

**Sharon Selectboard
Australian Ballot Hearing
February 27th, 2023
FINAL MINUTES**

Participants attending via Zoom: Ken Wright, Delinquent Tax Collector; David Karon, Sharon Representative on EC Fiber Board; Deb Jones, Treasurer; Nicola Shipman, Selectboard Assistant; Mary Gavin, Selectboard Vice Chair; Sarah Pfeiffer, Selectboard Clerk; Kevin Gish, Selectboard Chair

Participants attending via Phone:

Kevin Gish called the hearing to order at 6:00PM

1. Review/Approve Agenda

Mary Gavin made a motion to approve the agenda as presented. Sarah Pfeiffer seconded. Motion approved unanimously.

2. Reading and public discussion of Article 1

Kevin Gish explained the purpose of the hearing and read the following aloud:

“Article 1. To elect the following Town Officers by Australian Ballot:

Town Moderator for a 1-year term
Collector of Delinquent Taxes for a 1-year term
Selectboard member for a 3-year term
First Constable for a 1-year term
Lister for a 3-year term”

Ken Wright was introduced as the sole nominee for the Collector of Delinquent Taxes. Ken Wright made a brief statement and made himself available for questions. There were no questions from the public.

Kevin Gish introduced himself as the sole nominee for the open position on the Selectboard. Kevin Gish made a brief statement and made himself available for questions. There were no questions from the public.

Kevin Gish noted that the First Constable position is vacant, and there are no nominees on the ballot for this position in the Town. There were no questions from the public.

Helen Barrett was named as the sole candidate on the ballot for Town Lister, but unfortunately Helen was unable to attend the meeting tonight. There were no questions from the public.

Kevin Gish opened the floor for questions. David Karon stated that he would be available to discuss any possible changes or concerns relevant to EC Fiber.

Kevin Gish asked that David Karon perhaps come to a future meeting to discuss EC Fiber. David Karon encouraged questions and said he can be contacted at sharon@ecfiber.net

3. Adjourn

Sarah Pfeiffer made a motion to adjourn at 6:13PM. Mary Gavin seconded. Motion approved unanimously.

Special Meeting Minutes February 27th, 2023 FINAL MINUTES

Participants attending via Zoom: Kevin Gish, Selectboard Chair; Mary Gavin, Selectboard Vice Chair; Sarah Pfeiffer; Nicola Shipman, Selectboard Assistant; Lucy Pierpont, Finance Manager; Becky Owens, SRRS/Emergency Co-coordinator; Nathan Potter, Fire Chief/Emergency Operations Director; Deb Jones, Treasurer; Alex Bird, Health Officer; Dave Karon, Sharon Representative on EC Fiber Board

Attending by Phone: Frank Rogers, Road Foreman

Kevin Gish called the meeting to order at 6:30PM.

1. Review/Approve Agenda

Mary Gavin made a motion to approve the agenda as presented. Sarah Pfeiffer seconded the motion. Motion approved unanimously.

2. Public Comments

No public comments.

3. Selectboard Reports

Sarah Pfeiffer reached out to Jodi Painter, the RL Vallee office manager, to discuss the installation of a Town owned AED. Sarah said Jodi was extremely responsive. Sarah reminded RL Vallee that Becky Owens has volunteered to train staff to use the AED and Dustin Potter has said the fire department will maintain the AED as required.

Mary Gavin suggested that it might be worth contacting RL Vallee on a regular basis. Mary also asked if there is a written proposal that had been submitted to RL Vallee. Sarah Pfeiffer said a proposal had been submitted in writing, but she will forward to RL Vallee again.

4. Finance Manager Reports

Lucy Pierpont mentioned that she had sent the financial reports for January 2023 to the Board for review. Lucy noted that the General Fund Revenue has increased by \$3,600, and total operating expenses increased by \$60,000 since December primarily due to wage related items, heating fuel, the audit, and an invoice to the Fire Department.

Highway revenue increased by \$44,000 which included \$29,000 in reimbursements of State grant funding. The Highway Operating expenses increased by \$61,000 mostly due to wage related items, fuel and salt purchases, as well as for contracted services with Chase Site Services.

As of today, the Town has collected \$3,850,450 in tax revenue. There is still \$20,000 outstanding for payment one and just over \$65,000 outstanding for payment two. The Town received a \$30,000 check from VHAF for a delinquent property tax payment.

5. Road Foreman Reports

Frank Rogers said that there had been a crew member out for about a week due to illness. Otherwise, the crew has been working to keep up with the variable weather conditions.

