

MINUTES
SHARON SELECT BOARD
April 25, 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

Public comment period

A resident expressed concern about the Board's upcoming discussion on trash fees and the affordability for residents. Water costs are being driven up for PFAS mitigation. Sharon is becoming an expensive place to live. The resident asked that the Board try to keep costs as reasonable as possible.

A resident remarked that the Select Board agendas continue to be posted on the website late despite a previous request and acknowledgement by the Town Administrator that they would be posted by 5pm on Friday afternoon. It was explained that there was an error made this week. The process for posting with the Town Clerk's office and on the Select Board webpage was explained.

A resident commented that there has been limited or no communication with the residents impacted by the site of the e-bike project/bicycle rack at the train station and feels that the area proposed for the bike platform is unsafe.

A resident explained that the Governance Study Committee discussed posting agendas on the webpage. Due to concerns with Open Meeting Law, the primary posting location remains in the vestibule at Sharon Town Hall. It has been requested that all Boards and Committees post a courtesy copy on the Town's website.

Seeing no further public comment, Ms. Switekowski moved on with the meeting.

Arbor Day

Mr. Kevin Weber was in attendance and explained to the Board that Public Works is endeavoring to renew its Tree City USA designation. Tree City USA is an awards program sponsored by the Arbor Day Foundation and administered in Massachusetts by the Department of Conservation and Recreation Urban and Community Forestry Program that provides public attention and national recognition for local commitments to community trees and forests. The Tree City USA designation brings official recognition from the DCR and the Arbor Day Foundation and provides recognition that Sharon has established trees as a priority and made good decisions about the management of these resources.

Mr. Weber requested the Board's support for the following Proclamation which was read by Ms. Smith-Lee.

WHEREAS: The Legislature of this state has adopted Act designating Arbor Day, and by that Act has designated the last Friday in April as Arbor Day; and

WHEREAS: Each Spring people are encouraged to dedicate themselves to the responsibilities of preserving and improving our woodlands; and

WHEREAS: Through the cooperation of all residents of Sharon, Arbor Day is observed in this state by citizens joining together to plant trees as an unselfish symbol of hope and stability for the future; and

WHEREAS: The importance of trees to the natural environment and quality of life cannot be properly recognized in one twenty-four-hour period.

NOW, THEREFORE, We, the Select Board of Sharon, in accordance with Chapter 201 of the Acts of 1946, do hereby proclaim Friday, April 28, 2023 as Arbor Day and urge the citizens of the Town of Sharon to take cognizance of this event and to participate fittingly in its observance.

MOTION: To approve the 2023 Arbor Day Proclamation.
(Smith-Lee - Pierre-Louis)

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

3-0 **PASSES**

Discussion on train station bicycle platform construction

The Board has received correspondence from several residents as well as from the Transportation Advisory Board. Ms. Hager of that Board is in attendance this evening to speak on this topic as well as Sam Liao. Ms. Switekowski stated that the Board has had several updates at prior meetings from DPW and the Recreation Department. Mr. Hooper is also here to help answer questions.

Ms. Hager, Co-Chair of the Transportation Advisory Board advised that TAB became aware of the e-bike program about four weeks ago. Their concerns center around the lack of involvement of their Board in the placement of the bicycle platform. Safety is a significant concern for TAB. Ms. Hager stated that speeding is significant with vehicles traveling toward the train station. The proposed location of the platform puts cyclists and pedestrians at risk.

Mr. Liao added concerns about the effects of the tree removal at the proposed platform location as they act as a sound barrier for the neighborhood. He expressed that he hopes some trees will be planted. Mr. Switekowski and Mr. Hooper explained some of the cutting that happened was for removal of dead trees.

Mr. Hooper further explained that the site of the platform was selected due to the limited parcels of land owned by the town as well as that relocating the platform *into* the parking area increases the potential for increasing the pedestrian, vehicle, and bicycle interactions. By locating the platform *outside* the parking area at the entrance, those interactions will be decreased. It was also explained that the MBTA has issues with the location of the existing bicycle rack at the train station due to its being on MBTA property and its proximity to the tracks.

The Board expressed their desire to find a solution in this matter as well as to other resident concerns. It was mentioned that the Board has public comment on their agenda for every meeting and has for nearly a year now. They have had this topic on previous agendas. Agendas are posted on the Town website and distributed to those who elect to receive notifications by email. The Board is interested in hearing from folks about how best to communicate with the community. The Transportation Advisory Board will meet and develop a proposal for the Select Board which will be presented at a future meeting.

