

TOWN OF SHARON
ANNUAL MEETING MINUTES
Tuesday, March 5, 2019

The 'Call to Order' for Town Meeting was made by Moderator Galen Mudgett at 9:00AM.

The Moderator led the Pledge of Allegiance and then introduced Sharon's local representatives. Voters yielded the floor to Representatives Tim Brigland, Jim Masland, and Senator Dick McCormack who delivered their legislative reports.

Tim Brigland reports he now chairs the House Energy and Technology Committee. The Committee deals with matters pertaining to all regulated utilities, telecommunications and broadband issues, and climate change. EC Fiber plans to complete its build-out of Sharon by the end of August 2019. By late next fall fiber (high speed internet) will be available to all.

Jim Masland reported the State is looking at a potential increase in the gas tax to fund increased aid to Towns for maintenance of local roads. He spoke in favor of a gas tax increase for that purpose. Jim Masland spoke of the Legislature's concern about reinvigorating small towns, as many town centers are casualties of school consolidation. Jim Masland sits on the House Ways & Means Committee, which is struggling to address the impacts of the recent federal tax cuts.

Senator Dick McCormack sits on the Senate Appropriations Committee, which is reviewing the Governor's proposed budget. The Committee sees problems with the budget. Certain goals are not 100% funded. Senator McCormack is also chair of the 'Climate Change Caucus'. The Caucus is trying to assure funding for ongoing statewide weatherization programs. And it is also attempting to electrify transportation systems.

Dana Colson, resident, questioned legislators about the State plans to get tough on major crimes. Legislators responded the State is working to empty prisons in order to provide room in prisons for violent and serious criminals. Dana Colson stated his opposition to letting offenders out of prison for drug therapy, citing the fact that offenders check out of these therapeutic programs (such as Valley Vista) and return to the streets. This is why his son's killer is now at-large.

The Moderator convened the business portion of the meeting.

The Moderator read Article 1. To elect the following Town Officials by Australian Ballot:

- Town Moderator for 1-year term
- Collector of Delinquent Taxes for 1-year term
- First Constable for 1-year term
- Second Constable for 1-year term
- Lister for 3-year term
- Selectmen for 3-year term
- Treasurer for 3-year term

The Moderator read Article 2. To elect the following Town Officers:

Article 2 was moved by Bob Ferguson, seconded, and the motion passed unanimously.

Town Grand Juror – 1- year term

Motion to nominate Pam Brackett made by Bob Ferguson.

The motion was seconded by Alan Hood and passed unanimously on a voice vote. The Clerk was instructed to cast one ballot in favor of Pam Brackett for a 1-year term as Grand Juror.

Agent to Prosecute and Defend Suits – 1- year term

Motion to nominate George Ostler by Bob Ferguson.

The motion was seconded and passed unanimously on a voice vote. The Clerk was instructed to cast one ballot in favor of George Ostler for a 1-year term as Agent to Prosecute and Defend Suits.

Trustee of Public Funds – 3-year term

Motion to nominate Emma Rikert was made by Martha Fisk.

The motion was seconded by Joe Willis and passed unanimously on a voice vote. The Clerk was instructed to cast one ballot in favor of Emma Rikert for a 3-year term as Trustee of Public Funds.

Trustee of Baxter Library – 3-year term

Motion to nominate Stephanie Davis made by Sue Sellew.

The motion was seconded by Mary Gavin and passed unanimously on a voice vote. The Clerk was instructed to cast one ballot in favor of Stephanie Davis for a 3-year term as Trustee of Baxter Library.

Trustee of Baxter Library – 3-year term

Motion to nominate Mary Stoddard made by Sue Sellew.

The motion was seconded by Ann Mapplebeck and passed unanimously on a voice vote. The Clerk was instructed to cast one ballot in favor of Mary Stoddard for a 3-year term as Trustee of Baxter Library.

