

**SHARON SELECTBOARD
SPECIAL MEETING
MAY 24, 2021**

MINUTES (Final)

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

Participating via Zoom: Selectboard members Joe Ronan, Mary Gavin, Kevin Gish; Margy Becker (SB Assistant), Deb Jones (Finance Manager), Vince Gross (resident);

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

1. Review/Approve Agenda:

Kevin Gish made the motion to approve the agenda. Joe Ronan seconded. Motion carried unanimously.

2. Community Policing Alternatives:

Selectboard members met with VLCT law enforcement consultant, Trevor Whipple, to review alternatives for community policing for the town.

Mr. Whipple indicated many towns are struggling with the best policing strategies for their towns. The VSP is not accepting any new contracts presently. Certain towns are re-kindling the position of Constable, and providing Constables with law enforcement training, but there are challenges and drawbacks to doing so. He cited that obtaining insurance coverage for use of a personal vehicle for law enforcement purposes is difficult. Trevor Whipple also pointed out there is a statewide shortage of law enforcement personnel at the state and local level. He noted the Town of Hartford is having difficulty filling positions, Brattleboro is short 9 officers.

Trevor, when asked, indicated there is no magic formula for the number of hours or dollar investment into policing. Upon creation of a police department, there are methods to analyze calls for service and to perform workload analyses.

Mr. Whipple asked SB members to consider what the town *wants* for community policing. Trevor Whipple encouraged the town to perform an analysis of call data from the VSP, Hartford Dispatch, and Windsor County Sheriffs. This task could help guide the town in forging future agreements for law enforcement coverage in town.

Mary Gavin expressed the opinion a greater law enforcement presence is needed in the town and that prosecution of an ongoing drug case is a concern. Kevin Gish agreed more patrolling is needed. Trevor Whipple acknowledged the difficulty with drug cases and the frustrating length of time associated with prosecution. Joe Ronan expressed frustration with the courts and the

attitude that until more serious offenses are committed, law enforcement personnel and states attorneys appear to be uninterested in prosecution.

Trevor Whipple indicated he has forwarded to the Board model contracts with various sheriff departments for consideration. Randolph has recently replaced its police department with a contract with county sheriffs. St. Albans Town has a sizable budget now earmarked for a multi-year contract with the Franklin County Sheriffs. However, a brief review of those contract provisions indicates only some of those provisions are relevant for a smaller town like Sharon.

Joe Ronan indicated his interest in resuming discussions with the Town of Thetford regarding community policing. Trevor Whipple applauded consideration of multi-town solutions, indicating his interest over time is to see increased regionalization of policing throughout the state. He also provided some suggestions for provisions that could be included in an expanded contract with the Windsor County Sheriffs, inclusive of a request that the same deputy be dispatched for patrols and that this deputy make appearances at community events.

Vince Gross, a resident on Harlow Road who has been impacted by the Digby drug case over the years, requested the Selectboard address several short-term deficiencies in law enforcement services. He observes there is no law enforcement presence on Harlow Road in the evenings, that the Windsor County Sheriffs are not up-to-date concerning the case, and that residents have been told by law enforcement officers that it will take a more violent act before prosecution is warranted. He stated residents in the area should not have to live under these conditions. SB Chair Joe Ronan agreed the SB could advocate for better response, but addressing the courts is where the Board is having the most difficulty.

The meeting with Mr. Whipple concluded with a brief discussion of ordinances and enforcement. Trevor Whipple advised the SB consult Counsel concerning even enforcement of ordinances throughout the town. He encouraged the SB to wait to adopt additional ordinances until it has an enforcement mechanism in place. Ordinances are 'tools' only. However, ordinance adoption enables the town to assess civil fines, which sometimes serve as the only way to bring certain parties into compliance.

Deb Jones inquired whether ARPA funds will be available to address policing. It seems the VLCT is seeking better guidelines for allocation of these funds to municipalities, and that it is too early to tell.

3. Approval of Warrants:

Mary Gavin made the motion to approve the Payroll Warrant for the period ending 5/22/21 for a cash draw of \$13,061.88. Joe Ronan seconded. The motion carried unanimously.

Mary Gavin made the motion to approve AP Warrant #1166 in the amount of \$1,604.67, including payments to Chase Site Services Inc \$785 for a lost invoice from March, Northeast Delta Dental \$446.18 for June 2021, The Lincoln National Life \$229.89 for June 2021, and US

Bank \$150.60 for 1 month of copier lease and maintenance agreement. **Kevin Gish seconded. The motion carried unanimously.**

Kevin Gish made the motion to approve AP Warrant #1167 RECREATION in the amount of \$553.56 including payments to Fred Small \$253.56 to reimburse for materials purchased to line the baseball field and for 3 baseball bats, and Upper Valley Portables \$300 for 2 units mid-May through mid-June. **Mary Gavin seconded, and the motion carried unanimously.**

4. Adjourn:

Mary Gavin made the motion to adjourn at 7:40PM. The motion was seconded by Kevin Gish and carried unanimously.

Submitted by Margy Becker