

**TOWN OF SHAFTSBURY
ANNUAL TOWN MEETING MINUTES
Monday, February 28, 2010, Shaftsbury Elementary School**

Select Board Present: Craig Bruder; Lon McClintock, Chair; Bill Pennebaker, Vice-Chair; Karen Mellinger; Cinda Morse.

Moderator: Thomas Dailey.

Others Present: Margy Becker, Town Administrator; Judy Stratton, Town Clerk; Alice Miller, Shaftsbury State Representative; Henrietta Billow, Town Treasurer; Richard Bump, Meeting Recording Secretary, and about 75 other Shaftsbury Residents and several non-residents.

CAT-TV: The meeting was filmed by Dan May and broadcast live on CAT-TV.

After calling the meeting to order at 7:35pm, Dailey led everyone in the Pledge of Allegiance, and then asked for a moment of silence for those who passed away during the last year including June White, Angie Abbatello, Chuck Peacock, Gene and Ruth Kochy as well as others listed on page 63 of the Annual Report.

Special Recognitions: After introducing Selectboard members, the Town Administrator, Town Clerk, and Recording Secretary, Dailey asked McClintock to announce special recognitions. McClintock then thanked

- Margy Becker, for her continuing efforts and support on behalf of the board and the town
- Cinda Morse, for her 7 years service as a Selectboard member
- The NorShaft Lion's Club for its work on the Cleveland Park skating rink and warming shelter
- Rex Burke, for his 20 years service as Executive Director of the Bennington County Regional Commission
- George Chandler, for his 13 years of service to the Highway Department
- Angie Abbatello, for her 17 years of service in the Lister's Office as well as with the Historical Society.

Larry Johnson also asked for special recognition of Abbatello's support to the town and Johnson also thanked the Selectboard for its support of the Lister's Office during the "difficult transition" after the passing of Abbatello and its authorizing a separate firm to come in and finish the re-appraisal.

State Representative's Report: After suggesting that Art Farris, who now resides at the Bennington Center for Living and Rehabilitation, would appreciate hearing from any and all townspeople, Miller read aloud three separate resolutions recognizing the efforts of

- Judy Stratton and Florence Beebe, for their exhaustive work on researching details for all veteran's buried within Shaftsbury
- Miles Yucht, a Shaftsbury Elementary graduate and now MAU high school senior, for his extraordinary academic, athletic, and musical achievement
- Elizabeth Cushman Titus Putnam, who recently received from Barack Obama the President's Citizen Award for her extraordinary achievement in creating the Student Conservation Association in 1951.

Miller also noted that Putnam is the first recipient of the President's award in the area of conservation and preservation. After each resolution was read aloud, persons recognized were asked to come up and receive the Resolution, and each received standing and enthusiastic ovations from all present. Copies of the three Resolutions are attached to and hereby incorporated into these minutes.

Miller then described major initiatives during the upcoming legislative session including but not limited to

- going "green" and reducing energy consumption in the private, public, and business sectors throughout the state by 20%
- having broadband access statewide by 2013
- achieving ways to control the "exploding" costs of health care without "hurting" seniors or the disabled who are the most vulnerable in the general population
- closing the \$176M funding gap in the FY12 state budget, and this after already reducing the state budget four years in a row.

Eleanor B. Smith Essay: Dailey then introduced Miss Eleanor B. Smith who delivered a short, original essay on celebrating one's life and the lives around one. Dailey noted that the essay would be archived at Town Hall with all of Smith's previous writings.

Selectboard Report: Using a power-point format, McClintock then presented the FY10 Selectboard Report, and summarized as follows (a complete copy of the report is available on the Town of Shaftsbury website):

- the \$1,282,202 FY12 budget is .06% lower than the FY11 budget
- the Town received \$405,204 in federal and state grants in FY10, and the Town's matching share for this amount was \$90,349
- the largest grant of \$271,533 was for sidewalk construction
- the year ended with a budget surplus of \$116,413
- the \$425,000 water project was completed and bonded
- Stimulus/ARRA funds reduced the water bond by \$215,000
- a part-time assistant for bookkeeping, payroll and accounts payable was hired
- highway improvements were completed on Myers Road, Shaftsbury Hollow Road, White Creek Road, Airport Road, and Cleveland Avenue
- the Cemetery Committee was re-formed, a job description for the Cemetery Superintendent was developed, and Ken Coonradt was hired into this position
- policies, procedures and fees for the Cemetery were revised, and a gift from the Renz family of 1.2 acres was accepted
- the Parks and Recreation Committee completed rules for Howard Park, ice rink construction at Cleveland Park, and improvements to the Tilgner Trail
- the Fire Department upgraded communication equipment to meet Homeland Security standards
- the COPS grant financed doubling the Sheriff's patrol at half the cost
- the impact of the new state law requiring that constables gain certification before engaging in law enforcement is being analyzed
- facilities assessments were completed for Cole Hall and the Town Garage.

