

MINUTES
SHARON SELECT BOARD
June 8, 2023

The meeting of the Sharon Select Board was called to order at 6:00 pm by Chair Hanna R. Switekowski remotely via Zoom. Select Board members Kiana Pierre-Louis and Emily Smith-Lee were in attendance as was Town Administrator Frederic E. Turkington, Jr. and Assistant Town Administrator, Lauren Barnes.

Interviews for Council on Aging Director

Ms. Switekowski began the meeting by stating there would be no public comment at this meeting. The Board will be conducting interviews with candidates for the Council on Aging Director position.

Each candidate had the opportunity to respond to the following questions:

- Please tell us about your education and experiences and how it has prepared you to work as a director of senior citizen services and programs?
- What specifically about Sharon and the current programming and services for older adults do you find appealing? Discuss the management challenges and skills necessary in working with both a small staff and large pool of dedicated volunteers.
- Please describe your experience interacting with citizens from a diverse number of cultures, ethnicity, religions, and languages that differ from that of the experience of most American-born citizens?
- What adjustments to programs would you make to be sensitive to these differences?
- How will you assess the needs of the targeted adult population?
- What steps will you take and what strategies will you employ to develop a response to meet those identified needs?
- What programs of which you are aware or have observed in dealing with comparable towns through your work would you consider trying in Sharon?
- What are your key strengths pertinent to this position?
- What would you identify as an area in which you would seek to gain further knowledge?
- Can you conclude by sharing anything about yourself or your experiences that wasn't covered by the prepared questions that you wish to share with the Select Board?

The Board was introduced first to Ms. Gloria O'Brien and thanked her for attending the meeting this evening. Ms. O'Brien provided her background, which includes a degree in Human Services. She has worked with seniors for over 40 years in a variety of capacities, including as a social worker, nursing home administrator, and assisted living executive director. She is interested in working for a Council on Aging because she wants to have a smaller staff and be able to build better relationships with the seniors she serves. She also wants to develop more interesting programming and entice more residents to attend the Council on Aging.

Ms. O'Brien is aware that Sharon has a diverse population and is willing to work with local churches and religious institutions to overcome any cultural barriers. She is a people person who loves to brainstorm and troubleshoot. She is also good with finances and keeping budgets in check. Ms. O'Brien believes that her experience and skills would be a valuable asset to the Council on Aging. She is a hard worker who is dedicated to making a difference in the lives of seniors.

Ms. O'Brien is fluent in English but not in other languages. This could be a challenge in a town with a diverse population, but she is willing to work with local organizations to overcome this barrier. She is aware that the needs of seniors have changed since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic and is committed to developing programming that meets the needs of the current population.

Ms. O'Brien is a strong advocate for seniors. She believes that they deserve to have access to quality services and programs that help them live their best lives.

The Board then met with Mary Beth Caruso and thanked her for attending the meeting this evening.

Ms. Caruso is a highly experienced professional with a passion for working with older adults. She has a wealth of experience in a variety of settings, including the state, Perkins School for the Blind, and North Hill. She is skilled in a variety of areas, including programming, budgeting, and working with advisory boards. She is also committed to making whatever she does successful.

In her remarks, Ms. Caruso highlighted the following areas of her experience:

- Her work with the state, where she worked with families of students with visual impairments and helped them access services.
- Her work at Perkins School for the Blind, where she started a program for older adults and worked with families to make transitions.
- Her work at North Hill, where she oversaw programming, cultural events, volunteers, and trips.

Ms. Caruso also discussed her strengths and what she would bring to the position. She is enthusiastic, passionate, and able to get along well with others. She is also a good listener and is able to support staff to grow and change. She is experienced in working with community committees and is a good public speaker.

Ms. Caruso is excited about the opportunity to work with the Council on Aging and to professionally grow. She believes that her experience and skills would be a valuable asset to the organization and thanked the Board for their consideration.

Joint meeting with the Planning Board

At 7:00 pm., the members of the Planning Board joined the Select Board to hear two presentations.

Ms. Laura Smead of JM Goldson provided a presentation on proposed technical assistance to be provided by JM Goldson to the Town of Sharon concerning the implementation of new MBTA community laws and necessary multifamily zoning regulations. The conversation involved an introduction by the Senior Community Planner Tim Goldson. JM Goldson is a firm specializing in land use planning, housing plans, and zoning work across several communities. Ms. Smead elaborated on the statutory requirement of the MBTA communities' law, which mandates multifamily housing provisions for communities adjacent to or connected with an MBTA service line.