Trustee of Baxter Library – 1-year remaining in 3-year term

Motion to nominate Paula DuPrat made by Sue Sellew.

The motion was seconded by Allen Hood and passed unanimously on a voice vote. The Clerk was instructed to cast one ballot in favor of Paula DuPrat to serve 1 year remaining in a 3-year term as Trustee of Baxter Library.

Trustee of Downer Fund – 3-year term

Motion to nominate Bob Ferguson by Martha Fisk.

The motion was seconded by Mary Gavin and passed unanimously on a voice vote. The Clerk was instructed to cast one ballot in favor of Bob Ferguson for a 3-year term as Downer Fund Trustee.

The Moderator read Article 3. To receive the reports of Town Officers.

Motion to move the article made by Carol Flint. The motion was seconded by Ann Mapplebeck and passed unanimously on a voice vote.

Selectboard Chair Kevin Gish called attention to the Selectboard Report in the Town report. Kevin Gish introduced Town Office staff and Frank Rogers, Road Foreman. He commented on

the Board's plans to address issues with town highways consistent with a capital program for paving that could culminate in a bond vote in the fall. He likewise commented on plans underway for the creation of a new "Ashley Community Forest", with acreage in both Sharon and Strafford, and announced upcoming community dinners and forums in the four towns of Royalton, Tunbridge, Strafford, and Sharon that are being facilitated by the Vermont Council for Rural Development. Selectboard member Joe Ronan introduced himself.

Leon Sheldon made the motion to accept the reports of the town officers. The motion was seconded by Allen Hood and passed unanimously on a voice vote.

The Moderator read Article 4. Shall the voters of the Town of Sharon appropriate the amount of \$1,548,006 for necessary Town expenses, including highways, of which \$1,230,149 shall be raised by property taxes, and to authorize the Selectboard to set a tax rate sufficient to provide the same?

Motion to move the article made by: Bob Ferguson. The motion was seconded by Allen Hood and carried unanimously on a voice vote.

Mary Gavin discussed the major highlights of the budget, as noted in the Town Report. Some fund balance has been applied to this year's budget. The projected tax increase is 1.5 cents for the general fund and 5.9 cents on the highway side.

Susan Root inquired as to whether the Town is able to put its accumulated surpluses in an interest-bearing account? Treasurer Margaret Raymond explained that no, the Town is prohibited from doing so. The surplus exists primarily in the form of cash invested conservatively – for example in treasuries.

Rebecca Owens, Emergency Co-Coordinator, moved to amend the budget by an increase of \$5,000 for the purpose of making a one-time contribution to South Royalton Rescue to help offset the cost of purchasing a new ambulance. The motion was seconded by Carol Flint.

Upon clarification by voter Deb Hopkins in concurrence with the Town's Finance Manager and Selectboard, it was agreed the motion needed to be amended to indicate the source of funds for the proposed budget increase – either property taxes or the general fund's fund balance.

Susan Root made the motion to amend the motion by Ms. Owens to include financing the \$5,000 budget increase from the fund balance.

Carol Flint seconded the motion. The voice vote was indeterminate, and the Moderator called for a vote by display of voter cards. The Moderator determined the 'ayes' have it and the motion passed.

The Moderator read the amended motion to be "Shall the voters vote to increase the budget by \$5,000 for the purpose of making a one-time contribution to South Royalton Rescue to help offset the costs of purchasing a new ambulance, with the increase being funded by the general fund's fund balance?"

Leon Sheldon made the motion to approve, Carol Flint seconded, and the amendment to the original budget article passed on a voice vote.

The Moderator read amended Article 4 as follows: Shall the voters of the Town of Sharon appropriate the amount of \$1,553,006 for necessary Town expenses, including highways, of which \$1,230,149 shall be raised by property taxes, and to authorize the Selectboard to set a tax rate sufficient to provide the same?

The motion was seconded by Bob Ferguson.

