

**MINUTES**  
**SHARON SELECT BOARD**  
May 9, 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 member Kiana Pierre-Louis was 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 mentioned having thoughts about the Annual Town Meeting and asked whether now was the best time to mention them or wait until after the Board's conversation later in the meeting. With respect to June reappointments to be discussed, the resident asked that a member of the Commission on Disabilities or someone from the disability community be selected to serve on the Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Committee.

A resident requested information on expenditures for the 3% allocation from marijuana receipts at a previous meeting and would like to know when to expect the information. In response, it was requested that the resident submit a public records request electronically for the information being sought.

**Proclamations**

In lieu of reading the Proclamations, Ms. Switekowski stated that the signed Proclamations would be posted on the Select Board's webpage.

**MOTION:** To approve the following Proclamations: Jewish American Heritage Month, Asian American and Pacific Islander (AAPI) Heritage Month, Mental Health Awareness Month, and Wear Orange Day, June 2, 2023 for gun violence awareness.  
(Pierre-Louis – Switekowski)

Pierre-Louis: AYE  
Switekowski: AYE  
2-0 **PASSES**

**Public hearing – South Main Street bicycle lane**

**MOTION:** To open the public hearing at 7:12 pm.  
(Pierre-Louis – Switekowski)

Pierre-Louis: AYE  
Switekowski: AYE  
2-0 **PASSES**

Mr. Peter O'Cain, Town Engineer, began by explaining the background on this project which come about through input on the Imagine Sharon masterplan which was completed in 2019. He shared a brief slideshow and explained that the masterplan identified a need to provide interconnectivity of bike routes in Sharon. As South Main Street is the main arterial road in town with adequate width to do so, it made sense to begin there with the design of a bike lane. Bike lanes are designed to be 5' in width when possible. The master plan also identifies the need for opportunities for physical activity for the public. This will provide residents along this two-and-a-half-mile stretch of roadway, on both sides of the street, safe bicycle access to the railroad station. It was explained that the steel reflectors in the centerline of the road would be retained. Two 11-foot travel lanes would be maintained, and a five-to-six-foot bicycle lane would be added to the right shoulder area of the road. Mr. O'Cain advised that the Metropolitan Area Planning Council bicycle experts have reviewed the design plans as

have the Boston Metropolitan Planning Organization and some very knowledgeable residents such as Michael Littman who is in attendance tonight.

Mr. O'Cain also mentioned the Farnham Road intersection which is a blind intersection when traveling north to south due to the elevation gain of the railroad bridge. Roadway striping/painting and flexible bollards are being considered for the area where the crosswalk is located, just south of the Farnham Road/Clarke Street intersection. A rapid-flashing signal will also be installed soon to improve safety for pedestrians crossing the road in this area. The bicycle lane will terminate at Chestnut Street as the design in Post Office Square becomes challenging. Parking along South Main Street will become restricted because of the bike lane which is part of the reason for the hearing. There is one business which has an occasional car parked on South Main Street. It will be requested that their clients park on the adjacent side street.

Ms. Switekowski opened the floor to comments or questions from the public. Mr. Ken Olum of 156 Massapoag Ave commented that he has been a cyclist in town for many years. Although he likes the idea of a bike lane, he expressed his concerns about the narrow width from Laurel Road to Gavins Pond and the danger this presents to cyclists. Mr. O'Cain remarked that the bike lane has not yet been extended beyond Laurel due to the expected future traffic improvements due to the Sharon Gallery project. The layout design for those roadway improvements will include a bike lane.

Ms. Judy Crosby of Condor Road asked about cost and prioritization. She expressed concern about the brick sidewalks in the center of town which present an impediment for the handicapped. Mr. O'Cain concurred that grants have been applied for and denied. The sidewalks are a concern and at the top of the list of concerns for engineering. It is estimated that the costs for striping/line-painting for the bike lane will amount to \$68,000. Brick sidewalk/crosswalk removal and replacement is over \$1M. He further explained that there is a new planning specialist at DPW and additional grants will be investigated. DPW was never supportive of the brick crosswalks. Ms. Crosby struggles with the idea that accessibility takes a back seat to bicycles.

