March 30, 2020 Minutes

Town of Sharon Finance Committee Meeting

**Present:** Daniel Lewenberg, Patricia-Lee Achorn, Anja Bernier, William Brack, Arnold Cohen, Gordon Gladstone, Chuck Goodman, Ann Keitner, Ira Miller and Edward Philips.

**Not Present:** Anil Ramoju.

Also present: Krishan Gupta, Director of Finance and Fred Turkington, Town Administrator.

# Dan Lewenberg, Chair, gave opening remarks:

* 1. This meeting is being held through the Zoom online platform due to the State of Emergency based on the COVID-19 outbreak. Confirmed the meeting was being recorded and is being broadcast.
  2. Community Preservation Committee currently meeting tonight at this time to discuss articles related to their committee. The Finance Committee may need to meet again to discuss and vote on those articles.

# Article 4 – Personnel bylaw:

* 1. Library page wage has been adjusted to $12.75 effective July 1, 2020, which will increase to $13.50 effective January 1, 2020.
  2. Financial concerns regarding the global pandemic were discussed. Krishan Gupta, Finance Director, discussed that aid to towns and cities will be forthcoming, and that the state and the Town have rainy day funds and reserves.

**Motioned:** by Anja Bernier **Seconded:** Ann Keitnerto recommend approval of Article 4 **Voted:** 10-0-0.

# Article 5 – FY21 budget & compensation of elected officials:

* 1. Committee discussed amending the language for the new Town Clerk to include that the person will receive the $5,000 additional funds for working towards completion of certification. Some of the certification classes are not currently being held due to the global pandemic, so it may be impossible for the person to receive certification in the allotted time frame. Language should be specific and enforceable. Could define as pro-ration depending on number of classes taken. Discussion does not impact 2020 ATM warrant or FY21 budget and can be revisited.
  2. Select Board budget represents an increase of 2.95% at $14,487,710.
  3. Schools budget represents an increase of 2.94% at $46,434,145.
  4. Long term debt represents an increase of 130.28% at $4,826,850.

**Motioned:** by Anja Bernier **Seconded:** Ann Keitnerto recommend approval of Article 5 **Voted:** 10-0-0.

# Article 6 – Capital outlay:

* 1. Anja Bernier discussed that she talked today with Eric Cooper from the Department of Public Works, who stated that if Article 19 for removal of recycled asphalt pavement (RAP) is approved that the budget for capital outlay would change dramatically. Without the ability to stockpile RAP the Town would have to pay for trucks to be standing by at sites to remove the RAP, which is far more expensive.
     1. In order to stay within the budget various projects would not be able to be completed. Would potentially need to not complete the Gunhouse Street and East Street to Ames Street paving projects.
  2. Anja Bernier and Ann Keitner discussed that they were satisfied with the capital outlay process this year and felt that issues were thoroughly examined.

**Motioned:** by Anja Bernier **Seconded:** Ann Keitnerto recommend approval of Article 6 **Voted:** 10-0-0.

# Article 7 – Community Preservation Act – annual funding and projects:

* 1. Committee will wait to vote this article due to the Community Preservation Committee meeting tonight to discuss this article.
  2. Fred Turkington, Town Administrator, stated he thinks that Town Meeting will be delayed due to the global pandemic and the printer for the warrant currently being closed.

# Article 18 – Artificial turf moratorium:

* 1. The proponent of this article has reached out to the Board of Health and they will be discussing this issue at their meeting next week.
  2. Committee discussed it would be prudent to wait to vote on this article until the Board of Health weighs in on this issue.
  3. Judy Crosby, speaking as a citizen who is also a member of the school committee, discussed that Dr. Greer, Superintendent of Schools, presented artificial turf as the preferred material, and that the Standing Building Committee has voted 7-3 in favor of artificial turf. There must be a field in place by the time the new high school opens in three years. A vote for this moratorium is in effect a vote for natural grass over artificial turf.
     1. It may be premature for the Finance Committee to vote on this issue without discussing it with the School Committee.
  4. Debbie Tatro of Sustainable Sharon discussed that the cost of laying down natural grass is approximately $200,000 and the cost for laying down artificial turf is $1.1 million.
  5. The Committee discussed that they would like to hear from opponents of the moratorium in order to be thorough and hear both sides of the issue.

