

**Town of Shaftsbury
Selectboard Special Meeting
Minutes
December 5, 2013**

Members Present: Karen Mellinger, Ken Harrington, Mitchell Race, Tim Scoggins, Carl Korman
Others Present: Margy Becker, Town Administrator; Larry Johnson (Lister); Bob Holmes (Auditor);

1. Call to Order

Called to order by Karen Mellinger at 5:00P.M.

2. Conflict of Interest Statement

No conflict was reported.

3. Announcements:

Karen Mellinger reported she had represented the Town at the tax sale that morning. The Town did submit bids on the Shores and Joly properties. Merton Snow has expressed his opinion that both properties may be redeemed in January. If this did not happen, the Town would have to write-off taxes due, pay the expense of the Banner advertisements for the tax sale, pay Merton Snow, and pay attorney fees. The Town could sell the properties, if acquired.

Selectboard Report for March Town Meeting – Karen Mellinger announced she is drafting the report and will soon send this to fellow Board members for comments.

4. FY15 Budget Workshops

Bob Holmes discussed the **Auditors'** budget request. The Auditors are going to be auditing more accounts in the future. More internal controls will be put in place. Additional set-asides into the audit reserve were requested. After some discussion it was agreed that a \$4,000 transfer into the Audit Reserve Fund would be budgeted for FY15. The tentative goal is an Audit of FY16.

Though discussed no decision was rendered on whether to discontinue mailing Town Reports. Approximately 1,850 town reports are mailed at a cost of approximately \$4-\$5/each. This expense will be budgeted for again in FY15.

Listers Budget: Larry Johnson discussed the status of Listers' activities. Jim Boyle continues to be appointed as the Town's professional appraiser. The current CLA (an indicator of value of sales relative to market value) is 106. Sales are lower than appraised

values. The State likes this climate – as the Towns are over-taxing. The State gets more property tax revenues than it should, he stated. An average of 10-20 people continue to “grieve” each year. But at least Shaftsbury residents are fairly valued with respect to their neighbors, Mr. Johnson explained.

Larry Johnson further explained that District One’s (North Bennington School District) CLA is 91.71. Those residents are sending less money into the State than other parcels in Shaftsbury.

The Listers’ have requested an increase in Wages, but after some discussions the Selectboard agreed the line item would be level-funded. The Selectboard asked to meet with Appraiser Jim Boyle in the near future, as his budget request has increased. This meeting will be scheduled for an upcoming budget meeting.

Results of December 3 Election and budget impacts: Karen Mellinger reported the second garage bond vote was defeated by 31 votes. Its first defeat was on a margin of 2:1. Selectmen discussed at length their individual interpretations of what the message might be from the voters.

Carl Korman said he feels the voters have asked the Selectboard to hold the line on taxes. He then expressed discomfort with the fact that Board members have made public statements as to whether or not the current garage is safe. Discussions followed.

Motion by Carl Korman “that the Town look into retaining a professional to assess the safety of a) working conditions, b) the physical plant of the current garage for the purposes of addressing employee safety and the Town’s liabilities, and that the cost to address safety-related deficiencies be provided to the Town.” Mitch Race seconded. The motion carried unanimously.

The Selectboard agreed that the source of funding available for said evaluation is the Garage Reserve Fund.

Karen Mellinger stated she did not want to bring the question to the voters again this year. Fellow Board members agreed. She noted that the Town will be starting from scratch to set-aside garage reserves for a new building, if the Town has to pay for safety-improvements on the existing garage.

Tim Scoggins asked Ken Harrington whether he believed the Town needs a new garage. Ken Harrington said yes. Ken Harrington reported that he heard people concerned about the location and size of the proposed garage in addition to the fact the Town had no reserves set aside. He said a few people he talked to opposed the landfill location. Mr. Harrington then stated he felt an 8,000 sq ft garage was too big for the Village site.

Tim Scoggins said he thinks the tax payers will fight to keep taxes from going up. But not spending money now means paying more for a garage in the future. He further stated that IF it is expensive to make the existing garage safer, the Town would have to cut

government expenses elsewhere.

Tim Scoggins then asked Ken Harrington if the Town had too much equipment. Ken Harrington said he thought the Town could afford to get rid of one piece of equipment and one man. Other members expressed some disagreement with this statement. But then Tim Scoggins further stated he thinks the voters do not want to see a budget increase.

Carl Korman made the Motion that the Selectboard only approve community appropriation requests in the amount of 50% of prior year requests in order to use the other 50% to pay for safety improvements to the existing town garage, if needed.

Tim Scoggins 2nd for discussion purposes. After some discussions Carl Korman offered an amendment to his motion as follows:

Motion to amend original motion: insert “and that the other 50%, or approximately \$30,000, be set-aside into the garage reserve fund to pay for safety improvements to the existing town garage, if needed.” Carl Korman/Tim Scoggins 2nd.

Tim Scoggins noted that reducing community appropriations helps protect other municipal services.

The Chair called the question. **Action: 1 – 3 – 1 The motion to amend the motion failed, Scoggins voting for the motion; Mellinger, Race, Harrington voting against the motion, and Carl Korman abstaining.**

The Chair called the question on the original motion. Action: 0-5-0 The original motion failed unanimously.

Ken Harrington asked why punish organizations just because the bond went down? Karen Mellinger expressed her appreciation for the thoughtfulness of the Board’s discussions. Mitch Race commented that he had heard some voters state that the landfill parcel might be best for industrial use.

Motion to adjourn at 8:40PM by Carl Korman/2nd Ken Harrington; the motion carried unanimously.

Submitted by Margy Becker