

**Sharon Selectboard
REGULAR Meeting Minutes
January 3, 2022**

This meeting was held in compliance with the VT Open Meeting law for electronic meetings with remote and in-person attendance.

Attending In-Person from Sharon Town Offices: Joe Ronan, Selectmen; Attending remotely via Zoom: Margy Becker, SB Assistant; Selectmen Mary Gavin and Kevin Gish; Deb Jones, Finance Manager; Road Foreman Frank Rogers; Library Trustees Mary Stoddard, Emma Basham, Stephanie Gergley Davis, Jeremiah Brophy, Morgan Brophy.

Joe Ronan convened the meeting at 6:33PM;

1. Approval of Agenda:

Motion by Mary Gavin to approve the agenda as submitted. Kevin Gish seconded. The motion carried unanimously.

2. Public Comments:

There were no public comments apart from those received related to FY23 budget items.

3. Review/Approval Minutes:

Motion by Kevin Gish to approve the minutes of the December 20th regular meeting with one correction. Second by Mary Gavin and the motion carried unanimously.

4. Approval of Warrants:

Motion by Mary Gavin to approve the Payroll Warrant for Period Ending 1/1/22 with a cash draw of \$20,108.48. Kevin Gish seconded and the motion was passed unanimously.

Motion by Mary Gavin to approve AP WARRANT #1252 in the amount of \$13,758.40 including payments to: Allegiance (formerly Clarks Truck Service) \$144.30, Cargill \$6,697.49, Chase Site Services \$1,825.00, Consolidated Communications \$247.36, EasiFile \$3,652.93 new map filing system for vault, Evans Motor \$749.90, and Eyemed \$70.42. **Kevin Gish seconded and the motion carried unanimously.**

Motion by Kevin Gish to approve AP WARRANT #1253 in the amount of \$964.51 including payments to: Foley Services \$114.96, Frank Rogers \$140 mileage, GMP \$591.25, and Key Communications \$118.30. **Mary Gavin seconded and the motion carried unanimously.**

Discussions ensued regarding use of personal vehicles for town business. SB agreed insurance implications should be investigated. Highway crew members will only use personal vehicles as a last resort – i.e. if a town truck is down.

Motion by Kevin Gish to approve AP WARRANT #1254 in the amount of \$5,591.81 including payments to: Madison Nat'l Life \$207.16, Magee Office Products \$60 for copier 3 mos. Service, Sabil & Sons \$238.70, Suburban Propane \$387.75 library fuel oil, Ted Green Ford \$586.45, Tenco \$160.36, Texas Refinery Co. \$384.00, and VMERS DB \$3567.39 for Dec 2021. Mary Gavin seconded and the motion carried unanimously.

5. Finance Manager Reports:

Selectmen reviewed and indicated their acceptance of bid specifications for a new 6-wheel dump truck cab and chassis, dump body, and wing plow as presented by Frank Rogers and Deb Jones. Frank Rogers noted he has recommended retaining the 2017 front plow and that specs include a wing plow only.

6. Road Foreman Reports/Highways:

Frank Rogers indicated the crew did not have to reapply sand as temperatures dropped on Sunday, due to the quality of the winter sand being applied. Margy Becker reported that the FHWA will not fund the permanent repairs on the Rte.132 culvert below Aldrich Farm Road. Five years have lapsed since the July 1, 2017 storm created washouts in that area. But the permitting and design work completed by District 4 on the Town's behalf will still benefit the Town going forward, as it seeks grant funding from other sources – i.e. VTRANS culvert grants, Better Roads grants.

7. Ashley Community Forest: Approval of Inter-local Agreement with Strafford:

Selectmen indicated they will sign the inter-local agreement in its final format as presented by Paul Gillies, Esq.

8. FY23 Budget Adoption:

Selectmen reviewed and noted revisions Deb Jones has made to the highway infrastructure budget based on the recent feedback from the FHWA. Frank Rogers confirmed the need to proceed with repairs to the short span concrete bridge at the bottom of Quimby Mountain Road and the culvert upgrade at the junction of Krivak and Downer roads. The infrastructure budget illustrates the timing of anticipated VTRANS structures grant awards. The infrastructure budget also indicates the Town is setting aside funds to repave the circle by Sharon Elementary school (FY23) and the TSA access road (FY24). Selectmen indicated they were satisfied with the highway infrastructure budget as proposed.

Selectmen gave Frank Rogers the green light to gather specifications to bid the repairs to the Quimby Mountain Road short span bridge. The Town is awaiting VTRANS Hydraulics Unit

to complete hydraulic studies for the culvert upgrade on Downer/Krivak and Quimby Mountain Road bridge.

Selectmen completed a final review of the proposed highway operating budget. Deb Jones pointed out she had lowered the transfer out to the highway infrastructure reserve fund to \$12,390. The proposed \$20,000 transfer to the building reserve fund is an acknowledgement of the need to ascertain whether the Town Garage can be repaired in its current location or whether it has to be replaced and potentially re-located on the existing site. Engineering expertise will be needed to perform this analysis of options. Mary Gavin expressed her concern that \$20,000 was insufficient. Board members agreed, after further discussion, to increase the transfer out to \$30,000 – with \$5,000 to be raised in highway taxes and \$5,000 from the highway fund balance.