McClintock reported that FY11 activity includes

- completion of feasibility studies for Cole Hall and Town Garage

- completion of road work on Murphy Hill, Paran Road and Ledgely Drive, Glastenview Drive, Westview and Stephens
- development of a new and comprehensive Personnel Policy
- grant funded energy improvements at Cole Hall and Buck Hill Fire Station
- preparation for extension of sidewalk at 7A and Church Street
- completion of CPA audit in March 2011

and that goals for FY12 include

- present Cole Hall and Town Garage facilities plan for public vote
- construct new sidewalk at 7A and Church Street
- complete revision of Town Policies
- complete improvements on East and Ehrich Roads
- replace the 1998 dump truck and 1998 backhoe
- improve financial operations of the Town Administrator's office.

McClintock further noted that Cole Hall, which was built in 1834 as Vermont's first Universalist Church, is problematic in that

- the offices of the Clerk, Lister and Zoning Administrator are all in open and unsecured spaces and do not allow any office any privacy
- there is no room for the Treasurer's Office

and that the Highway Garage

- is too small, with equipment stored unprotected outside
- lacks a welding area
- is in poor condition and not worth repairing

and the salt shed is also too small, requiring salt and sand to be mixed outside.

FY12 Budget Overview: McClintock continued his presentation noting that the FY12 budget is

- an estimate of revenues and expenses for each year
- a policy document honoring existing commitments (debt service, contracts, taxes, insurances, salaries, benefits, etc)
- based on previous year's actual costs

and that

- given the loss of ARRA funding locally and at the state level, and the anticipated reduction in state funding, the Selectboard recommends placing \$99,000 of the \$116,000 FY10 budget surplus into the Reserve Fund
- the FY12 budget is slightly less than the current year budget, and should not raise taxes if the Grand List stays the same
- median house value in 2000 was \$117,300 and this compares to the median house sale price for Bennington County in 2010 at \$173,000
- with the FY12 proposed budget and tax rate, a house in Shaftsbury on the Grand List at \$1,730 (or \$173,000 full value) would be assessed \$557 in town taxes
- this tax can be compared to the average social security benefit of \$987/month of \$11,844/year.

McClintock closed his presentation with a reminder to residents that the town election is scheduled for March 1, 2011 with polls open 7:00am to 7:00pm at the Buck Hill Road Fire Station. McClintock then opened the floor for discussion of his report whereupon Michael Gardner complimented the board

- on the new, more easily read and more informative budget format
- and for recommending increasing the amount in the Reserve Fund

and then asked several questions, all of which were answered by McClintock and as follows

- FICA paid for Delinquent Tax Collection is based on the amount of fees collected
- the stipend paid for collecting delinquent taxes is 8% of the amount collected
- the FICA expense used to be presented in only one line item in the entire budget and it is only recently that FICA line items are appearing in each department in which salaries are paid
- appropriations to community organizations are based on individual applications which require a description of services provided
- not all groups requesting/receiving town funding supply financial statements with their requests
- the NorShaft Little League did not submit a request for funding.

In response to another resident who said his taxes jumped \$1,100 in one year, McClintock noted that

- although all properties were re-assessed, the total tax levy did not increase significantly
- most people did not see a significant change in taxes, and some people saw their taxes reduced
- the state requires re-assessments in order to standardize property values throughout the town.

FY12 Town Warning: Dailey thanked McClintock for his presentation and then explained the Robert's Rules process of discussion, making motions, making amendments to motions to be used for the remainder of the meeting, and further noted that

- non-residents are not allowed to vote
- speakers should come to the microphone and announce their names.

In response to Dailey's request, a motion was made and seconded to dispense with the reading of the Warning, and the motion passed by voice vote.

