April 23, 2020 Minutes

Town of Sharon Finance Committee Meeting

**Present:** Daniel Lewenberg, Patricia-Lee Achorn, Anja Bernier, William Brack, Arnold Cohen, Gordon Gladstone, Charles Goodman, Ann Keitner, Ira Miller, Edward Philips and Anil Ramoju (had to leave after voting the first two articles).

**Not Present:** None.

Also present: Krishan Gupta, Director of Finance and Fred Turkington, Town Administrator.

1. **Dan Lewenberg, Chair, gave opening remarks:** 
   1. This meeting is being held through the Zoom online platform due to the State of Emergency based on the COVID-19 outbreak. He confirmed all present members could hear and that the meeting was being recorded and broadcast.
2. **Discuss and vote recommendation on Article to limit use of recycled asphalt pavement (RAP):** 
   1. Dan Lewenberg entertained the motion to vote on the Article.
   2. The Committee discussed the potential cost implications of approving limiting the use of RAP for the Town.
      1. Anja Bernier stated that she discussed capital outlay with Eric Hooper, Superintendent of Public Works. He did not have an exact estimate of the cost if the Article passes, but that it would increase the cost of road work substantially.
      2. Without giving the Department of Public Works a significant increase in their budget it would be impossible to complete the planned road projects if this Article passes.
      3. Cost to remove the material that has been put down on the exercise loop would include an as yet undetermined number of hours of labor in addition to the cost to dispose of the material.
   3. Board of Health voted unanimously against this petition at their recent meeting.

**Motioned:** by Patricia-Lee Achorn **Seconded:** Anja Bernier to recommend the approval of Article. **Voted:** 0-11-0 against the Article.

1. **Discuss and vote recommendation on Article to impose artificial turf moratorium - David Warner, Landscape Architect / Chris Blessen, Lead Architect:**
   1. Committee discussed that the architects providing the presentation are doing so at the request of the School Committee regarding what materials will meet the needs of the high school and the Town.
   2. Chris Blessen presented and discussed the sports program needs:
      1. In the fall, 6 games and 10 practice sessions are held per week on the field for school, community and recreation programs, for a total of 168 hours of scheduled use on current natural grass field.
   3. There are three different natural grass field types: Native soil, sand amended soil with sand blanket underlayment, and sand only rootzone.
      1. Architects recommendation in regard to natural grass options is the sand amended soil with sand blanket underlayment for Sharon due to amount of field use hours and cost.
      2. This option could increase the use of the field to 400-500 hours per year.
   4. New design includes a rubberized area for shotput on the north side of the field.
   5. Artificial turf system is layered with curved edges and a shock pad underneath overlaying a permeable stone base. Water runs through the turf and is collected underneath, with a drainage system that removes excess water.
   6. The carpet has a permeable backing and is sewn similarly to a home carpet.
   7. Infill layer resembles soil and is mostly what players interact with.
      1. There are different options for the infill layer, such as crumb rubber and alternative infills that are available due to concerns regarding crumb rubber products.
         1. There are organic options for the alternative infill that use plant-based products from 7-9-year-old pine trees from Georgia. There are various colors available, with lighter colors being better for heat. Other synthetic infill options are not recommended for this project.
   8. Artificial turf has an eight-year warranty.
   9. Synthetic turf cost is $1,077,200 for an eight-year life cycle with 1348 estimated playing hours, at $99.89 per playing hour.
   10. Natural grass cost is $728,680 for an eight-year life cycle with 500 estimated playing hours, at $194.01 per playing hour.
   11. Most games are played in the spring and fall, not summer, when heat is not as much of a concern. Natural grass fields do not have a risk of being too hot because they are close to the ambient air temperature.
   12. Wear and tear of natural grass fields was discussed. Unable to play on natural grass after heavy rains because they can be easily damaged.
   13. Artificial turf fields come with agreements that covers and other special equipment will be used if graduation or other events are held on them.
   14. Normal maintenance for artificial turf includes infill replenishment occasionally.
   15. Most other towns the architects are working for are rotating their fields. Having one artificial turf field has allowed those towns to rest their natural grass fields because the turf fields can take heavier use.
   16. Natural grass fields typically need to be carefully maintained with the use of fertilizers, herbicides, fungicides and other products. Historically non-organic products are used.
   17. A rebuttal from the engineering firm came today stating that water does not flow towards the lake. Previous engineering report from Weston and Sampson stated that with the wetland being adjacent to the field means that passage of water off the field may end up near or in lake but will not run off into wellheads and drinking water. No unanimity from these experts regarding whether water would flow to lake. Committee discussed the need to be cognizant of communities downstream from Sharon.
   18. Disposal of turf is specified by regulation and contractors who remove it must get a certification of legal disposal.
   19. Current natural grass is native soil, which is not being recommended as the preferred natural grass option. Most of rainwater sheet flows off field, and the wet field can easily be damaged, especially with cleats. Less use of field now due to this, and the grass typically dies off 4-5 weeks into the season.
       1. Artificial turf increases use of field because it can be played on around rain events.
       2. There are safety concerns for players falling on poorly maintained grass fields.
       3. Matthew Conway from Boston College discussed that concussion risk may be increased on natural grass fields due to the compaction around weather events.
   20. Warranty for the artificial turf field is only for workmanship and the product.
   21. Natural grass fields will be started from seed and will need to grow in for an entire spring and fall and may not be ready the following spring. Growing from seed is horticulturally the best way to establish a grass field, as sod has issues such as thatching.
   22. There are other environmental concerns with artificial turf, such as PFAs that haven’t been tested. Architects stated they have not been requested to issue further testing, but Sharon may want to do further testing.
   23. Organic infill for artificial turf is trapped and will not blow away.
   24. Town has an issue with having a shortage of fields for playing use. Having one artificial turf field could increase playing time, and Town would still have nine natural grass fields.
   25. Board of Health recently voted against a three-year moratorium petition. Conservation Commission has not yet voted and are continuing this conversation on May 7.
   26. Committee discussed that a moratorium would not only specifically affect the high school because that is the field being considered currently but would affect other fields in Town as well.

