

MINUTES
SHARON BOARD OF SELECTMEN
October 15, 2013

The meeting of the Sharon Board of Selectmen was opened at 7:08pm in the David I. Clifton, Jr. Ballroom at the Sharon Community Center with Chairman Walter “Joe” Roach, Selectmen William Heitin, Selectmen Richard Powell and Town Administrator Benjamin E. Puritz.

Fire Station Heating System Bid Award Approval

Fire Chief Jim Wright was present for the discussion. He explained that the project was put out to bid and the Town received nine responses. Reference checks were completed on the low bidder, the provided all of their paperwork and the agreement is before the Board. Chief Wright explained what improvements are being made to the heating system at the station.

MOTION: To enter into an agreement with Atlantic Power Service, Inc. for the work as described in the amount of \$36,408

(Powell – Heitin) 3-0 **PASSES**

Approval of Minutes – September 27, 2013

MOTION: To approve the regular session minutes of September 27, 2013

(Heitin – Powell) 3-0 **PASSES**

Approval of Minutes – October 1, 2013

MOTION: To approve the regular session minutes of October 1, 2013 and hold the executive session minutes of October 1, 2013

(Powell – Heitin) 3-0 **PASSES**

Banner Request – Sharon Veterans’ Day Program – November 5-12

MOTION: To approve the banner request from the Veterans’ Agent from November 5-12, 2013 (2nd position) for the Sharon Veterans’ Day Program – fee to be waived

(Powell – Heitin) 3-0 **PASSES**

Community Innovation Challenge Grant

DPW Superintendent Eric Hooper was present. He explained that a bid, done through SERSG, has been put together to get some state money to look at stormwater problems.

MOTION: To authorize the Chairman of the Board of Selectmen to sign on behalf of the Town the Community Innovation Challenge Grant

(Heitin – Powell) 3-0 **PASSES**

Solar Salt and Rock Salt Contract Award Approval

DPW Superintendent Eric Hooper was present. He explained that the Town has contracts in place for both solar salt and rock salt for the winter in the event that one vendor runs short and isn't able to provide.

MOTION: To approve the solar salt and rock salt contracts with Eastern Minerals at 47.20 per ton and American Rock Salt Company, at 50.90 per ton, as described

(Powell – Heitin) 3-0 **PASSES**

Train Station Parking Ticket Authorization

DPW Superintendent Eric Hooper was present. He explained that the Town used to have crossing guards write tickets, but there have been retirements and other changes and they are looking for the ability to continue to write tickets. Ms. Blackler will be the primary and the two Town employees will be backups to Ms. Blackler. This authorization is to write tickets for the daily spots. The Police Department does sweeps of the quarterly lot.

MOTION: To authorize the following individuals to issue parking tickets at the railroad lot: Michael Teixeira, Elizabeth Curley and Beverly Blackler

(Powell – Heitin) 3-0 **PASSES**

Nominations for Boston Region Metropolitan Planning Organization

Selectman Heitin noted there are two positions and two applicants.

MOTION: To support the ballot relative to elections for the Boston Region Metropolitan Planning Organization – two towns running unopposed are the City of Somerville and the Town of Framingham

(Powell – Heitin) 3-0 **PASSES**

Town Administrator Screening Committee

Selectman Powell recused himself from the discussion. Selectman Heitin noted that he has been contacted with several individuals, as has Chairman Roach, and the Board will discuss the Committee at their October 24 meeting.

Fall Town Meeting Warrant Discussion

Selectman Heitin said that it is in the best interest of the Board to delay the vote and discussion on Articles 2, 3 & 4 relative to the development at Rattlesnake Hill. There is some confusion out there and the Board should allow for other boards and committees to spend some additional time to study the proposal. He suggests that the issue not be taken up at the Fall Town Meeting, but perhaps at a Special Town Meeting in the future, and allow a two-month period for boards and committees to review, study and discuss the proposal. He also suggests that the boards and committees formally communicate in writing to the Board their questions or concerns. The Board will try to get their questions answered and come back together for a community presentation with the developer.

Selectman Heitin went on to say that the property is not for sale whatsoever, there are some people in town who believe there are sources of money available to purchase the property. He has consulted with legislators and others and has been told that there is no money available. These individuals can try to

raise money during this two-month period and if they are able to get money, then the Town can try to negotiate an acquisition. He has spoken to the developer and while they can't promise that they won't proceed with their initial intentions, he hopes the Town can show good faith effort in digesting the information and study the proposal.

