

**SHARON SELECTBOARD
SPECIAL MEETING
MONDAY, NOVEMBER 30, 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). Guest participants and listeners: Galen Mudgett (Lister); John Roe, Dan Hudnut (The Sharon Academy); Carol Sheldon, Suzanne Jones, Michael Sacca, (Alliance for VT Communities), Library Trustees Mary Stoddard, Carole Bando, Emma Basham, Stephanie Gergley Davis, Marian Weatherbee; Warren Johnston, Nicole Antal, Sue Sellew, Jim Kearns.

Call to Order:

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

1. Review/Approve Agenda:

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

2. Public Comments:

There were no public comments offered apart from those received on agenda items.

3. Tribute to Brad Atwood:

Selectmen acknowledged Brad Atwood's passing with sadness. Mary Gavin noted her appreciation for Brad's service as Selectmen. She indicated "Brad was very welcoming to people, a great 'thought partner', and always concerned about 'doing the right thing' while he was on the Selectboard". Kevin Gish spoke of his appreciation of Brad as a neighbor and friend.

4. Road Foreman Reports:

Frank Rogers reports the crew is back in full force. Chase Site Services has indicated interest in helping out the Town with sidewalk maintenance in addition to some plowing. Chase will submit its proposal for December 7th.

5. Grand List changes:

Galen Mudgett explained the changes to the grand list needing the Selectboard's approval included name correction on the Crowley parcel listing and a change in valuation to the Cayer property to recognize covenant-restricted housing. The changes in valuation to the

Gish, Lake Mitchell Trout Club, Stoddard, and WindsOrange LLC properties reflect Current Use updates. Galen indicated the changes result in an approximate \$1,800 decrease in tax revenues for the town. **Mary Gavin made the motion to accept the changes to the grand list as presented. Joe Ronan seconded. The motion carried 2-0-1 in favor, with Kevin Gish abstaining.**

6. Sharon Academy Solar Project: Trenching on access road

John Roe and Dan Hudnut discussed TSA's need to run 2" conduit under the upper portion of the access road. TSA's proposal is to cut pavement, dig a trench, then backfill. The trench would be dug with a 2-foot wide bucket. An easement from the Town to TSA is proposed for this work. Dan Hudnut further explained details of the 15kw solar project, noting the VT Public Utilities Commission did not require submittal of a site plan or survey. The solar project will provide 40-50% of the high school's electricity, and the RECS will be owned by TSA.

Frank Rogers, Road Foreman, commented on the need for constant backfilling with gravel (3/4" hard pak) throughout the course of the winter. Alex Bird suggested consideration of 'torpedo' technology, noting he could provide the names of Vermont-based firms who specialize in the work. Discussions will continue at the December 7 meeting to enable TSA to further evaluate this alternative and to enable review of the proposed easement by the Town's attorney.

7. OSH Bathroom Ventilation Bids:

Margy Becker reported three bids had been received for installation of bathroom fans, associated sensors, ducts, and wiring. The bids were received from a) Alliance Mechanical \$7,220; b) Merrill Mechanical \$3,176; c) Christian Electric \$3,700. The SB agreed the bids would be further evaluated and then acted upon at the December 7 meeting.

8. Ashley Forest Vote: Reconsideration of Date to Vote

Kevin Gish indicated he felt the Town could hold a vote safely on January 18, as agreed with the Town of Strafford. Joe Ronan noted his increased concern regarding community spread of the coronavirus. He suggested the vote be postponed to Town Meeting and that the Town begin working on necessary agreements as soon as Strafford votes in favor of the project. Mary Gavin indicated support for this compromise. Alex Bird stated he felt Sharon residents needed to be better educated about the Ashley Forest. Michael Sacca inquired about the mechanics of the vote, and he was informed a polling location would be required.

Mary Gavin made the motion to rescind the SB's prior motion to hold the Ashley Forest vote on January 18 and to re-schedule the vote for Town Meeting 2021. Joe Ronan seconded. The vote carried 2-1-0, with Mary Gavin and Joe Ronan voting for the motion and Kevin Gish voting against the motion.

9. FY22 Budget Preparations:

Library Trustees met with Selectmen to discuss their proposed \$3,000+ increase in the FY22 Baxter Memorial Library appropriation request. The FY21 budgeted appropriation is \$22,980. The Trustees are asking for \$26,500 for FY22. Trustees indicated the increase is needed to maintain the currently level of services and to provide fair compensation to the Librarian. Carole Bando noted Baxter Library has remained a vital community hub, even if mostly ‘virtual’, during the pandemic. She noted how the role of libraries has changed. Baxter is now an important ‘portal’, enabling residents to connect to social services and online learning. The parking lot is often full as people take advantage of the free WIFI. Patrons have been very enthused by the option of curbside pickup offered by the Librarian.