Ms. Laura Nelson of Edge Hill Road commented that it sounds as though this is a wonderful idea because of the people using the e-bikes at the train station. Has there been any real interest or definitive data? The Board explained that the e-bike program is a separate initiative. It was further clarified that earlier mention of bicycles could be used by residents to travel to and from the train station. She further questioned whether cyclists could ride side-by-side and whether that was illegal. Mr. O'Cain opined that, similar to safe motorcycle operation, it is generally not a good idea to ride side-by-side due to the risk of collision if one rider were to fall.

Eric Brodsky of 2 Knob Hill Street asked about the rapid flashing signals. Mr. O'Cain explained that they are currently located at School, Oakland, Laurel and will soon be installed at Farnham at pedestrian crosswalks. Mr. Brodsky asked how they relate to the bicycle lane and the answer was only that they are part of the design plan.

Barry Rosenbloom of 49 Blair Circle asked about e-bikes. He further asked about the design and whether signage will be included at the Cumberland Farms entrances. Mr. O'Cain explained that one cannot exit Cumberland Farms at the drive closest to the Walpole Street intersection on South Main Street.

Alex Schneiderman of 8 Grant Circle explained he is an avid cyclist and supports the addition of a bike lane on South Main Street and hopes it moves forward.

Arlene Mathes-Scharf of 38 Clark Street explained that she walks a lot on South Main Street and has nearly been hit by cyclists on the sidewalk. She asked whether it is legal to cycle on the sidewalks? She also asked about whether there will be a push button for the crosswalk signal at Farnham. She stated that she supports this initiative if it will get cyclists off the sidewalk.

Michael Littman of 18 Brook Road indicated that he represents the Sustainable Sharon transportation coalition group. He thanked Peter and Kevin Davis for putting this project together and allowing comments. He further stated that he is a transportation Engineer specializing in cyclists/pedestrians. This will be the first real bike lane in Sharon and stated that it is an amazing first step. So many projects are not achievable due to cost and construction issues. This can be done right away without exorbitant cost.

Connor Ofsten of 25 Station Street indicated he is a supporter of the project and offered his gratitude for the presentation. He asked whether there was a schedule for implementation? Mr. O’Cain stated that although the paving contractor controls the schedule, he hopes to have this completed by end of July if approved by the Select Board on June 6.

Ted Schnitzer of 5 Terrapin Lane offered his thanks for hard work which went into this. He supports the project.

Susan Friedman of 10 Robin Road had a question about signage and traffic lights. She asked whether the lighting or traffic signals can be changed for cyclists. She has witnessed many vehicles turning right not realizing a bicycle is next to them. Mr. O’Cain stated that he would investigate that and thanked Ms. Friedman for the suggestion.

Ms. Nelson provided a follow-up to the comment about cycling on sidewalks. She referenced MGL, Ch. 25, §11b which states that cyclists may use sidewalks but must yield to pedestrians. With respect to riding two abreast, it is not permitted except when there is more than one lane in the direction of travel.

Michael Littman mentioned that there is a new law, just passed a few weeks ago. Vehicles must leave 4’ of space when passing cyclists.

Ms. Pierre-Louis asked whether to mark out what the lane would look like, perhaps spray painted, at the four-foot section? Mr. O’Cain advised that he would do that.

Ellen Dirgins of 17 Bluff Head Road stated that she is in favor of this project.

Eric Brodsky of 2 Knob Hill, asked about the four-foot law passed and whether there may be any way the town could highlight that somehow as it is a big deal for cyclists. Is there any means for spreading the news about that? Mr. O’Cain indicated he would investigate adding something to the website.

Judy Anderson of 156 Massapoag commented that as a cyclist, four-foot width is comfortable for riding; three feet is decent but four feet is great.

Judy Crosby of 6 Condor Road asked about the four-foot passing law as there is rarely 4 feet between a cyclist and the centerline of the roadway. She would like public safety to speak about that. It was explained that MA traffic laws stated that a vehicle must yield to pedestrians, cyclists, or other roadway impediments in the same direction of travel until it is safe to pass. This new four-foot law can only be enforced if it is seen by police.

**MOTION:** To close the public hearing at 7:52 pm.  
(Pierre-Louis – Switekowski)

Pierre-Louis: AYE  
Switekowski: AYE  
2-0 **PASSES**

The Board thanked Mr. O’Cain for his presentation and the hard work that went into this project. They also thanked residents for their comments. This topic will be further discussed and voted at the Select Board’s June 6 meeting.

