

Shaftsbury Select Board
July 1, 2019, 6:30 pm

- 1) Call to order at 6:30 pm. Present were Select Board members Tim Scoggins, Ken Harrington, Art Whitman, Joe Barber, and Tony Krulikowski. Also present was town administrator David Kiernan. Tyler Resch arrived after start.
- 2) Conflict of interest statement
Mr. Harrington said he'd like to put a word in for his grandson as a member of the audience. He will recuse himself from the executive session discussion of same.
- 3) Approval of minutes
Mr. Whitman moved to approve the June 3 minutes. Mr. Krulikowski seconded the motion, which passed 4-0-1, with Mr. Scoggins abstaining.
Mr. Whitman moved to approve the June 3 minutes for the water board. Mr. Krulikowski seconded the motion, which passed. The motion passed 3-0-2, with Mr. Scoggins and Mr. Barber abstaining.
Mr. Whitman moved to approve the minutes of the special meeting to approve warrants and contracts, and to discuss animal control issues held June 20. Mr. Krulikowski seconded the motion, which passed. The motion passed 4-0-1, with Mr. Barber abstaining.
- 4) Warrants
Payroll warrant #26, \$19,677.47. Mr. Krulikowski moved to approve the warrant. Mr. Whitman seconded the motion, which passed 5-0-0.
Check warrant #39, \$30,080.24. Mr. Krulikowski moved to approve the warrant. Mr. Whitman seconded the motion, which passed 5-0-0. (Mr. Kiernan reported that the water testing came back fine, no change.)
- 5) Announcements
Mr. Whitman noted that fireworks will be offered at Lake Paran on Wednesday July 3.
- 6) Public comments
Mr. Pete Levin, 399 Cleveland Avenue, complained about a water bill with a usage charge of \$1296, when most years the charge has been \$600-\$880. The water guys checked and reported the meter is working and there are no leaks. The board agreed that the issue would need to be addressed by the water board (which is the Select Board and the water superintendent). A meeting will be arranged.
- 7) Treasurer's report
Ms. Dexter was absent (in concert), but had prepared notes, which Mr. Scoggins read, paraphrased: "The town ended with more cash on hand at the end of the year than I anticipated. We will still probably need to draw on our line of credit, but will need less than I anticipated in April. It appears that this year like last year will be almost surgically on target for both revenue and expenses, including for the garage project." She went on to explain entries in the ledger. She asked for signatures on the line of credit paperwork. She will close out the year on July 2, after the checks approved this evening were cut. Mr. Krulikowski moved to approve the Town's application for a line of credit in anticipation of taxes for up to \$300,000. Mr.

Whitman seconded the motion, which passed 5-0-0. Mr. Scoggins signed a state form regarding compliance with certain requirements already addressed in the annual audit.

8) Roads report

Mr. Kiernan reported that the crew started roadside mowing, conducted by Mr. Hosely. He has been contracted for 100 hours. After those ours are used, the town will rent a mower and mow throughout the autumn. They are ditching Cold Spring Road and will be grading Airport Rd. The compacter has arrived. Some items need to be addressed at the new Garage. On the 15th, bids will be opened for repair of a portion of the road in Shaftsbury Hollow. Bids for paving on the Myers Rd. and North Rd. aprons will be sought. A bid for repairing the depression on White Creek Rd. will be sought. The Town will pull up the pavement rather than contract to have it ground up. The town applied for a grant for work on Trumbull Hill and a project on Cross Hill. Mr. Kiernan hopes to go to bid for other projects before the end of the season. State engineer designers have broken Myers Rd. into three sections, which will be tackled sequentially. Mr. Kiernan has offered Peter Cross fill from ditching operations to be placed on the parcel he owns behind the old garage. He is aiming for an auction in late August. Mr. Kiernan has stored many boxes of old documents in the old garage and will go through them in the next months, discarding what can be legally discarded. Mr. Scoggins reminded Mr. Kiernan that he'd like to post on the website the schedule for such road improvements.

Mr. Harrington spoke on behalf of his grandson, Cody Wilkins, who "is a good worker and a natural equipment operator. He took off a week from work to get his GED so he'd be eligible for the position."

