

MINUTES
SHARON SELECT BOARD
January 24, 2023

The meeting of the Sharon Select Board was called to order at 7:00 pm by Chair Hanna R. Switekowski remotely via 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. The meeting commenced with the recitation of the Pledge of Allegiance followed by a moment of silence for all affected by the mass shooting events in California.

Public comment period

An attorney representing the Quail Ridge Homeowners Association Board introduced himself. He is here this evening to listen in to the discussion regarding the Sharon Gallery.

A resident of Edge Hill Road requested that the Select Board consider withdrawing their support for the housing project on Edge Hill Road for the following reasons:

- Abutters received no notice of the proposal before the Select Board;
- the proposal for rental units and the density of the proposed project in a Rural-1 District is not a good fit for the neighborhood;
- residents in the Rural-1 District choose to live there for the primary fact that there is less density, more open space, and more wildlife;
- the road already has traffic issues and there is no safe way to walk on the street;
- the Town Engineer already stated that those parcels will support only several house lots under current zoning;
- cluster housing developments under the “affordable” LIP or 40B programs should be located within safe walking distance to public transportation and other services and not placed in rural districts; and
- a similar proposal at the Cape Club project for duplex units on Edge Hill Road was also withdrawn several years ago for all the same reasons, character of the neighborhood, quality of life, road and traffic safety, among other things.

Several other residents of Edge Hill Road also commented that they support their neighbor in requesting the Select Board to consider withdrawing support for the project.

Board of Health interview – Hillary Johnson

The Board welcomed Hillary Johnson who has applied to fill the vacancy on the Board of Health. Ms. Johnson stated that she is a resident of 5 Williams Road. Dr. Mesiha has submitted a letter of support for Hillary which was included with the Board’s meeting materials.

Ms. Johnson explained that her professional experience is in infectious diseases and epidemiology. She has been providing technical assistance to local Boards of Health during the COVID-19 outbreak. She is new to the community, moving here from Boston in 2021. Since moving to Town, she has been looking for opportunities to get involved. This opportunity most closely aligns with her background. Ms. Johnson further noted that she loves the rich culture and diversity in Sharon which she feels is a benefit to the community. When asked about her goals for her work on the Board of Health, Ms. Johnson wishes to make sure everyone is represented and has a voice.

Although the Board’s past practice has been to make Board and Committee appointments at the next meeting after interviews are held, since this vacancy has been adequately posted and no other candidates have applied, they stated they were comfortable making an appointment this evening. The Board thanked Ms. Johnson for her time this evening and for stepping up to serve the Sharon community.

MOTION: To appoint Hillary Johnson to the Board of Health for a term expiring December 31, 2025.
(Switlekowski– Pierre-Louis)

Switlekowski: AYE
Smith-Lee: AYE
Pierre-Louis: AYE
3-0 **PASSES**

Town Administrator budget overview

Mr. Turkington advised that a draft budget had been included in the meeting materials for the Board. He explained that staff is presently in the process of reviewing all general government department budget submissions. The preliminary budget exceeds the Finance Committee target by about \$60,000. The Priorities Committee will meet again either in late February or early March once Governor Healey releases the State Aid figures. Tonight, Police and Fire will present their budgets.

Fire Department FY24 operating budget interview

Chief Wright explained to the Board that he has presented a level service budget for fiscal year 2023. This is the first year that the Town will be absorbing the cost for increased staff due to the SAFER grant program. There is also an additional step level in the collective bargaining agreement.

Chief Wright explained that the upcoming leadership transition affords the department the opportunity to make administrative changes. He explained that the administrative staff currently works a Monday through Friday schedule and includes the Chief, Deputy, Fire Safety Inspections Officer, and EMS Coordinator. Union Firefighters usually staff the EMS Coordinator and Fire Safety positions but must apply for the positions. It can take up to two years to bring these individuals up to speed on fire code and other standards. He proposes a dual Deputy structure which would encompass these duties and provided an organization chart based on that proposal.

Ms. Smith-Lee asked for an explanation regarding SAFER grant for the benefit of those listening. Chief Wright explained that the Grant provided funding to offset 75% of the first two years of salaries and health insurance. Fiscal year 2023 was the final year and \$112,000 was contributed for salary offset. There is no longer any grant funding coming in.