Article 1: A motion was made and seconded to waive the reading of and to accept the reports of the Town Officers as published, and the motion carried by voice vote.

Article 2, A-E: A motion was made and seconded to pay an annual stipend to

- Selectboard members of \$500
- The Town Treasurer of \$16,000
- The Town Clerk of \$8,000
- and to pay an hourly wage of \$10 per hour to each of the Board of Auditors, the 1st and 2nd Constables, and the Listers

and the motion carried by voice vote and with no discussion.

Article 3, A: A motion was made and seconded to authorize the Town Treasurer to collect taxes, and the motion carried by voice vote with no discussion.

Article 3, B: A motion was made and seconded to set the date by which property taxes should be paid as Thursday, November 10, 2011 at 5:00pm. In subsequent discussion and in response to a question from a resident about pre-payment of taxes, Billow noted that

- the Treasurer's Office accepts tax payments beginning July 1st for the Fiscal Year just starting
- payments can be made in full or in part and based on previous year's taxes
- should an overpayment be made, that overpayment would be refunded

and McClintock noted that this information will be posted to the town's website and will be brought up for discussion during Selectboard meetings. Gardner then asked for an amendment to the motion on the floor

to set the deadline for taxes to be paid as the same date as the annual floor meeting, an amendment that was never seconded, and after an extended discussion wherein

- Dailey said that the amendment was not germane to the intent of the article and was out-of-order
- McClintock noted that research has been conducted about having proportionate taxes paid at various times during the year
- Gardner asked what would happen if this article failed
- Dailey responded that another date would need to be established, but that this date was set to coordinate with the date school taxes are due in North Bennington and Bennington
- Dailey suggested that the Selectboard could consider discussing the frequency of proportionate tax payments
- Gardner asked how and when would delinquent taxes be determined if there were to be multiple due dates during the course of the year
- Gardner also said that his intent on amending the due date of taxes to be the same as town meeting was to increase resident participation in the annual meeting, and that he was not advocating multiple dates for tax payment
- McClintock noted that extending the tax due date another 4 months would put a significant financial hardship on the town
- Gardner suggested that in order to avoid interest on borrowed funds for the first year, there may be a need to have partial year taxes collected

the question was called and seconded, and the un-amended motion carried, by voice vote, with one opposed. In response to Gardner's question about what other dates might be considered, Dailey noted that it would be at the moderator's discretion, and that a date "within a few weeks" of the originally stated date might be acceptable.

Article 3, C: A motion was made and seconded to levy interest at the rate of 1% per month for taxes that are late and unpaid. After a brief discussion wherein McClintock noted that

- this motion clarifies what has always been policy
- this is in addition to the 8% fee collected on delinquent taxes (which is used as the reimbursement for services provided by the collector of delinquent services)

and after

- a motion was made to amend the motion on the floor by adding "or portion thereof" after "month"
- McClintock explained that the 1% interest is assessed after the month has ended (and any payment made during the month would not be assessed any interest penalty for that month)
- the amendment to the motion was withdrawn

and the motion carried by voice vote, with no opposition or abstention.

Article 3, D: A motion was made and seconded to authorize the Selectboard to borrow money from time to time, as needed, in anticipation of taxes, and the motion carried by voice vote, with no discussion, opposition, or abstention.

Article 4: A motion was made and seconded to adopt the \$1,713,855 General Fund Budget for Fiscal Year 2011, and as presented in the *Town of Shaftsbury Annual Report for the Year ending June 30, 2009* (pages 40-55), and the motion carried by voice vote, with no discussion, opposition, or abstentions.

Article 5: In response to Dailey's request for other business, Gardner suggested that printing and postage costs for the annual report could be significantly reduced by placing that report on the Town's website, as the elementary school has been doing. In response, McClintock noted that

- the actual cost of printing the annual report has decreased in recent years due to more competitive bidding
- not all residents have a computer and therefore could not access the on-line report
- \$4,800 is not a large price for having a well-informed citizenry
- the Selectboard discussed this, and decided to stay with the same format.

At 9:05pm, and after an enthusiastic round of applause for the Selectboard and town administrators, a motion was made and seconded to adjourn the 2011 Town of Shaftsbury Annual Floor Meeting, and the motion carried by voice vote.

Respectfully submitted,
Richard G. Bump