

**SHARON SELECTBOARD
REGULAR MEETING
Monday, December 19, 2016
Minutes**

Selectboard Members Attending: Kevin Blakeman, Mary Gavin, Luke Pettengill
Staff Attending: Road Foreman Tim Higgins, Finance Manager Deb Jones, Selectboard Assistant Margy Becker (taking minutes).

Visitors: Mark Schindler, Mary Russ (White River Partnership), Warren Johnston, (Alliance for Vermont Communities); Peggy Ainsworth (Royalton Selectboard), Jim Beraldi (Royalton Police Chief), Larry Swanson, Sherri Lorette Blakeman, Fritz Weiss, Nicole Antal, Paul Kristensen, Kevin Gish, Bob Ferguson, Brad Atwood, Sue Sellew, Abby Armstrong.

The Chair convened the meeting at 6:30PM.

Review & Approve Minutes:

Approval of March 1, 2016 Town Meeting minutes was postponed.

Motion by Mary Gavin to approve the minutes of December 10th and 12th budget meetings without changes. The motion was seconded and carried unanimously.

Review & Approve Warrants:

Check and payroll warrants were reviewed and approved, including the first payment into escrow for the 2017 Health Reimbursement Arrangement between the Town and employees.

Public Comments: There were none.

Road Foreman Reports:

Tim Higgins reported that TENCO reports a delay in truck delivery until the end of the month, possibly early January. The Sharon road crew will assist Royalton with a salt delivery, providing equipment and man power. Fuel bids were discussed. **Motion by Mary Gavin to accept the fuel bid from Suburban Propane for diesel, fuel oil, and propane. The motion was seconded and carried unanimously.**

Survey of Kenyon Hill Road:

Mark Schindler is preparing to sell the house and 10 acres at the end of Kenyon Hill Road. Larry Swanson presented a preliminary survey of the subdivision, which includes the location of the terminus of Kenyon Hill Road on the Schindler property. The survey also includes the location of the Wallace Doubleday Cemetery. Larry Swanson reported that historical documents indicate Kenyon Hill Road used to continue from its present terminus by the farmhouse down the bank to the river and 'The Ford'. 'The Ford' was a river crossing.

Larry Swanson suggested his final survey could show the location of a turnaround for town vehicles. The turnaround 'hammerhead' could also serve as a point of access to the Wallace Doubleday Cemetery. The Town would then be deeded access to the turnaround and cemetery.

Larry Swanson further reported the deeds to the Schindler property do not include the cemetery yet he did not find evidence that the Town has title to the cemetery land. The Town does, however, maintain the Wallace Doubleday Cemetery.

Selectmen agreed with Mr. Swanson's proposal, and plans were made to stake the turnaround prior to preparation of the final survey. The Town's attorney would then be asked to prepare an easement deed.

Rikert Property: Consideration of Acceptance by Town as Conserved Land

Kevin Blakeman discussed residual concerns concerning liabilities of ownership of this parcel. Brad Atwood expressed the opposing view point that the concern over liability is a 'red herring'. The Town should not be concerned with the future 'low intensity use' of the property. He stated his confusion as to why the Town's insurance carrier is requesting the VT River Conservancy carry \$2 - \$4 million in liability insurance. Once the Town is a named insured on the VRC liability policy, there is no risk left to the Town.

Luke Pettengill said he favored Town ownership of the land. But he still desires to hear back from the VLCT PACIF regarding acceptable limits for the VRC's liability insurance. Mary Gavin spoke about the many future benefits of town ownership of the parcel.

Bob Ferguson encouraged the Selectboard to talk directly with the VLCT to further research insurance coverage on town-owned properties. He noted the Town owns other land which has intensive recreational use, such as the horseshoe pit.

Kevin Blakeman noted that the Town of Royalton recently accepted ownership of 'Sinclair's Rock'. The agreement regarding ownership of the property includes a requirement that the Town 'police' the property.

After further discussions Selectmen agreed to have Deb Jones, Finance Manager, further research liability insurance coverages of existing town properties and whether \$1 - \$2 million vs. \$2 - \$4 million limits would be required of the VRC. Discussions will continue at the next Selectboard meeting.

Alliance for Vermont Communities:

Kyle and Becca Milaschewski, and Warren Johnston, representatives of the Alliance for Vermont Communities, asked Selectmen to place an article on the warning for Town Meeting regarding the NewVistas development. The Alliance was formed by area residents who are deeply concerned about the NewVistas project and future impacts on the 4 towns of Tunbridge, Strafford, Royalton, and Sharon. The Alliance has received advice from the Secretary of State's

Office about the wording of the article. The article presents the question “Shall the voters of the Town of Sharon oppose the NewVistas Development?”. Yes? No?