Frank Rogers said mechanically-wise the machines and vehicles have been operating well, and there have been no major repairs.

Frank asked the Board to approve a letter to send a resident a letter to reminding of the requirement not to blow snow into Route 132. Nicola Shipman will follow up in writing to the resident in coordination with Frank Rogers.

Mary Gavin made a motion to authorize Nicola Shipman to send a letter to a resident on Route 132 at the request of the Road Foreman in violation of Vermont State Statute. Kevin Gish seconded the motion. Motion approved unanimously.

Frank also mentioned that he attended a VLCT Road Posting Training. Frank will send the list of the posted roads to Nicola Shipman to register with the DMV so the Town can request additional enforcement should there be any violations.

6. Selectboard Assistant Reports

Nicola Shipman reported that the Town now has a signed agreement with Avery Excavation, Inc. for the culvert replacement on Downer Road. The anticipated start date for that project looks to be sometime in August. Avery Excavation has not yet supplied the design, but once that is available it will need to be reviewed by ANR and the Board will have an opportunity to review.

Nicola also said she met with the VLCT “Consults on Call” regarding funding support for upcoming municipal projects, including the underground oil tank at the Old School House

and a possible site evaluation at the Town garage. The VLCT will email a list possible funding sources to explore for the Town projects currently on the schedule.

The RFP for the Old Town Hall replacement ramp is set to be issued Tuesday, February 28th, 2023. The response deadline is March 29th, 2023 at 9:00am.

Nicola also said she is scheduled to meet with Jackson Evans from the Preservation Trust of Vermont (PVT) on February 28th at 2pm to discuss the kinds of services PTV offers to municipalities and what might be the best way forward for the Old Town Hall building repair projects.

The new Interregional Energy Coordinator and Ryan Haac are coming to tour the municipal offices on Wednesday, March 1st at 9am. Nicola will also work with Ryan to set up a tour of the Town Garage with Frank and the Old School House for later in the Spring.

Nicola let the Selectboard Members know that the Planning Commission is having their Public Hearing for the draft Town Plan which is schedules for March 28th, 2023 at 7:00pm at the Sharon Elementary School in the Music Room. The draft plan is posted online, and Nicola said she also emailed a digital copy to the members for review. Cathy Sartor also has a hard copy of the plan in the vault along with the maps that were created for the document.

Nicola said she received an updated quote from Northern Basement Systems for the vapor barrier which had been originally quoted in 2020 for the Old Town Hall building. The contractor did include the additional systems despite Nicola's request to leave those out. Also, Northern Basement Systems did not break down the cost of labor and materials by line item. The new quote came in at just over \$12,000. After speaking with the "Consults on Call" at the VLCT and knowing that she will be meeting with Jackson Evans, Nicola said she will do some digging to find out if the vapor barrier is even the best way to proceed.

The Vermont state legislature has been very busy drafting legislation. Primary topics include dispatch services, policing, and legislation to address housing in Vermont. Nicola said that there was a bill voted out of committee that may affect Act 250 and how it is administered, so she will keep the Selectboard apprised of any updates.

7. Review/Approve Minutes: February 6th, 2023

Sarah Pfeiffer made a motion to approve the minutes from February 6th, 2023 with minor changes. Mary Gavin seconded. Motion approved unanimously.

8. Review/Approve Warrants

Sarah Pfeiffer made a motion to approve payroll for the pay period 2/12/23-2/25/23 with a cash draw of \$16,609.68. Mary Gavin seconded. Motion approved unanimously.

Mary Gavin made a motion to ratify payroll for the pay period 1/29/23-2/11/23 with a cash draw of \$19,655.90. Sarah Pfeiffer seconded. Motion approved unanimously.

Sarah Pfeiffer made a motion to approve AP Warrant 1438 in the amount of \$19,206.62 with payments to Aubuchon Hardware \$12.66, Blue Cross Blue Shield \$4,698.59, Capital One Trade Credit \$669.96, Cargill Inc. \$8,385.00, Casella Waste \$110.41, Chase Site Services \$5,330.00. **Mary Gavin seconded. Motion approved unanimously.**

Mary Gavin made a motion to approve AP Warrant 1439 in the amount of \$5,642.55 with payments to Northeast Delta Dental \$552.10, Evans Motor Fuels \$4,843.35, EyeMed Vision Care \$63.68, Foley Services \$183.42. **Sarah Pfeiffer seconded. Motion approved unanimously.**

