications in the ADA law. The cost could be about \$250,000. Because the second floor is the Town emergency operations center, some of the cost could be covered by ARPA funds. A better fit, however, would be infrastructure bill money. For that reason, Mr. Kiernan would like to hold off a little while on pursuing a Cole Hall bid.

12. FY23 Budget Proposal overview – scheduling of meeting dates

Mr. Kiernan said the main focus of the budget this year is employees and employee retention. He is proposing a 5% across the board pay raise for everyone. He would also like to offer to full-time employees (but not their families) dental and vision plans offered by VLCT. This would go far to keep us competitive with other regional employers. The budget overall would go up about 4.5% (compared to a 1% increase last year). The road budget would increase tree removal efforts, and level fund gravel. Mr. Yannotti asked for an increase in the road salt budget, as the price has gone up by a third.

Mr. Kiernan would like to again review the budget on Dec. 6, when he will be able to offer more detail.

13. Review of Action Items

- Send out a bid for the SHR culvert
- Send out a bid for cemetery mowing and special projects
- Place the listers issue on the ballot
- Review the 2023 budget on Dec. 6

14. Adjournment

Mr. Barber moved to adjourn at 7:56 p.m. Mr. Krulikowski seconded the motion, which passed 5-0-0.