# Article 19 – Limit use of Recycled Pavement:

* 1. Board of Health is meeting soon to discuss this issue. Finance Committee will wait to vote this article until Board of Health has met and potentially weighed in on this issue.

# Article 20 – Adjustments to size of parcels within recreational and residential overlay district.

* 1. Planning Board has not yet met to discuss this issue.

**Motioned:** by Arnold Cohen **Seconded:** Patricia-Lee Achornto recommend approval of Article 20 subject to reconsideration after the Planning Board votes **Voted:** 10-0-0.

# Article 21 – Acquire easements on South Main Street.

* 1. Appraisal stated that total amount is approximately $46,000 for acquiring easements. Of this amount approximately $42,000 will be paid to the Sharon Marketplace.
  2. Committee discussed whether letters have been sent to abutters. Fred Turkington stated he knows the letter has been drafted, but unsure if abutters have received the letters yet.
  3. Committee members expressed their frustration that abutters are just now finding out about the permanent easements, when outreach was discussed almost one month ago. Stated this is an important step in the project moving forward. Would like concerns regarding outreach delay to be written up in the article.

**Motioned:** by Anja Bernier **Seconded:** Ann Keitnerto recommend approval of Article 21 **Voted:** 10-0-0.

# Article 24 – Authorization to transfer Rattlesnake Hill property from Select Board to Conservation Commission:

**Motioned:** by Anja Bernier **Seconded:** Ann Keitnerto recommend approval of Article 24 **Voted:** 10-0-0.

# Article 25 – Grant to Mass Audubon a conservation restriction on Inter Lochen Park:

* 1. Unable to use this land for athletic fields due to protected habitat and inaccessibility.

**Motioned:** by Anja Bernier **Seconded:** Ann Keitnerto recommend approval of Article 25 **Voted:** 10-0-0.

# Solar energy agreement update:

* 1. Fred Turkington discussed that the Select Board met last week and KP Law will review existing leases and be engaged in discussions in the future.
  2. Energy Advisory Committee meets tomorrow as well as April 6th and they are expected to give recommendations. New counsel is looking to meet in April to assist the Board in finalizing the agreements.
  3. Committee discussed the concerns that were brought up at the last Finance Committee meeting on March 23rd regarding possible backdating the signatures and notarization of the agreement. Discussed that they need to be able to rely on Town Counsel for determining what is and what isn’t legal, and are very concerned that wrong advice was given.
  4. Julie Rowe, from the Solar Design Review Committee, expressed surprise that KP Law was selected as they are experts in municipal law but not solar energy law. Discussed that a member of the Solar Design Review Committee has resigned due to concerns regarding the ethics of the agreement being backdated.
  5. Questions were asked regarding how KP Law was selected. Committee discussed that these are valid questions but they should be asked of the Select Board who will be able to provide the answers.
  6. Committee feels encouraged that 3rd party legal counsel is involved and would like to see the solar projects proceed for the Town.

# Liaison Updates:

* 1. Sharon Schools - Ann Keitner discussed:
     1. Dr. Greer sent out a letter to parents updating them on remote learning requirements of 3 hours per day after April 6th. School closure days until April 6th are to be considered snow days.
  2. Planning Board - Arnie Cohen
     1. No updates.
  3. Standing Building Committee - Gordon Gladstone:
     1. No updates.
  4. Library - Charles Goodman:
     1. No updates.

1. Minutes to be Voted: March 23,2020

**Motion:** by Anja Bernier **Seconded:** Ann Keitner to approve the March 23, 2020 minutes **Voted:** 10-0-0.

# Topics not reasonably anticipated by the Chair in 48 hours:

* 1. Dan Lewenberg discussed that he will be adding an additional Finance Committee meeting in April to discuss and vote on the remaining articles. Will choose a date that allows other committees to meet first, may be on a Monday or a Thursday evening, but will not be on April 20th because it is a holiday.

# Adjournment:

**Motion:** by Ira Miller **Seconded:** Anja Bernier to adjourn the meeting **Voted:** 10-0-0.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:35 pm.