The Board thanked Chief Wright for his budget presentation and for taking the time to attend the meeting this evening.

Police Department FY24 operating budget interview

Chief Coffey presented a brief overview of the budget. He explained there are several new officers and lateral transfers which will impact the budget. Over past several years, the Department has stepped up community involvement. This budget reflects a requested increase in funding for training as the Department is now younger and has less experience. There are increased costs for equipment and vehicles. Gasoline prices have fluctuated over the past several years, but the Department continues to transition to hybrid vehicles and is studying the potential for electric vehicles in the future.

Chief Coffey then provided a quick overview of accreditation. Despite a recent twist in requirements, the Department is ready for certification. It is expected that the Police Department may be able to submit for accreditation in August.

It was asked whether the Department has experienced any cost savings with the hybrid or expected electric vehicles. Chief Coffey explained that he is working on this with Public Works. He explained that outfitting new vehicles is quite an expense and logistics for charging will need to be developed as the current cruiser fleet is used around the clock, seven days per week.

Finally, Chief Coffey provided an overview of the Advocates program which is expected to be up and running in about one month. Advocates operates pre-arrest Co-Response Programs in police departments throughout Massachusetts. By working together, clinicians and law enforcement can respond most appropriately to the needs of individuals in the community who are in crisis. A full-time clinician will work in the field with police officers providing the opportunity to deliver mental health services quickly to those they encounter. The Board expressed their pleasure at hearing about the program considering the mental health issues being faced recently.

Chief Coffey explained that the Police Department event which was to be held tomorrow night has been postponed due to weather.

Continued discussion on Governance Study Committee report and recommendations

Mr. Pietal called a meeting of the Governance Study Committee to order briefly to attend to one last piece of business, approval of minutes, and adjourned immediately following the vote.

Mr. Turkington provided an overview of the list of articles which was provided to the Board with their meeting materials along with some background information. This list includes the potential articles suggested by the Governance Study Committee.

Ms. Pierre-Louis asked about the article for the change from a three-member Select Board to a five-member Board. Mr. Turkington advised that he would collaborate with Town Counsel on the language for the warrant article. If approved at Town Meeting, it would then move forward to the legislature, then a referendum vote at the town election. Staggered terms will then be established, and the positions voted at the following town election.

It was asked whether adjustments to the bylaw for the date of Town Meeting will include language for the date of the town election as well. Mr. Turkington remarked that he will make sure they are consistent.

It was explained that labor counsel is presently reviewing the personnel bylaw. The Governance Study Committee recommended elimination of the Personnel Board. With respect to Indigenous People's Day, the Personnel Board must hold a hearing to amend holidays. The Board expressed their desire to move forward with the change to Indigenous People's Day.

The Board felt it was interesting to read Town Clerk's memo on voting related things. Ms. Smith-Lee asked about electronic voting. It was explained that with the new legislative session, Wayland's petition for electronic voting must be refiled. With respect to home rule petition for non-citizen voting in local elections, four or five towns have petitioned for home rule legislation, but it has not made it out of committee. The Board supports non-citizen voting in local elections and wishes to pursue this at the annual town meeting.

The Governance Study Committee did not provide a recommendation on a recall provision which was ready for May town meeting. Mr. Pietal explained that he was a late convert on recall because of concerns that the language was too broad. He suggested that the Governance Study Committee continue to work on a proposal for fall town meeting.

The Board felt it worthwhile to explore electronic voting and support Wayland's initiative. Mr. Turkington will add this item to a future agenda.

Fire Chief selection

The Board offered their thanks to all three candidates for completing the application and interview process as well as for their service to the Town. The Board was impressed by the candidates and feel they are all well qualified to step in and serve as the next Fire Chief. It was mentioned that Captain Ricker has a strong training background while Captain Greenfield's strengths lie in his skills with technology. Deputy Chief Madden brings

experience as he has been in the position of working closely with Chief Wright since he announced his plans for retirement. Regardless of the outcome this evening, the Board feels that the candidates will collectively evolve into a leadership team that will propel the department forward. Ms. Switekowski stated that she would like to put forth Deputy Madden for consideration. Ms. Smith-Lee and Ms. Pierre-Louis expressed that they also felt that Deputy Madden was their choice to fill the role of the next Fire Chief.

