

**MINUTES**  
**SHARON SELECT BOARD**  
*November 15, 2022*

The meeting of the Sharon Select Board was called to order at 6:30 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. and Assistant Town Administrator Lauren Barnes.

**Executive Session – Grievance Hearing, MA Coalition of Police AFL-CIO member (Dispatchers)**

**MOTION:** To enter Executive Session at 6:30 pm  
(Smith-Lee – Pierre-Louis) 3-0 **PASSES**

Switekowski: AYE  
Pierre-Louis: AYE  
Smith-Lee: AYE

**MOTION:** To adjourn Executive Session at 7:07 pm  
(Smith-Lee – Pierre-Louis) 3-0 **PASSES**

Switekowski: AYE  
Pierre-Louis: AYE  
Smith-Lee: AYE

**Public comment period**

The Board has set aside a few minutes at the beginning of their meeting to address resident concerns or questions. Seeing no indication of public comment, Ms. Switekowski moved on with the meeting.

**Public hearing – Tax Classification**

**MOTION:** To open the public hearing at 7:11 pm  
(Smith-Lee – Pierre-Louis) 3-0 **PASSES**

Switekowski: AYE  
Pierre-Louis: AYE  
Smith-Lee: AYE

Mr. Funk explained that he would be as brief and as interesting as possible. He advised that shifting the Tax Burden involves the Select Board voting to either maintain a single tax rate with a factor of 1.00 or adopting a split tax rate with a lower residential factor, thereby increasing taxes for Mixed-Use, Commercial and Industrial Properties and for taxpayers required to pay a Personal Property tax. Due to the very small percentage of CIP classes within the Town of Sharon, a Split Tax Rate could be detrimental to the businesses in Town since most are smaller business owners.

It is the recommendation of the Board of Assessors that the Select Board opt to maintain a residential factor of 1.00 for fiscal year 2023.

Only 16 of the 351 communities in Massachusetts currently have adopted the Residential Exemption and they tend to be communities with many apartment buildings (Boston, Brookline, Cambridge, and Chelsea) or many second homes (Barnstable, Tisbury and Nantucket). If adopted, the Residential Exemption would shift the tax burden within the Residential Class from domiciled to non-domiciled taxpayers. This exemption reduces, by the adopted percentage, which may be between 10-20% of the average assessed value of all residential parcels, the

taxable valuation of each residential parcel that is a taxpayers' principal residence. The residential exemption does not reduce the residential share of the tax levy for the fiscal year. Rather, the total tax reduction is offset by an increase in the residential tax rate, which shifts the taxes not paid by eligible homeowners to residential properties not occupied by the owner. Thus, the Town will raise the full amount of the tax levy despite the higher tax break to eligible homeowners.

This option shifts more of the residential burden to non-domiciled taxpayers. A possible downside of this shift is that those living in rental housing (with non-domiciled owners) are likely to have lower incomes than those who qualify to purchase homes. In addition, if the taxes increase for those landlords, it is likely that the increase will be passed along to the tenants.

If adopted, it would benefit most owners whose principal residence is in Sharon. It would not benefit owners of vacant residential land, owners of apartments or landlords that do not occupy a unit within the property, owners of second homes in Sharon, those who own mixed-use or investment properties who do not occupy a residential unit in the property, and those who own higher valued principal residences. An increase in tax rate could offset the amount of an exemption.

It is the recommendation of the Board of Assessors that the Select Board opt not to adopt a residential exemption for fiscal year 2023.

Only 14 of the 351 communities in Massachusetts currently have adopted the Small Commercial Exemption. If adopted, the Small Commercial Exemption would shift the burden so that qualified Commercial and Chapter Land properties could receive the benefit, but the burden would be shifted to the other Commercial and all Industrial Properties. The exemption allows for up to a 10% reduction in value to qualifying properties. As determined by statute, to be eligible for the small commercial exemption, properties must have an assessed value of less than one million dollars and be occupied by a business which has been certified by the Department of Employment & Training as having no more than an average of ten employees in the previous year.

It is the recommendation of the Board of Assessors that the Select Board opt not to adopt a small commercial exemption for fiscal year 2023.

Ms. Smith-Lee mentioned that as in years past, though at its surface it may seem appealing to shift burden to commercial, doing so could dissuade businesses from coming to Sharon.

For split, in illustration. Maximum allowable? Would it have to go there or is there something inbetween. Smaller shift, getting \$100/200 on residential but

Rob Maidman of 52 Wilshire wished to comment as a resident and not as a member of any of the Boards or Committees which he presently serves. He stated that regardless of size of business in town, there is the perception dues to the single rate that there is a cost of subsidization that is hard to quantify. Mr. Funk advised that he would be glad to put an illustration on the Board of Assessors webpage which addresses this.

