

**SHARON SELECTBOARD  
REGULAR MEETING  
MONDAY, NOVEMBER 16, 2020  
MINUTES (Final)**

*This meeting was held in compliance with the Vermont  
Open Meeting Law with Electronic Participation*

**Attending via Zoom:** Selectboard members Joe Ronan, Mary Gavin, Kevin Gish; Town staff Margy Becker (SB Assistant), Deb Jones (Finance Manager), Frank Rogers (Road Foreman); Margaret Raymond, Treasurer. Guest participants and listeners: Bonnie Lesage Dow, John Mudgett (Independent Auditors Mudgett Jennett & Krogh-Wisner PC, CPA), residents Marcy Marceau, Alex Bird, Lucia Gagliardone, Steve Gagliardone, Carol Langstaff, Jim Rooney, Suzanne Jones, Tulio Browning.

**1. Call to Order:**

Joe Ronan called the meeting to order at 6:30PM.

**2. Review/Approve Agenda:**

**Kevin Gish made the motion to approve the agenda without modifications. Mary Gavin seconded. The motion carried unanimously.**

**3. FY20 Independent Audit:**

Bonnie Lesage Dow and John Mudgett met with SB members to discuss the financial statements and findings presented in the FY20 audit. Bonnie reported the remote audit went smoothly and involved a lot of copying and scanning documents via email. A clean opinion has been given. There are no materials weaknesses. The general and highway funds both came in under budget for the year. Bonnie encouraged the Town to consider some cross-training among employees to prevent disruption of operations, in light of the increasing number of coronavirus cases. John Mudgett encouraged the SB to adopt an investment policy. Joe Ronan's concerns regarding fraud and cyber security were briefly discussed.

**Mary Gavin made the motion to approve the Financial Statements and Reports contained in the independent audit for the period ending June 30, 2020, and to authorize Joe Ronan, as Chair, to sign a statement accordingly. Kevin Gish seconded. The motion carried unanimously.**

**4. Road Foreman Reports:**

The crew is finishing grading before snow flies. The Town is taking further steps to pursue its complaint against Meritor regarding the under-sized Freightliner front-end. A crew member who has returned from a hunting trip out-of-state is quarantining due to COVID19 state requirements.

No bids were received for sidewalk plowing and clearing of town building entryways. Efforts to procure contracted services for this work will continue and will include the addition of plowing parking lots.

#### 5. **Coronavirus Planning:**

Mary Gavin indicated she has been assisting the crew with contingency planning to assure plow routes are covered in the event crew members are unable to report to work. A backup process for payroll was agreed to. Deb Jones indicated Mike Tisdale has devised a protocol to enable her to work from home with access to NEMRC software. A spare laptop has been ordered for bookkeeper Joni Latuch-Lyman.

Deb Jones requested the SB **reconsider its decision to hold a vote in January on the Ashley Forest matter**, citing concerns about the safety of election workers. Joe Ronan will follow-up with Strafford to revisit. Margy Becker urged SB members to make its final decision no later than November 30, due to timelines for noticing and warning Australian ballot votes.

#### 6. **Community Policing Alternatives:**

Mary Gavin indicated her interest in a second meeting with Trevor Whipple, VLCT policing consultant. She would like him to address neighborhood watch programs and the role of constables in local policing.

Kevin Gish commented the role a Constable plays in local policing is related to the amount of training they have received. Margy Becker indicated the townspeople could make changes to the position of Constable. The Town currently elects Constables for a term of one year, but the term length and whether Constable are elected or appointed is at the will of the voters. Margaret Raymond, Treasurer, pointed out the position of Treasurer could also be changed from an elected to an appointed position by the voters.

Joe Ronan reported the SB is interested in prioritizing limited resources available for policing. It is also trying to define an appropriate level of spend on policing. Joe stated his opinion that the current focus of the law enforcement on traffic control has not been effective in addressing the public safety issues confronting the town. Kevin Gish noted the SB's preference for 'local policing' and that the agreement with Windsor County Sheriff's is less than ideal.

Steve Gagliardone suggested the SB look at the 'whole pool of dollars' when thinking about how best to make Sharon a safe community. The SB should think about other things apart from policing. Margy Becker commented the Town's annual budget also supports many social service agencies in addition to law enforcement. The combined budgets provide a different illustration of public investment. SB members noted the Town could better advertise its support of local social service agencies.

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Discussions on community policing concluded with the agreement that SB members would circulate among themselves a list of questions for Trevor Whipple to consider in advance of a second meeting with him.