Chairman Roach noted that if we do go back to a Special Town Meeting, Brickstone Corporation should pay for the Special Town Meeting. Selectman Powell agrees with both of his colleagues – there are too many unanswered questions and it gives people more time to look at the proposal. We should use time productively and not wait until the last minute. He encouraged the boards and committees to use the time well and encouraged residents to stay informed.

MOTION: To not take any action associated with the three articles for Rattlesnake Hill
(Heitin – Powell) 3-0 **PASSES**

Selectman Heitin noted that the Board is still waiting on a figure for Article 7, relative to roadway improvements money.

Selectman Heitin explained that the Town recently received a downgrade in its bond rating by Standard and Poor's. The Town has had lengthy discussions with S&P about the Town building its reserves and Selectman Heitin said that if the Town doesn't take any action on the stabilization article, Article 9, we will be downgraded again. He suggests slowly building up the account and recommends putting \$300,000 into Stabilization. Selectman Powell agrees that \$300,000 is an achievable amount. Chairman Roach thinks that \$300,000 is a good start and notes that we wouldn't be in the position we are now if the Town hadn't put money into Stabilization earlier.

Alex Corin, member of the Finance Committee, asked Selectman Heitin for the funding sources for the \$300,000. Selectman Heitin replied that the Town will provide whatever information they can about the funding sources and Selectman Powell noted that we must go forward.

MOTION: To recommend \$300,000 for the Stabilization Fund
(Heitin – Powell) 3-0 **PASSES**

Topics Not Reasonably Anticipated 48 Hours in Advance of Meeting

Chairman Roach informed the Board that they must name the Board's representatives to the Capital Outlay Committee and the Priorities Committee.

MOTION: To name Selectman Heitin and Chairman Roach to the Capital Outlay Committee, with Selectman Powell as an alternate
(Powell – Heitin) 3-0 **PASSES**

MOTION: To name Selectman Powell and Chairman Roach to the Priorities Committee, with Selectman Heitin as an alternate
(Heitin – Powell) 3-0 **PASSES**

Susan Peck – Board of Health Interview

Ms. Peck was unable to attend.

Mary Tobin – Housing Partnership Interview

Ms. Tobin was unable to attend.

Commission on Disabilities – FY15 Budget

Chairman Paul Remy and Vice Chair Katrin Andberg were present for the discussion. Ms. Andberg noted that the Commission's funding has primarily come from the handicapped parking violations but that there has been a sharp decline in the money coming in. They are looking for an allocation of \$3,000 to cover their costs. Selectman Heitin suggested that the Commission work with the Town Administrator and the Finance Director to come up with a solution to get an annual allocation. Selectman Powell noted that it is difficult for the Commission to do its good work with the limited resources they have.

Historical Commission – FY15 Budget

Chairman Bruce Rosenbaum was present for the discussion. Mr. Rosenbaum noted that the Commission's budget is \$650, and they are okay with level funding. The money is used primarily for administrative purposes, like mailings. They currently have five members, as they have lost a couple of members.

Animal Inspector – FY15 Budget

Edwin Little was present for the discussion. Mr. Little put in a 2% increase in his salary and is holding the same amount for mileage. He explained that he inspects animals, other than cats and dogs, as they need to be permitted by the Board of Health. He also responds to complaints and explained what steps he takes in the event of an animal bite. He added that if someone applies for an animal permit, he conducts a pre-inspection even before the Board of Health takes action.

Law – FY15 Budget

Town Administrator Puritz presented a level-funded FY15 law budget. He noted that the Town has been creative in defraying legal costs and added that this line item covers Town Counsel, Labor Counsel and experts. He told the Board that the current line item is on track for this fiscal year.

Town Report – FY15 Budget

Town Administrator Puritz presented the Town Report budget for FY15. He said that the Town is going to do as much in-house as possible. This line item includes the cost of printing enough reports for each household as well as the delivery to each household. Chairman Roach noted that the Town is going to put the town report on the website and perhaps, down the line, print a limited number of copies instead of delivering to each household.

The Board took a five-minute recess.

Water Rates Hearing

MOTION: To open the public hearing at 8:00pm
(Heitin – Powell) 3-0 **PASSES**

DPW Superintendent Eric Hooper noted that the Board of Selectmen held a public hearing a couple of months ago and he took the comments from the meeting into consideration and came up with this new proposal. He changed the rates slightly but moved the break points for the rate structure itself to reduce the amount of subsidized water.

