

MINUTES OF THE SHAFTSBURY SELECT BOARD  
JANUARY 19, 2009  
COLE HALL  
SHAFTSBURY, VERMONT

**Board Present:** Lon McClintock (Chairman), Bill Pennebaker, Karen Mellinger, Wynn Metcalfe, Cinda Morse

**Others Present:** Henri Billow (Treasurer), Aaron Chrostowsky (Town Administrator), Susan Swasta (Recording Secretary), Mike Gleason (Bennington Banner -- arrived 7:00 PM)

**1. Call Budget Work Session to Order:**

Chairman Lon McClintock called the budget work session to order at 6:04 PM. He announced that the Board needs to acts on a motion duly made and seconded at the last meeting to cut every Town department's 2009-2010 budget by 5%, with department heads to decide how to allocate the cuts.

Mr. Pennebaker offered a friendly amendment to exempt those areas of the budget that are fixed and cannot be cut, such as truck lease payments. The amendment was not accepted. Wynn Metcalfe, who had made the motion, confirmed that the intent of his motion is to have departments decide on cuts. It was established that the total amount to be cut from the budget would be about \$78,000.

**Motion to cut every Town department's 2009-2010 budget by 5%, with department heads to decide how to allocate the cuts, was defeated 2-3-0. (Mr. Metcalfe, Ms. Morse in favor; Chairman McClintock, Ms. Mellinger, Mr. Pennebaker opposed)**

Chairman McClintock introduced another budget proposal, handing out copies to Board members. He stated that the current budget has a \$38,000 deficit. He proposed that the \$54,000 in spending freezes previously approved by the Board become spending cuts. Chairman McClintock then went over suggested adjustments to this year's and next year's budgets. For this year, he proposed a \$10,000 cut in reappraisal funds, sus-pending Select Board stipends for the rest of the year to save \$1500, a \$1000 cut in the office equipment budget, and a \$2000 cut in highway contracts. This would reduce this year's deficit to approximately \$24,000, to be paid off in taxes next November.

For next year's budget, on the revenue side, Chairman McClintock suggested raising the price of transfer station access stickers from \$10 to \$15, and raising the dog license fee by \$3 (approved by the Board last week). The latter would net about \$5100. Chairman McClintock said that he expects to receive 85% of state funds due to the Town, or about \$154,000.

On the expense side, he suggested cutting the Zoning Administrator's time by 25%, cutting the Select Board stipend by 50%, closing the Town office one day a week (which would reduce the Town Clerk's stipend by \$2000), level funding highway salaries, and eliminating the bookkeeping position. Chairman McClintock also recommended reducing the calcium chloride budget by \$22,000, level funding the tree removal budget at \$2000, cutting highway subcontracting costs by \$5,000, and reducing economic development reserve funds by \$1000. He recommended not doing tree removal for the Myers Road project, at \$7500, unless a grant becomes available. All of these adjustments would result in a 1% budget increase and a 4% tax increase. Adding in this year's remaining \$24,000 shortfall would result in 2% and 6% increases. (This takes into account the \$18,000 deficit from last year that has already been figured into taxes.)

Ms. Mellinger suggested level funding all departments, and proposed saving \$3366 by not paying toward the Town Clerk's health insurance deductible, since this is an elected position. Mr. Metcalfe asked why they would cut tree removal for Myers Road but leave \$14500 for the rest of the project. Chairman McClintock replied that they would use

that money for a project further down the road priority list if grant money does not come in. Ms. Mellinger also suggested cutting the paving reserve fund.

Mr. Metcalfe stated that he thinks a 2% budget increase and 6% tax increase is pretty darn good. He said that highway employees should get a cost of living raise because otherwise their pay takes a step backwards. Mr. Pennebaker and Chairman McClintock thought this would be hard to justify. Ms. Morse said they should look carefully at priorities and not undermine things they have decided are important. She recommended making the transfer station and Pay As You Throw (PAYT) pay for themselves, and looking at everything that brings in revenues. Chairman McClintock then suggested a \$20 transfer station access sticker, and pricing dog licenses to pay for the \$7000 animal control costs.

There was discussion of why PAYT is not paying for itself. Mr. Pennebaker said that he does not know why the numbers do not work, because 75 cents per bag should pay for disposal, and they charge \$1.00. Ms. Mellinger stated that numbers show that PAYT is paying for itself, as well as one half of the attendant's salary.

