

**Sharon Selectboard  
Regular Meeting Minutes  
November 7<sup>th</sup>, 2022 FINAL**

*This meeting was held in compliance with the January 2022 VT Open Meeting law amendments regarding fully-remote electronic meetings.*

Participants attending via Zoom: Deb Jones, Treasurer; Sarah Pfeiffer, Selectboard Clerk; Nicola Shipman, Selectboard Assistant; Alex Bird, Resident; Marcy Marceau, Resident; Kevin Gish, Selectboard Chair; Lucy Pierpont, Finance Manager; Mary Gavin, Selectboard Vice Chair

Participants attending via Phone: Frank Rogers, Road Foreman

**Call to Order:**

Kevin Gish called the meeting to order at 6:31PM.

**1. Review/Approve Agenda**

**Kevin Gish made a motion to accept the agenda with the addition of an executive session at the end of the session. Sarah Pfeiffer seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.**

**2. Public Comments**

Marcy Marceau commented on the possible Elementary School expansion. Marcy asked the Town to consider the option of using the Old School House, currently leased to The Sharon Academy Middle School, as an alternative to expanding the Sharon Elementary School building.

Marcy asked if Dee Gish's connection to The Sharon Academy could create a conflict of interests in the discussion of any past lease agreement with the Sharon Academy Middle School or any future discussion as they relate to The Sharon Academy Middle School.

Mary Gavin asked for clarification regarding the conflict of interest. Marcy Marceau said that Dee Gish is on the Board of Trustees on The Sharon Academy, and there could be a perceived conflict of interest for Kevin Gish.

Mary Gavin said that this was a point worth considering. Kevin Gish stated that he is no longer an employee of The Sharon Academy, and he stated that Dee Gish serves on the Board of Trustees at The Sharon Academy.

**3. Review/Approve Minutes: October 17<sup>th</sup> and October 28<sup>th</sup>**

**Sarah Pfeiffer made a motion to approve the October 17<sup>th</sup>, 2022, minutes as presented. Kevin Gish seconded. Motion approved.**

**Mary Gavin made a motion to approve the October 28<sup>th</sup>, 2022 with amendments. Sarah Pfeiffer seconded. Motion approved unanimously.**

**4. Selectboard Member Reports: Members**

Kevin Gish reported on the Inflation Reduction Act funding, but he recognized that it is currently unknown how this money will make its way to the municipal level.

The Ashley Community Forest public meeting for the draft forestry management plan was held as scheduled. The plan is open to public input until November 30<sup>th</sup> and then once revisions are made it will be sent for review. Ideally there will be a stewardship plan in place by January.

Kevin Gish also said he attended the Homes for All Summit hosted by Vital Communities and reported that weighing the benefits of more units in the same buildings, particularly older buildings, is being put forth as a way help alleviate the housing crisis in the State.

**5. Finance Manager Reports: Lucy Pierpont**

Lucy Pierpont said that her updates could be addressed later in the meeting.

**6. Highway Business/Road Foreman Reports: Frank Rogers**

Kevin Gish asked how the roads survived the rainstorm. Frank Rogers said the roads were in good shape with just mild washouts.

Frank Rogers mentioned that Friday is Veteran's Day. He said the Road Crew is still working four ten-hour days, since the weather has been so good. Veteran's Day is a recognized Town Holiday in the personnel policy. Frank asked if the Selectboard would consider Thursday November 10<sup>th</sup> to be a holiday since this year Veteran's Day falls on a Friday, but the crew was not scheduled to work on Friday.

Mary Gavin asked for further clarification on the personnel policy. There was some discussion of precedent and the need for updating the personnel policy to reflect current practices. Nicola Shipman will be working to bring a revised personnel policy to the Board for review soon.

Frank Rogers also noted that Doug Jones has a storage unit and disused truck in the Town Right of Way that needs to be moved. Frank is wondering if there can be a letter sent from the Selectboard requiring those items to be moved.

Nicola Shipman will draft and send a letter to request that the items in the Town right of way be removed not later than the 18<sup>th</sup> of November to ensure the safety of the roads.

Deb Jones presented the personnel policy and there was continued discussion about the holiday policy. Given that there is precedent, Mary Gavin said that it would be worth approving the change for the Town Offices, but also to ensure the personnel policy is updated to reflect current practices.

**Mary Gavin made a motion to allow for the observance of Veteran's Day for eligible municipal employees on Thursday, November 10<sup>th</sup>, 2022. Sarah Pfeiffer seconded. Motion approved unanimously.**

#### **7. Selectboard Assistant Reports: Nicola Shipman**

Nicola Shipman informed the Selectboard that the Bank Stabilization Grant Funding was not awarded. Mary Gavin asked if there was any reason given as to why. Nicola responded that VTrans said the number of applications was very high and the dollar figures requested amounted to more than what was available this year.

