

**MINUTES**  
**SHARON SELECT BOARD**  
*September 13, 2022*

The meeting of the Sharon Select Board was called to order at 7:00 pm by Select Board Chair Hanna Switekowski virtually by Zoom. Select Board members Emily Smith-Lee and Kiana Pierre-Louis were in attendance as was Town Administrator Frederic E. Turkington, Jr. The meeting commenced with the Pledge of Allegiance.

**Public comment period**

The Board has set aside a few minutes at the beginning of their meeting to address resident concerns or questions. Mr. Sam Liao expressed his feelings that the quarterly pass system is important for Sharon residents and should not be eliminated.

Ms. Switekowski advised that anyone wishing to comment on the train station parking topic would have an opportunity to do so later this evening. There being no other public comments, Ms. Switekowski moved on with the meeting.

**Sharon Police Department promotion to Sergeant – George Demeris and K9 Buck**

Lieutenant Fitzhenry advised that officer Demeris grew up in Sharon and attended Sharon Schools. He has undergraduate studies at Norwich University. George is a reservist with the Army National Guard and an 8-year veteran of the Sharon Police Department. A few years ago, George researched and completed all the leg work for a K-9 position with Sharon Police. This is where Buck comes in. Buck is a Belgian Malinois and has been with the department for about 3 years. Both Officer Demeris and Buck have been called out for many incidents around the area with positive results. Both are members of METROLEC Regional K-9 Unit. George and Buck bring with them certifications in Crisis Intervention Team Training (CIT), Explosive Ordinance Detection, evidence recovery, tracking, building/area searches, suspect apprehension and much more. George has received two chief's awards, Commendation for Excellence from Norfolk County CIT Committee, perfect attendance award, a letter of commendation for a K-9 track and apprehension of fleeing suspect.

**MOTION:** To promote Officer George Demeris to the position of Sergeant at the recommendation of Chief Coffey.

(Smith-Lee – Pierre-Louis) 3-0 **PASSES**

Switekowski: AYE

Pierre-Louis: AYE

Smith-Lee: AYE

The Board thanked Officer Demeris for his service and offered their congratulations on his promotion.

**Discussion - railroad parking program**

Ms. Switekowski started the discussion by mentioning that this is the start of what will be ongoing discussions on parking at the train station. The Board has received lots of correspondence on this matter and as the pandemic is still ongoing and the future of commuting world is uncertain, they must also consider the revenue and expenses for the railroad station as well.

The commuter rail program has been in place for more than 15 years. The parking rates have not been changed since 2016. During that time, the MBTA has increased rates seven percent. As Hanna mentioned, demand for mass transit plummeted during the pandemic as businesses pivoted to a work-from-home environment. There has been a very gradual increase in ridership over the past year. Last April, the Board authorized town staff to increase the number of daily spaces given the decrease in quarterly passes sold.

Prepandemic, the quarterly pass system would sell out (640 passes) in minutes and often had a waiting list of an average of 50 residents. The cost to run the program at capacity is roughly \$21,000. This cost includes mailing passes and the surcharge for pass sales. The MBTA commuter rail offers a discounted fare for those purchasing monthly passes rather than the daily rate equal to 22 percent. A quarterly pass represents about a 40 percent savings over daily pass charges.

Regarding the overall cost of the parking program, the budget was generally just over \$500,000 annually. Expenses have been moved to other sources due to the decline in revenues. For example, 90 passes were sold during the last quarterly sale a few weeks ago. As of today, 116 passes were sold. The number of daily spots were increased to 300 which allows Sharon residents and other commuters to avail themselves of parking at the \$4 daily rate.

In the past, parking rates reflected the costs of the program and to build some reserves for maintenance expenses as well as improvements and to increase capacity. All things considered, the marketplace should be monitored for the next year or two for commuting trends before taking on expenses for expansion.

Ms. Smith-Lee remarked that historically, rail transport has been encouraged in Sharon. She likes the benefits for residents but also knows that the program cannot lose money. She would like to know what the specific costs are to run the parking lot as the prices must reflect adequate coverage for expenses. She also remarked that she is not hearing that the intent is to do away with quarterly passes.

Ms. Pierre-Louis mentioned that costs are exclusively for maintenance, there are costs for repairs as well. The issues the MBTA is currently experiencing are widely reported on the news. She asked whether a survey has been done about the expected future parking/commuting needs and whether an updated survey could be undertaken. She also asked whether increases in daily passes can be easily reversed if the demand for quarterly passes increases, to which Mr. Turkington replied that they can. As of today there are 300 daily spots and 440 quarterly spots.

Mr. Hooper advised that the railroad parking is a revolving fund and must be self-supporting. The reserves that had been built up allowed Sharon to ride out the period of declining revenue until now but it cannot sustain doing so for much longer. He stated that parking rates have not increased in 7 years but the T has increased fees by 7 percent in that time.

Mr. David Fixler of 81 Bishop Road commented that he has been parking at the train station since 1995. He is also a member of the Transportation Advisory Board. He states that he was taken by surprise as the Transportation Advisory Board had very little notice of this discussion. In fact, they met last night as a result. Transportation Advisory Board members feel that it is premature to take any action right now. There may not likely be a return to a five day in-person work week for some time. The Town may be in a better position in 8 to 12 months.

Ms. Linda Hager of 15 Aspen Road and member of the Transportation Advisory Board wished to reiterate the need for another survey which TAB would like to undertake. She also feels it is necessary to reach out to adjacent communities.

