

**SHARON SELECTBOARD  
SPECIAL MEETING  
MONDAY, December 14, 2020**

**MINUTES (Final)**

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: Marcy Marceau, Alex Bird, Bill Raymond (Threat Owl).

**1. Call to Order:**

Joe Ronan called the meeting to order at 6:38PM. Joe stated the SB's great appreciation to staff for all their hard work over the past year, commencing with the successful bond vote for the paving projects followed by COVID19 and its impacts on the work environment. He wished all employees, town officials and volunteers a Happy Holiday and New Year.

**2. Review/Approve Agenda:**

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

**3. Highway Business:**

**FY22 Better Roads Grant Application:** Frank Rogers confirmed replacing the 12" culvert at the bottom of Mosher Lane with an 18" culvert would be sufficient to address drainage needs. The Town is seeking a grant award of \$7,096. The Town's local share of expenses will be \$1,774. Work activities will include a culvert upsize and lining roadside ditch with stone. **Mary Gavin made the motion to approve submittal of the FY22 Better Roads Grant Application for storm water improvements Mosher Lane and to direct the Chair to sign the application. Kevin Gish seconded. The motion carried unanimously.**

**Meritor Letter of Response to Town Complaint re: Freightliner front-end:** Joe Ronan expressed frustration with a letter from the Meritor. Meritor had asked for data, which the Town provided, regarding the fully-loaded GAWR axle weight. The letter indicates Meritor has 'exhausted all options' regarding the Town's complaint from May 2020. Meritor also indicated that even if the warranty were still in effect, the Town has been overloading the truck by 5,000 lbs. 35% more weight than the axles were built for, thereby voiding the warranty. Frank Rogers reported on a recent phone call from the President of ATG. Mr. Holmes has indicated he will be following up with Joe Ronan and Daimler Chrysler. In subsequent discussions SB members rejected the idea of a class action suit, noting this would not be in the interest of the Town.

**Permit Issuance to TSA for Work within the TH66 ROW:**

Selectmen discussed the process and application fees for this new town permit. SB members agreed to set the application fee at \$150.

**Kevin Gish made the motion to ratify SB issuance of a Permit to Excavate in a Town Highway to The Sharon Academy, as previously signed by Joe Ronan. The motion was seconded by Mary Gavin. The motion carried unanimously.** The permit is being issued for the purposes of directional boring beneath the ditches and travelled way of TH66 (Academy Drive).

**Mary Gavin made the motion to establish an application fee of \$150 for permission to work within the right-of-way to a town highway. Kevin Gish seconded. The motion carried unanimously.** Staff was asked to follow-up with the TSA to request payment of this application fee, in addition to the recording fees already agreed to.

#### **Chase Site Services Contract – Winter Season 2020-2021:**

**Mary Gavin made the motion to authorize Joe Ronan to sign the contract with Chase Site Services. Kevin Gish seconded. The motion carried unanimously.**

#### **Roadside Litter:**

Mary Gavin expressed disappointment at the accumulation of **litter on roadsides** and the disregard of anti-litter laws. She indicated she recently posted a thank you on the Sharon Community Facebook page to the folks who are voluntarily picking up trash along Rte. 14. SB members may encourage a fall Green Up Day in addition to the traditional May event.

#### **4. FY22 Budget Preparations:**

Budget review centered upon discussions of wage, cost of living increases, and merit increases. Deb Jones stated she did not think the SB had not yet instituted a framework of concise standards on which to base ‘merit’ pay increases. This could be done for the future. Mary Gavin stated she wished to recognize work that had been done versus goals ‘to be achieved’. Joe Ronan stated he wishes to acknowledge how happy the SB is with all the work that has been done over the past year. Everyone has done a great job during the pandemic. Fellow board members agreed, noting the SB meeting frequency has doubled during the pandemic. After further consideration board members settled on the idea of a year-end bonus.

**Motion by Mary Gavin to grant a 2% cost of living increase to administrative, finance, janitorial, and highway employees effective for the payroll period ending January 2, 2021. The motion was seconded by Kevin Gish and carried unanimously.**

**Motion by Kevin Gish to approve a \$500 bonus to all full-time (hired) employees to be included in the December 19<sup>th</sup> payroll. Mary Gavin seconded. The motion carried unanimously.**

SB members then expressed their deep gratitude and appreciation for the contributions and hard work in 2020 of all elected officials and volunteers in town organizations and on boards and commissions, including Elections, Rec Committee, Planning, Conservation, and Energy Committee members, Library Trustees, the “Light Up Sharon” volunteers, Incident Command team – and all those essential workers unrecognized to-date.

It was agreed the SB will look at a final proposed budget on January 4<sup>th</sup>. SB members agreed that the Recreation Committee should continue to draw down on its existing fund balance until there is \$5,000 remaining. At that time the SB will once again consider a line item appropriation.

