



TOWN OF SHARON
15 School Street
Sharon, VT 05065

Selectboard Special Meeting
October 7th, 2024 Minutes

In-Person Participants: Kevin Gish, Chair; Scott Henkels, Vice Chair; Ted Austin, Clerk; Nicola Shipman, Selectboard Assistant; Dee Gish, Resident; Deb Jones, Resident; Jack Jones, Resident; Michael Livingston, Resident; Emma Carroll, Guest; Ella Harper-Schiehl, DOH Representative; Sean Trombly, Trombly House of Cannabis; Elizabeth Sowerwine, Resident; John Roe, Planning Commission Chair; Eileen Lanza, Resident; Daniel Primmer, Fraser Farm/1791 Star Cannabis; Anne Hill, Twin Pines Housing Trust; Lauren Sherman, Resident; Frank Rogers, Road Foreman

Remote Participants: Marcy Marceau, Resident; Isabel Dreher, White River Valley Herald; David Miles, Landowner; Lucy Pierpont, Finance Manager

1. Call to Order

Kevin Gish called the meeting to order at 6:00PM.

2. Review/Approve Agenda

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

3. Cannabis Retail Opt-In Vote: Informational Meeting / Q&A

Kevin Gish provided an overview of information regarding the procedures for the Cannabis Retail Opt-In Vote and the information in the Selectboard's Handout.

Kevin Gish noted that Australian Ballot format is required by State Statute for this vote.

Kevin also noted there is no local control mechanism to manage the number of retailers in the Town, and there is currently no Local Cannabis Commission in the Town nor is there a local options tax in Sharon.

Jack Jones wanted to know what a Local Cannabis Control Commission is.

Kevin Gish responded that a local cannabis control commission ensures compliance with local ordinances.

Dee Gish noted the State has put a pause on retail cannabis license applications and wondered where the retailers are currently located.

Meeting participants named retail locations in the surrounding areas, including Woodstock, Bethel, and White River Junction, for example.



TOWN OF SHARON
15 School Street
Sharon, VT 05065

Deb Jones asked if there is information from other Towns regarding the positive and/or negative impacts once they opted-in to retail cannabis.

Scott Henkels responded that the distribution of retailers has been uneven throughout the State, creating higher concentrations of retailers in those areas that have opted in.

Ella Harper-Schiehl responded that it is hard to measure the quantitative impact of allowing cannabis retail in a town. She did note that Towns that have opted in are reporting more overdosing in children as well as the normalization of cannabis consumption, even among parents and counselors. Ella reiterated that no amount of consumption is safe for anyone under the age of twenty-one.

Michael Livingston asked if the Board thinks the proximity to I-89 would increase the level of traffic in the Town should the Town opt in to cannabis retail.

Kevin Gish expressed this is a likely outcome, and one about which he is particularly concerned.

Sean Trombly noted that he would hope to serve 30 – 50 customers per day, which is below the level served by Sandy's when it was open.

Marcy Marceau asked the following questions:

- What has been the increase in drug overdoses in Vermont over the last two years?
- What is the distance to the proposed retail site to the community library and the elementary school?
- What is the mix of retail offerings being proposed?

Ella Harper-Schiehl responded that there has been an increase both in overdoses generally and increased instances of children overdosing, particularly because of accidental ingestion in small children. She did not have exact figures available but could work to find specifics.

Elizabeth Sowerwine asked for a definition of cannabis overdose in children.

Ella Harper-Schiehl responded that an overdose in an underage child is defined as any ingestion of cannabis as no level of ingestion is considered safe. Ella also noted that there have been reported increases in dangerous levels of ingestion in children leading to ER visits, as well as accidental dosing in general.

In response to Marcy Marceau's question about location of Sandy's in relation to the schools and library, Nicola Shipman confirmed the Sandy's location is far beyond the State's minimum



TOWN OF SHARON
15 School Street
Sharon, VT 05065

requirement of at least 500ft, with the Elementary school about 0.4 miles away and TSA High School about 0.5 miles away.

Regarding Marcy Marceau's question as to the retail offerings, Sean Trombly noted that if the retail cannabis vote is successful then he would also like to offer food service at the Sandy's location, but in a separate space.

Elizabeth Sowerwine asked about the location of the liquor store in relation to the local school and library.

Nicola Shipman responded the liquor store is much closer to the Elementary school and library.

In response to concerns that there could be bias by addressing the specifics of a particular retail location, Kevin Gish reminded participants that the question before the voters is whether to allow retail cannabis in the Town or not, and that the Town would not have control over the number of or the location of specific retailers licensed in Town.

There was a question as to whether there had been any discussion about increasing law enforcement in the Town if this vote passes.