Dana Colson made the motion to increase the budget by \$500 for the purpose of installing security cameras on the Town Offices facing the Exit 2 Park & Ride lot. The motion was seconded.

Selectmen Joe Ronan expressed his preferred alternative to amending the proposed FY20 budget, which is to charge the Selectboard with the responsibility to research the matter and consider action in the current budget year.

Susan Root spoke in opposition to the motion. Bob Ferguson inquired whether \$500 was sufficient to cover the costs of such cameras and stated support for the alternative of Selectboard research and immediate action.

Debbie St. Peter spoke in favor of monitoring activities at the Park & Ride lot, indicating the Park & Ride is thought to be a convenient site for drug traffic. She noted Sharon Trading Post had just recently been broken into.

Bob Ferguson inquired whether the State could fund the investment of cameras? He stated his preference that the purchase and installation be done independently of the FY20 budget.

Deb Hopkins expressed her willingness to be involved. She participates in the VT State Police Drug Task Force.

Ben Servoz commented the cameras should not be directed towards recording traffic in and out of the Food Shelf, housed next door to the Town offices.

Peter Anderson called the question.

The motion to amend the budget by \$500, as put forth by Mr. Colson, failed first by voice vote and then subsequently by a show of voter cards at the request of the Moderator.

The Moderator directed the voters to the motion still on the floor, which is whether or not to appropriate the amount of \$1,553,006 for necessary Town expenses, including highways, of which \$1,230,149 shall be raised by property taxes, and to authorize the Selectboard to set a tax rate sufficient to provide the same?

The motion carried on a voice vote, and the budget article passed as amended.

The Moderator read Article 5. Shall the voters of the Town of Sharon authorize the Town Treasurer to collect General Fund, Highway Fund, and School District taxes on real and personal estate in two (2) installments for the fiscal year beginning July 1, 2019 through June 30, 2020 the first being on or before Wednesday, September 18, 2019 and the second being on or before Wednesday, February 12, 2020, with interest of one percent (1%) per month or part thereof for the first three months and one and one-half percent (1.5%) thereafter for each installment until paid in full, and a late fee of eight percent (8%) following any delinquency after the second installment due date.

Motion made to move the article by: Mary Gavin
Seconded by: Margaret Raymond
Article 5 was passed unanimously on a voice vote.

The Moderator read Article 6. To see if the voters of the Town of Sharon will vote to schedule its next Town Meeting for 9AM Tuesday, March 3rd, 2020.

Motion to move the article made by: Warren Johnston
Seconded by Bob Ferguson.
Article 6 was passed unanimously on a voice vote.

The Moderator read Article 7. To transact any other business relevant to this meeting.

Motion to move the article made by: Allen Hood
Seconded by Carol Flint.
Article 7 was passed unanimously on a voice vote.

The Moderator thanked the volunteers from the community and Sharon Energy responsible for providing the community breakfast. A round of applause followed. Ashley Denk spoke about activities of the Sharon Health Initiative. Peter Anderson spoke about the new Sharon Resiliency Organization, and he introduced Carol and Jason Flint, and Rebecca Owens. These folks made a brief presentation on community preparedness. There are emergency shelters in town, 1) the Sharon Academy High School, 2) Sharon Fire Station, 3) Sharon Elementary School. Area-wide shelters are available at VT Technical College in East Randolph and at Hartford High School.

Jason Flint addressed the need for residents to replace faded red and white E911 numbers. Galen Mudgett, who is the Town's E911 Coordinator, requested the numbers be installed at the driveway entrance and facing the road. Jason Flint spoke in support of the need for surveillance cameras on the Fire Station in addition to the other town buildings.

Nicole Antal announced the Sharon Elementary PTO is assembling a phone book of telephone numbers, cell phone numbers, and email addresses. Ann Mapplebeck encouraged the community to support the 7 Stars Arts Center. Joe Willis thanked the Sharon road crew for all the work accomplished over the winter.

The Moderator adjourned the meeting at 10:50AM.