**7. Anti-Racism/Implicit Bias Training:**

Joe Ronan summarized the SB's consideration of racial justice issues to-date. The Town had been deficient in recognizing MLK birthday as a paid holiday. Discussions regarding observance of 'Juneteenth' have been tabled, as the legislature has taken up consideration of possible statewide observance. Staff and SB members had expressed interest in receiving training on anti-racism and implicit bias. That training has yet to be put in place. He invited public comments.

Carol Langstaff asked for further clarification of the training being considered. Joe Ronan indicated training would address issues around diversity and implicit bias in American society. He noted the Sharon Elementary School is undertaking such training, which is geared more towards educators.

Marcy Marceau noted she had forwarded to the SB copies of statutes and information from the VLCT outlining legal responsibilities of selectboards. She commented that though the topic of training on anti-racism and implicit bias may be of interest to people in town, it goes beyond the scope of what the SB is legally tasked to do. Spending tax dollars on trainings is beyond the parameters delineated for legislative bodies, she stated. Marcy suggested there are other more suitable venues for discussions promoting anti-racism training.

At the Chair's invitation, and for the benefits of meeting attendees, Marcy then read from Title 24, Chapter 33, Subchapter One Section 871 regarding general powers and duties of selectboards. She commented the focus of SB duties to be the 'nuts and bolts of fiscal matters' not socio-political issues. She asked the SB to vote to table further discussions.

Joe Ronan stated his appreciation for the point of view and then outlined why he interpreted the statutes differently. He noted that if he followed her conclusions, other towns which have already offered trainings of this type to employees would have violated the law. Marcy Marceau re-stated her position is that the SB's further consideration of anti-racism or implicit bias training would constitute government 'overreach'.

Lucia Gagliardone requested the SB prioritize the issue of anti-racism and implicit bias training. She commented elected officials need to provide for the safety and well-being of all constituents. If the Town provided training, it would be addressing that obligation. Lucia further commented that anti-racism training would benefit everyone and help create a space safe from violence and discrimination. She pointed out that historically many local governments across the U.S. have put a lot of time into "over policing" and into issues of de facto segregation and racist policies. Lucia argued it is not 'overreach' to work against that history of racism.

Alex Bird commented Sharon is a small town. He has lived here for over 25 years. He asked why the SB was trying to fix a problem that is not a problem. He indicated he was unaware that racism was a problem in town, suggesting that perhaps spending significant tax dollars on anti-racism training was inappropriate given limited resources. Funds on training could be better spent, he suggested.

Tulio Browning indicated he understood the concern about ‘keeping a lid on government’. He then pointed out there was ample precedent for a community stance on issues. He cited the era when many Vermont communities declared themselves ‘nuclear-free zones’. Tulio then asked for reconsideration of the ‘it ain’t broken don’t fix it’ school of thought. He asked people to acknowledge the lack of diversity in town. Tulio asked ‘do we listen to folks that do not look like us?’ He stated support for anti-racism trainings and greater diversity in the community. Sharon could be a little more ‘cutting edge’, and an increased cultural base would be progress for the town. Tulio acknowledge the town’s financial bottom line is important, yet community members have the responsibility to “look around” and not just assume things are okay.

Mary Gavin thanked people for their comments. She spoke in favor of having the town provide employee training, noting there are low-cost high-quality options available. Mary cited the example of the major investment companies have made in workplace training on sexual harassment and noted the benefits of such training.

Suzanne Jones expressed support for a nominal investment in employee training. Kevin Gish stated he had served in the military for over twenty years. He found training to be good ‘preventative medicine’. The town may have a problem it does not know it has. Treasurer Margaret Raymond also spoke in favor of obtaining training.

Steve Gagliardone suggested the Town should carefully consider what entity is providing training. The town should assure training options have been vetted by people of color.

Deb Jones commented that if the SB were approached with a complaint of insensitive employee behavior, it has the responsibility to deal with the complaint. Therefore, if the responsibility for addressing such complaints is within the Board’s purview, how could prevention of those behaviors constitute ‘overreach’?

Joe Ronan stated Marcy Marceau’s comment that providing anti-racism training would be ‘illegal’ and is outside of the SB’s purview is worthy of further consideration by the Board. He stated he would consult the VT League of Cities and Towns, and town counsel if necessary, and report back to the SB.

SB members asked Margy Becker to research anti-racism and implicit bias training options. Discussions will resume at the Selectboard’s December 7<sup>th</sup> regular meeting.

## **8. FY22 Budget Preparations:**

The SB began FY22 budget preparations with a review of the highway infrastructure and equipment fund budgets. These funds reflect major in-flows and out-flows on capital projects, vehicles, and heavy equipment. It was noted the access drives to the Town Offices/Sharon Elementary and the Town Garage/Sharon Academy high school still need shim coats. Frank Rogers will obtain pricing from Pike and Blaktop. Joe Ronan agreed to speak with Keenan Haley regarding the status of SES plans for paving the school parking lot.