Discussion and vote position on Article 17 – Library project funding

The language for this article has been finalized by the Finance Committee. Since the Warrant went to print on March 31, the Sharon Standing Building Committee has affirmed the updated project budget of \$24,347,925 after a rigorous review of cost estimates prepared by the Owner's Project Manager and an independent cost estimator. Appropriations for all previous public building projects undertaken by the SSBC have been based on professional cost estimates. While the SSBC had hoped to validate the cost estimate by obtaining actual construction bids, no general contractor submitted a bid on April 13. At the SSBC meeting on April 18, the OPM reviewed reasons provided by general contractors for declining to bid; based on that feedback, the SSBC has re-bid the project with a deadline of May 18 with the expectation of finalizing a construction contract by June 30 and meeting the MBLC deadline included in the grant award.

The SSBC estimates that the total cost of the Sharon High School project at completion will be \$139,948,765, of which \$92,500,00 has been borrowed and \$50,832,765 will come from Massachusetts School Building Authority school construction grant and other funds. That leaves \$3,373,000 of borrowed funds that are available for transfer to another construction project funded by 20-year bonds.

The undesignated fund balance is the accumulated balance of unexpended budget authority and revenues which exceed estimates. It is also referred to in Massachusetts as “free cash” – the amount certified each year by the Department of Revenue as available for appropriation. As of June 30, 2022, the certified amount is \$9,157,580. Of that amount, Article 16 proposes to use \$500,000 to initiate the full-day kindergarten program, leaving \$8,657,580 available for appropriation. We propose to appropriate \$2,980,000 to the library project, leaving a balance of \$5,677,580. This amount represents 5.5% of the recommended FY 2024 budget of \$103,243,582, a percentage that falls within the policy target recommended by bond rating agencies. In addition, the Town has approximately \$990,000 in the stabilization fund as a source of funds for unforeseen expenses. Together, these funds represent 6.46% of the recommended FY 2024 budget.

MOTION: To vote position on Article 17 - Library project funding.
(Smith-Lee – Pierre-Louis)

Smith-Lee: SUPPORT
Pierre-Louis: SUPPORT
Switekowski: SUPPORT

Discussion and vote support on Article 26 – Short term rental zoning bylaw

During a recent review of the language of this zoning bylaw, issues of consistency with Board of Health regulations, building and life safety code, and state law were discovered. It is recommended that the registration requirement be imposed for only those properties to be rented for more than fourteen (14) days in any twelve (12) month period to align with the state registration requirement. While Section 3.5.2, sub-section 3 can be read as requiring registration for those previously registered with the Mass DOR, the amendment to Section 3.5.2, sub-section 1 clarifies it. It is also recommended that the registration period be annual so as to align with required annual inspections with local health and life safety codes for such rental housing.

MOTION: To vote position on Article 26 – Short term rental zoning bylaw.
(Smith-Lee – Pierre-Louis)

Smith-Lee: SUPPORT
Pierre-Louis: SUPPORT
Switekowski: SUPPORT

Consider and vote to approve amended regulations for food trucks

At the last meeting the Select Board indicated their preferences for amendments to the proposed regulations for mobile food vendors on Town property at special events. Staff have made the recommended amendments to the proposed fee, reducing the annual charge from \$100 to \$50 and eliminating the fee per event.

MOTION: To approve the amended mobile food vendor regulations as discussed.
(Smith-Lee - Pierre-Louis)

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

3-0 **PASSES**

Vote to approve updated HR policies regarding social media and technology use

A draft of the finalized social media and technology use policy was provided for the Board to review ahead of the meeting. Previous drafts have also been reviewed by the Board. This policy was developed with HR Specialist Mary Beth Bernard and labor council. This policy, unlike others previously approved by the Board, was developed, and drafted to include both employees and members of the Town's boards, committees, commissions, and study groups, whether elected or appointed. This will be distributed to elected and appointed board members by the Town Clerk's office through their onboarding/swearing in processes.

The Board has reviewed the policy and supports approval.

MOTION: To approve the social media and technology use policy as presented.
(Smith-Lee – Pierre-Louis)

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

Discussion on bids for solid waste/recycling collection

Mr. Turkington explained that proposals for solid waste and recycling collection were received from Republic and Boston Carting. Republic is the apparent low bidder. Staff continues to analyze the proposals for impact for household hazardous waste, bulky waste disposal and dumpsters for town buildings. Every other week recycling collection was proposed in the specifications. One of the vendors requested consideration for collection of half the town every other week to keep the same truck and same employee in Sharon every week. The numbers will be evaluated against the budget and the current quarterly fee, which has not been adjusted now for two years. The Board can expect to hold a hearing, likely in late May, to consider any necessary adjustments to the fee.