Ms. Switekowski asked about the senior tax exemption. Mr. Funk stated that he is always happy to elaborate on what can offer. Information on tax exemption programs is available on the Assessor's webpage. Mr. Funk will make this more visible by including in on the home page as well. The Board of Assessors are looking at alternatives to the income limits that may help some folks. Applications for consideration are accepted through April 1. Programs are available also for veterans.

Mr. Einstein of 136 Morse Street asked whether there were special programs for disabled residents? Mr. Funk advised there are but most exemptions for the disabled are for Veterans. Mr. Einstein was advised to contact Mr. Funk during business hours at 781-784-1500 x1207.

**MOTION:** To close the tax classification hearing at 7:36 pm.  
(Pierre-Louis – Smith-Lee) 3-0 **PASSES**

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

**MOTION:** To vote for a residential factor of 1 for FY2023.  
(Smith-Lee – Pierre-Louis) 3-0 **PASSES**

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

**MOTION:** To vote their choice not to adopt a residential exemption for 2023.  
(Smith-Lee – Pierre-Louis) 3-0 **PASSES**

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

**MOTION:** To vote their choice not to adopt a small commercial exemption for 2023.  
(Smith-Lee – Pierre-Louis) 3-0 **PASSES**

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

#### **Public Hearing - train station parking fee 7:39**

**MOTION:** To open the hearing at 7:39.

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

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

Mr. Turkington began by explaining that this not a proxy for a conversation about quarterly passes, rather about the cost of running the program. He explained that there are things that need to be understood about long-term commuting needs.

The Board remarked that the quarterly parking fee has not been increased since 2016. While the Board would prefer residents to experience a savings, the cost to run the program is constantly increasing.

Pass sales dropped dramatically during COVID and only 186 total passes were sold during last quarterly sale. The new price still represents a 40% discount over the daily rate. The Transportation Advisory Board is evaluating trends in commuting post COVID and will report back to the Select Board in early April.

Members of Transportation Advisory Board agreed that setting the fee was outside of their purview but individually agreed that it has been a long time since the fee was adjusted.

**MOTION:** To close the hearing at 7:45

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

Switlekowski: AYE  
Pierre-Louis: AYE

Smith-Lee: AYE

**MOTION:** To increase the quarterly parking fee to \$162 effective January 1, 2023.

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

Switekowski: AYE

Pierre-Louis: AYE

Smith-Lee: AYE

### **Sharon Cultural Council update and request for additional funds**

Chair of Cultural Council, Aaron Glick, presented the Select Board with an update on the Council's recent activities. He explained that the Sharon Cultural Council is 14 members strong. There is a 13-1 female-to-male ratio. Despite this, a broad spectrum of residents is represented. The Sharon Council is one of over 300 in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts and has participated since the program's inception in 1998. The Council recently closed the application period for funding requests by local artisans. The Council received \$9,000 from state this year, a 15% increase over last year. Mr. Glick remarked that of the 50 applications received, 30 were approved but the Council's ability to meet the funding requests received has decreased over time. At this time, he would like the Select Board to consider a matching award.

The Board asked about the average award granted and if the council had more money, would their priority be to fund an increased number of requests. Mr. Glick responded that the average award is roughly \$275 to \$300 each. He further mentioned that the Council would likely fund the requests more deeply rather increase the number of awards.

The Board expressed their appreciation for the work that the Sharon Cultural Council does and commented that it is wonderful to see that the range of programming offered through the pandemic is to be able to continue. The Board will continue to communicate with Mr. Glick as the budget season progresses.

### **Town Administrator performance review**

The Board explained for the benefit of the public that each board member completes an evaluation individually which is then compiled into a document representing a consensus. The public should appreciate the fundamental awkwardness of the process being done in the public eye. Upon review, the Board feels that the composite fairly reflects the evaluations put forward.

Ms. Pierre-Louis stated that this was her first experience completing Mr. Turkington's evaluation. As she was completing it, she reflected that it has been her experience that Mr. Turkington is always willing to have an open conversation and entertain changes, but she sees some small room for growth. Overall, she feels that Mr. Turkington does a bang-up job.