The Board expressed their gratitude to Captain Ricker, Captain Greenfield, and Deputy Chief Madden. Deputy Chief Madden thanked the Board for their trust in him to lead the department.

MOTION: To appoint Michael Madden to the position of Fire Chief effective April 8, 2023.
(Smith-Lee – Pierre-Louis)

Switekowski: AYE

Smith-Lee: AYE

Pierre-Louis: AYE

3-0 **PASSES**

Amendment to agreement with Sharon Gallery

The Board was requested to consider modifications to the development agreement with Sharon Gallery to adjust square footage allocations between residential and various types of commercial retail space based on the ratio of land to be sold to Costco in relation to the total project plan.

Mr. Spiegel and his representative, Attorney Bob Shelmerdine, presented his position on the proposed changes to the development agreement. In November 2021, the Zoning Board of Appeals granted site plan approval for Costco and a second building, Building F.

A development agreement was finalized in October 2017. Paragraph six of this agreement limits the residential development of the 750,000 square foot complex such that the residential portion of the project cannot consist of more than 250,000 square feet, one third of the commercial portion or a maximum of 225 housing units. The proponent seeks to reduce the commercial construction requirement threshold.

Ms. Smith Lee wished for clarification that the request involves the difference between the net and gross square footage which was bargained for initially as a balance between residential and commercial tax impact.

Mr. Turkington recommends tabling this item until the February 7 meeting. The Board concurred and will consider this again at a future meeting in February.

Consent calendar

- I. Approve the following minutes
 - a. December 20, 2022 open session
 - b. December 20, 2022 Executive session
- II. Approve the following banner request/requests:
 - a. Cub Scouts registration, August 28-September 4, 2023 in 1st position
 - b. Sharon Youth Lacrosse registration, January 30 to February 6, 2023 in 2nd position
- III. Reappoint Dan Rabatsky to the Energy Advisory Committee for a term expiring December 31, 2025
- IV. Approve the following Common Victualler licenses through December 31, 2023
 - a. Angel's Café – 3 Post Office Square
 - b. Coriander Bistro – 5 Post Office Square
 - c. The Daily Grind Nutrition, LLC - 364 South Main Street

MOTION: To approve the consent calendar.
(Smith-Lee – Pierre-Louis)
(Pierre-Louis – Smith-Lee)

Switekowski: AYE
Smith-Lee: AYE
Pierre-Louis: AYE
3-0 **PASSES**

Report of the Town Administrator

Mr. Turkington provided the following update.
We received / exchanged approximately 48 pieces of correspondence between Friday, January 5 and 6:00 p.m. on Thursday, January 19. Topics included:

- Notices and invitations: two submissions related to consideration of appointment to Town boards and committees (ZBA – Henry and Goldschneider); copy of preliminary official bond statement and S&P bond rating; letter of commendation to Officer Robert Awad; Police Department program for non-violence awareness on January 25;
- Email from a resident supporting installation of new sidewalks the entire length of Lakeview Street;
- Public records request and response for town meeting article lists from January 10 Select Board meeting materials;
- Thirty-nine emails from across the country urging Town officials to oppose a proposed cell tower just over the town line in Canton; and,
- Email from Town Clerk to all members of boards and committees concerning Open Meeting Law, public records law, and best practices for conduct of meetings.

Topics not reasonably anticipated within 48 hours in advance of the meeting

None.

Adjourn

MOTION: 9:40 pm
(Smith-Lee – Pierre-Louis)
(Pierre-Louis – Smith-Lee)

Switekowski: AYE
Smith-Lee: AYE
Pierre-Louis: AYE
3-0 **PASSES**

List of Documents

- Application
- Membership list
- Interview questions
- Support correspondence
- Draft budgets (3)
- Memo
- Organizational charts
- Updated list of warrant articles
- Town Clerk response to GSC recommendations
- Additional background on GSC recommendations
- Link to Governance Study Committee final report
- Proposed amendment to bylaw -SSBC Selection Committee
- Proposed marijuana facility – 990R Providence Highway
- Remote participation information and estimate
- Proposed changes to Finance Committee policy
- Proposed changes to bylaw regarding naming public buildings
- Candidate resumes
- Draft proposal
- Minutes
- Banner request forms (2)
- Common Victualler license applications (3)