

Annual Town Meeting Minutes
Monday, March 3, 2008
Shaftsbury Elementary School
150 Buck Hill Road, Shaftsbury, Vermont

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

Moderator: **Thomas Dailey**

Others Present: **Town Administrator Aaron Chrostowsky, Town Clerk Judy Stratton, Meeting Recording Secretary Susan Swasta, and approximately 113 Shaftsbury residents**

Moderator Dailey called the meeting to order at 7:38 PM and led everyone in the Pledge of Allegiance. He asked everybody to reflect on how lucky we are in this country to be able to assemble in this way. A moment of silence was observed for our servicemen and servicewomen and their families.

Moderator Dailey introduced Select Board members, Town Administrator Aaron Chrostowsky, Recording Secretary Susan Swasta, and Town Clerk Judy Stratton. He called Select Board chairman Wynn Metcalfe to the podium for some special recognitions.

Chairman Metcalfe thanked Town Auditors Jim Meskun, Robert Holmes, and Janet Daniels for their work on the Town Report, which was done in a larger and easier to read format this year. He recognized Florence Beebe for her research on cemetery records, Ernie Harwood for taking care of Cleveland Park mowing, and June White for her work with the Town Clerk. Chairman Metcalfe thanked Town Board and Committee members and the volunteer fire department for their service.

Moderator Dailey invited Rep. Alice Miller to deliver her legislative report. She began by reading a resolution honoring Shaftsbury Elementary School gym teacher Howard Herrington for being named Walmart's Vermont Teacher of the Year, which brought a \$10,000 award to the school. Rep. Miller stated that copies of her legislative report are available at the back of the room.

She reminded residents to fill out the Doyle survey, and to include an email address if they want legislative updates by email. She also reminded residents to file their Homestead forms for 2008, and noted that there were no prebate checks last year. Instead the reduction was deducted from tax bills.

Rep. Miller reported on the work of the House Appropriations Committee, on which she serves. She noted that she had been able to obtain \$5000 for Ancient Roads which had been previously denied to Shaftsbury, and that the Town had received road funds and income sensitivity tax benefits.

Rep. Miller advised the Town to get the sidewalk project underway as soon as possible because construction costs go up each year. She advocated funding of juvenile restorative justice, which keeps youth out of prison, and listed funding for social services. She said that funding had also been provided to transport the Bennington County Capitol Christmas tree to Washington, with stops at veterans' homes.

Rep. Miller stated that the 2009 budget is the tightest budget she has ever seen, and that this is the hardest year of her legislative career, with a ten million dollar deficit budget and numerous budget cuts. She noted that the Appropriations Committee has not accepted Governor Douglas's budget. Rep. Miller criticized high salaries of the

Governor and some other officials.

She reported that the House approved the Energy Efficiency and Affordability Act and are looking to expand Catamount Health and Worker's Compensation. Rep. Miller thanked everyone for their time and stated that she is sorry to give such black news.

Moderator Dailey introduced Miss Eleanor B. Smith, who delivered an original essay on health. She advised people to follow the laws of nature and to use natural therapies to maintain health.

Moderator Dailey introduced Tracy Galle of the Recreation Committee, who came to the podium with Committee members Deena Rouge and Walt Merritt. Ms. Galle thanked people for filling out recreation surveys and announced the Shaftsbury Snowflake festival for this Sunday at Howard Park. She said that the Recreation Committee meets almost weekly and will have a calendar of park events. About twelve people attend meetings regularly, and new volunteers are welcome to join.

Moderator Dailey then turned things over to Chairman Metcalfe for the Select Board presentation. He noted that there will be two opportunities to ask questions tonight, once after the Select Board report and again when ballot articles are brought up.

Chairman Metcalfe began with two announcements. He said that with the long winter the Town is over budget on sand and salt, as well as road crew overtime, so roads will only be sanded on hills and corners. He asked residents to fill out a survey from the back table to help the Select Board in long range planning. The survey will also be available at the polls tomorrow.

Chairman Metcalfe stated that it is a privilege to be a Select Board member, and thanked everyone for the opportunity to be here tonight. He then proceeded to the Select Board presentation, accompanied by Power Point slides and a handout.

Chairman Metcalfe began with a discussion of long range issues, noting that the Board is working to identify significant issues facing the Town over the next 5-10 years. He first addressed equipment, stating that the Town has switched to a lease purchase program as a cheaper way to buy big ticket items. They will spend roughly \$103,000 on equipment this year, mostly for a dump truck. They will also put away funds for a grader and brush truck.

Chairman Metcalfe next discussed long range facilities plans, noting that facilities have been ignored for a long time. He described the work of the new Facilities Committee, made up of Peter Olney, Rick Kobik, Ben Benedict, David Beach, and Angie Abbatello. They have evaluated Town facilities in terms of safety, maintenance concerns, and space needs. Chairman Metcalfe described the work needed on Cole Hall and the Highway Garage and noted that at some point the state will require a sand and salt shed. He went over the needs of the fire stations and transfer station buildings, noting that they are in pretty good shape.

