

## Shaftsbury Select Board

January 16, 2023

In person at Cole Hall and remotely via Zoom

### 1. Call to Order

The meeting came to order at 6:31 p.m. Present were selectpersons Art Whitman (chair, via Zoom), Mike Cichanowski, Martha Cornell, Tony Krulikowski, and Joe Barber.

### 2. Conflict of Interest Statement

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

### 3. Minutes

Mr. Cichanowski moved to approve the January 3 minutes. Mr. Barber seconded the motion, which passed 4-0-1, with Mr. Krulikowski abstaining.

### 4. Warrants

- Check warrant #23, \$701.99. Mr. Cichanowski moved to approve the warrant. Mr. Barber seconded the motion, which passed 5-0-0.
- Check warrant #24, \$50,647.11. Mr. Barber moved to approve the warrant. Mr. Cichanowski seconded the motion, which passed 5-0-0.
- Payroll warrant, \$30,706.73. Mr. Cichanowski moved to approve the warrant. Mr. Barber seconded the motion, which passed 5-0-0.
- Payroll warrant, \$32,764.37. Mr. Cichanowski moved to approve the warrant. Mr. Barber seconded the motion, which passed 5-0-0.
- Payroll warrant 13, \$33,247.98. Mr. Cichanowski moved to approve the warrant. Mr. Barber seconded the motion, which passed 5-0-0.
- Check warrant, \$12,556.73. Mr. Cichanowski moved to approve the warrant. Mr. Barber seconded the motion, which passed 5-0-0.

### 5. Announcements

Ms. Cornwell said she had received several applications for the economic development and Cole Hall committees but is still accepting resumes. If interested, please contact Mr. Whitman or Mr. Kiernan.

Kit Ausschnitt announced the creation of a group of residents opposed to the solar development on Holy Smoke Road. The website is <https://stopshaftsburysolar.org/>

### 6. Public Comments

Ken Harrington said he thought there were better places for the solar project than the site on Holy Smoke Road.

Kit Ausschnitt said the solar array proposal is equivalent to an industrial power plant. He estimated the extent of roads, poles, and other elements required to construct the array and said it would be a behemoth. He said the project is all about their making money at our expense. He said their group will be attending future town meetings and hosting their own. In answer to a question from Mr. Barber, he said the developers did reach out to him. He said his group would be fighting the proposal every step of the way. Lighting and security were brought up. Mr. Ausschnitt expressed skepticism regarding the developer's promises regarding those and other matters.

Another neighbor said the entire neighborhood is in agreement that the solar proposal must not go forward.

Joshua Tobe said he lives on Myers Road and said he is opposed to the project for a host of reasons. He asked how the process began and how he could be involved. Mr. Ausschnitt said the developer must give a 45-day notice to the Public Utility Commission, which entity regulates (and approves or disapproves) such applications.

Mr. Whitman said the Town Plan welcomes solar projects, although the Public Utility Commission is the entity in charge. He said the Select Board and the Planning Commission plan on sending a letter to the PUC regarding securing the soundness of the roads.

Attendees discussed what net metering means in practical terms. They said views are the reason many citizens live here, and that they would lose the views.

Mr. Ausschnitt said the solar developers see the solar farm as a temporary use of the land.

A resident said a proposal in Bennington has been shut down in response to citizen outcry; why can't the Town of Shaftsbury do the same?

Seth Stratton said he's lived on Holy Smoke for forty-two years. The solar proposal is disheartening.

Mr. Harrington asked if the matter could be put on the ballot for an up or down vote at Town meeting day. Town Clerk Marlene Hall said a petition (with 140 signatures) would be needed to put it on the ballot, and it could only be a symbolic vote as the PUC is the entity responsible for such decisions. Ms. Hall said she would check with VT League of Cities and Towns about whether a petition is appropriate.

## 7. Treasurers Report

Melanie Dexter reported on cash flow. She said the cash balance is a little lower than usual because funds haven't been moved from the general fund yet. She showed the report on transfers to reserves, and mentioned that water payments have come in. (A state assistance program is still up and running for those needing help with paying utility bills.) She said some issues with the town's payroll system have been cleared up.

## 8. Town Meeting Planning

Mr. Whitman noted that Town Meeting will be held in person this year. There are two possibilities. One is a pot luck supper on Monday evening. A complicating factor is that the school board meeting won't be held in Shaftsbury this year. A second option is a pot luck brunch on Saturday at 10 o'clock at the garage, with the actual meeting, with voting, to be held on Sunday. Complicating that option is the fact that acoustics at the garage are awful, and that chairs and tables will need to be brought to the garage.

Ms. Cornwell said she votes for Town Meeting on Monday evening at the school with a pot luck supper prior.

Ms. Hall said holding a meeting on Monday night and then having to set up at the garage for the vote very early on Tuesday can be exhausting. She wondered whether a Saturday pot luck might be better. Mr. Barber said a Saturday pot luck wouldn't be so well attended for various reasons. Ms. Hall wondered if the pot luck and Town Meeting could be held beginning at 5p, for an earlier closing. Ms. Cornwell will confirm with the school principal that the school would be available on either Saturday March 4 or Monday March 6. Ms. Cornwell wondered whether BCA members could help with the ballot counting on Monday p.m. It was agreed that the potluck would begin on Monday March 6 at 5 p and the Town Meeting would begin at 6 p. Town Hall will close at noon. Ms. Cornwell will confirm that BCA folks will help the town clerk

staff with counting ballots in the afternoon on Monday. Ms. Cornwell will reach out to the janitor at the school. Ms. Cornwell will share an update with Ms. Mellinger.

Ms. Hall described respiratory issues she suffers while in the office and headaches Ms. Jenks suffers while in the office. They could be caused by mold, or perhaps by fumes emitted by a new copier. Mr. Whitman said the Town administrator has contracted with ServPro to do a thorough cleaning of the ground floor. He said it is important to get to the bottom of the problem before the Cole Hall committee begins its work.

#### 9. FY24 Budget discussion

Mr. Whitman reported that the latest draft indicates a 5% increase in the tax rate, to cover wage increases, health care increases, increased hours for the sheriff's patrol, and other increased costs. The draft budget moves the Arlington Rescue Squad from the community appropriations to a line item. The biggest cut was a \$50K plus cut to the class three road fund contribution. Most of the serious problems have been addressed. Others can be handled with help from the state and a 20% match from the Town.

#### 10. DPW Report

There was none.

#### 11. Schedule Special SB Meeting Jan 30 Budget Adoption/Town Meeting Warning

Ms. Cornwell moved to hold a special meeting for the above matters in person and via Zoom at 6 p.m. on January 30. She said she'd also like to review applicants for the economic development committee at that time as well. Mr. Krulikowski seconded the motion, which passed 5-0-0.

#### 12. Other Business

Andrea Bacchi said Shaftsbury lost a very special person when Nicky Burnham passed away yesterday.

#### 13. Review of Action Items

Ms. Cornwell will contact the school and Karen Mellinger. Ms. Hall will contact VLCT about a petition for a vote on the solar project.

#### 14. Executive Session – Personnel

Mr. Krulikowski moved to enter executive session to discuss a personnel issue at 7:42 p.m. Mr. Barber seconded the motion, which passed 5-0-0.

#### 15. Adjournment