9) Chief Vadakin – Fire Truck Replacement

Chief Vadakin explained that, since it would take more than 400 days to receive delivery of a new truck; the schedule calls for a new truck in 2021; and the sinking fund plus the selling price of the old truck could cover the cost of about \$350,000 for a new truck, Mr. Vadakin would like to seek to buy a new truck. He will seek bids from vendors within 1.5 hours or so. He has prepared a checklist of what is needed in the truck which vendors can use. The final bid packet has been prepared. Mr. Vadakin said the old truck would probably bring in \$130,000. Mr. Kiernan said the sinking fund has \$339,000+ and more will be added in FY2021. Mr. Vadakin noted that he couldn't sell the old truck until the new truck has been delivered, so he's not sure what price it will bring. Mr. Whitman moved to send the bid package for a new fire truck. Mr. Krulikowski seconded the motion. The motion passed 5-0-0. Mr. Kiernan will also advertise in the paper.

10) SoVT Economic Summit – Tyler Resch

Former selectman Tyler Resch reported his observations and opinions on the Southern Vermont Economic held at Mt Snow in Dover on May 23. His full report is attached to these minutes. Of note, Mr. Resch committed positively on the spirit of regionalism that was evident at the conference. As a historian and long-time resident, he has observed that for many years towns have functioned independent and isolated. Every town has its own select board, school board, fire department, etc. Regional coordination and cooperation were little in evidence. It was heartening to see citizens, business owners, and local and state officials striving together toward common goals, said Resch.

Mr. Scoggins, who also attended the summit, noted that the Bennington County Regional Economic Development (RED) group continues to meet, and to explore various ways in which regionalism can be encouraged.

11) Other business

Mr. Scoggins shared three maps created by BCRC portraying broadband and cell phone coverage or the lack thereof in Town. He hopes to place the maps on the website, where residents can see which carrier best serves their neighborhood.

He also noted strong signal from Vtel on Rod and Gun Club Road. That signal provides “fixed point wireless” broadband internet service as well as cell phone coverage. **Residents on Rod and Gun Club Road who are unhappy with their Internet service are encouraged to contact Vtel.**

Mr. Kiernan reported that PACIF has agreed to re-cover town clerks in their capacity as notary publics.

Mr. Whitman shared a story about a dog bite that portrayed how greatly communication has broken down regarding animal control. He promised to talk about it more in the future.

Mr. Scoggins reported that he often produces reports on Select Board business for the Bennington Banner, which they routinely publish.

In response to a question from Mr. Harrington, Mr. Kiernan reported that state engineers recommend that the dip on White Creek Rd. be leveled and paved so as to get the road through the next winter. The major repair will be made in 2020.

12) Review of action items

Trustees of Public Funds have agreed to consolidate the funds. Our attorney advised that it can be done relatively easily with statements from the Town Clerk that the original documents cannot be found. A judge can then be requested to allow the Town to consolidate and make the funds available. The attorney will be crafting the language needed to move forward.

Road crew schedules will be posted regularly on the web and on the ground.

Mr. Kiernan will meet with water superintendent Jim McGinnis regarding Mr. Levin’s water bill.

Mr. Kiernan will look into the legality of hiring the sheriff to serve summonses to dog owners whose dogs are unregistered.

Mr. Kiernan will also ask the Sheriff about enforcing the traffic laws.

13) Executive session

Mr. Krulikowski moved to enter executive session to discuss matters related to personnel and hiring issues. Mr. Whitman seconded the motion, which passed 5-0-0. Mr. Harrington recused himself from the executive session and left the building.

14) Motion to return to open session at 8:01 By Mr. Whitman. Seconded by Mr. Barber.

15) Motion to offer Cody Wilkins a full-time employee position in the Department of Public Works by Mr. Whitman, Seconded by Mr. Barber. Motion passed 4-0-0. (Mr. Harrington had left.) Mr. Wilkins replaces an employee who resigned.

16) Adjournment Motion by Mr. Whitman. Seconded by Mr. Krulikowski. Motion carried 4-0-0.