Sarah Pfeiffer made a motion to approve AP Warrant 1440 in the amount of \$1,513.97 with payments to Green Mountain Power \$805.64, Granite State Glass \$230.00, Madison National Life \$235.91, Magee Office Products \$242.42. **Mary Gavin seconded. Motion approved unanimously.**

Mary Gavin made a motion to approve AP Warrant 1441 in the amount of \$2,977.00 with one payment to Mascoma Bank \$2,977. **Kevin Gish seconded. Motion approved unanimously.**

Sarah Pfeiffer made a motion to approve AP Warrant 1442 in the amount of \$4,409.07 with payments to Mcleod's Spring & Chassis \$2,021.40, ATG Westminster \$860.60, Pete's Tire Barns \$600, R.C. Brayshaw & Company \$485.02, R.H. Scales \$144.07, Royal Auto Parts \$27.71, Sabil and Sons \$270.27. **Mary Gavin seconded. Motion approved unanimously.**

Mary Gavin made a motion to approve AP Warrant 1443 in the amount of \$20,492.03 with payments to Sanel Auto Parts \$438.26, South Royalton Rescue \$14,947.68, Southworth Milton \$127.91, Tri-Valley Transit \$4,054, Suburban Propane \$924.18. **Sarah Pfeiffer seconded. Motion approved unanimously.**

Sarah Pfeiffer made a motion to approve AP Warrant 1444 in the amount of \$9,730.50 with payments to Ted Green Ford \$201.87, Tarrant, Gillies, & Shems \$228.60, Valley News \$194.40, Viking-Cives \$166.19, VMERS \$4,139.44, Windsor County Sheriffs \$4,800. **Mary Gavin seconded. Motion approved unanimously.**

Mary Gavin made a motion to ratify the HRA expenditures for January 2023 in the amount of \$466.94. Sarah Pfeiffer seconded. Motion approved unanimously.

9. MOU/Facility Use Agreement

Kevin Gish briefly stated that he wasn't sure the purpose of the Facility Use Agreement since he was under the impression that there was already an agreement with the school to allow for emergency sheltering in the School if needed.

Mary Gavin asked Nicola Shipman if a facility-use agreement had ever existed between the Town and the School in the past. Nicola Shipman said that she did not find one between the

Town and the School, but she did say that there is an agreement signed between the American Red Cross and the School as a result of the LEMP that the Town has in place. Kevin Gish thought that when the School was built, there was an agreement with the Town that the School building could be used for municipal purposes.

Mary Gavin said the facilities-use agreement might be a nice complement for the additional uses for the School between the Town and the School if there is not already something in place.

Kevin Gish invited Alex Bird to discuss his thoughts regarding a possible MOU/Facility Use agreement between the Town and the School.

Alex Bird said he is not looking to create additional levels of bureaucracy and understands there is an Emergency Management plan in place. Alex did express his frustration that, after the power went out in December, he received three calls from residents looking for support, and he felt he wasn't able to provide them any assistance nor was he able to connect them with an agency that could assist. Alex said he called Emergency Management Services and was put on hold, and he said he called the State Police and they didn't know what to do. Alex noted that the Fire Department opened a warming station the next day, but he felt it wasn't opened soon enough to help the people who called him. Ultimately, Alex said he referred people to the hospital since he wasn't sure what else to do.

Alex said it was heart-breaking to him that he couldn't provide a solution for the people in need, and he felt he was unable to get any information regarding what facilities were open for people who were without power. Alex is wondering why the School wasn't open during the power outage or even during Tropical Storm Irene. Alex said he was just trying to help people.

Kevin Gish recognized Becky Owens, Emergency Co-coordinator for the Town. Becky asked if the calls to Alex Bird came through to him via a 2-1-1 referral. Alex Bird said the calls were directed to him via 2-1-1. Becky Owens said this was an error, and those calls should have gone instead directly to the Emergency Operations Director or an Emergency Co-coordinator rather than the Health Officer. Becky confirmed that this has been corrected with 2-1-1 administrators to ensure that all calls go through the correct channels. Becky said it would not be responsibility of the Health Officer to have to respond to a local emergency, but if people do reach out to Alex, it would be appropriate to connect them with the Emergency Operations Director or Co-Directors.

Kevin Gish agreed with Alex that this is important to help neighbors and said that everyone involved in the discussion agrees that it is important to help people in need. Kevin also said that if systems in place are not working, he welcomes the opportunity to discuss solutions.