Kevin Gish said there has not been any discussion regarding increased law enforcement.

John Roe asked if there is a financial advantage to the Town if this vote passes.

Nicola Shipman responded there is not a direct financial advantage for the Town currently unless there would be the potential for increased spending at other local businesses in Town.

Kevin Gish noted that the only way there could be any money coming back directly to the Town would be through a local options tax which would need to come before the voters before it could be enacted.

There was a question as to whether there was a consideration for the one percent options tax in Sharon.

Kevin Gish responded that a local options tax is not a question before the voters at this time.

Nicola Shipman noted that the petition process for the consideration of a local options tax is available to voters. Also, the Selectboard could add the question of a local options tax to a warning for Town Meeting under its own motion. Nicola noted a local options tax would apply to all Sharon businesses that collect sales tax.

Deb Jones wondered about the impact of drivers in conjunction with cannabis use.



TOWN OF SHARON
15 School Street
Sharon, VT 05065

Ella Harper-Schiehl noted that driving under the influence is illegal, and using cannabis as a passenger is also illegal and does create impairment.

Scott Henkels noted that based on information he received, a local option tax in Sharon, based on existing sales tax data, would generate about \$20,000 in local taxes for the Town.

John Roe asked if cannabis retailers have data as to what population of consumers is needed to support retail sales particularly when considering the size of the Town of Sharon.

Elizabeth Sowerwine asked if there are other regulations related to other businesses in our Town.

Kevin Gish noted that while there is no zoning, there is a Town Plan, and he invited the input of the Town's Planning Commission/DRB Chair, John Roe.

John Roe reiterated that the Town of Sharon does have a Town Plan and Act 250 could apply to certain development and questions of land use. There are areas within the Town where development is encouraged, including along Route 14 where the Health Center is located.

Eileen Lanza asked if cannabis can be consumed on site at retail locations

Kevin Gish responded this would be illegal.

Eileen Lanza asked about what mechanism there would be for responding to any enforcement needs if there was indication of illegal consumption near the location.

Nicola Shipman responded that enforcement would be left primarily up to Windsor County Sheriff's Department as at this time there are no relevant local ordinances to enforce, and no local cannabis commission has been established. Alternatively, the Selectboard could try to raise compliance concerns with the State Cannabis Control Board.

Daniel Primmer gave background on the cannabis industry and the Vermont cannabis market specifically. Daniel expressed that there is a local focus by design in the State licensing program with the express goal of creating industry opportunities to small, family-owned, and/or independently owned Vermont cannabis businesses.

Deb Jones asked if the State Cannabis Board mission includes the promotion of Vermont growers and retailers.

Sean Trombly said Vermont has done a good job of creating a local market like the Vermont craft brew model. He explained the largest Vermont cannabis operation is 15-20,000 sq ft versus



TOWN OF SHARON
15 School Street
Sharon, VT 05065

in other states where facilities are as large as 500,000 sq feet. Sean also explained the limitations of State licensing, including the limitation of allowing only one of each license per licensee. Licensees are only eligible for one retail license. This means there cannot be “retail chains” as each retailer may only have one retail license in the State.

Deb Jones asked if retailers are restricted to where they can buy their cannabis.

Sean Trombly responded that currently all cannabis sold in Vermont must be purchased in Vermont.

John Roe asked if this market is truly local, why Towns are unable to have any say in the licensing.

Ella Harper-Schiehl noted that when a licensee is going through the application process, there is a public hearing through the State Board, and this would be open to the public. But Ella confirmed the licensing process is not controlled at the local level.

John Roe noted that the Town is only aware of this potential retailer due to the petition, but he wondered if the Town would be notified of additional retailers in future.

Nicola Shipman responded that unless a local cannabis control commission is created and in the absence of zoning, as noted by Ella Harper-Schiehl, the Town would not be notified of any potential retailers seeking State licensure to set up a retail location in the Town of Sharon.

Sean Trombly noted the State Board has suspended retail license applications Statewide to address the uneven distribution of retailers throughout the State.

Nicola Shipman noted that State cannabis retail license applications will be accepted through October 25th, 2024, after which there will be a freeze on applications until the State Board can analyze retail distribution in the State and create mechanisms for a more thoughtful distribution of retailers.

Dee Gish asked for clarification regarding how far Sean Trombly was in the process of his retail license application.

Nicola Shipman responded that the question might be best reframed as a more general question, and she noted that any potential retailer interested in opening a location would have to submit their license application prior to the State’s deadline of October 25th and would not be able to submit a license until the retail license application process is reopened by the State Cannabis Board.