Discussions resumed with **Baxter Library Trustees** regarding their request for increased compensation for the Librarian. Mary Gavin suggested the Librarian, who is a town employee, should be treated as such and compensation increases should fall within the range of increases awarded to other town employees. As presented by Trustees the requested increase for the Librarian is in excess of the 5% compensation increase awarded recently to town employees. Library Trustees presented the case that the Librarian wage is below that of wages paid to Librarians in surrounding towns. Their recommendation is to bring the BML Librarian wage up to that level. Trustees are also proposing the Library be open additional hours, which contributes to the increased compensation amount. In subsequent discussions SB members expressed unanimous support for increased Library hours. Joe Ronan and Kevin Gish expressed support for the full increase in Librarian compensation. In closing discussions Mary Gavin expressed her hope that the Trustees would not approach the Selectboard anytime soon with another sizable compensation request.

Discussions resumed on the general fund budget, and a final budget was agreed upon. The proposed budget poses a 6.2% increase in the amount to be raised in taxes, which is more than the proposed increase in highway taxes. Deb Jones reported the final revised general fund budget includes the increased South Royalton Rescue budget, which is approximately \$7800 more than the prior budget draft. The final SRRS budget figure is \$89,686.

Total proposed general fund budget expenses, including transfers to reserves, are \$790,775, which is a 16% increase over the FY21 figure of \$681,432. The SB budget includes increases in compensation for administrative personnel due to retirements of Selectboard Assistant and Finance Manager. It is anticipated market conditions will dictate increased compensation for new hires, as current wage levels have been ‘under-valued’.

The combined general fund and highway budgets show a 4.22% increase in total taxes to be raised. The impact of the property tax increase is projected to be \$57.72/year on a \$200,000 property.

Mary Gavin made the motion to approve the FY23 budget totaling \$1,861,675 in expenses, including highways, of which \$1,320,000 shall be raised in property taxes. Kevin Gish seconded. The motion carried unanimously.

9. **ARPA Funds:**

Selectmen agreed to host a public meeting to hear from residents as to how ARPA funds should be prioritized. The meeting will take place Thursday, February 10th at 6:30PM. The meeting will be conducted via Zoom. Deb Jones encouraged one priority to be a continued clean drinking water sources for the Village. Some ARPA funds are eligible to spent on the Arts, as pandemic conditions hit that sector very hard.

10. **Town Report – Status:**

Margy Becker reports Nicole Antal is progressing with town report layout. The possibility of having the printer mail out town reports directly is being looked into.

11. **Town Meeting Articles:**

Margy Becker reported on conversations with the VLCT regarding cannabis legislation and second constable position. There is no required deadline by which a town must vote to ‘opt in’ on cannabis. The VLCT suggests the Selectboard consider asking the voters to change the second constable position from an elected position to an appointed position “as-needed”. No person has run for the second constable position in many years.

Selectmen noted their interest in proceeding with formulating draft wording for an article to vote to change the Town Treasurer position from elected to an appointed position. If approved the change would not go in effect until 2023. Research is needed to ascertain how a positive vote on that article would impact the Town Treasurer election to be held this year and Sharon School District. The Town Treasurer currently serves as the School District Treasurer. Selectmen also agreed to ask the voters to consider changing the way town reports are distributed.

Selectmen expressed support for conducting all Town Meeting business by Australian ballot, if the legislature votes to provide that authorization again. Selectmen are not in favor of holding an in-person town meeting. The Board is also in favor of proceeding with March 1st as the date for Town Meeting 2022.

12. **Ashley Forest Inter-Local Agreement:**

Selectmen are in receipt of the final inter-local agreement as prepared by Paul Gillies, Esq. for signature. Deb Jones will facilitate signature via Docu-Sign.

13. **SB Assistant Reports:**

Margy Becker reported Ryan Haac and Geoff Martin have progressed on preparing specifications for a potential RFP for a new Library heating system. She reported she is contacting neighboring towns regarding options for animal control. The Town currently is in

need of an animal control officer. The current compensation rate is \$20/hour with a minimum call-in time of 2 hours.

14. Coronavirus planning/updates:

Selectmen declined to take action on a mask mandate, citing concerns over the feasibility of enforcing such a mandate. The Town Offices are currently open to the public by appointments only.

15. Harlow Road:

Joe Ronan reported briefly that he had reached Royalton SB member Chris Noble and that information he has to share warrants an executive session due to ongoing police investigations.

16. Tentative Agenda & Town Office coverage for January 18, 2022

Mary Gavin agreed to be present in the Town Offices for this meeting.

17. Executive Session:

Motion by Kevin Gish to enter executive session at 8:39PM to discuss personnel matters and an ongoing police investigation. Mary Gavin seconded and the motion carried unanimously. The Board exited executive session at 8:51PM.

Selectmen subsequently agreed to work with the Royalton Selectboard on a traffic study.

18. Adjourn:

Kevin Gish made the motion to adjourn at 8:54PM. Mary Gavin seconded. The motion carried unanimously and the meeting was adjourned.

Submitted by Margy Becker