MEMO

To: Shaftsbury Selectboard

From: Tyler Resch

Re: Southern Vermont Economic Summit

June 2, 2019

Efforts to stimulate the economy in Bennington and Windham counties have been in the news lately, as well as a subject of the selectboard's concerns. So when I read about the May 23 "Economic Summit" at Mount Snow, at the last minute I called Tim Scoggins about it and asked whether there was a way I could go. He agreed the town would pay for my registration if I were to report to the Selectboard. This is my report as an independent citizen observer.

First I want to express my sense of appreciation for the progress that has been achieved in Shaftsbury in very recent times. The newly reconfigured municipal dump, the beautifully renovated offices at Cole Hall, and above all, the new town garage. Another sign of progress is seen in the aggressive work being pursued by your new road commissioner. All these projects have been a long time coming, and they have been done with little perceptible burden on the taxpayer.

I was a member of this board for five years nearly 20 years ago, and a new town garage was urgently needed back then. So I have a special sense of what it really took to get the garage project moving and figuring how to pay for it on relatively gentle terms.

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At the Economic Summit it was basically encouraging to see 275 people from various venues and agencies and offices getting together from both counties. The overall theme might be described as breaking down traditional town and county barriers in the interest of the overall economy.

The program, other than having a dynamic speaker – the same speaker who entertained the annual BCRC dinner the night before -- was divided into twelve different sessions in three time periods, so you could only attend three of them. I

gravitated first toward one titled “financing great community projects.” This primarily involved the successful Brooks House redevelopment project in downtown Brattleboro, and the very comparable Putnam-Greenberg Block in Bennington. What’s encouraging, I thought, is that the same M&S Development is involved in both projects, and their experience should be valuable here in Bennington.

Two other major downtown projects were described: the Mocha Joe’s Coffee building on Flat Street in Brattleboro, where a large abandoned building was brought back to life; and the productive rescue in Springfield, Vt., of some 300,000 square feet of space abandoned years ago by the machine-tool industry there. (I have some familiarity with all these situations, having edited newspapers in both Brattleboro and Springfield some years ago.)

Secondly, a session titled “What Makes a Resilient Community?” involved enthusiastic descriptions of towns that came back from disaster or trauma. A sparkplug of a woman from Bethel told how that town not only recovered from near wipeout by hurricane Irene but then came alive with new community activities and revitalization of its small downtown. A woman from Arlington told how a local tragedy, the murder of an elderly woman, prompted neighbors and citizens to get together to create a new sense of community. Another success story was told about the revitalization of the village of Bellows Falls, where productive use was made of neglected buildings.

Lastly, a session on state taxes and incentives offered probably the most relevant specific information for Shaftsbury. Tim Terway from the Vermont Center for Geographic Information told how the state hopes to link with local listers to develop a statewide Grand List, with the entire state being mapped. Doug Farnham of the state tax department focused on problems with commercial tax appraisals, because of different criteria and levels of professionalism varying from town by town. He suggested that eventually the state would like to be responsible for appraising all large commercial properties. He also mentioned a proposal to allow towns to merge and/or create new assessment districts. This was the only session that Tim Scoggins and I attended together, and I raised the question with him about how the Peckham property is assessed in Shaftsbury.

Among conclusions I drew from attending this Economic Summit:

- Vermont downtowns are taking advantage of utilizing long-abandoned buildings, especially underused second-floor spaces; this endeavor avoids new construction, revitalizes downtown commerce and stimulates tax revenue, avoids sprawl, and prevents plowing up lands devoted to agriculture.
- Just as it makes sense for towns to break down arbitrary town and county boundaries for economic-development purposes, it's also clear that the state will continue gradually to try to erase town lines for purposes of tax assessment and Grand List uniformity, as it has been doing for residential appraisals with the "common level of appraisal" approach.
- Same conclusion in other words: From the beginning of statehood, Vermont towns have been creatures of the Legislature, which can create, re-name, merge, divide, or disincorporate them. In earlier times, when transportation and communication were primitive and Vermonters lived in relatively insulated clusters, it made sense to have townships with rigid boundaries, each town having its own legislative, taxation, and judicial functions (town agent, grand juror, etc.) Now in the Internet and Digital Age, the state is going to be gradually breaking down those ancient barriers.