TOWN OF SHARON
15 School Street
Sharon, VT 05065

Michael Livingston asked where the Informational Handout is posted. Nicola Shipman responded that it is posted to the Town's Facebook page and the Town's website, and anyone interested is welcome to request a copy.

Deb Jones asked about the time and location of voting on the Cannabis Opt-In Question.

Eileen Lanza asked if ballots are available.

Nicola Shipman confirmed the ballots are already available at the Town Clerk's Office.

At 6:55PM, Scott Henkels made a motion to recess until 7:05PM so the Board can relocate to the Town Offices. Ted Austin seconded. Motion approved unanimously.

4. Driveway Permit Application Review

The Selectboard reviewed a driveway access permit application as submitted by David Miles of 253 Deer Meadow Lane.

After a good deal of discussion, the Selectboard decided to table a decision for this application to a future date, so they could gather more information regarding access to Legal Trails.

5. Howe Hill Well Concerns

The Selectboard received documents from resident Lauren Sherman who expressed concern regarding potential well contamination which Lauren believes could be due to road salt contamination.

The Selectboard listened to Lauren's concerns and reviewed the documentation presented. After significant discussion and consideration, the Selectboard expressed the need to confer and receive guidance from legal counsel and the Town's insurance to establish the best course of action. The Town will reach out with next steps in response to Lauren's complaint.

6. Easement Documents for Review/Signature

Scott Henkels made a motion to authorize Chair Kevin Gish to sign documents submitted by VT AOT granting easement rights associated with future upgrades to the VTrans Park and Ride in Sharon. Ted Austin seconded. Motion approved unanimously.

7. 2024-2025 Salt Purchase

Kevin Gish made a motion to sign agreement for 2024-2025 winter salt purchase with Cargill at a rate of \$86.75 per ton. Ted Austin seconded. Motion approved unanimously.



TOWN OF SHARON
15 School Street
Sharon, VT 05065

8. Treasurer Reappointment

Scott Henkels made a motion to reappoint Deb Jones as Town Treasurer effective 11/1/2024 – 10/31/2025. Ted Austin seconded. Motion approved unanimously.

9. Town Meeting Survey Results

Nicola Shipman presented results of the voter survey. The Town received over 10% response, which is the expected return rate. 157 voters responded to the survey.

Fifty-four percent of respondents indicated they did not vote at Town Meeting, while 72% of respondents indicated they did vote by Australian Ballot in 2024.

In response to why respondents did not vote at Town Meeting, the primary reason selected was work conflicts.

Regardless, 63% of respondents indicated they are not in favor of eliminating Town Meeting. The survey revealed a strong preference to continue to vote both at Town Meeting and by Australian ballot, following the existing format.

A strong majority of respondents indicated they are in favor of a Saturday Town Meeting option, with 43% of respondents indicating Saturday at 9AM and an additional 13% in favor of Saturday at 5PM. On the other hand, only 33% were in favor of Tuesday at 9AM.

10. Vermont Judiciary Letter of Request

Ted Austin made a motion to ratify a letter to the Vermont Judiciary establishing Nicola Shipman as the Custodial Official and James Armbruster, Animal Control Officer, as an authorized enforcement official for the Town as signed by Chair Kevin Gish on October 1st, 2024. Scott Henkels seconded. Motion approved unanimously.

11. Website Upgrade

The Selectboard reviewed the different quotes from municipal website developers including CivicPlus, Town Web, Revize and JEB Designs.

Nicola Shipman will present a service agreement for signature at the next meeting.

12. Executive Session

Scott Henkels moved that premature public knowledge would put the Town as a substantial disadvantage, therefore are authorized to enter executive session to receive confidential attorney-client communications made for the purpose of providing professional legal services to the body. 1 VSA § 313(a)(1). Kevin Gish seconded. Motion approved unanimously.



TOWN OF SHARON
15 School Street
Sharon, VT 05065

13. Resume Open Meeting

Scott Henkels made a motion to exit executive session at 9:25PM. Kevin Gish seconded. Motion approved unanimously.

No action required.

14. Warrants

Scott Henkels made a motion to approve AP Warrant 1732 in the amount of \$9,453.02. Ted Austin seconded. Motion approved unanimously.

Kevin Gish made a motion to approve AP Warrant 1733 in the amount of \$115,447.20. Scott Henkels seconded. Motion approved unanimously.

Ted Austin made a motion to approve AP Warrant 1734 in the amount of \$4,684.79. Scott Henkels seconded. Motion approved unanimously.

Scott Henkels made a motion to approve AP Warrant 1735 in the amount of \$1,429.05. Kevin Gish seconded. Motion approved unanimously.