### **Discussion and follow-up on May 1 Annual Town Meeting**

Mr. Turkington provided an overview of the highlights of Town Meeting. He advised that Town Clerk, Mark Hogan is in the process of compiling the bylaws for submission to the Attorney General’s office which must be done by the end of the month. The AG has 90 days to review and provide feedback or comments. Any Zoning cases filed in the meantime would be subject, retroactively, to the new bylaws.

Staff is following up on two pieces of special legislation and the required documentation is being assembled currently for Board approval. This includes the size of the Select Board and the special act requesting local election voting participation by resident aliens.

Staff has heard feedback on the concept of gatekeeping, particularly frustration that CPA appropriations cannot be adjusted based on community support or lack of support. There were also concerns that appointed boards such as the Personnel Board, Standing Building Committee, and Finance Committee Nominating Committee, serve as gatekeeping roles in terms of membership.

Inquiries have been made to the members of the temporary Library Reuse Advisory Committee to gauge their willingness to continue to serve with the expectation that the Committee will be reengaged by July to investigate uses for the current library building.

Ms. Pierre-Louis mentioned that the wait time to get into the building was challenging. About 30 minutes of the meeting was lost to waiting for those who had not yet made into the venue. Mr. Turkington concurred and believed that more checkers may be needed.

Ms. Crosby of Condor Road mentioned that the delay in checking in adversely affected the elderly and disabled due to the length of time they were standing, waiting to check in. Ms. Crosby advocated and Mr. Hogan made seating available inside for those affected inside.

Staff will hold a debriefing meeting after the Town Election to discuss such concerns.

### **Discussion on solid waste and recycling collection proposals**

Mr. Turkington explained that proposals were received by two suppliers for the Town's solid waste and recycling collection services, Republic and Boston Carting. Proposals are still being reviewed. A public hearing is scheduled for June 6 to set the fee effective July 1.

The trash and recycling budget shared by all 5,465 households includes all costs associated with the program except the disposal fee for solid waste. It is the only variable cost included in the quarterly fee. Tipping fees are an estimated \$470k of a projected \$2.48M expense. Therefore, approximately \$89 of the quarterly fee is the base charge, regardless of cart size selected. The difference in the fee charged by cart size reflects the disposal charge.

The items for consideration include:

- whether to create a fourth tier in the pricing structure to reward those who compost (while Black Earth subscriptions could be verified, we need to have a system to verify backyard composters) and how to structure the pricing (more complicated with full PAYT bag program)
- whether to implement a full PAYT bag requirement and if so, how to structure the quarterly fee given that tonnage is the only variable that drives the different price structure (same fee regardless of cart size or some amount of variable pricing)
- whether to offer a cardboard drop off option (this has been explored without success in finding a location, and offering convenient hours that doesn't trigger additional staff costs to monitor use)

Ms. Crosby of Condor Road suggested that the options be publicized ahead of the hearing to educate the public in advance.

### **Update on June Board/Committee/Commission reappointments**

Ms. Switekowski advised that a list of those Board/Committee/Commission members with terms expiring on June 30, 2023 has been provided. Staff has corresponded those individuals to inquire whether reappointment is desired. All of this information is available on the Select Board page of the Town of Sharon website. Mr. Turkington added that the Board endeavors to meet with candidates who have served two consecutive terms

prior to reappointment. The Chairs of the committees have been consulted on reappointment and the vacancies have been advertised. Depending on applications received, there may be interviews either June 6 or June 20. The Library Reuse Committee will also be posted so that the work of that committee may resume in July. The Governance Study Committee is one of the committees listed as all terms for that group expire at the end of June as well. Although the committee felt their work was completed, there are some outstanding items that were not put forth at this Town Meeting as well as topics that need more study such as recall. The Select Board and GSC members should decide whether to consider reappointing the full committee or a subcommittee to research.