SB member Kevin Gish inquired whether the Library has compared its hours and services to other libraries. Emma Basham reported some other towns devote well above 3 to 4% of the general fund budget for their library. Library funding mechanisms vary widely. The level of programming offered by BML is, on average, on par with area towns. BML offers fewer services than Royalton or Tunbridge, yet more than Pomfret.

Mary Gavin suggested the Library track participants in its programs. Trustees indicated the Librarian prepares such reports. Mary pointed out that fundraising has been occurring while the Library is closed. Carole Bando stated the Library’s hours had not been reduced during the pandemic. Carol Sheldon spoke about the importance of the Library to the community. Joe Ronan indicated the SB is still figuring out where the Town stands with regards to its overall budget, and he thanked Trustees for their work.

Selectmen continued FY22 budget preparations with a **line item review of the town general fund**. Deb Jones had prepared, at the Board’s request, three potential property tax scenarios: 3% decrease, level funding, and 3% increase. After this initial review was completed, and several budget components were flagged for further consideration, Mary Gavin stated her support for a 3% decrease in the amount to be raised in taxes. Joe Ronan indicated he may only support a \$24,000 library appropriation versus the \$26,500 requested. Kevin Gish indicated he could support a level property tax scenario. He also expressed support for the BML Trustees’ request, noting the library is a ‘huge benefit to the town’.

In keeping with directives from SB members, Deb Jones indicated she will prepare a draft budget that reflects \$0 increase in taxes to be raised and a \$24,000 library appropriation for consideration on December 7th. SB members agreed the budget scenario should also reflect a 2% increase in compensation for regular employees.

10. Approval of Minutes:

Mary Gavin made the motion to approve the minutes of the November 16, 2020 regular meeting with corrections as noted. Kevin Gish seconded. The motion carried unanimously.

11. Approval of Warrants:

The SB agreed to postpone approval of **Warrant 1095 for \$1550** due to **Swasey & Sons for installation of standby chlorination** in the Old School House, pending further research into why costs exceeded the approved spending limit.

Kevin Gish made the motion to approve Warrant 1097 for \$2,393.64 which includes payments to NE Delta Dental for December (\$446.18), Evans Motor Fuel for truck diesel for \$361.68, Fastenal for \$36.28 for 800' of enmotion EPAT, Fifiield Electric for \$540.49 for annual inspection of garage fire system with test, sticker and battery replacements (3), Green Mtn Power for 586.51 for monthly electric bills for 5 locations, and Green Mountain Mowing for \$422.50 for their final 2020 invoice for lawn care of Town grounds. **Mary Gavin seconded. The motion carried unanimously.**

Joe Ronan made the motion to approve Warrant 1098 for \$2,957.42 which includes payments to Have Trash Will Travel for \$26 for trash pickup, Health Equity for \$141.55 for 2 weeks of HRA reimbursement, HP Fairfield for \$1,131.58 for a side dump cylinder plus freight for 2018 Freightliner and two 12v batteries, Deb Jones for \$876.90 to reimburse for the purchase of the drop box for tax payments and 2 air purifiers for the Town Offices (all to be submitted for reimbursement through the LGER grant), Lincoln National for \$223.24 for monthly insurance premium, and Magee Office Products for \$558.15 for office supplies and sanitation/disinfecting supplies for the garage (\$299.03 of the \$558.15 should be reimbursed by the LGER grant). **Mary Gavin seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.**

Joe Ronan made the motion to approve Warrant 1099 for \$13,826.62 which includes payments to Maine Oxy for \$40.75 for an O2 tank, Business Tech Management for \$1,021.68 for a laptop for Margy for remote work use (to be reimbursed through the LGER grant), Royal Auto for \$196.83 for 5 invoices for misc. garage supplies and parts, Sabil & Sons for \$228.47 for DEF, Red 50/50 and a backup alarm for the 2017 Freightliner, Suburban Propane for \$85.38 for the Library's heating oil, Tasco Security for \$2,545.60 (including the final 50% for the new fire and security alarm install (\$2,070) and \$475.60 for the annual and daily monitoring fees, Twin State Sand & Gravel for \$6,160.23 for 685 tons of supergrit hauled by our crew, US Bank for \$143.10 for monthly lease of copier + maintenance, VCI for \$594.37 for 75 more 911 signs plus shipping, and VMERS for \$2,810.21 for November's retirement (\$1,327.91 employee share; \$1,482.30 employer share). **Kevin Gish seconded and the motion carried unanimously.**

12. Executive Session:

Mary Gavin made the motion to enter executive session with the Road Foreman to discuss a personnel matter. Kevin Gish seconded. The motion carried unanimously.
Meeting recording ended.

13. Adjournment: Mary Gavin made the motion to adjourn at 9:24PM. The motion was seconded and carried unanimously.

Submitted by Margy Becker