

Town of Shaftsbury
Economic Development Committee
Special Meeting
Cole Hall and remotely via Zoom
Thursday, September 7, 2023

1. Call to Order

The meeting came to order at 3 p.m. Present were Martha Cornwell (chair), Andrea Bacchi, Emily Cowperthwaite, Marita Cockburn, and Rick Bennett. Also present was town administrator David Kiernan.

2. Conflict of Interest

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

3. Survey – Review of survey results and drafting of document for public

Ms. Cornwell noted that the survey was intended to find out what people want so funding can be sought to implement those ideas.

Ms. Bacchi gave an overview of the results.

- 128 results
- What do you want to see in the community center? Meeting/events/fitness space was chosen by 83.6%; offerings for seniors and youth won 73.4%; commercial kitchen and meal space, 51.6%. Several other options were also chosen and/or suggested. Ms. Cowperthwaite thought that many of the other items could be incorporated. Mr. Bennett said a commercial kitchen could be very useful but could be very expensive. Ms. Bacchi noted that it could serve well in a town emergency.
- What amenities? Picnic tables/green space was chosen by about 77%; gazebo/stage by about 76%; skating rink/splash pad, about 58%; solar covered parking lot/charging stations, about 37%, as well as many others.
- How did you find out about the survey? Most folks learned about it from Front Porch Forum. Others heard about it from social media, town website, and other venues.
- The ages of the respondents were mostly 56-70, but other age groups were also well represented.

Ms. Bacchi will create a graphic presentation of results of questions 1 and 2.

Ms. Cornwell noted that we'd learned recently that there are few spaces available for community events with solid internet service. Warming and cooling spaces will be needed in future. We might not need a commercial kitchen, but some sort of running water, cleaning space, oven, and public toilets would be very desirable. She thought each item could be fundable. She summarized these thoughts in a document shared by Mr. Kiernan and viewed by all. Changes were suggested and made. The document will be shared with the Select Board on September 18, and will be incorporated in a state Municipal Planning Grant to be developed by the Bennington County Regional Commission. Mr. Kiernan said the endorsement of the Select Board would be important at this point. As for future upkeep of the new town center, the Town already needs another DPW employee, who can care for the Green. Ms. Cornwell said she thought the project would probably be done in phases, and that it might involve public/private partnerships. She thought programming in the new space would be undertaken by private partners.

Mr. Kiernan said he would be meeting with BCRC re the municipal planning grant by the end of the month. It will probably be December before we learn about the grant. Ms. Cornwell wondered whether the committee could meet soon-ish to plan some sort of event on the new green. A hybrid

meeting will be scheduled for Thursday Sept. 28 at 3 p.m. An event could be a harvest event in early November, or some sort of European-style holiday event.

4. Adjournment

Mr. Bennett moved to adjourn at 3:55 p.m. Ms. Cockburn seconded the motion, which passed 5-0-0.