September 21, 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.

**Not Present:** Anil Ramoju.

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. Confirmed the meeting was being recorded and will be broadcast at a later date.
2. **Potential Federal Funding Supplement to MBLC program – Lee Ann Amend, Library Director**
   1. 29 libraries around the Commonwealth worked together to seek federal stimulus funding for library construction projects.
   2. If successful, Sharon would receive an additional $3.7 million. If the library construction project does not move forward, Sharon would not receive this funding.
   3. The state allows up to 75% of construction to be covered by grants. Funding would only go to libraries currently receiving funding and those on the existing wait list.
   4. MA Board of Library Commissioners (MBLC) had asked for $250 million but received only $115 million this year. MBLC typically receives $200 million.
   5. Library is looking for two letters of support from each Town committee – the first letter should be addressed to the MA general legislature, and the second letter should be on the federal level to encourage support.
   6. Cheryl Weinstein will write a sample letter for the committee and send to Dan Lewenberg Wednesday. Dan will review, write up and send finalized letters to Lee Ann.

**Motion:** by Anja Bernier for the Finance Committee to write a letter of support **Seconded:** Edward Philips

* 1. Discussion among the committee that they are being asked to write two letters.

**Motion:** motion amended by Anja Bernier for the Finance Committee to write two letters, one that urges representatives on the state level to lobby for this funding and a second letter on the federal level to support if comes up for a vote **Seconded:** Patricia-Lee Achorn **Voted:** 10-0-0.

1. **Month-to-Month Budgeting Update – Krishan Gupta, Finance Director**
   1. Sharon’s October budget is $7,548,983, which was approved by the Department of Revenue on September 14th.
      1. Major category is Schools, at $4,048,139.
      2. These are General Fund expenditures.
   2. Committee asked to occasionally see grant funding updates for COVID-19 expenses from the CARES Act and emergency funds.
2. **FY22 Budget Process Calendar – Fred Turkington, Town Administrator**
   1. The budget planning process for next fiscal year will begin soon. The Capital Outlay Committee will start meeting in November.
   2. Discussion regarding locations due to the COVID-19 pandemic, with the high school being under construction. High school may be able to be used for both 2021 and 2022. These expenses are tracked separately by Town departments, depending on construction and demolition.
3. **Recap / Ratify Sharon Gallery Annual Town Meeting (ATM) Article Vote**
   1. This article has two provisions – first is to modify Sharon zoning bylaws to allow the retail sale and storage of gasoline and diesel fuel, and second is to amend bylaws to allow such sale and storage of gasoline and diesel fuel only as an accessory use to permitted uses.
   2. Sharon Gallery came to the Committee with a strong pitch from a “BJ’s Wholesale-like” company who requires selling gasoline and diesel at their locations as part of their business model.
   3. The Conservation Commission doesn’t have jurisdiction because construction is outside of the buffer zone, but the Gallery has discussed with them as well.
   4. Discussed that this item is on tonight’s meeting agenda because it was printed incorrectly on the last meeting’s agenda when the Committee voted.

**Motion:** Ira Miller moved to ratify the vote taken at the previous Finance Committee meeting that was 9-0-0 in favor of the Sharon Gallery article **Seconded:** William Brack **Voted:** 9-1-0. Charles Goodman voted against the motion.

* 1. Charles Goodman explained that he voted against the motion due to electric cars becoming more popular, that he believes gas stations won’t be as necessary in the future, and that he hasn’t heard of ASTs being at gas stations other than for holding propane.

# Liaison Updates:

* 1. Sharon Schools –Ann Keitner:
     1. School Committee meeting tonight. They voted to not renew Dr. Greer’s contract.
        1. Ms. Murphy has stepped in as interim superintendent. Dr. Greer has filed a discrimination complaint and is suing the district. She has been placed on administrative leave potentially until her contract expires.
     2. More requests for devices than the schools have, as more people ended up needing them than originally requested.
  2. Library - Charles Goodman and Cheryl Weinstein:
     1. Zoning Board of Appeals has not issued a decision yet. Deadline is 45 days after lifting of Covid-19 restrictions.
     2. Executive meeting tonight of Zoning Board to discuss this.
     3. Approximately 100 people come into the library each day currently, which does not include curbside pickup counts.
  3. Planning Board - Arnie Cohen: No updates.
  4. Standing Building Committee - Gordon Gladstone:
     1. The ZBA was asked to hold their opinion because the library asked for a reopening of the hearing, which is yet to be determined.
     2. At the high school there are approximately 100 truckloads of topsoil being removed each day.
     3. Architect and construction manager are using drones for the site to capture images.

1. **Minutes to be Voted: August 31, 2020**

**Motion:** William Brack moved to approve the August 31, 2020 minutes **Seconded:** Anja Bernier **Voted:** 10-0-0.

**Minutes to be Voted: September 09, 2020**

**Motion:** William Brack moved to approve the August 31, 2020 minutes **Seconded:** Anja Bernier **Voted:** 8-0-2. Arnold Cohen and Gordon Gladstone abstained.

1. **Topics not reasonably anticipated by the Chair in 48 hours****:** 
   1. Cheryl Weinstein discussed that there will be two open positions on the Finance Committee once Edward Philips resigns in late December. Committee agreed that they can operate with 10 members until May when new committee members will be appointed and voted on at Town Meeting.
      1. A quorum is currently six for the Finance Committee having 11 members.
   2. Andrew Nebenzahl discussed that he will be moderating the Pre Town Meeting and Annual Town Meeting (ATM):
      1. Anticipate challenges due to COVID-19 constraints, outdoor seating and meeting time frame.
      2. No media or PowerPoint presentations will be allowed due to outdoor setting and time constraints.
      3. Would like to encourage town residents to attend the Open Warrant Meeting to ask questions and discuss articles. Committee discussed that lengthy presentations for and against articles should not be encouraged at this meeting.
      4. Extra messaging regarding parking, COVID-19 restrictions, seating arrangements, mask requirements, etc. has been printed in the warrant and signage has been ordered. Also posting this information on the Town’s Twitter and other social media pages and email listservs.
      5. 200-word summary arguments from the proponent of each of the citizen’s petitions will be printed in the warrant.
      6. Presenters have been asked to streamline in order to expedite, such as not examining each budget line item.
      7. Chairs of each meeting should be sure to keep meetings moving along in an expeditious way.
      8. Some neighboring towns that have held their ATMs have found lower rates of attendance, while others had normal attendance depending on weather and items being voted on.
      9. Andrew and Dan agreed to meet to discuss logistics for both meetings.
2. **Adjournment:**

**Motioned:** by Patricia-Lee Achorn **Seconded:** Ira Miller to adjourn **Voted:** 10-0-0.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:17 pm.