October 5, 2020 Pre-Town Meeting and Open Warrant Hearing 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, Eric Hooper, Superintendent of Department of Public Works, Jim Wright, Fire Chief.

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 the meeting was being recorded and broadcast.
2. **Pre-Town Meeting Forum – Andrew Nebenzahl, Town Moderator**
   1. The goal of tonight’s meeting is to review logistics and the articles that will be voted at next week’s Town Meeting:
      1. A great deal of effort by Town administrators has been made to ensure a safe, socially-distanced outdoor Town Meeting. He urged cooperation and patience with the setting and the process. Two tents will be set up at the high school, with himself, the Town Clerk, Assistant Town Clerk, Chair and Vice-Chair of the Finance Committee on a stage. Two microphones will be set up for attendees. Chairs will be set 6 feet apart, except for people from the same household who can sit together. Meeting will start promptly at 1pm on Monday October 12 and end at 5:30pm so attendees can leave before it gets dark, with a reminder that the setting is currently a construction site. Attendees are encouraged to arrive early.
      2. No PowerPoints will be permitted as it is outdoors during daylight hours. Thorough instructions and article descriptions are contained in the warrant, and proponents and opponents of articles can print handouts to distribute if they desire. The library offers free internet and Wi-Fi for those who need access to the information online.
      3. Any amendments to articles must be emailed to Andrew Nebenzahl in advance at [ANebenzahl@neblawgroup.com](about:blank).
      4. As the moderator, Mr. Nebenzahl said he will be strictly adhering to time limits and encouraging attendees to be concise when speaking, due to time constraints.
   2. Mr. Nebenzahl discussed how he would present each article, asking meeting attendees if they had amendments to add, and asking for any clarification:
      1. Don Brichta discussed that he has an amendment regarding raising the Town Clerk’s salary to $92,984, which was the salary for the outgoing Town Clerk. He explained this is due to the position being elected and not appointed. Clarified that he is presenting this amendment without input from the Town Clerk.
      2. Finance Committee will make all motions, including citizen petitions.
      3. A question was raised about whether the Historical Commission has given consent for the renaming of the driveway at the Department of Public Works to Joe Roach Way. Fred Turkington, Town Administrator, stated he would check.
      4. Mr. Nebenzahl asked for a complete list of non-voters and non-residents who will be addressing Town Meeting by the end of this week.
      5. Non-voting attendees can attend but will be seated together. Children and youth under the age of 18 will not be allowed to attend this year due to restrictions around COVID-19.
3. **Open Warrant Hearing – Opportunity for residents to ask questions of Finance Committee and Article proponents and discuss warrant Articles to familiarize in advance of Town Meeting**
   1. Dan Lewenberg, Finance Committee Chair, reviewed each article in order and asked meeting attendees if they had questions or comments. Background information and rationale for articles is printed in the warrant. He encouraged all residents to attend Town Meeting next week:
      1. Article 5, FY2020 Budget and Compensation – Fred Turkington discussed that if the Town Clerk salary proposed in this article is increased to $92,984, the Town’s budget will need to be increased from the current number. Committee members discussed that the salary they voted on in April was published so that persons submitting papers for the position would be aware of the salary offered. The Town Clerk also has the opportunity to attend a multi-year certification program and would receive a raise once completed.
      2. Article 6, Capital Outlay – Eric Hooper, Superintendent to the Department of Public Works, clarified a question that was raised about the price of the DPW and the Water Department trucks in the budget. Stated there is a competitive bidding process for these trucks, and that each one will come with specific features that are not included in dump trucks found through a typical online search:
         1. The DPW dump truck is more expensive because it needs to have specific safety equipment required for public safety vehicles, as well as a J hook for various capabilities as this truck will be used for plowing, sanding, hauling containers, etc.
         2. The water dump truck also needs specific safety equipment required for public safety vehicles but doesn’t need as many capabilities as the DPW truck as it will have fewer purposes.
      3. Article 7, Community Preservation and Funding Act – J.J. McGrath discussed that he has been working with the Town Hall, Standing Building Committee and others regarding the historic fountain. The Town Hall did not include the fountain in their landscape plans, so a new location was found. Additional costs for restoration and installment are needed. Currently being stored at no cost at a salvage yard in Pawtucket, RI. Committee members discussed that they voted against restoring and installing the fountain this year due to tough budget times.
      4. Article 18, citizen petition for a 3 year moratorium on artificial turf – Debbie Tatro and Paul Lauenstein discussed the cost of an artificial turf field is roughly $1 million, which lasts 8-10 years. Town residents are encouraged to view the presentation by the landscape architect on the High School project discussing proposed options and costs for artificial turf vs. natural grass in the April 23, 2020 Finance Committee meeting video on the Town website.
         1. Eric Hooper discussed his extensive experience as a water hydrologist and that his professional view is that runoff from the field would flow to the drainage ditch and toward Lake Massapoag, not towards Town wells a mile away, in the other direction.
         2. Committee members discussed they voted against this petition in the majority because they felt that a 3 year moratorium against artificial turf was too broad as it would affect all fields in Sharon.
         3. Costs and other related information are discussed more in depth in the warrant for residents to view and consider.
      5. Article 26, general bylaw amendment to allow for retail gas and diesel fuel at a membership club at the Sharon Gallery – Steve Rafsky discussed the cutting edge safety mechanisms and technology for the underground storage tanks planned for this site for containing potential leaks and spills will meet and exceed MA and federal requirements.

1. **Adjournment:**

**Motioned:** by Anja Bernier **Seconded:** William Brack to adjourn **Voted:** 9-0-0. Patricia-Lee Achorn experienced technical difficulties and was unable to vote.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:21 pm.