Kevin Gish made a motion to approve AP Warrant 1736 in the amount of \$4,100.32. Scott Henkels seconded. Motion approved unanimously.

Ted Austin made a motion to approve AP Warrant 1737 in the amount of \$14,071.94. Scott Henkels seconded. Motion approved unanimously.

Scott Henkels made a motion to approve AP Warrant 1738 in the amount of \$33,757.74. Kevin Gish seconded. Motion approved unanimously.

Kevin Gish made a motion to approve AP Warrant 1739 in the amount of \$1,263,916.79. Scott Henkels seconded. Motion approved unanimously.

Scott Henkels made a motion to approve AP Warrant 1740 from the Recreation Fund in the amount of \$677.00. Ted Austin seconded. Motion approved unanimously.

Ted Austin made a motion to approve AP Warrant 1741 from the Old School House Fund in the amount of \$875.00. Scott Henkels seconded. Motion approved unanimously.

Kevin Gish made a motion to approve AP Warrant 1742 in the amount of \$4,000. Scott Henkels seconded. Motion approved unanimously.



TOWN OF SHARON
15 School Street
Sharon, VT 05065

Scott Henkels made a motion to ratify payroll for the period 9/8/24-9/21/24 with a cash draw of \$15,559.15. Kevin Gish seconded.

Ted Austin made a motion to ratify check warrant 1719 in the amount of \$429.40. Scott Henkels seconded. Motion approved unanimously.

Ted Austin made a motion to approve payroll for the period 9/22/24-10/5/24 with a cash draw of \$23,274.13. Scott Henkels seconded. Motion approved unanimously.

15. Minutes

Kevin Gish made a motion to approve the minutes from September 12th, 2024 with minor changes. Ted Austin seconded. Motion approved 2-0-1 with Scott Henkels abstaining.

Scott Henkels made a motion to approve the minutes from September 16th, 2024 with minor changes. Ted Austin seconded. Motion approved unanimously.

16. Selectboard Reports

None

17. Road Foreman Reports

Frank Rogers gave an update regarding the current staffing, including the addition of a new Road Crew member who started earlier last week.

Frank also reported that the Better Roads funded project on Town Farm Road is almost complete. The Road Crew will also be attending a winter maintenance class in Hartford hosted by Local Roads.

Frank provided an update on the issues discovered during the Baxter Library Drainage Project. Frank and Nicola Shipman will be working with the engineer and the contractor to find a solution to unanticipated electrical line located underneath the proposed drainage site.

Kevin Gish made a motion to authorize the Road Foreman to engage tree removal services in an amount up to \$5,000 with competitive price quotes required per the procurement policy. Scott Henkels seconded. Motion approved unanimously.



TOWN OF SHARON
15 School Street
Sharon, VT 05065

18. Finance Manager Reports

Lucy Pierpont reported that the outstanding taxes due for the first payment are \$33,000. This has been an improvement over last year.

Lucy also initiated the conversation around health benefits as Blue Cross Blue Shield of Vermont released the 2025 rates with all plans showing at least a 23% increase and even higher in some cases. Lucy asked the Selectboard for input as to what kinds of modeling she should present at the next meeting for the Board to see the impact of the rate increase on the overall budget.

19. Selectboard Assistant Reports

Nicola Shipman provided a report on the progress at the Old Town Hall, particularly the flooring project. The project is moving forward, and historic floor layers are being revealed during the restoration.

Nicola initiated research into the Town Highway Garage project as that building is showing significant deficiencies, many of which are critical and need to be addressed. Nicola is working to establish the best next steps which may mean engaging an architect to perform a feasibility study. Nicola noted that the MERP funding recipients will be announced on October 25th, so the Town will know if it has received any of that funding soon.

Nicola reported that the Town has received full reimbursement from the Emergency Relief Funding through the FHWA for work completed on Route 132 after July 2023 flood damage which was just over \$117,000.

Nicola also indicated the Town received FEMA reimbursement for all highway repair projects. The Town is waiting for a small reimbursement for Cat Z (Admin) funding of just over \$500 and for the 17.5% State ERAF reimbursements for those projects.

20. Upcoming Dates/Topics

October 15th Vote: Cannabis Opt-In (7AM – 7PM at the Town Offices in Sharon)

October 21st at 6:00PM- Scoping Study Alternatives Presentation starting at 6:00PM in Steele Chapel with regular business to follow; Topics to Include: SRRS/Hartford EMS Services; Highway Policy/Access Permit; Website Upgrade; FY26 Budgeting; Health Insurance; Carpentry Contract

21. Adjourn

Scott Henkels made a motion to adjourn at 9:30PM. Ted Austin seconded. Motion approved unanimously.