#### **5. Local Hazard Mitigation Planning Services: Bid Review**

SB members reviewed a tabulation of four proposals in response to the Town’s RFP for hazard mitigation planning services. The Town has received proposals from local, regional, and out-of-state consultants including Seam Solutions of Barre (\$6,725), TRC of Boston (\$9,000), Two Rivers Ottauquechee Regional Planning Commission (\$8,930), and Threat Owl of Franklin, NH (\$8,500). Margy Becker noted the proposed budget for staff hours were very similar across the board.

Bill Raymond of Threat Owl introduced his new company and detailed its expertise and relevant experience. John explained his familiarity with the area which is due, in part, with his participation in post-Irene reconstruction efforts while he served in the National Guard. Bill then fielded several questions from SB members regarding hazard mitigation planning, including whether he had experience with inundation planning for potential dam breaches. He indicated he had that experience. SB members noted his proposal included a six-month timeline. The Town’s current Local Hazard Mitigation Plan expires in early August. Bill confirmed Threat Owl could meet the proposed timetable for final draft plan deliverables in July 2021, with submittal of the final plan to VEM and FEMA later in the summer or fall.

**Kevin Gish made the motion to accept Threat Owl’s proposal for hazard mitigation planning services for the not-to-exceed amount of \$8,500. Mary Gavin seconded. The motion carried unanimously.**

#### **6. Consideration of Public Nuisance Ordinance:**

SB members have received copies of the Town of Royalton’s public nuisance ordinance. Joe Ronan noted that some, perhaps not all, provisions may be relevant to Sharon. SB members also noted Sharon lacks ordinance enforcement capability. Mary Gavin wondered whether the Town could contract with Royalton PD to enforce the ordinance. Margy Becker reported the process for adoption of an ordinance includes adoption by the SB followed by a 44-day period in which the public is put on notice that it could, via a petition of 5% of registered voters, request that the ordinance be rescinded. There are statutory requirements for public notice of ordinance adoption. If no such petition is received, an ordinance goes into effect 60 days from adoption. Alex Bird encouraged public education regarding a potential public nuisance or similar ordinance. As Health Officer, he could be involved in enforcing certain

provisions. A first or second Constable, if elected, may be able to assist with enforcement of ordinances. SB members requested additional information concerning election and appointment of Constables, which staff will provide. SB members agreed to further consider potential content for an ordinance in mid-January and after the FY22 budget has been approved.

**7. Approve Ashley Forest Ballot Language:**

Joe Ronan reported Strafford has also postponed its vote until Town Meeting. Final approval of ballot language will take place at the January 4 meeting.

**8. Selectboard Assistant Reports:**

**Mary Gavin made the motion to authorize the Chair to sign the contract on behalf of the Town to be issued to Christian Electric for installation of exhaust fans in the Old School House in the amount of \$3,700. The motion was seconded by Kevin Gish and carried unanimously.**

**9. Coronavirus planning/updates:**

Mary Gavin will participate in the Incident Command meeting on December 21<sup>st</sup> at 5:00PM.

**10. Harlow Road – updates:**

SB members indicated the December 7<sup>th</sup> meeting with the Royalton Selectboard to have been useful. It was also noted that Harlow Road residents who had been listening in on the call expressed less satisfaction. Mary Gavin confirmed her continuing interest in learning more about Neighborhood Watch programs. Kevin Gish indicated only some, not all, of the neighbors may participate. Mary Gavin wondered about alternative ways the Towns could be helping out the neighborhood. Kevin Gish stated he would be willing to continue as the Selectboard's 'liaison' on Harlow Road issues. Joe Ronan indicated he will contact Royalton to determine who has stepped forward as its liaison. SB members agreed to renew a dialogue with state legislators on the overall situation. Mary Gavin noted it would be a long drawn out process to amend laws that seem ill-suited to address issues raised by drug crimes – inclusive of neighborhood degradation. The courts also are part of the problem, in that offenders are often released only to re-offend. In a related discussion Mary Gavin noted Vermont Law School is considering relocating to the Burlington area, which would be a tremendous loss for Royalton and the surrounding region. SB members agreed to send a letter to VLS Board of Directors requesting that VLS remain in Royalton.

**11. Racial Justice Issues: Public Comments**

In follow-up to prior board discussions concerning anti-racism training options for staff, or lack thereof, Marcy Marceau read aloud for the record a letter she had emailed to SB members as follows:

Good Afternoon,

First, I would like to thank all of you for your time and efforts on behalf of the town. I know it is not an easy job! If you forward the contact information for the individual from the VLCT, I would be happy to follow up myself on some of the issues that have been raised.

I am also attaching additional information for your review with respect to the Selectboard Agenda item *Black Lives Matter and Issues of Racial Justice in Sharon*.