Nicola also asked the Selectboard to consider the option of rescinding the Conflict of Interest Ordinance as this is an outdated way to handle the Conflict of Interest for a town. The recommended format would be to enact a Town policy. To rescind the Ordinance, the Board will need to go through the statutorily required process, but the Board could target Town Meeting as the mechanism for implementing the change. Nicola will bring this up for discussion again at a future meeting.

Nicola Shipman will draft a contract for Jack Jones Construction for carpentry services to review and approval by the Selectboard.

#### **8. Approve Warrants: Selectboard**

**Sarah Pfeiffer made a motion to approve AP Warrant 1386 from the Chester Downer fund in the amount of \$265 with payments to Windsor County Probate \$85, Pine Hill Cemetery \$180. Mary Gavin seconded. Motion approved unanimously.**

**Mary Gavin made a motion to approve AP Warrant 1388 in the amount of \$5,170.36 with payments to Bethel Mills \$10.97, Capitol Steel & Supply \$355.00, Compucount \$191.25, Consolidated Communications \$123.20, Cott Systems \$170, De Lage Landen Financial \$94.53, EC Fiber \$254.79, Evans Motor Fuels \$3842.84, Eyemed \$70.42, ATG Westminster \$57.36. Sarah Pfeiffer seconded. Motion approved unanimously.**

**Sarah Pfeiffer made a motion to approve AP Warrant 1389 in the amount of \$2,166.00 with payments to Fifiield Electric \$209.50, Foley Services \$183.42, Greater Upper Valley Solid Waste \$525, Green Mountain Power \$599.19, Key Communications \$273.09, Kofile Preservation 375.80. Mary Gavin seconded. Motion approved unanimously.**

**Mary Gavin made a motion to approve AP Warrant 1390 in the amount of \$29,750.00 with payment to Lewco LLC. Sarah Pfeiffer seconded. Motion approved unanimously.**

**Kevin Gish made a motion to approve AP Warrant 1391 in the amount of \$10,902.08 with payment to Madison National Life \$192.11, Magee Office products \$45.07, Mascoma Savings bank \$9,362.17, Northeast Delta Dental \$588.08, Royal Auto Parts \$5.07, Sabil & Sons \$355.60, Suburban Propane \$353.98. Sarah Pfeiffer seconded. Motion approved unanimously.**

**Mary Gavin made a motion to approve AP Warrant 1392 in the amount of \$4,621.72 with payment to Tascos Security \$528.00, Tenco Industrial \$443.04, Twin State \$3,475.68, Tyler Wight Heating \$175.00. Sarah Pfeiffer seconded. Motion approved unanimously.**

**Sarah Pfeiffer made a motion to approve AP Warrant 1393 with the amount of \$31,144.00 with payment to Vermont Mechanical. Mary Gavin seconded. Motion approved unanimously.**

**Kevin Gish made a motion to approve AP Warrant 1394 in the amount of \$4,152.87 with payments to Viking-Cives \$442.91, VMERS \$3,376.48, White Cap \$333.48. Mary Gavin seconded. Motion approved unanimously.**

**Kevin Gish made a motion to approve AP Warrant 1395 from the Recreation Fund in the amount of \$350 Upper Valley Portables \$350. Sarah Pfeiffer seconded. Motion approved unanimously.**

**Sarah Pfeiffer made a motion 10//22 – 11/5/22 with a cash draw of \$14,805.15. Mary Gavin seconded. Motion approved unanimously.**

#### **NEW BUSINESS: Action Items:**

##### **9. Driveway Permit Application**

Mary Gavin asked if the sight lines were appropriate. Frank Rogers said he measured at 150' which satisfies the Town Highway Policy.

**Mary Gavin made a motion to approve the Driveway Permit application as presented by Richard Johnson, Peter Johnson, Joseph Johnson and Laura Johnson, joint owners of 2307 Beaver Meadow Road and parcel number R01222.LR received on October 17<sup>th</sup>, 2022. Kevin Gish seconded. Motion approved unanimously.**

**10. FY24 Budget Discussions – Departmental Wages**

Mary Gavin asked the Board to consider what tax rate increase the Board is willing to ask the taxpayers to afford as well as to consider the impact of any increase might be when making budget decisions.

Kevin Gish asked if it is worth looking department by department or position by position when looking at the percent increase for departmental wages.

