



**Sharon Selectboard
Meeting Minutes
January 29th 2024 FINAL**

Attending In Person: Scott Henkels, Selectboard Vice Chair; Kevin Gish, Selectboard Chair; Nicola Shipman, Selectboard Assistant; Dave Kimball, South Royalton Rescue Advisory Board; Ken Wright, Collector of Delinquent Taxes

Attending via Zoom: Sarah Pfeiffer, Selectboard Clerk; Lucy Pierpont, Finance Manager; Sue Sellew, Sharon Historical Society; Deb Jones, Treasurer; Cathy Sartor, Town Clerk

Attending via Phone: Frank Rogers, Road Foreman

Call to Order: Kevin Gish called the meeting to order at 6:33PM.

1. Review/Approve Agenda

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

2. Public Comments

No public comments

3. Selectboard Member Reports

Scott Henkels noted that on February 10th the Town is hosting the Sharon Skill Swap in conjunction with Sharon Connects. The event will take place in multiple buildings around town. Kevin Gish noted that when people interview for positions, it is important for the Selectboard to connect with candidates, even if they are not selected for roles within the Town.

4. Road Foreman Report

Sue Sellew joined at 6:35PM

Frank Rogers said there has been the need to add a good deal of material to the roads due to the consistently wet weather. Trucks have been holding up well otherwise, and things are going smoothly overall even with two newer employees on staff.

5. Finance Manager Reports

Lucy Pierpont reminded participants that the second installment of taxes is due on Wednesday February 14th, 2024 by 6:00PM

6. Selectboard Assistant Report

Nicola Shipman reported that there had been technical issues with the Baxter Memorial Library Heat Pump which were being addressed with Vermont Mechanical.

Nicola also reiterated that the Town Garage needs major repairs, including the roof, which is leaking. At this time, there is no grant funding likely to come through for new construction of a Town garage and there is no funding for routine maintenance and repair. The Town is a lower energy burden according to the index created by the State, and the Town may not receive MERP funding for retrofitting buildings even if the Level 2 Energy Audit identifies significant needs.

Nicola said she will be meeting with Joyce Amsden on Thursday to review the Sharon Historical Society plans as they relate to the Old Town Hall building conditions.

Nicola also said she has a meeting scheduled with Will Davis on Wednesday to review drainage plans for the Baxter Library/SES/Seven Stars area as they are now available in draft form.

Nicola asked that the Selectboard choose a date and time for a site visit for TH-46 and Th-47. The Selectboard chose to set the site visit for Saturday, March 9th at 9AM. Nicola will need to notice the hearing and site visit in accordance with state statute.

Nicola noted the Town is now working directly with Vermont Emergency Management to secure reimbursement for the obligated FEMA grant funding. FEMA obligated the first round of funding with an expected contribution from FEMA of \$42,877.50 and remaining non-federal share of \$14,292.50.

Nicola said she is waiting to confirm with ANR as to the culvert sizing requirements and permitting for a culvert project on Quimby Mountain Road. She will need confirmation from ANR that the culvert will be a pipe arch and will not require a concrete box.

Nicola reported that the Town has received a contract amendment from South Royalton Rescue, but at this time they still do not have a fully executed copy of the contract. Dave Kimball said he would be meeting with the Advisory Board and would see what he could do to move that along.

Nicola asked the Board members to take some time to view a proposed driveway site as there is a driveway permit request in process and the Selectboard members are charged with viewing sites prior to issuing a permit.

Regarding the February 10th Sharon Skills Swap, Nicola wanted to confirm it would be appropriate for a subset of the group to use the Old School House for the event. The Board agreed it would be appropriate to use the space given that Andrew Lane had communicated he was also open to hosting the event in the building.

Nicola reported that all Annual Report documents are due since the print deadline is next week.

Finally, Nicola apprised the Board of a bill, H. 629, that is of particular concern to municipalities as it relates to reformation of the Tax Sale process and abatement structure. There is a revised draft expected soon. Nicola suggested the Collector of Delinquent Taxes and the Selectboard might be interested in reviewing the draft bill, and she encouraged them to reach out either to the local representatives and/or VLCT with any feedback they might have.

7. Minutes

Scott Henkels made a motion to approve the minutes from 1/16/2024 with minor changes. Sarah Pfeiffer seconded. Motion approved unanimously.