Chairman Metcalfe next spoke about long range plans for highways, noting that Shaftsbury's gravel roads do not have the proper base, and it would cost \$25,000 a mile to do it correctly. This is why potholes are a problem. He described the work of Select Board member Lon McClintock, Town Administrator Aaron Chrostowsky, and Road Foreman Ron Daniels in putting together a Road Improvement Plan. He said that the Highway Department will go down the priority list as best it can, but it depends on availability of money and the cost of projects.

Chairman Metcalfe discussed long range recreation plans, including a new hiking trail that will connect Lake Paran and Howard Park. On the topic of sewer and water, he

noted that they don't see the Town getting state or federal funding for a sewer system, so this has been tabled for now. He described planned improvements to the water system. Chairman Metcalfe stated that the Board is trying to pull together information for long range planning and wants to hear residents' thoughts on these issues.

He next presented the "State of the Town" report. Under finance and administration, he described budget saving strategies, the Health Leader program rebate, health insurance cost sharing, Zoning Administrator job description revision, and merit-based employee performance reviews. He praised department heads for managing money well to end the year with a surplus. Under grants, Chairman Metcalfe noted that it had been a good year for grants.

Chairman Metcalfe presented an overview of community and economic Development efforts, noting the successful street dance and fair. He gave highlights on solid waste matters, including the "Shaftsbury Free Library" created by transfer station attendant Shelly Boardman, and work on resolving the methane problem. He summarized highway work, including the Bennett Hill box culvert, Church Street repair, and Grant and Grandview Street paving.

He discussed park and cemetery work, including Howard Park projects done by eagle scouts Derek Gibson and Geoff Gibson. In the area of public safety, Chairman Metcalfe praised Gerry Mattison's work on emergency management. He noted that an Ancient Roads Committee has been formed and is at work.

Chairman Metcalfe next presented Select Board 2008-2009 goals, which include long range planning, writing and updating of policies, resolution of the methane problem at the landfill, new sidewalk construction, and road and park improvements. He noted that Select Board member Bill Pennebaker has saved the Town a lot of money on the methane work. He thanked Aaron Chrostowsky, Select Board member Karen Mellinger, and the Sidewalk Committee for their work, noting that they are planning to get the sidewalk done this construction season.

Chairman Metcalfe then made his budget presentation. He described the budget planning process with Town department heads, and noted that there had been hard decisions this year. He said they were steadfast on replacing a 12 1/2-year old dump truck for safety reasons. Chairman Metcalfe went over the list of budget highlights, describing the reasons for increases or decreases in line items.

Ellen Viereck asked why the Town Treasurer is getting a \$1000 raise, and Chairman Metcalfe replied that the Select Board felt the raise is justified. Noel Cardiff asked why the budget highlights shows 0 increase in Highway Administration, while the budget line item shows a \$16,000 increase. Karen Mellinger replied that this is a mistake, and it should be \$16,000.

Chairman Metcalfe explained the Taconic Grange and the Veterans tax exemptions included in the Town Meeting articles. The Grange exemption tax burden would be .75 on a \$150,000 home, and the veterans exemption would be a \$4.80 burden. He stated that the Grange exemption has been done before, and that the Select Board is 110% in support of the increased veterans exemption.

Chairman Metcalfe described the effect the 2008-2009 budget has on the taxpayer. He noted that it represents a tax increase of \$49 (from \$704 to \$753) on a \$150,000 home. The overall budget increase is 8%.

Chairman Metcalfe asked for questions and comments. Ed Colvin asked about the status of work camps. Chairman Metcalfe stated that the Work Camp Committee had visited the work camp in St. Johnsbury. The process is now on hold until they hear from the

state. He emphasized that there will many meetings before anything happens, which is a long way off and would require a Town vote.

Andy Crosier asked why the Town is leasing a dump truck, and Chairman Metcalfe explained that this is a lease purchase, and is a cheaper way of doing business. Eric Broderstein asked if the Select Board has considered farming out maintenance and eliminating the maintenance department. Chairman Metcalfe replied that they do farm out mowing, and that the road crew is pretty handy at welding and other repairs that save the Town money. Mr. Broderstein said that when cost and upkeep of a building are added in, it may be cheaper to farm it out. Chairman Metcalfe replied that they are just in the beginning stages of discussing these kinds of long range matters.

Kathy Cardiff asked why the listers' salaries went up 15%, and Chairman Metcalfe replied that the listers have always been paid minimum wage, and the Board felt it was time to bring the wage up to a reasonable rate. He praised the work done by the listers. Dixie Zens stated that, with all the rising costs, the Board had done an incredible job on the budget and deserves a big hand. The audience applauded.