**Motioned:** by Anja Bernier **Seconded:** Ann Keitner to recommend approval of petition and Article. **Voted:** 2-9-0. Ira Miller and Anil Ramoju voted in favor of recommending the moratorium.

1. **Discuss and vote recommendation on FY2021 Community Preservation Act Funding & Projects - Corey Snow**
   1. Project #1 -Historic preservation at Mann’s Pond Dam and Park:
      1. Requested: $367,500
      2. Recommended: $45,000
      3. CPA vote was 4-2-0.
   2. Project #2 – New pickleball courts at Deborah Sampson Park:
      1. Requested: $50,265
      2. Recommended: $35,202
      3. CPA vote was 5-0-0.
   3. Project #3 – Tennis wind screen and practice wall:
      1. Requested: $50,265
      2. Recommended: $35,202
      3. CPA vote was 5-0-0, for wind screen only.
   4. Project #4 – Lights at Ames Street softball and mixed use fields:
      1. Requested $625,000
      2. Recommended: $295,000
      3. CPA vote was 4-1-0, with scaling back of the appropriation to cover full lighting on one softball field.
   5. Project #5 – Sharon Youth Softball and Baseball Association:
      1. Request: $49,863
      2. Recommended: $31,988
      3. CPA vote was 5-0-0, with recommendation for field conversion only.
   6. Project #6 – Restoration and installation of historic ‘Jenks’ fountain:
      1. Request: $5,000
      2. Recommended: $5,000.
      3. CPA vote was 6-0-0.
   7. FY21 Operating Budget:
      1. Recommended: $15,000 for the annual CPC operating budget from the CPA General Fund.
   8. Debt service line item in budget to cover open space is $99,000. This debt has not yet been issued. Rattlesnake project will be a large portion of this funding. Several projects that didn’t get funded were capital outlay projects. There may be reserves available next year if there is still value in having these projects completed.
   9. Krishan Gupta, Director of Finance, stated that $766,000 total based on projects allocated and there are funds left over.
   10. $355,000 reserved for affordable housing, which will increase into next year’s budget, as it is not being used this year. In the past have provided funding for the Pleasant Street School owned by the State and acquired affordable homes.
   11. When the historic fountain was discussed previously it was not disclosed that there would be costs for restoration and installation.
   12. Inherently there will be increased costs in the future for the Town’s operating budgets based on these items, as there will be associated maintenance and operating costs.

**Motioned:** by Gordon Gladstone **Seconded:** Anja Bernierto recommend approval of CPA items 1-5 **Voted:** 10-0-0. Anil Ramoju no longer present.

**Motioned:** by Gordon Gladstone **Seconded:** Anja Bernierto recommend approval of CPA item 6 **Voted:** 3-7-0. Patricia-Lee Achorn, Edward Philips and Charles Goodman voted in favor. Anil Ramoju no longer present.

**Motioned:** by Gordon Gladstone **Seconded:** Anja Bernierto recommend approval of the CPA operating budget **Voted:** 10-0-0. Anil Ramoju no longer present.

Committee discussed that it may not be the right time to spend funds on restoration and installation of a historic fountain due to the global pandemic. Because the Town owns the fountain it can be stored and the project completed a different year.

1. **Solar energy agreement update - Dick Gelerman / Lisa Whelan:**
   1. Fred Turkington, Town Administrator, stated the Energy Advisory Committee is beginning the process of review for site mitigation for three solar sites in Sharon. The Committee discussed the signing of the solar agreement with legal counsel:
      1. There was disagreement about which dates were on the documents.
      2. The attorneys stated that a mistake was made pertaining to dates when the agreement was notarized and that there was no backdating. Six separate documents were not dated and notarized correctly.
      3. Committee emphasized they have responsibility for the Town’s finances, and that the agreement was not properly notarized. Legal counsel should never act in a way that could hurt the Town.
      4. Discussion regarding if any parties benefited from the dating of the agreement. It was stated that in general backdating can be a common practice so that developers can take advantage of rebates.
      5. Legal counsel stated that they had relied on George Aronson, an expert in the field, for technical issues for the agreement.
      6. Transfer of land to the developers has already occurred.
      7. Lisa Whelan stated she has been a notary for 20 years and has retaken her oath as needed.
      8. No changes have been made to the agreement and is awaiting KP review.
2. **Dan Lewenberg discussed that the Committee will hear the final agenda items at the next Finance Committee meeting.**
3. **Minutes to be Voted: March 30,2020**

**Motion:** by William Brack **Seconded:** Ann Keitner to approve the March 30, 2020 minutes **Voted:** 10-0-0. Anil Ramoju no longer present.

1. **Topics not reasonably anticipated by the Chair in 48 hours:**
   1. Dan Lewenberg asked if any committee members knew about the email address or email correspondence at FCommittee@TownofSharon.org email address. The email address may direct to the Secretary of the Committee, and will be looked into.
   2. Discussed when the Articles should be submitted. Stated Lauren Barnes is collecting the Articles for the warrant now. There may not be a Town Meeting in June.

1. **Adjournment:**

**Motioned:** by Anja Bernier **Seconded:** Ira Miller to adjourn **Voted:** 10-0-0. Anil Ramoju no longer present.

The meeting was adjourned at 10:45 pm.