8. Warrants

Sarah Pfeiffer made a motion to approve AP Warrant 1603 in the amount of \$27,922.42 with payments to Blue Cross Blue Shield \$4,814.78, Cargill \$4,718.58, Casella Waste \$103.98, Cott Systems \$170.00, Evans Motor Fuels \$4,915.33, Community Bank \$12,679.55, ATG Westminster \$520.20. **Scott Henkels seconded. Motion approved unanimously.**

Scott Henkels made a motion to approve AP Warrant 1604 in the amount of \$6,886.47 with payments to Foley Services \$170.55, Fuss & O'Neill \$5,909.14, Haun Welding \$100.21, Kimball Midwest \$315.66, Madison National Life \$199.13, Magee office products \$152.81, Nicola Shipman \$38.97. **Sarah Pfeiffer seconded. Motion approved unanimously.**

Sarah Pfeiffer made a motion to approve AP Warrant 1605 in the amount of \$7,198.13 with payments to Northeast Delta Dental \$363.90, Power Wash Sales \$141.12, Royal Auto Parts \$120.65, Sabil and Sons \$2,699.61, U.S.P.S. \$132.00, VMERS \$3,738.87, WB Mason \$1.98. **Scott Henkels seconded. Motion approved unanimously.**

Sarah Pfeiffer made a motion to approve Payroll for the period 1/14/24-1/27/24 with a cash draw of \$20,979.40. Scott Henkels seconded. Motion approved unanimously.

9. Articles for Town Meeting Warning

Kevin Gish invited Ken Wright, Collector of Delinquent Taxes, to share feedback and insights with the Selectboard regarding the tax penalty and the phased collection schedule that was instituted in 2023. This change approved by the voters in 2023 will take effect for the first time in February 2024 when the second installment of taxes comes due.

Ken Wright provided information to the Board, including background and his insights regarding a proposed warned article from his perspective as the Collector of Delinquent Taxes. Ken suggested that the change in the delinquent tax penalty structure affects his office, and he wondered if the Selectboard might consider changing the fee structure from a commission, based on a percent of taxes collected, to a salary.

While the Selectboard members agreed that this would be a worthwhile question to consider, they did not feel equipped to understand the full implications of the change and would need more time to evaluate.

Since the deadline for warning the articles for Town Meeting was imminent, the Board decided to warn the articles with the phased collection schedule similar in structure to the 2023 articles. For the 2024 articles, the Board decided to reduce the 2% penalty phase from fourteen days to seven days. The Board expressed their intent to revisit the question of a salary structure for the Collector of Delinquent Taxes again in April after Town Meeting for consideration on next year's warned articles.

In addition, the Selectboard decided to include articles required if voters wish to move to Australian ballot voting. The Board also included an article to eliminate the office of constable as the position has long been difficult to fill.

Kevin Gish made a motion to approve the warned articles for Town Meeting 2024 as read. Scott Henkels seconded. Motion approved unanimously.

10. South Royalton Rescue Contract Modification

Scott Henkels made a motion to approve the South Royalton Rescue Contract Modification for the period of July 1, 2024 – June 30th, 2025 with a per capita fee not to exceed \$67.13. Sarah Pfeiffer seconded.

Dave Kimball exited the meeting

11. Driveway Permit Application

Scott Henkels made a motion to include a \$50 non-refundable Driveway Permit application fee. Permit fees collected will be deposited to the General Fund. The new fee will be effective February 15th, 2024. Kevin Gish seconded. Motion approved unanimously.

12. ARPA Resolution

Deb Jones presented information to the Selectboard regarding the ARPA resolution and there was rich discussion as to the mechanism as well as the pros and cons. Deb said she consulted with the Town's auditor, and the auditor said they are aware of this process and noted this has been done by other towns. The auditor did not raise any concerns with the process. The Board is open to moving forward with a resolution at the February meeting.

13. Audit Bids

Lucy Pierpont reported that the Town received a single bid for the annual audit which was submitted by the Town's current independent auditor. Lucy also noted there is only a minimal \$200 increase, and the total amount is under budget for FY25.

Scott Henkels made a motion to award the contract for auditing services for FY24 – FY26 to Mudgett, Jennet and Krogh-Wisner, PC with the total contracted amount not to exceed \$41,041.00. Kevin Gish seconded. Motion approved unanimously.

14. Other Business

No other business

15. Adjourn

Scott Henkels made a motion to adjourn at 9:08PM. Sarah Pfeiffer seconded. Motion approved unanimously.

Respectfully submitted by Nicola Shipman