

MINUTES
SHARON SELECT BOARD
February 27, 2024

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 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

Mr. Sam Liao of Turning Mill Road wished to comment on the proposed changes to the personnel bylaw. He speaks as a member of the public and advised that he served recently on the Personnel Board. He suggested that the Select Board consider amending the appointment process for the Personnel Board. It is currently an appointment by the Town Moderator. Mr. Liao proposes an appointment panel consisting of a member of the Finance Committee and a member of the Select Board in addition to the Moderator. Secondly, he proposes renaming the Personnel Board the Human Resources Administrative and Policy Board, which he believes will bring the Board into the 21st century. He further believes that this will promote a better understanding of the work of the Board as well as attract more volunteers to be considered for appointment to the Board.

Public Hearing – Lily Lane and Juniper Road roadway layout

MOTION: To open the public hearing at 7:07 pm.
(Switekowski– Smith-Lee)

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

Mr. O’Cain advised explained that part of the acceptance of changing the status of a roadway that is part a new subdivision from privately-owned to a public way, there are a total of three votes that need to be taken. First, the Select Board votes their intention to layout and refers the matter to the Planning Board for a 45-day review and non-binding recommendation. Second, the Select Board should vote to adopt the layout and file such vote the Town Clerk at least seven days before Town Meeting. Finally, the matter should be considered on the floor of Town Meeting. The Town currently retains the developer’s bond to assure vegetation management and maintenance conforms to Town’s standards and the development agreement.

The Engineering Division of the Department of Public Works requests that the Sharon Select Board vote to formally express their intention to layout Lily Lane and Juniper Road as shown on the as-built plan attached.

Ms. Smith-Lee asked for clarification on the impact of the roadway when the remaining undeveloped lots become built. Mr. O’Cain stated that a bond will be requested. Acceptance of the roadway means that the homeowners will then have snow removal services and other typical road maintenance by the Town.

There being no public comment, the Board closed the public hearing.

MOTION: To close the public hearing at 7:17 pm.
(Smith-Lee – Switekowski)

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

MOTION: To declare the intent to layout Lily Lane and Juniper Road as shown on the as-built plan and refer to the Planning Board for recommendation as discussed.
(Switlekowski– Smith-Lee)

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

Neponset River Watershed Association Municipal Vulnerability Preparedness

Mr. Jeff Frisch of NEPRA gave a presentation on the status of the Neponset River Watershed Association resilience along with Mr. Martin Pillsbury of MAPC and Indrani Ghosh of Weston and Sampson. The update included the work which was completed during Phase I of the vulnerability preparedness project. It was explained that this is a collaborative effort involving communities impacted by the Neponset River watershed. Phase 1 included development of a flood model. The objectives include fostering partnerships to advance climate resilience planning and implementation efforts in the watershed, determining goals and priority actions for implementation across communities, identifying and pursuing technical assistance and funding opportunities to support climate resilience projects and supporting implementation throughout the region.

Phase two of the resilience project involves assembling a climate collaborative steering committee. It is recommended that Sharon nominate two individuals to serve in this capacity. Next, the project team will identify key community organizations, particularly those working with and/or serving priority populations disproportionately affected by climate change. Finally, support of regional efforts to build climate resilience throughout the watershed.

The Board thanked Mr. Frisch, Mr. Pillsbury, and Ms. Ghosh for their presentation.

Public hearing – water rate adjustment effective April 1, 2024

MOTION: To open the public hearing at 7:45 pm
(Smith-Lee – Switlekowski)

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

Mr. Hooper advised that recent rate increases have been small, following the Water Management Advisory Committee's previous approach. However, the cost of producing water has changed due to the requirement to treat all water for PFAS constituents. A proposed rate increase aims to increase overall revenues by 12% and absorb the cost of the treatment program without using retained earnings. Future budget projections show the need for rate increases to maintain salary and cost increases, as well as water main replacement. The Commonwealth recommends maintaining a Retained Earnings balance of 50% of the operating budget. The treatment facility project's final cost is uncertain, but using Retained Earnings to offset rate increases is not recommended at this time. The proposed water rate increase has been approved by the Water Management Advisory Committee. The proposed changes include an increase in the fixed fee, changes to all use categories, and adjustments to block break points. A subsidized fee for income-qualified residents will be retained. Approximately 500-750 households will remain in the lowest block, and 500-700 households will remain in the second-rate block. Approximately 20% of Sharon households will reach the top block rate. To qualify for the subsidized Capital Project Fee waiver, single income resident households must have a maximum annual income of \$24,980, and multiple income households can earn a combined annual income of no more than \$33,820. Applications for the subsidized fee waiver will be available at the Sharon Council on Aging.

The following proposed water rate increase has been reviewed and approved by the Water Management Advisory committee at its meeting on January 25th, 2024.

