

April 26, 2021 Minutes
Town of Sharon Finance Committee Meeting

Present: Daniel Lewenberg, Patricia-Lee Achorn, Anja Bernier, William Brack, Arnold Cohen, Brian Collins, Gordon Gladstone, Charles Goodman, Ann Keitner, Ira Miller, Jada Wang.

Also Present: Dr. Meg Dussault, Krishan Gupta, Richard Gelerman, Bill Heitin, Mark Hogan, Eric Hooper, Andrew Nebenzahl, Emily Smith-Lee, Hanna Switlekowski, Fred Turkington, and James Wright.

1. Dan Lewenberg, Chair, Gave Opening Remarks

- a. This meeting is being held through the Zoom online platform due to the State of Emergency based on the COVID-19 outbreak. Mr. Lewenberg welcomed everyone to this Pre-Town Meeting Forum and Public Hearing on the 2021 Annual Town Meeting (ATM) Warrant.

2. Pre-Town Meeting Forum – Andrew Nebenzahl, Town Moderator:

- a. Stated goal to review each article in advance of the May 2 meeting to answer questions and discuss the Committee's recommendations.
- b. Discussed that his job as moderator is to preside over the Town Meeting. It has been an unusual year due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Last year the ATM was held outdoors at the High School football field. This year it will be held outdoors at the Middle School football field.
- c. Most important consideration is for the health and safety of all residents attending the meeting.
 - a. Strongly encourage all residents to read the warrant thoroughly in order to be prepared.
 - b. Masks will be required and strictly enforced. Can only remove for a medical reason or to speak at the microphone. The microphone will be cleaned in between speakers.
 - c. Chairs will be spaced 6 feet apart, with microphones in the aisles. There will be a microphone labeled "for" and one labeled "against."
 - d. In the interest of time, please do not repeat arguments and keep comments brief.
- d. Traffic and parking – will permit parking on both sides of Mountain Street once parking lot is full.
- e. Will introduce Fire Chief Wright who will outline safety procedures for the event.
- f. There are 20 articles. Daniel Lewenberg will second each motion that was not originally motioned by a Finance Committee member, and will interject after each motion with the Committee's recommendation. There will be no ability to use PowerPoint or other media at the meeting due to it being outside:
 - a. Articles 4, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, and 16 are pro forma articles and are not expected to be controversial. If someone wished to vote any of these articles separately they should say, "hold" and it will be held. Voting together will leave more time to focus on other articles that may be more controversial.
 - b. Article 1 – appoint next year's slate of Finance Committee members and the Finance Committee Nominating Committee members.
 - c. Article 2 – Select Board Chair Emily Smith-Lee will make the motion at ATM for this article.
 - d. Article 3 - Select Board Chair Emily Smith-Lee will make the motion at ATM for this article.
 - e. Article 4 – consent item.
 - f. Article 5 – Budget. Lauren Barnes will provide a spreadsheet with line items ahead of the meeting. A School Committee person will need to be prepared to speak as needed as schools are the largest budget item. Daniel Lewenberg will make the motion at ATM for this article.
 - g. Article 6 – Capital outlay. Paul Linehan will give a five minute overview of the capital outlay process. Select Board Chair Emily Smith-Lee will make the motion at ATM for this article. Each item will be voted separately.

- h. Article 7 – Community Preservation Act annual funding and projects. Will reach out to Corey Snow to be prepared to make this motion.
- i. Article 17 – Septic management program. Krishan Gupta will email the Board of Health to have them get in touch with Mr. Nebenzahl. This article requires a 2/3 vote to pass.
- j. Article 18 – Acquisition of 66 North Main Street. There has been no action on this. Select Board has moved to indefinitely postpone. Select Board Chair Emily Smith-Lee will make the motion to indefinitely postpone at ATM for this article.
- k. Article 19 – Utility easement for the High School. Select Board Chair Emily Smith-Lee will make the motion at ATM for this article.
- l. Article 20 – Increase membership on Select Board to 5 members. Phillip King will confer with Town Counsel beforehand and make a five-minute presentation and make this motion at ATM. Bill Heitin will also speak at ATM on this article after Mr. King.