There was discussion of the possibility of cutting \$8000 for tub grinding of brush. Mr. Pennebaker said he is not sure they have enough space to accommodate more brush, but they could take a chance. Mr. Metcalfe suggested eliminating the brush pile, since it is a convenience more than a necessity. Ms. Mellinger suggested budgeting low on brush expenses, and if too much brush comes in, close the brush pile. Chairman McClintock noted that cutting the \$8000 would result in budget and tax increases of 2% and 5%. It was agreed to eliminate tub grinding and require revenues to cover disposal.

There was discussion of the \$30,000 in paving funds. Chairman McClintock suggested taking \$5000 from paving reserves and putting it toward Murphy Hill tree removal. Mr. Metcalfe suggested cutting \$2500 from the Town Garage reserve fund to make up the rest of the Murphy Hill tree costs.

Ms. Mellinger suggested level funding for libraries, and reiterated her recommendation to not fund the Town Clerk health insurance deductible. Chairman McClintock noted that these cuts would make the percentages 1% and 5%. He also said that raising access sticker fees to \$20 would bring in \$2500. Ms. Morse strongly objected to cherry-picking employee benefits, and recommended that all salaries be level funded.

Chairman McClintock asked whether Board members have strong feelings about anything else in the budget. Mr. Pennebaker asked whether revenue from the \$13,000 landfill reserve fund should show up in the general fund under highways. Other Board members felt that the revenue should be allowed to accrue as a savings account, since this is not income used to balance expenses.

Ms. Morse asked if the Town may reduce hours and stipend for the Town Clerk, since this is an elected position and voters set the stipend. Mr. Chrostowsky replied that the Secretary of State said that they may not tell the Town Clerk what hours to maintain, but they may decide what hours Town Hall will be open. Chairman McClintock said that he had talked to the Town Clerk, who said that things will be busy for the election, but that Fridays are very quiet, and she understands why they would consider closing on Fridays.

Chairman McClintock said the Board should decide on a tentative budget by the weekend, based on the previous discussion, and consult with department heads and make a final decision at Monday's meeting. Mr. Pennebaker noted that Town Administrator recruiting costs have not been budgeted for. Chairman McClintock and Mr. Metcalfe said it will be close to a wash, since they will be paying less in salary.

Chairman McClintock asked Board members whether they support cutting \$3366 for the Town Clerk's insurance deductible. Ms. Mellinger and Mr. Pennebaker felt it should be cut, and the other three Board members felt that it should not. The \$3366 was therefore left in the budget. Ms. Mellinger asked about appropriations, and Chairman

McClintock said that everyone will be level funded. Mr. Metcalfe said that all department heads should be informed of this right away.

Chairman McClintock stated that the tentative budget will have a 2% increase in total expenditures and a 5% increase in taxes. It will fully retire last year's deficit and this year's deficit. Ms. Morse asked about the highway overtime budget. Chairman McClintock said it has been capped at \$15,000. Mr. Chrostowsky noted that no overtime has been used in recent weeks.

Chairman McClintock closed the budget work session at 7:48 PM and called the regular meeting of the Select Board to order.

## **2. Announcements:**

Mr. Pennebaker reported that Rep. Alice Miller had informed him that the state is very likely to get Federal stimulus money.

Chairman McClintock expressed his appreciation to Road Foreman Ron Daniels and the road crew for dealing with winter storms and still staying within budget.

## **3. Conflict of Interest Statement:**

Chairman McClintock asked if any Board member has a conflict of interest with any topic on tonight's agenda. None did.

## **4. Public Comments:**

There were no public comments.

## **5. Census 2010:**

This agenda item will be rescheduled because a person could not attend tonight.

## **6. Emergency Management Update:**

This agenda item will be rescheduled because Emergency Management Director Jerry Mattison is not here tonight.

## **7. Open Cemetery Bids:**

Mr. Chrostowsky opened a bid from Sycamore Landscaping for \$12,500 for a one-year contract, \$13,000 per year for a three-year contract. This will cover spring and fall cleanup and summer mowing.

**Mr. Metcalfe made motion to accept the bid from Sycamore Landscaping for a three year contract at \$13,000 per year. Ms. Morse seconded. Motion carried 5-0-0.**

## **8. Town Plan Update:**

Ms. Morse asked if voting on the Town Plan will be by the Select Board, or by Australian ballot by Town voters. Mr. Chrostowsky replied that by law a town the size of Shaftsbury may adopt the Town Plan by Select Board vote, but if voters have authorized vote by Australian ballot, it must be done by ballot. He has done research and could find nothing in past minutes requiring vote by Australian ballot. Ms. Morse noted that, since they have done it that way, voters could expect that they will continue to do so.

