

MINUTES
SHARON SELECT BOARD
November 1, 2023

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

Joint meeting with Library Reuse Committee

A quorum of the Library Reuse Committee attended and called to order.

The Library Reuse Committee has designated a chairperson, vice-chairperson, and clerk/secretary assigned. They have had an opportunity to discuss the materials reviewed, such as reports and guidelines, and familiarized themselves with the Open Meeting Law guidelines. The committee has gone over the 2020 report on the condition of the library building.

The Library Reuse Committee seeks to be guided by the Select Board in their focus for the building. The Board offered the following points for guidance:

- There is no anticipated municipal use for the property.
- There is an expectation that a purchaser or long-term leaseholder, similar to the approach taken with the Wilber School rehabilitation, will submit a proposal that takes into account renovations for the planned use; there is no expectation that taxpayers will make renovations to building systems, envelope or structure in advance of sale or lease of the property to a third-party.
- There is limited septic capacity and limited on-street parking available that restricts the viability of uses, short of a creative pairing with other Town-owned land, an agreement for public-private parking at a nearby property or allowing shared parking as part of a mixed-use project, as well as exploring the availability of dedicated parking for the North Main Street building vis-à-vis library dedicated parking in the High Street lot.

Throughout the discussion, there were questions brought up about the need for another community space, particularly the desire for a Cultural Center by local artisans, and the feasibility of different options.

There is a deadline of November 2024 for the Library Reuse Committee to deliver their report with recommendations to the Select Board. The committee will be conducting a tour of the current building and considering involvement from other committees and organizations in the town.

The Select Board members reiterated that ultimately, it will be up to the committee to make decisions and recommendations based on their discussions and research.

At the conclusion of the discussion, the Library Reuse Committee adjourned.

#BringThemHome initiative and “We Stand With Israel”

The Board received correspondence from Nina Rogoff of Young Israel of Sharon requesting both the display of blue ribbons on Town property in support of an initiative to bring home the hostages taken by Hamas as well as to display signs in front of Sharon public buildings stating, “We Stand with Israel.” She emphasized that this is not a political statement but rather a way to show solidarity with the Jewish community and the tragedy they have experienced. She argues that standing with Israel is a human response to the terrorist attack by Hamas.

The Board expressed their concerns about the political nature of the signs and the potential slippery slope of allowing signs related to international affairs on public buildings. They discussed the distinction between public

and private speech and the need to be mindful of the consequences of advocating on such matters as a municipality.

While the Board may have differing opinions, they highlight the significance of supporting the Jewish community in a time of fear and rising anti-Semitism. They also mention examples of similar displays, such as the Pride flag, that have been approved by the Select Board.

Ms. Pierre-Louis suggested considering a compromise in allowing the display of blue ribbons throughout the town while being more cautious about the signs on public buildings. They explain that the ribbons could serve to show support for the Bring Them Home initiative without delving into potential political implications.

MOTION: To approve the request for signs stating “We Stand With Israel” to be displayed in front of Town buildings.

(Switekowski – Smith-Lee)

Smith-Lee: NO

Switekowski: AYE

Pierre-Louis: NO

2-1 **DEFEATED**

MOTION: To approve the request for display of blue ribbons on trees in front of Town buildings in support of the #BringThemHome initiative.

(Switekowski – Smith-Lee)

Smith-Lee: AYE

Switekowski: AYE

Pierre-Louis: AYE

3-0 **PASSES**

Consent calendar

- I. Vote to approve suggested new language to H3905 home rule petition as proposed by House Counsel
- II. Vote to approve the following banner requests:
 - a. One Book One Town, April 1 to 8, 2024 in first position and waive fee
 - b. One Book One Town, April 15 to 22, 2024 in second position and waive fee

MOTION: To approve the consent calendar.

(Smith-Lee – Switekowski)

Switekowski: AYE

Smith-Lee: AYE

Pierre-Louis: AYE

3-0 **PASSES**

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

None.

Adjourn

MOTION: 8:33 pm

(Switekowski– Smith-Lee)

Switekowski: AYE

Smith-Lee: AYE

Pierre-Louis: AYE

3-0 **PASSES**

List of Documents

- Library Reuse Committee charge
- Proposed key points
- Request email
- Banner request forms (2)
- Home rule petition H3905 text with edits