3. Open Warrant Hearing: Discuss Town Meeting Article Recommendations. Daniel Lewenberg gave an overview of each article to allow for Finance Committee members to answers questions from Town residents:

- a. Article 1 – The Committee will not make a recommendation for this Article. No questions for the Committee.
- b. Article 2 – Name change from Board of Selectman to Select Board. No questions for the Committee.
- c. Article 3 – Conveyance of Town-owned land at 18 Briar Hill Road. No questions for the Committee.
- d. Article 4 – Personnel Bylaw – table of salaries and wages, of which the majority are represented and not voted on. Town will vote only on executive salaries, with a 1.5% performance increase and a 2% merit increase for a total of 3.5% maximum raise per employee. No questions for the Committee.
- e. Article 5 – Compensation of elected officials. Requested \$88,294,735. Reserve fund numbers were not printed in the appendix of the warrant but are on the Town's website. No questions for the Committee.
- f. Article 6 – Capital Outlay. List of projects are in the warrant. Total request of \$5,278,161. No questions for the Committee.
- g. Article 7 - Community Preservation fund. Total request of \$879,576.75, which includes \$368,693.75 for debt service, \$15,000 for administrative expenses and \$152,000 for 10% reservations. No questions for the Committee.
- h. Article 8 – Norfolk County Retirement Annual Assessment. Not discussed.
- i. Article 9 – Unemployment fund. Requested \$300,000 to fund. This is an increase from \$75,000 last year. This is help the Town position itself for the impact of the pandemic. Unused funds will be returned. No questions for the Committee.
- j. Article 10 – OPEB. Requested \$400,000 to fund, up from \$350,000 last year. No questions for the Committee.
- k. Article 11 – Funding assessor inspection services. Would authorize to pay \$50,000, which is unchanged from last year. No questions for the Committee.
- l. Article 12 – Annual audit. Would authorize the Town to pay \$59,000, which is unchanged from last year. No questions for the Committee.
- m. Article 13 – Revolving fund authorization. Affirmative vote would authorize each revolving fund. No questions for the Committee.
- n. Article 14 – Property tax exemption. Would authorize state exemptions such as for the legally blind. No questions for the Committee.
- o. Article 15 – Act on Reports. Affirmative vote would authorize action on reports. No questions for the Committee.
- p. Article 16 – Sharon Friends School Fund records and reports. Would authorize acceptance of records and reports of the Sharon Friends School Fund. No questions for the Committee.
- q. Article 17 –Community Septic Management Program. Would authorize financial support to homeowner residents for septic systems. Maximum interest rate will be 3.5% in

addition to a \$200 application fee. Town will borrow up to \$500,000 in increments of \$100,000. No questions for the Committee.

- r. Article 18 – Article will be withdrawn.
 - a. Update on library project from Richard Gelerman: Town hired an outside expert to look at the program and plan from the Library Board of Trustees. Report is now posted on the ZBA website. ZBA voted to not grant relief. In litigation which is in the discovery phase currently. A motion for summary judgment is anticipated, which will be opposed by the ZBA. Engineering plans need to be finished and filed in August. Standing Building Committee meeting tomorrow night where this will be discussed.
 - b. Discussion around this issue will have to be discussed carefully at ATM due to ongoing litigation.
- s. Article 19 – Grant gas utility easement for High School. Would authorize the Select Board to grant gas utility easement to Eversource of MA for existing gas main, which is legally advisable to have. No questions for the Committee.
- t. Article 20 – Citizens petition to increase membership of Select Board from three to five members. No questions for the Committee.

4. Daniel Lewenberg closed the open warrant hearing at 8:13pm.

5. Finance Committee to take action on any matter related to the Warrant articles:

- a. No other actions to take at this time.

6. Vote Meeting Minutes

Motioned: by Anja Bernier, **Seconded:** Patricia-Lee Achorn to vote the March 8, March 15, March 22 and March 25 Finance Committee meeting minutes as an omnibus with the change of adjusting the reported time of adjournment as 10:05pm on the March 8 minutes. **Voted:** 11-0-0.

7. Topics not reasonably anticipated by the Chair in 48 hours:

- a. Annual Town Meeting is on Sunday May 2 at 1:00pm.
- b. Next Finance Committee meeting will be on May 17 as a reorganization meeting. Will potentially meet the new Town planner at that meeting.

8. Adjournment:

In favor of adjournment, Committee voted:

Ira Miller – Aye
Ann Keitner – Aye
Anja Bernier – Aye
Patricia-Lee Achorn – Aye
William Brack – Aye
Gordon Gladstone – Aye
Arnold Cohen – Aye
Charles Goodman – Aye
Jada Wang – Aye
Brian Collins – Aye
Daniel Lewenberg – Aye

Committee voted 11-0-0 to adjourn. Meeting adjourned at 8:21pm.