Mr. Chrostowsky stated that the Vermont League of Cities and Towns (VLCT) says they are bound only by law. Chairman McClintock noted that there is no evidence that it was voted that Town Plan approval will always be by Australian ballot, so they may do it either way. Mr. Metcalfe and Ms. Mellinger felt that the Town Plan has a major impact on everyone, and people are used to voting on it. Mr. Chrostowsky stated that they have missed the deadline for warning the two required Select Board meetings and getting it on the ballot. The Town Plan expires March 2, 2009.

Mr. Chrostowsky suggested that they could get authorization from voters at Town Meeting to allow the Select Board to adopt the Town Plan. Board members noted that there are no sweeping changes in this Plan revision, and it has been out for public review many times. Mr. Metcalfe said that they could get copies of the Town Plan out for Town Meeting to give people an opportunity to comment, then vote as a Select Board on adoption at Town Meeting. Chairman McClintock stated that they can get two public hearings in by Town Meeting, and Town Meeting will be the third public hearing.

He gave Town Plan copies on CD to Board members, and said that any substantive changes need to be made by the January 27 Planning Commission meeting. They will then hold two Select Board hearings in February and it will be placed on the agenda for Town Meeting, for Select Board approval after public discussion. If Town Meeting attendees really want an Australian ballot vote, they will do so. Ms. Morse said they should do research to be sure this will work, and to see if they can extend the Plan if they cannot vote on it at Town Meeting.

#### **9. Select Board Report:**

Chairman McClintock will write a draft report to be taken up at next week's meeting.

#### **10. Transition Plan:**

Mr. Chrostowsky will prepare a list of his duties and contacts as a reference tool for the new Town Administrator. Chairman McClintock noted that there is a lot to do leading up to elections, and Mr. Chrostowsky is scheduled to leave just before Town Meeting. He asked if Mr. Chrostowsky would extend his resignation until just after Town Meeting. Mr. Chrostowsky agreed to do so. Ms. Mellinger said that a draft of the position advertisement was to have been circulated. Chairman McClintock said that they already revised it, shortened it, and sent it out.

#### **11. Review and Approve Meeting Minutes:**

##### January 5, 2009 Select Board minutes

**Mr. Mellinger made motion to approve January 5 minutes. Ms. Morse seconded.**

The following corrections to the January 5 minutes were requested:

*On page 1, under item 1 (Call Meeting to Order), in third paragraph, third sentence is changed to:*

The highest percentage reached by a town using the plan was 68%, according to the plan administrator.

*On page 3, under item 5 (Broadband Update), in first paragraph "21010" is changed to "2010."*

**Motion to approve January 5, 2009 minutes as amended carried 5-0-0.**

##### January 12, 2009 Select Board minutes

Approval of January 12 minutes was postponed because not all Board members had read them.

**12. Review and Approve Warrants:**

The following warrants were presented for approval:

1/16/09 Transfer Warrant:       \$107,057.85

**Ms. Morse made motion to pay Transfer Warrant. Ms. Mellinger seconded. Motion carried 5-0-0.**

Retirement Warrant:           \$2,218.77

**Ms. Morse made motion to pay Retirement Warrant. Mr. Pennebaker seconded. Motion carried 5-0-0.**

Payroll Warrant PR#29:         \$6,265.92

**Ms. Morse made motion to pay PR Warrant #29. Ms. Mellinger seconded. Motion carried 5-0-0.**

**11. Other Business:**

Mr. Pennebaker reported on favorable responses from Comcast and Fairpoint regarding collaboration on broadband expansion. This took place at a recent Bennington County Regional Commission meeting.

Ms. Mellinger reported that two Howard Park grant proposals went in last week. She will hear by the end of March. Ms. Mellinger asked about pursuing an initial energy audit of Cole Hall. There may be a potential grant to help with energy costs. Everyone agreed on looking into an initial audit.

Mr. Metcalfe asked that a discussion of Robert's Rules of Order be put on the agenda for the next meeting.

**Ms. Mellinger made motion to adjourn. Ms. Morse seconded.**

**The meeting adjourned at 8:31 PM.**

Respectfully Submitted,

Susan Swasta