The Board and Mr. Turkington agreed to continue their research and amend the Transportation Advisory Board's charge or provide further direction. The Board will discuss this further at their next meeting.

#### **Update by the Governance Study Committee**

Mr. Pietal explained that the Committee will be holding a second hybrid public forum Monday at Community Center or by Zoom. Since the committee last updated the Select Board, they have surveyed other towns and MAPC has helped quite a bit with research on a few topics. The full committee met last week and discussed 27 motions related to their tasks as well as things that may be related to their tasks. The summary of the votes was included with the Board's meeting materials. Some of the actions include the committee's preference for a five

member Select Board and retention of open Town Meeting. Mr. Pietal also provided an overview of the data collected through the committee's town-wide survey. Nearly 1300 responses were collected.

### Consent Calendar

- I. Vote to approve the following minutes:
  - a. August 23, 2022 open session
  - b. August 23, 2022 Executive session
- II. Affirm the vote taken in Executive Session on August 23, 2022 to approve the collective bargaining agreement with the Police Dispatchers from July 1, 2022, through June 30, 2025
- III. Vote to approve the following banner requests:
  - a. Sharon Girl Scouts recruitment, September 26-October 3, 2022 in 1<sup>st</sup> position
  - b. HUGS Sharon domestic violence awareness, October 3-10, 2022, in 1<sup>st</sup> position and consider waiving the fee
- IV. Vote to approve a one-day liquor license for the Sharon High School Band and Chorus Reunion on October 22, 2022 from 5pm to 9pm at the Sharon Community Center
- V. Vote to award a contract to Dependable Petroleum of Plymouth, MA in the amount of \$329,330 for the Sharon DPW underground storage tank project
- VI. Vote to approve the Sharon High School 5K Road Race for the American Heart Association on October 9, 2022
- VII. Vote to approve the Sharon Lions Club fall White Cane Day fundraiser on Saturday, October 15, 2022 in Sharon center from 9:30 am to 12:30 pm with a rain date of October 22, 2022
- VIII. Vote to approve the Hunger Action Month proclamation

**MOTION:** To approve the consent calendar  
(Smith-Lee – Pierre-Louis) 3-0 **PASSES**

Switlekowski: AYE  
Pierre-Louis: AYE  
Smith-Lee: AYE

### Town Administrator's report

Mr. Turkington provided the following report:

#### Tri-Board meeting update

- Schools, free full-day kindergarten
- *Building Inspector vacancy filled.* We are pleased to announce the appointment of Dana Hinthorne as building official effective Monday, September 19. He comes to us having worked in Stoughton and Medway as building inspector. He has completed one of the three tests to be certified as a building commissioner and is expected to complete the process within 6 months of hire. Michael Yankovich, a former building commissioner now consults on building code issues, will continue to provide support and oversight.
- *HR consultant begins work.* Assistant Town Administrator Lauren Barnes is working with a retired HR director from Westwood and Foxborough to update our personnel policies to assure compliance with Federal and state law. The work will form the foundation for an employee handbook.

### Town Administrator Updates

- *FY2023 state budget approved.* Sharon will receive a net addition of \$118,311 compared to the Governor's proposed state aid package that was included in the Priorities Committee recommended state revenue. The library will receive an additional \$6,879 compared to the Governor's proposal. The package includes an allocation of surplus FY2022 funds to the Community Preservation Act matching funds, so Sharon will receive the same 43% match of local collections as was received last fiscal year.
- *FEMA snow emergency reimbursement.* Emergency Management Director Jim Wright has received notification that the Town will receive 75% reimbursement for eligible expenses related to January 2022 snowstorms. The total amount to be received, and added to the general fund, is \$111,147.

### **Select Board Correspondence/Announcements**

We received / exchanged approximately 33 pieces of correspondence between 9:00 a.m. on Friday, August 19 and 4:00 p.m. on Thursday, September 8. Topics included:

- Notices and invitations: materials related to consideration of appointment to Town boards and committees; invitations to 9/11 remembrance, Sharon Day on October 2 (movie night on October 1), and Trunk or Treat event on October 30; notice of deer management at Moose Hill Audubon property and vegetation management on properties abutting Maskwonicut Street bridge;
- Ten emails and responses relative to potential changes to the parking pass program at the MBTA railroad station;
- Meeting agendas and background material for tri-board meeting on September 12;
- Two emails and response regarding tractor trailer truck traffic on South Walpole Street; and,
- Two emails thanking the Board for participation in India Day event.

The next meeting will be September 29 due to Rosh Hashana

### **Announcements**

Wishing members of the community who celebrate Rosh Hashana a Happy New Year.

### **Executive Session – 8:33 pm**

**MOTION:** To enter Executive Session to discuss strategy with respect to collective bargaining with Firefighters Local 1880 IAAF and at the end, to adjourn for the evening. Discussion of these items in Open Session would be detrimental to the bargaining position of the Town. The Board will not return to open session. (Smith-Lee – Pierre-Louis) 3-0 **PASSES**

Switlekowski: AYE

Pierre-Louis: AYE

Smith-Lee: AYE

### **List of Documents**

- Promotion recommendation
- Survey results and analysis
- Minutes
- Banner request forms (2)
- One day liquor license application
- Memorandum from Town Engineer
- Notice of Award form
- Email correspondence
- Road race map
- Request letter
- Proclamation
- Town Administrator's report