Dave Herzfeld said that the state will be looking for towns to create their own police departments, and that more training and money for constables would be a good idea. He said that he teaches at the fire academy, and recommended more training for firemen rather than investment in a brush truck. He would be willing to help with training.

Moderator Dailey thanked Chairman Metcalfe for the presentation. He explained the process of discussion and making motions and amendments to motions for the next part of the meeting. He noted the passing of Eleanor Lawrence, Zeke Frost, and Donnie Peters, and asked that all the people who have passed on be remembered.

Moderator Dailey asked for a motion to allow him to dispense with reading of the Warning.

Tyler Resch made motion and it was duly seconded to dispense with the reading of the Warning. Motion passed by voice vote.

Moderator Dailey proceeded to the articles.

Article 1. To hear the reports of the Town Officers and take action thereon.

Mr. Resch moved and it was duly seconded to accept the reports as published. Motion carried by voice vote.

Article II. To Determine:

A. Whether Selectboard members receive an annual stipend in the amount of \$1,000?

B. Whether Town Treasurer receives an annual stipend in the amount of \$16,000?

C. Whether Town Clerk receives an annual stipend in the amount of \$8,000?

D. Whether the Board of Listers receives an hourly rate of \$10.00?

E. What compensation, if any, shall be paid to all other elected Town Officers?

Tony Zazzaro moved and Dixie Zens seconded to pay Selectboard members an annual stipend in the amount of \$1,000. Motion carried by voice vote.

Marilyn Harrington moved and Brian Lent seconded to pay the Town Treasurer an annual stipend in the amount of \$16,000. Motion carried by voice vote.

Tony Zazzaro moved and Dixie Zens seconded to pay the Town Clerk an annual stipend in the amount of \$8,000. Motion carried by voice vote.

Laurie Lincoln moved and Alan Sollien seconded to pay the Board of Listers an hourly rate of \$10.00. Motion carried by voice vote.

Bob Cole moved and Andy Crosier seconded to pay all other elected Town Officers an hourly rate of \$7.68. Motion carried by voice vote.

3. To Determine:

A. Will the Town vote to have taxes collected by the Town Treasurer?

Marie Lentz moved and Pat Harris seconded to have taxes collected by the Town Treasurer. Motion carried by voice vote.

B. Will the Town vote to set the date for payment of taxes as Monday, November 10th, 2008?

Treasurer Henri Billow stated that taxes will be due at midnight on November 10, 2008.

Dixie Zens moved and Ellen Viereck seconded to set the date for payment of taxes as Monday, November 10, 2008 by midnight. Motion carried by voice vote.

4. Shall the Town of Shaftsbury adopt the General Fund Budget for Fiscal Year 2008-2009?

Dixie Zens moved and Ellen Viereck seconded to adopt the General Fund Budget for Fiscal Year 2008-2009. Motion carried by voice vote.

5. To transact any other business found proper when met.

Dixie Zens commented on the Mount Anthony Union budget proposal to have the Career Development Center (CDC) revert back to control under the Mount Anthony board. Mr. Zens stated that he had been involved in the process of making the CDC independent of the Mount Anthony board, and he does not understand why they want to revert back. He said there would be no benefit in terms of cost and that the CDC runs a very tight ship and is a great school. He recommends not supporting that article.

Select Board Chairman Wynn Metcalfe stated that he helps with the CDC, and that he supports what Mr. Zens said. He reiterated that this is a nonbinding vote, and the state of Vermont would have to agree. Andy Crosier noted that the article is written in a confusing way, and that people should be aware that a no vote means you don't want them to restructure.

Sally Sugarman stated that economic stimulus should be provided to our own communities. She said people should agree to give one third of the stimulus check and get together to decide where the money should go.

Alan Sollien and Laurie Lincoln of Southwest Vermont Medical Center asked people to oppose the increase in the hospital provider tax being considered by the Governor and Legislature. Mr. Sollien explained the issue, and stated that it would result in reduced services, fewer jobs, and higher costs. People can voice their opposition by going to the medical center website and clicking on "stop the tax." There are brochures on the table in the back explaining the issue.

Debbie Goldman stated that she wants to get Shaftsbury residents involved in environmental action. She suggested solar street lights, a solar panel for the school, biodiesel fuels for Town vehicles, compact fluorescent light bulbs. lowering thermostats, turning off lights, and giving up plastic shopping bags. She also recommended signs at the transfer station, post office, and store asking people to turn off their vehicles while there.

Eleanor Smith stated that she is worried about the Vermont Yankee nuclear plant.

Kathy Sollien moved and it was duly seconded to adjourn. Motion carried by voice vote.

Meeting adjourned at 9:41 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Susan M. Swasta, Recording Secretary