The core requirements of this law include permitting multifamily housing, establishing reasonable zoning district size, and achieving a minimum gross density of 15 housing units per acre within a half-mile radius of an MBTA station. Age and bedroom restrictions are prohibited, ensuring housing suitability for families. Sharon, with 6581 existing housing units, must zone for a minimum capacity of 987 multifamily units by December 2024 to comply. JM Goldson initiated a working group involving town representatives to assess existing and proposed zoning and identify compliance obstacles. Through iterations and evaluations, they outlined recommendations for achieving compliance, aiming to align with existing town goals. The proposed solution entailed an overlay district comprising two sub-districts: the existing mixed-use Overlay district and a general residential area. Maps illustrated excluded lands due to environmental or infrastructure constraints.

The proposed zoning was adjusted to include both multifamily and mixed-use language, conforming to the recommended model bylaw. The reordered structure, definitions, dimensional standards, and additional provisions like bicycle storage, EV charging, and affordable housing were also integrated. The proposed overlay district aims to balance legal compliance and practical feasibility. Further engagement with the community and Planning Board is envisioned to refine and finalize the proposed zoning.

The Select Board thanked Ms. Smead for her presentation.

The Board heard next from Mr. Karl Seidman on a potential District Improvement Financing plan, an innovative municipal funding mechanism designed to support economic development and enhance infrastructure within designated areas. The speaker, an economic development consultant, outlined their collaboration with the town, facilitated by CINAHL, Peter, and Rob, to implement DIF as a tool for driving growth and improvements in the post office square region.

DIF operates under Chapter 40Q of state law, enabling municipalities to fund specific geographic zones, referred to as development districts, using incremental property tax revenue generated by new private investments classified as new growth. This additional tax revenue can be retained and reinvested within the district for approved activities, services, and projects. The presentation emphasized that DIF doesn't introduce new taxes or change local tax rates; it channels incremental property tax revenue for targeted improvements.

The mechanism requires establishing a base date and developing a development program outlining the projects or activities funded by the incremental tax revenue. DIF provides flexibility through the creation of invested revenue districts, allowing revenue collection from specific sub-areas. Examples from various suburban communities demonstrated DIF's application in funding infrastructure projects, mixed-use development, and road improvements.

Mr. Seidman detailed the requirements for establishing a DIF district, including defining the proposed district, conducting public hearings, and obtaining approval from the local governing body. Administration involves assessing base values, certifying new growth, and managing the collected tax increment for investment in the approved projects.

The presentation highlighted the ongoing DIF study and plan for the Post Office square area, aiming to evaluate the feasibility and desirability of establishing a DIF district. The process involves defining district boundaries, identifying priority projects, analyzing deferred revenue contributions, and ultimately creating a development program for town meeting approval. The speaker noted the intention to engage the public through informative forums to ensure transparency and gather input.

Deliberation on Council on Aging Executive Director candidates

Mr. Turkington explained that he, Mr. Maidman, and the search committee interviewed 18 candidates for the COA Director position. They narrowed the field down to four candidates for interviews. The remaining two candidates are Beth and Gloria, both of whom have extensive experience working with seniors. Mr. Maidman has expressed a slight preference for Gloria, but Mr. Turkington believes that both candidates are capable and qualified for the job. He also mentioned that the burnout rate for Assisted Living Directors is high, so he is impressed that both Beth and Gloria have been in the field for so long. Ultimately, the decision of who to hire will be up to the board of directors.

Ms. Smith-Lee commented that what she really liked about Beth was the mix of in the community experience and I shouldn't say it that way because senior facilities call themselves communities too, but in the broader community and the facility experience because, Sharon needs the programming expertise and I think it's brilliant to tap into that talent pool for that. But I was impressed with the way she talked about being in people's homes, getting to know families, working with different types of people. She suspects that not everything the COA does is about programming. It's at the center, but a lot of it is interacting with our seniors, in the community. So that struck me. It didn't strike me as a negative for Gloria, but it struck me as a strong positive.

Ms. Pierre-Louis remarked that Mr. Maidman's comments helped her understand his preference for Gloria. The Board felt that while both candidates have very different strengths, they would both be an asset in the COA director role.

MOTION: To appoint Gloria O'Brien to the position of Council on Aging Director.
(Smith-Lee – Pierre-Louis)

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

Adjourn

MOTION: To adjourn at 8:17 pm.
(Smith-Lee – Pierre-Louis)

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

List of Documents

- Resumes (2)
- Presentation
- Technical memorandum