Mr. Hooper noted that there are two numbers to keep in mind: \$600 – what people should be paying to pay for the annual operating costs and infrastructure. The other number is 65 – as in 65 gallons/person/day or less. He tried to create less subsidized water. With this new rate structure, he is generating \$2.8 million in revenue, but they really need \$3.1 million. Mr. Hooper noted that the rate is slightly higher in the spring and summer.

Chairman Roach opened up the hearing for public comment.

Paul Lauenstein, 4 Gavins Pond Road: Read a prepared statement, in which he provided the Board with a history of the issue, including maintenance and conservation factors. He also provided the Board with his analysis. He noted that the proposed rates would encourage conservation, especially in summer when it matters the most, but they would only generate \$2.8 million, which is not enough to keep up with infrastructure maintenance. He believes the Town should add \$2 to each of the proposed summer rate blocks to encourage water conservation in summer. That would spread the economic burden across all users. The Town should also add a fifth rate block at \$18 per thousand gallons for usage over 30,000 gallons. Setting the water rates high enough to meet the cost of maintaining our water supply infrastructure, and structuring the rates to encourage everyone to use water efficiently, especially in summer when it matters the most, will serve the best interests of the community in the long run.

Robert Parrish, 343 Bay Road: Questioned where the money is going to from the water tower leases for cell usage. He believes the Town should consider a larger, upfront cost to pay for fire protection. He agrees with another rate block higher than 22,500 gallons. Mr. Hooper replied that he is opposed to higher blocks as it perpetuates the problem and also doesn't want to penalize the efficient users. Mr. Hooper noted that the major items were part of the twenty-year plan include a supplemental connection to the MWRA for emergencies, treatment at Well #6 and a new replacement well as one of the existing sites.

David Ableman, 75 South Main Street: Provided the Board with his own analysis. He believes people need to think of water as a utility. There are three significant issues the Board needs to address: unaccounted for water; excessive users; and rewarding conservers. His proposed solutions: retain the basic program that Mr. Hooper has proposed; create a fifth bracket; and introduce a mechanism to encourage conservation. He believes that Mr. Hooper's model needs to be massaged slightly.

Sarah Windman, 607 Massapoag Avenue: Wonders why the Town isn't going to raise rates to get to the \$3.1 million, as we are getting behind and our wells are getting older.

Selectman Heitin asked if we have considered tacking on a betterment for a period of time to address infrastructure improvements.

Alex Korin, 18 Robin Road: Suggested that if the Water Department read the meters once a week, they would see how many people are in the house. He agrees that water is a limited resource and added that because the water quality is poor, he has had to replace some equipment in his house.

Paul Lauenstein noted that regarding an infrastructure fee, it doesn't do anything to encourage conservation. Adding to the usage fee is better than an infrastructure fee.

Donna Cover, 148 Pond Street: Noted her concern about water conservation issues and believes that anything we can do to save water should be done. She is also concerned about how to deal with the shortage of funds to deal with the fact that we don't have the money for infrastructure improvements.

Herb Gould, 23 Huntington Avenue: Believes the best we can do is what Mr. Hooper is proposing. Water is a public utility and each person should pay the same amount. He thinks the town should obtain a written opinion about whether or not it's legal to know family size in each house. He believes people should volunteer that information each quarter and if not, they should be charged the highest rate.

David Crosby, 23 Aztec Way and Chairman of the Water Management Advisory Committee, noted that irrigation should be metered separately so the Town can charge correctly.

Paul Lauenstein noted that irrigation meters would cost a couple of hundred thousand dollars, which is money the Town does not have. With the block rate structure, the highest block rate basically addresses irrigation.

Selectman Powell asked Mr. Hooper about the number of gallons used per person per day – is this factored into the rate structure and Mr. Hooper said that it does not. Selectman Powell thinks going to a per person rate structure is a viable proposal. Mr. Hooper said that a nine-block rate structure but it was too unwieldy was looked at and that he also tried to make it easy for people to understand their bills.

Lois Miller, 112 Glendale Road: Is concerned about the idea of installing irrigation meters.

Chairman Roach thanked Mr. Hooper for his hard work as well as well as the WMAC. He noted that the Board will not be voting on the proposal tonight.

MOTION: To close the public hearing at 9:10pm
(Heitin – Powell) 3-0 **PASSES**

Executive Session

MOTION: To enter into executive session to discuss Police Superior Officers Collective Bargaining, a real property transfer, and pending litigation, and at the evening, to adjourn for the evening. Discussion of any of these items in open session would be detrimental to the Town.

Roach: Aye
Powell: Aye
Heitin: Aye

Adjournment

The Board adjourned at 9:41pm