According to the Selectboard Minutes (8/3/2020), two books served as part of the basis for a draft "Anti-Racism and Racial Justice Policy." Excerpts from NPR interviews with the two authors are attached.

Also, Selectboard Minutes from August 10, 2020 state "Joe Ronan reported on what a display of solidarity with Black Lives Matter could look like with respect to the flag. Other communities are displaying the BLM flag on the same pole as the American flag." Please find information about the Black Lives Matter Organization, its affiliations and financial management attached.

Several items are worth pointing out with respect to the attached information:

- When asked about the basis for the inquiry on August 10, 2020, the Selectboard stated that it was simply looking into "whether or not there *are* issues with racism in the town."
- The sources being used have specific themes, and they use those themes to make broad social claims.
- Below are direct quotes from the two authors whose works are part of the basis for this inquiry/policymaking process:

"And what I want people to realize is that white privilege is a part of white supremacy and upholds white supremacy." The author continues that if you are born white, then you automatically have "white privilege." (Saad)

"But people have to have a clear sense of what a racist and an anti-racist choice is. And that doesn't come naturally." (Kendi)

The take-away from these sources is disturbing. By including them in its decision-making, the Selectboard appears *de facto* to accept that: the white people living in the Town of Sharon are "naturally" racist and that they are born with "white privilege," which, therefore, upholds and supports "white supremacy."

I certainly do not believe that the Selectboard or anyone in Sharon is racist or supportive of white supremacy but that appears to be the message from this source material.

Perhaps the topic of "racial justice" needs to focus on just that: race and justice. Discussions about these issues can and should be encouraged and conducted with thoughtfulness and nuance.

Attempts to paint our community with a broad brush using the latest best-selling narratives is not a constructive path. I would be happy to be part of a forum where the issues of race and justice can be discussed, and local, practical policy applications might be created.

Please don't hesitate to let me know.

Best,  
Marcy  
Marcy Marceau, 54 Steele Road, Sharon, Vermont 05065

Joe Ronan indicated that from his personal standpoint, he was not trying to paint anybody with a 'broad brush' about anything. These are complex and sensitive issues, which require a lot of work. Marcy Marceau acknowledged she was not characterizing his position but was referring to prior SB minutes.

#### 12. Approval of Minutes:

Mary Gavin made the motion to approve the minutes of the December 7, 2020 regular meeting with changes noted. Kevin Gish seconded. The motion carried unanimously.

#### 13. Approve Warrants:

Mary Gavin made the motion to approve AP Warrant 1103 for \$24,644.41 including payment of invoices from **BCBS of VT for \$5,847.11** for Jan 2021 with new premium rates, **Casella Waste for \$82.98** for garage dumpster & dumping fee, **Evans Motor Fuels for \$431.95** for 12/3 delivery at 1.827 per gal (at winter clear diesel rate since early Nov), **Health Equity for \$1,578.92** for HRA reimbursement invoices for 12/3 and 12/10, **Kimball Midwest for \$215.19** for shop expenses, **Maine Oxy for \$45** for the annual lease for oxygen tank, **NEMRC for \$756.30** for the 2021 Annual Disaster Recovery coverage (up 3% from last year), **VLCT PACIF for \$1,5023.21** for the first qtr of 2021, **VLCT Employment Resources for \$290** for the 1<sup>st</sup> qtr of 2021 for unemployment coverage and annual fee, and **Worksafe for \$373.75** for street signs. Kevin Gish seconded and the motion carried unanimously.

Kevin Gish made the motion to approve AP Warrant 1104 OSH for \$2,291.04 for the VLCT PACIF OSH portion of rental building for property & heating system coverage for OSH. The motion was seconded and carried unanimously.

Mary Gavin made the motion to approve AP Warrant 1105 for \$4,676.64 with payments to Eyemed for \$57.67 for Dec 2020 eye premiums, to IDS for \$128.94 for dog tags, to USPS for \$110.00 in stamps, VCI for \$610.03 for 77 911 house plates, and Windsor County Sheriff's for \$3,770.00 for 65 hours of service 11/2-12/6 @58/hr. The motion was seconded by Kevin Gish and carried unanimously.

Kevin Gish made the motion to approve the previously signed payroll warrant for the period ending 11/21/2020 with a cash draw of \$13,204.87. The motion was seconded and carried unanimously.

Mary Gavin made the motion to authorize the Finance Manager to issue a check in the amount of \$740 to Christian Electric upon receipt of an invoice for the 20% down payment cited in CE's bid dated 11.30.20. The motion was seconded and carried unanimously.

#### 14. Adjourn:

**Mary Gavin made the motion to adjourn at 9:08PM. Kevin Gish seconded. The motion carried unanimously.**

Submitted by,  
Margy Becker