Deb Jones suggested that it could be possible to apply different departmental rates for increases since there have been departments that have seen staffing changes recently versus other departments have not had much or any turnover in the recent years.

Mary Gavin asked what the impact of the Health Insurance costs will have on the budget.

Kevin Gish said the Board could also consider a raise now before the end of the fiscal year. Mary Gavin said typically any raises would be effective January 1, but in 2021 raises were applied in November.

Kevin Gish asked if anyone would be ready to act on the departmental wages decision. Neither Sarah Pfeiffer nor Mary Gavin felt ready to act. Kevin Gish asked how the information could be presented in a way that would facilitate the decision-making process.

Kevin Gish said he finds that this is a particularly tough year for budget discussions. Inflation is high, but it is hard to find employees, and employee retention is of one of the Selectboard's stated goals. Attempting to keep up with inflation seems logical to Kevin, but he also mentioned that it doesn't have to be a flat across the board decision, and he endorses a department-by-department decision.

Mary Gavin noted that a wage increase decision influenced by the unusually high inflation rates we are experiencing in 2022 could be premature as the inflation rate could be significantly different by the time we reach FY24. Mary also noted that once made, the decision could set a challenging precedent. Additionally, inflation rates could in fact drop leaving wages inflated in FY24.

Lucy Pierpont asked what data she could provide to the Board to help with their decision-making. The members suggested they needed time to consider, but they will get their requests to Lucy by early next week, so she can get the numbers to the Board in time for the next meeting.

Kevin Gish asked if Frank Rogers had any input for his crew. Frank said he would send an email this week with any input for the Selectboard to review.

## **11. Municipal Sign Policy**

The Board discussed the rational for and against a municipal sign policy as well as the possible merits of putting a municipal sign policy in place. Mary Gavin asked how the policy was going to be enforced. Nicola Shipman said she will be responsible for the administrative components of the policy. Nicola also suggested that it would be unlikely to be a particularly difficult or onerous task, and that it would likely be a rare occasion that the Town need to respond to violations of the policy. Nicola also said that in the absence of a policy, the Town would have no mechanism for enforcement should there ever become an issue with signage in Town.

**Sarah Pfeiffer made a motion to approve the Temporary Signs on Municipal Property Policy as presented to be effective as of November 21<sup>st</sup>, 2022. Mary Gavin seconded. Motion approved unanimously.**

## **12. Authorize Primary Contact for Town's Legal Counsel**

**Mary Gavin made a motion to make Kevin Gish as the authorized representative to respond to the Town's legal counsel in matters related to Case #22-ENV-00083. Sarah Pfeiffer seconded the motion. Motion approved unanimously.**

## **UNFINISHED BUSINESS: Status Reports/Action as needed**

### **13. Old School House and TSA HVAC Improvements:**

Mary Gavin does not feel that it would be appropriate to obligate a future board, but Mary also said she would be hopeful that a future board would give the proposal due consideration and not try to burden TSA with a huge repayment of the grant funding. No action was taken.

Nicola Shipman will reach out to Andrew Lane with the outcome of this discussion.

### **14. ARPA/SLRF Work Group Update**

Sarah Pfeiffer said the District Manager for Maplefields is working to find a possible site for an AED at their Sharon location. Mary Gavin will work with the South Royalton Rescue Squad to find a representative to meet with the District Manager of Maplefields.

Mary Gavin asked if there would be an updated spreadsheet with the newly appropriated funding decisions from the October 28<sup>th</sup> Special Meeting. Deb Jones said that she would share that with the members.

There was some discussion about the proposal to set aside ARPA funding for residents seeking gap funding for energy improvements as recommended by Efficiency Vermont and their energy audit process, like a program established in Barnard. Kevin Gish said Ryan Haac thought the Energy Committee could provide administration support to distribute funding to candidates. Mary Gavin wondered if it would be wise to put a program into play without

having a plan for funding the program in the future. Kevin Gish said he would send along the documents he received from Ryan so the members could review.

### **Departmental Wages (continued)**

**Kevin Gish made a motion to pay the Selectboard-appointed Town Treasurer Deb Jones the remainder of the Treasurer stipend for FY23 in the amount of \$2,153.85 plus \$2,500 that was budgeted for Audit Preparation. This combined total of \$4,653.85 is to be divided equally among the 16 remaining pay periods of FY23. Mary Gavin seconded. Motion approved unanimously.**

### 15. **Adjourn**

**Sarah Pfeiffer made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 8:46PM. Mary Gavin seconded. The motion passed unanimously.**

Submitted by Nicola Shipman