The scale of the investment needed in drainage improvements to the library parking lot remains an unknown. Margy Becker will follow-up with Frank Rogers and Will Davis. Frank Rogers suggested annual crack sealing expense could again be limited to the customary \$12,000 operating budget expense in light of the recent major investment in new pavement throughout town. Equipment replacement schedules were reviewed. It was noted the grader and loader are in good shape. Budget discussions will resume November 30<sup>th</sup>.

#### **9. Finance Manager Reports:**

SB members acknowledged receipt of the VLCT model investment policy. Joe Ronan agreed to assist with further initial review on behalf of the board.

#### **10. Thank You to November 3 Election Workers:**

**Mary Gavin made the motion that “*the Selectboard recognizes the tremendous effort election works undertook to assure a civil and fair election on November 3<sup>rd</sup>, and that the work involved risks to personal health and safety. The Selectboard thanks election workers on behalf of all voters.*” Kevin Gish seconded and the motion carried unanimously.**

Joe Ronan reported the Town Clerk has sent him the list of poll workers from November 3<sup>rd</sup> to enable more personal recognition.

#### **11. Harlow Road:**

Mary Gavin confirmed the Royalton Selectboard is available for a joint meeting on December 7<sup>th</sup>. The Sharon SB will host. The meeting will be scheduled to begin at 6:30PM.

#### **12. Ordinances:**

Mary Gavin commented the Town of Royalton is working to enforce its public nuisance ordinance with regards to properties on Harlow Broad Brook roads. The Sharon SB has yet to consider this type of ordinance, due to concerns regarding enforcement.

#### **13. Selectboard Assistant Reports:**

Margy Becker reported on the status of bid opportunities, animal control, and water system sampling.

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**14. Approval of Minutes:**

**Mary Gavin made the motion to approve the minutes of the November 9, 2020 special meeting with corrections. Kevin Gish seconded. The motion carried unanimously.**

**15. Approval of Warrants:**

**Kevin Gish made the motion to approve AP Warrant 1093 for \$18,380.47 with payment of invoices to Chappell Tractor Sales (B-B Chain) for \$2,525.00 for 200 8mm studs and a cam, to Margy Becker for \$158.89 for reimbursement of an annual Zoom subscription (LGER grant reimbursable), Casella Waste for \$34.98 for October dumpster rental at garage, Evans Motor Fuels for \$1,254.52 for 2 weeks of diesel fuel (while doing some hauling), Fastenal for \$93.55 for Blaster & Nitrile gloves, Indelible Inc. for \$317.11 for website work and support, Kimball Midwest for \$41.94 for interlube penetrating grease, McCullough Crushing for \$2,548.00 for 196 yards @ \$13/yd of 2.25" plant mix, Mudgett Jennett & Krogh Wisner for \$5,000 for audit work Aug – Oct 23, 2020, Business Tech Management (Mike Tisdale) for \$1,021.00 for a laptop for the AP Clerk to be used at the office LGER grant reimbursable), New England Truck Tire for \$5,384.80 for 14 winter tires and installation. **Mary Gavin seconded. The motion carried unanimously.****

**Mary Gavin made the motion to approve AP Warrant 1094 for \$20,118.96 with payment of invoices to Clara Martin Center for \$750 for FY21's appropriation, to D & D Excavating to correct an underpayment of \$60.00 on invoice 7921 for sand (Inv 21993.40, pd \$21,933.40), Jack Jones Construction for \$930.44 for Covid barriers for the SB Assistant desk area, a frame for a plexiglass panel barrier between the Treasurer's and Finance Mgr's desks, and for installing the door drop box, Pike for \$3,793.68 for 474 tons of ¾" crushed stone, Tarrant Gillies Richardson & Shem for \$166.40 for legal work on litigation, Twin State Sand and Gravel for \$4,614.84 for 513 tons of supergrit sand, Valley News for \$149.60 for RFP legal notice for snow removal on sidewalks and bldg. entryways, Windsor County Treasurer for 2<sup>nd</sup> payment of County Tax and Bond \$5,420.00, and the Windsor County Sheriff's October billing for \$4,234.00 for 73 hrs of policing at \$58/hr. **Kevin Gish seconded and the motion carried unanimously.****

Action to approve AP Warrant 1095 in the amount of \$1,550 was postponed. The warrant is for payment of one invoice from Swasey & Sons Plumbing & Heating for installation of a standby chlorinator (chemical feed pump) at the Old School House. Margy Becker will research the SB's prior action to establish a not-to-exceed amount for this work.

**16. Adjourn:**

**Mary Gavin made the motion to adjourn at 9:15PM. The motion was seconded and carried unanimously.**

Submitted by,  
Margy Becker