### Consent calendar

- I. Vote to approve the following requests by the Recreation Advisory Committee:
  - a. Accept donations of \$468 on behalf of the Friends of Beech Tree Park
  - b. Approve painting large “S” in support of Sharon Boosters fundraiser on the entrances located at Deborah Sampson Park, Veterans’ Memorial Park Beach, Sharon Community Cener and Pond Street Senior parking lot
  - c. Approve up to three plantings by Youth Sustainable Sharon on designated Veterans’ Memorial Park Beach along the walking path and fence
  - d. Approve re-appointment of Gary Bluestein as the Recreation Advisory Committee representative to LMAC
- II. Vote to award a contract to Markings, Inc. from May 1, 2023 through February 29, 2024 in the amount of \$35,983 for chlorinated rubber and epoxy traffic line painting

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

We will be meeting with the Personnel Board in May and June to resolve several open issues:

- Reconsider the job title and job rating for the Assistant Public Health Administrator position held by Linda Callan (formerly Administrative Assist - Board of Health). I’m concerned the job description changes can challenge the community of interest test and lead to a transfer from the administrative support union to the management/professional group.
- Approve and rate the position description for Communications Specialist.
- Approve and rate Assistant Director for Operations – DPW (combining of Operations Supervisor of Highway and Forestry & Grounds held by Kevin Weber).
- Approve salary range within executive group for Public Health Administrator position held by Leandra McLean (moving from management/professional association to executive group).
- Approve changes to and rate job description for Benefits Specialist position held by Amita Khismatrao within administrative support association.

I’m pleased to report that the Town of Norwood will be hiring James Tobin, currently Energy Coordinator for the City of Lowell, as the shared energy manager for Sharon and Norwood.

Due to an emergent family situation, the individual hired to fill the administrative assistant position at the Council of Aging has withdrawn her acceptance. We will re-advertise the position later this month with the expectation that new COA director will participate in the hiring process. In the interim, other staff has stepped up to support the newsletter and assist with programs. As is our typical practice, we will provide a stipend to those assisting during this extended vacancy.

Applications for the COA director position must be submitted by today. The Communications Specialist position has an application deadline of May 10. We have sent notices to several New England colleges with journalism and communications departments in hopes of attracting a recent graduate. The Building Inspector position has an application deadline of May 12.

We have reached a tentative agreement with the management/professional association. Pending ratification by the employee group, we will discuss and vote on the agreement on May 23. We will begin negotiations with AFSCME representing DPW/Water laborers and equipment operators on May 10 and await confirmation of initial bargaining sessions sometime in the next two weeks with librarians represented by SEIU.

The next department director's meeting will be Wednesday, May 24 to review ATM article results and follow-up administrative issues, FY2024 budget implementation, and FY2023 fiscal year closing.

We received / exchanged approximately 32 pieces of correspondence between Friday, April 21 and 6:00 p.m. on Thursday, May 4. Topics included:

- Notices and invitations including MMA legislative update on Senate budget, TRIC quarterly newsletter, and Sharon Cultural Council newsletter; invitation to One Book, One Town event, ribbon cutting at Rockland Recovery Behavioral Health on May 4, Memorial Day ceremonies on May 26 and 28 and Flag Day observance on June 14;
- Eleven emails concerning siting of bicycle station adjacent to Boston side of MBTA commuter rail;
- Email dated April 27 from town administrator to Select Board providing updates ahead of Annual Town Meeting and personnel matters;
- Letter on behalf of Edge Hill Road neighbors to various committees and staff explaining opposition to LIP project at 268-292 Edge Hill Road;
- Email on behalf of 8<sup>th</sup> grade civic project on recycling and response from DPW;
- Two emails exchanged with resident and Town Engineer regarding request for traffic study on Hampton Road;
- Four emails exchanged between resident and public safety chiefs concerning proposal to make Ridge Road one-way;
- Emails regarding the proposed bike lanes on South Main Street;
- Email calling attention to the renovation plan for Norwood Hospital that will end in-patient psychiatric services;
- Email lamenting lack of option to vote without attending town meetings.
- Email wondering whether the Town has tightened its belt and spending less given economic hardships some are facing; and,
- Email questioning the legality of Article 30 – home rule petition relative to resident alien voting.

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

There was an announcement made that on May 20 there will be two performances of Matilda Jr. at the Sharon High School. This is a student produced, directed, choreographed and organized production as well the first sensory friendly performance.

## Adjourn

**MOTION:** To adjourn at 8:44 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