**MOTION:** To accept the composite evaluation as compiled by the Chair.

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

Switekowski: AYE

Pierre-Louis: AYE

Smith-Lee: AYE

### **Consent Calendar**

1. Review and approve consent calendar
  - I. Vote to approve the open session minutes of October 25, 2022

- II. Vote to approve the following banner request/requests:
- Emma Greenspan Foundation, Emma's Run, May 1 to May 8, 2023, in 1<sup>st</sup> position
  - Sustainable Sharon Coalition, Green Day event, April 17 through 24, 2023, in 1<sup>st</sup> position
  - Friends of the Sharon Public Library, Annual Book Sale, May 15-22, 2023, in 1<sup>st</sup> position and consider waiving the fee
- III. Vote to approve Emma's Run to be held on Sunday, May 7, 2023, at Veterans' Memorial Park Beach as requested by the Recreation Advisory Committee
- IV. Vote to accept the donation of two memorial benches in honor of Fire Chief, Walter B. Roach and Select Board member, Walter "Joe" Roach to be installed on the site of their former family home at 94 South Main Street
- V. Vote to approve the request from Chabad Sharon to hold a menorah lighting and gelt drop at Sharon Town Hall on December 18 and display a menorah in Sharon center during Chanukah from December 18 through December 26, 2022
- VI. Vote to award a contract to ANIV, Inc. of Glendale, CA in the amount of \$66,320.00 for the bike share program
- VII. Vote to approve the Select Board Goals and Objectives for the period of November 1, 2022 through October 31, 2023
- VIII. Vote to approve the following Taxi license through December 31, 2023
- Pete's Taxi of Sharon
- IX. Vote to approve the following Hackney license through December 31, 2023
- Pierre Aoun
- X. Vote to approve the following Auto Dealer license through December 31, 2023
- DC Auto Sales, 210 N. Main Street #8
- XI. Vote to approve the following Common Victualler's Licenses from January 1, 2023 through December 31, 2023
- Red Lentil, 1 Pond Street
  - Carriage House Pizza Co., 21 South Main Street
  - Sharon Donuts, Inc. d/b/a Dunkin, 760 South Main Street
  - Mick Morgan's Irish Pub, 973 Providence Highway
  - Saphire Manor, 56 Highland Avenue
  - Best Western Plus Sharon, 395 Old Post Road

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

Switekowski: AYE  
Pierre-Louis: AYE  
Smith-Lee: AYE

### **Town Administrator's report**

Mr. Turkington provided the following update.

- Resignation of Planning Specialist.* Maria de la Fuente has received an offer to serve as lead planner and economic development coordinator from the Town of Norton. The offer included a \$20K raise from her salary in Sharon, as well as compensatory time off for attending Planning Board meetings and flexibility to

pursue a master's degree during work hours as needed. We discussed her professional development plan here, but she ultimately decided to take the offer and will be leaving on November 23. Our part-time land use specialist/counsel Elizabeth Ellis is taking some time off to pursue non-employment opportunities. She is resigning effective November 29. Staff and leadership of the Planning Board and EDC will be consulted as we fill a position to support both efforts.

- *Treasurer/Collector position.* We are pleased to announce that Shaun Strobel has rescinded his resignation and will remain as treasurer/collector.
- *Zoning bylaws approved by AG.* The AG has approved the zoning bylaw recodification and amendments with two exceptions, both of which special counsel Mark Bobrowski believes will be approved once he provides clarifying arguments.

We received / exchanged approximately 32 pieces of correspondence between 9:00 a.m. on Friday, October 21 and 1:00 p.m. on Thursday, November 10. Topics included:

- Notices and invitations: eleven submissions related to consideration of appointment to Town boards and committees and notices regarding grants received; two letters of commendation for police officers; invitation to Sandy Hook 10-year observance on December 14 and interfaith Thanksgiving service on November 20; and notice of open registration to MMA Annual Conference on January 20-21, 2023.
- Email from Larry Sandberg thanking staff for paving project on Saw Mill Drive.
- Emails regarding coyote observations on North Main Street.
- Five emails exchanged regarding appeal of parking tickets at railroad station parking lot.
- Seven emails exchanged with three residents regarding speed enforcement and sidewalk project on Lakeview Street.

#### **Topics not anticipated within 48 hours of posting**

The Board extended thanks to Town Clerk's office. They felt it important to acknowledge their work and that of the poll workers. Tremendous amount of work with early voting and on Election Day. Turnout for this non-Presidential election was over 60 percent.

Sharon High School will hold its annual musical in new auditorium.

Happy Thanksgiving. Sunday is Sharon's interfaith thanksgiving service. Please bring donation for food pantry and potluck dessert.

#### **Adjourn**

**MOTION:** To adjourn at 8:30 pm  
(Smith-Lee – Pierre-Louis) 3-0 **PASSES**

Switekowski: AYE  
Pierre-Louis: AYE  
Smith-Lee: AYE

#### List of Documents

- Advertisement
- Recommendation
- Agreement
- Board/Committee applications (3)
- Membership lists (2)
- Health Department update
- Organizational chart
- Objectives and priorities report
- Minutes
- Proclamation
- One-day liquor license application
- Letter of interest
- State Election warrant
- Town Administrator's report