

Shaftsbury Select Board

February 5, 2023

In person, Cole Hall, and remotely via Zoom

1) Call to order

The meeting came to order at 6 p.m. Present were selectpersons Art Whitman (chair), Tony Krulikowski, Mike Cichanowski, Martha Cornwell, and Joe Barber. Also present was town administrator David Kiernan. Several citizens attended in person and via Zoom.

2) Conflict of interest statement

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

3) Minutes

There were no minutes.

4) Warrants

Warrant # 26, \$34,162.67. Mr. Cichanowski moved to approve the warrant. Mr. Barber seconded the motion, which passed 5-0-0.

Payroll warrant, \$34,659.81. Mr. Cornwell moved to approve the warrant. Mr. Barber seconded the motion, which passed 5-0-0.

5) Announcements

Ms. Cornwell noted that an in-person Town Meeting will be held on Monday March 6 at 6 p.m., preceded by a pot luck supper at 5 p.m., both at the town garage. The balloting will be held on Tuesday March 7, also at the town garage.

6) Public comments

There were none.

7) Treasurer's report

Melanie Dexter noted that delinquent taxes are not quite as substantial as they usually are at this time. The budget comparison shows more expenses and more revenue than last year (a pandemic year) at this time but is more normal. Many voter-approved transfers to reserve were recorded in the reporting period.

8) Town of Shaftsbury declaration of inclusion

Mr. Barber moved to put the declaration on the ballot in 2024. There was no second.

Ms. Cornwell moved to discuss the declaration of inclusion as presented by citizens. Mr. Cichanowski seconded the motion. Ms. Cornwell said many people across Vermont have worked on the declaration for the past two years. She said she thinks it is an important document. Shaftsbury has been accepted into a state program to improve health equity in town. Several other towns in the county have adopted the declaration.

Mr. Barber said protections mentioned in the declaration are already available to citizens of Shaftsbury. He agrees with most of it, but takes issue with some items such as racism.

Ms. Cornwell said she has personally experienced racism, including in recent emails motivated by the proposed declaration.

Mr. Barber reiterated that citizens should vote on it. He disagreed with the declaration's reference to protecting illegal immigrants.

Ms. Miller said she thought an item was inadvertently omitted, that is, the category of “sexual orientation.” She asked that those words be added to the declaration.

Mr. Korman read a portion of a proclamation by Governor Scott and a portion of the proposed declaration. Neither included reference to illegal aliens. He noted that the intent of the proclamation is to guide town employees and officials and to attract new residents to the town.

Mr. Barber asked someone to define “gender identity or expression.” Ms. Cornwell said there are multiple genders and groups one can identify with.

Ms. Bacchi said she has a disability, and if the town were not to adopt the declaration she would feel discriminated against. She thought if the board did not adopt the declaration, it would be saying the town is exclusive.

Ms. Mellinger recounted the town’s actions many years ago in adopting a civility policy – taking the lead in modeling behaviors for citizens. She said young people wishing to move to a new town want to be sure they are welcome.

Mr. Korman suggested if members of the Select Board don’t like something in the declaration they should suggest amendments to it.

Ms. Miller noted that several of the categories mentioned in the declaration are already protected by state law.

Oliver Wadsworth spoke in favor of the declaration and agreed that young people looking for a new place to live would consider such a declaration important. He said attracting gay couples to the town could be very beneficial for the community. He said the personal connection he felt when he married his husband in Cole Hall should be strengthened by the adoption of the declaration.

A citizen asked via Zoom whether it is urgent to adopt the declaration now rather than wait to put it to a vote. Mr. Korman responded that Shaftsbury has been fortunate to have been spared incidents of public racism, but that racism, antisemitism, militia activities and other instances of intolerance have occurred recently in Bennington, at UVM, and in Pawlet. The declaration would make clear that such intolerance is not condoned in Shaftsbury.

Alice Miller reminded people that the state had voted for civil unions. A citizen said she expects the Select Board to lead on the issue; that is why she voted selectperson into office.

Ms. Cornwell moved to amend the declaration to add “, sexual orientation” after the phrase “gender identify or expression.” Mr. Cichanowski seconded the motion, which passed 4-0-1, with Mr. Barber abstaining.

Ms. Cornwell moved to approve the distribution of the declaration in various venues and to various agencies as listed in Mr. Korman’s request to the Town to take up the declaration. Mr. Cichanowski seconded the motion, which passed 5-0-0.

Ms. Cornwell moved to end the discussion on the declaration. Mr. Cichanowski seconded the motion, which passed 4-0-1 with Mr. Barber abstaining.

Ms. Cornwell moved to adopt the amended declaration and distribute as approved. Mr. Cichanowski seconded the motion, which passed 4-0-1 with Mr. Barber abstaining. It will be signed at the next meeting after amendments have been incorporated in the revised text.

9. DPW report

Mr. Kiernan said the crew is stockpiling gravel, sand and salt in preparation for the next storms.

Mr. Kiernan asked the board to certify the highway mileage, which has not changed since last year. Mr. Cichanowski so moved. Ms. Cornwell seconded the motion, which passed 5-0-0.

Mr. Kiernan asked the board whether it wished to impose weight restrictions on any town roads. Mr. Whitman explained that about 15-20 years ago towns would impose their own restrictions. The State began at that time to compile a list of those restrictions so drivers would be aware of them in advance. The board had no limits to impose.

10. Other business

Ms. Cornwell noted that a public meeting regarding the proposed solar project will be held Wednesday Feb. 8 at 6 p.m. at the elementary school. A panel of experts will be present to answer questions about the process and solar power generally.

11. Action items

Mr. Kiernan will revise the declaration of inclusion.

12. Adjournment

Mr. Cichanowski moved to adjourn at 7:28 p.m. Ms. Cornwell seconded the motion, which passed 5-0-0.