Kevin Gish asked if Alex Bird reached out to anyone on the Emergency Response Team. Alex said he did since he did not know about the Emergency Response Team or the LEMP at the time.

Kevin explained that he thinks the LEMP is in place for exactly the kind of this local emergency such as power outage like the one the Town experienced. Kevin noted that the Fire Department was open as a warming station, and it was of sufficient capacity for the number of people who stopped in to charge their phones, warm up, shower, or have a warm drink. Due to the limited number of people using the warming station, it was not necessary to open the school.

Mary Gavin asked if perhaps there could be some more specific parameters around when the LEMP is activated to address the timing of when facilities might be opened. Mary also suggested that there could be a more formal process for activating the Emergency Operations Command.

Alex Bird agreed that more advance planning might be part of the solution. Alex said he is not looking to add another level of bureaucracy.

Mary Gavin said that the Town does have an Emergency Director and two Emergency Coordinators, so the Selectboard can reach out to the team to coordinate preemptive municipal efforts.

Sarah Pfeiffer said Emergency Response was discussed at the last fire meeting, and she said that the information for warming shelters was posted on the local listserv, on the Town Facebook Page and the Fire Department Facebook page.

Alex Bird thanked the Board for the opportunity to bring his concerns to the Board.

Kevin Gish recognized Becky Owens. Becky shared that often there are things being done that the public may not be aware of. Becky said, for example, that she reached out to the Sharon Health Initiative (SHI) during the most recent storm to identify who might be more vulnerable to ensure that residents received a safety check.

Kevin Gish asked if Alex Bird had a copy of the LEMP, and Alex said he had received a copy. Kevin said residents may sometimes be confused about who to call, so Kevin encouraged Alex to feel free to reach out to the Emergency Operation team directly anytime.

Mary Gavin asked Nathan Potter for his insights on emergency response in the Town.

Nathan Potter said the school, from the beginning of the emergency planning process, was designated specifically for large-scale emergency events, such as a hazardous material spill or an emergency that would require evacuating large numbers of people.

Nathan also said that during the first storm in December, people were calling his cell phone directly, and he was able to coordinate response for individuals who needed assistance.

Nathan said generally the Fire Department would be the first option for a warming station and any time it is needed, the Fire Department will be opened. If the Fire Department reaches

capacity, which is about 10 people, Nathan said he can open the school in his role as Emergency Director.

Nathan also said that a lot of what the Fire Department and the Emergency Operations team does is often not visible to the public, but there is a significant amount of local response happening. Nathan noted that during the power outage in December, for example, the Fire Department was able to bring portable generators to people's homes during the last outage, so they could charge their oxygen tanks. Nathan said he is comfortable with anyone who needs assistance calling him directly.

Kevin Gish thanked Alex for bringing this to light.

10. RL Vallee Liquor License

Tabled until next meeting.

11. RL Vallee Tobacco License

Tabled until next meeting. Nicola Shipman will connect with the Town Clerk to get additional information about the approval process.

12. ARPA Update

Sarah Pfeiffer and Nicola Shipman are working on an online and paper survey for the ARPA Funding set aside for resident input.

13. Other business

There was a brief discussion about EC Fiber since David Karon had joined the meeting and is a Sharon representative for the East Central Telecommunications District (EC Fiber) Governing Board. David took a moment to address some Selectboard questions regarding structural changes in the operations of EC Fiber.

Kevin Gish asked if a B Corporation was looking to purchase EC Fiber and if so, wouldn't that conflict with the statutorily required structure?

Mary Gavin said she thought EC Fiber had been working towards a transition for some time, and that this had been communicated early and was planned for.

David Karon said that a recent Valley News article gave the impression that EC Fiber was sold to an out-of-state business. David said that EC Fiber remains a municipal utility, and the governing structure is still the same. David said the only change is that the main contractor for operations and construction is now GWI Vermont rather than the Vermont-based ValleyNet. David Karon said the EC Fiber employees remained in their roles and the business is still physically located in Vermont.

David Karon also put forward a request to the Board for an additional volunteer to represent the Town on the EC Fiber Board. David said there is room for an additional volunteer as there is a vacant position for a second alternate.

Nicola Shipman will add time for David Karon to join a Selectboard Meeting later in March so that there can be an opportunity for further public discussion.

14. **Adjourn**

Sarah Pfeiffer made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 7:50PM. Mary Gavin seconded. Motion approved unanimously.

Submitted by Nicola Shipman