Kevin Blakeman questioned the usefulness of such an article. No permits have been filed. Warren Johnston reported the Alliance hopes that a unanimous display of opposition to the development from the 4 towns would send a signal to the Vermont Governor’s office and to the developer. A vote on the article would be non-binding. Sharon voters would vote on the question from the floor at Town Meeting.

Kyle Milaschewski expressed his conviction that news of the NewVistas project has driven away young families from the area. This is reflected in real estate sales. Mary Gavin also expressed concerns about the NewVistas development.

Luke Pettengill requested the Alliance obtain signatures on a petition in order to have the article placed on the Warning. Selectboard members agreed with this request. Warren Johnston agreed the Alliance will proceed with the petition process.

Baxter Library Trustees:

Library Trustees Katherine Roe and Sue Sellew met with Selectmen to discuss the Selectboard’s proposed FY18 appropriation to the Library, which is a level-funded appropriation. The Trustees, however, would like to increase the wage of the Librarian and the Town appropriation is relied upon for compensation of the Librarian. The Librarian will also be working 4 more hours for a total of 24 hours/week. The library budget has to therefore pay the cost of Vermont Municipal Retirement System (‘VMERS’) benefits.

Selectmen acknowledged the presentation of the overall costs associated with operation of the library are difficult to understand, because some costs are underwritten by the Town’s general fund and some are covered by Library funds. Selectmen noted the FY17 budget included a 2% raise for employees but the preliminary FY18 budget proposes only a 1% raise. Luke Pettengill suggested the Town support a similar 1% raise for the Librarian, and Library funds be used to provide a wage increase beyond 1%. Trustees agreed to the proposal.

Motion by Luke Pettengill to increase the proposed FY18 Library appropriation of \$16,800 by 1%. Mary Gavin seconded. The motion carried unanimously.

FY18 Community Policing Contract Rates:

Royalton Selectboard member Peggy Ainsworth and Police Chief Jim Beraldi discussed Royalton’s proposed FY18 expense budget for community policing. The Town of Sharon would be charged \$60/hour for contract police rates effective July 1. One of the cost drivers to the Royalton budget is the need to purchase a cruiser.

Mary Gavin explained the proposed increase was unacceptable to the Town of Sharon. She noted over the past three years the cost of policing to the Town of Sharon has gone from

\$37/hour to \$50/hour and then to \$60/hour. Deb Jones, Finance Manager, noted the Police budget information lacked illustration of revenues being brought in by the Department.

Mary Gavin noted that the current rate of \$50/hour included the costs of a new police cruiser according to the contract in place for FY17. She objected to the fact the cruiser had not been purchased. Deb Jones suggested the costs of a new police cruiser be capitalized and that the Police budget should illustrate a reserve fund for equipment.

Sharon Selectmen also inquired about the proposed increase in wages. It was noted the Police Chief is requesting additional part-time staff in order to provide weekend coverage. He is requesting a 5% wage increase and a wage adjustment of (8% increase) for entry-level employees. Chief Beraldi noted that entry-level wages for law enforcement officers in Royalton are depressed when compared to the region. Discussions ended with an agreement that the Royalton Police Chief and Peggy Ainsworth would report the Sharon Selectboard's comments to the Royalton Board for consideration in final budget preparation.

Finance Manager Reports

FY18 Budget Discussions: are scheduled now for January 9th; all regular business to be postponed until January 16th.

Unfinished Business:

OSH Boiler Repairs: Margy Becker reported the final inspection of the boilers is scheduled for Dec. 22 at 1:00pm. Ken Wright's residual concerns and 'punch list' will be discussed at that time.

OSH Lease Amendment: Margy Becker reported the lease amendment is circulating at TheSharon Academy for signatures.

Rte. 132 Solar Project (Norwich Technologies applicant): Margy Becker will follow-up with the Public Service Board to determine the status of the petition.

Executive Session -Personnel: **Motion by Mary Gavin to enter executive session at 8:30pm with the Finance Manager to discuss a personnel matter. The motion was seconded and carried unanimously.** The Board exited executive session at 8:42pm. No formal action was taken.

Adjournment: The motion to adjourn was made and seconded at 8:43pm. The motion carried unanimously.

Submitted by, Margy Becker