Consent calendar

- I. Vote to approve the open session minutes of April 11, 2023
- I. Vote to approve the following banner request/requests:
 - a. Sharon Garden Club annual plant sale – May 15-22, 2023, in 2nd position
- II. Vote to accept the following donations for the Sharon Recreation Department:
 - a. \$1,159 for the Friends of Beech Tree Park
 - b. \$150 in memory of Russell Sellev
- III. Vote to award a contract with the option to renew in 2024 and 2025 to Mr. Felix Safai of Stoughton, MA; the sole bidder for operation of the Veterans' Memorial Park Beach concession stand
- IV. Vote to authorize submission of a municipal vulnerability preparedness program grant for FY 24 and FY 25 in the amount of \$150,000
- V. Vote to approve partnership with Trauma Services of Mansfield and placement of a medication disposal kiosk in the Sharon Health Department in the Town Office Building to be funded with opioid abatement funds
- VI. Vote to appoint Sonal Pai to serve as the Town of Sharon representative to the Metropolitan Area Planning Council for the remainder of the current term (formerly held by Maria de la Fuente) which expires on March 23, 2024

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

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

Report of the Town Administrator

Mr. Turkington provided the following update.

The SSBC received no bids, so we are moving forward using the project estimate. The FinComm will review and vote their recommendation on Wednesday, April 26. A one-page handout will be prepared and printed for distribution at ATM, with the text posted on the website by Thursday, April 27. The proposed motion would transfer \$3,370,000 of previously borrowed but unexpended HS project funds and appropriate \$2,980,000 from free cash. Article 26 – Short Term Rental zoning by-law will be amended to address consistency with state law and inspectional requirement, so it applies to only those units to be rented more than 14 calendar days in an annual period. Registration will be changed from a three-year period to a one-year period. The proposed write-ups are attached.

The next department director's meeting will be Wednesday, May 24 to review ATM article results, FY2024 budget implementation and FY2023 fiscal year close.

Verizon is working on a ten-month project to replace copper wiring with fiber optics. The purpose of the work is to allow for the offering of internet service and internet-based telephone service. The company has no plans to offer cable television, which requires a license with the Town. The Technology and Telecommunications Advisory Committee has reached out to Verizon with an offer to assist explaining to residents the options that will be offered once the project is completed in the fall of 2023. The committee is concerned about the impact on Sharon Community TV. Those who switch internet providers and rely on streaming services will no longer receive community programming. In addition, the continued loss of Comcast subscribers reduces the funding on which SharonTV relies. Subscribers are down nearly 15% in the past few years.

The net change to Cherry Sheet revenues and charges is a reduction of \$8,812 as compared to Governor Healey's proposed FY2024 state budget. Debate on amendments in the House begins on April 24. See MMA legislative alert for noteworthy amendments.

We received / exchanged approximately 33 pieces of email correspondence between Friday, April 7 and 6:00 p.m. on Thursday, April 20. Topics included:

- Notices and invitations including notification of MassDEP award to water system, MMA legislative alert on House budget amendments, and One Book, One Town events; invitation to Sharon Green Day program on Sunday, May 7 from 12n-4p at Sharon HS, SSC event on Saturday, May 20 from 9 am to 12 noon at Lake Massapoag, and Sharon Friends of Conservation annual meeting on April 15;
- Email from resident and response sent by town administrator expressing concern over fees charged on delinquent motor vehicle excise tax bills and inability to receive waiver of demand notice charge;
- Letter signed by 25 households expressing concern over siting of bicycle station adjacent to Boston side of MBTA commuter rail;
- Email from town administrator to Select Board providing documents and minutes of discussion of Board approval of ecotourism grant for bicycle station;

- Email from resident and response from MBLC concerning library financing and availability of grant funds;
- Emails exchanged between concerning public comment period at Select Board meetings and decisions to hold meetings remotely vs. in-person;
- Emails exchanged about the reappointment process for members of town boards and committees; and,
- Email from a resident opposing the proposed bike lanes on South Main Street (public hearing on May 9 which the resident is unable to attend).

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

Adjourn

MOTION: To adjourn at 8:52 pm.
(Pierre-Louis – Smith-Lee)

Switlekowski: AYE

Smith-Lee: AYE

Pierre-Louis: AYE

3-0 **PASSES**

List of Documents

- Proclamation
- Correspondence
- Proposed amendment
- Draft regulations
- Draft policy
- Minutes
- Banner request form
- Memoranda (4)
- Agreement
- Draft grant submission
- Nomination acceptance
- Draft appointment letter