Capital Project Fee	Residential		Other*	Irrigation Only
	\$100.00	\$100.00		
	Spring/Summer	Fall/Winter		
0-4,000 gallons	\$5.50	\$5.00	\$5.00	\$10.50
4,000-6,000 gallons	\$9.75	\$8.75	\$8.50	\$10.50
6,000-15,000 gallons	\$12.50	\$11.25	\$8.50	\$12.50
15,000-25,000 gallons	\$14.50	\$13.75	\$9.00	\$14.50
>25,000 gallons	\$16.75	\$15.75	\$9.50	\$16.75

* Agriculture, commercial and industrial uses

Fall/Winter: October through March

Spring/Summer: April through September

The highlights of the proposed changes include:

1. Increased the fixed fee from \$85/quarter to \$100/quarter. Revenue collected through this fee is used to fund PFAS treatment for presently contaminated Wells #2, #3 and #4 and to support the recent debt for water main replacement projects in the Chestnut Street and Heights neighborhoods, Massapoag Avenue and Pond Street, as well as large capital projects such as the Emergency MWRA Connection, the Massapoag Avenue Tank and the meter replacement projects.
2. A change to all use categories, including "Other" which is being brought closer to residential winter rates and "Irrigation Only" to match residential summer rates.
3. A change to break point between the 3rd and 4th blocks moves customers who are large users from the 3rd block up into the 4th block. With continued conservation future reductions in block break points may have to be implemented to keep revenue steady.
4. Retain subsidized fee for income qualified residents using the criteria set for subsidized trash collection, i.e., waiving the base fee and charging for water used only.

Based on past use history, approximately 500 - 750 households will remain in the lowest block, and an additional 500 - 700 households will remain in the second-rate block. These two blocks represented approximately 20% of accounts and are primarily 1 and 2 person households and elderly residents.

Also based on past use history, approximately 20% of Sharon households will have water use that will reach the top block rate.

To qualify for subsidized Capital Project Fee waiver, single income resident households may have a maximum annual income of \$24,980, multiple income households may earn a combined annual income of no more than \$33,820. Applications for subsidized fee waiver will be available at the Sharon Council on Aging administrative offices at the Sharon Community Center. Residents who receive this subsidized rate must apply for the subsidy annually.

There being no public comment, the Board closed the public hearing.

MOTION: To close the public hearing at 7:58 pm.
(Smith-Lee – Switekowski)

Switekowski: AYE

Smith-Lee: AYE

Pierre-Louis: AYE
3-0 **PASSES**

MOTION: To approve the water rates as proposed, effective April 1, 2024.
(Smith-Lee – Switlekowski)

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

Budget review – Department of Public Works

The proposed DPW Subtotal budget for FY2025 is \$4,512,870, representing a 0.98% increase from the previous year. Staffing levels have remained unchanged since 2005, except for the addition of a night custodian and Forestry and Grounds staff person in previous years. The budget includes funding for an electrician, thanks to the debt burden being paid off from switching to LED streetlights. The budget for salaries and wages is \$2,719,816, with increases primarily driven by contractual obligations and the new electrician position. Materials and services budget is \$1,627,054, mainly due to increased expenses for facilities maintenance, salt costs, and fuel prices. Gasoline and diesel prices are expected to remain high in FY2024. The maintenance plan for Town playing fields is continued, and the budget for Street Lighting has decreased due to the retirement of the debt assumed during the changeover to LED lights. The budget includes electricity costs, contractual services, and materials and supplies expenses. Revenues from railroad parking are expected to stabilize at 25% of pre-quarantine levels.

The Water Department budget assumes sufficient capacity in revenues, retained earnings, and borrowing ability. The budget for water-related expenses includes salaries and wages, operating costs, principal and interest costs for borrowings, temporary PFAS operating costs, and continued engineering services. The capital improvement budget includes funding for the water treatment facility and the Cottage Street School neighborhood project. Expected revenue for FY2025 is \$6,685,020 from water rates. The Water Department is "Enterprise" funded, meaning expenses must be funded via revenue generated within the department. Rate structures for water in Sharon include flat rate, uniform rate, increasing rate, and combination rate. The goal is to develop water prices and rate structures that encourage efficiency, conservation, long-term sustainability, equitable distribution of costs, and affordability. Evaluating usage patterns helps identify trends and changes in revenues. Weather-driven changes can impact revenue greater than consumption reductions due to the rate structure.

The Board thanked Mr. Hooper for his review of the budget.

Budget review – Lake Massapoag Advisory Committee

Ms. Laura Russell of the Lake Massapoag Advisory Committee provided the Board with a summary of the proposed FY 2025 budget. The Lake Massapoag Advisory Committee, with the support of its volunteers and funded administrative help, is working on various projects aimed at lake testing, reducing phosphorus levels, and controlling invasive weeds. The budget shows the impact of adjusted vs. requested funding, and the leveraged funds section has been updated. LMAC has secured grants and is launching campaigns to achieve its goals, including a comprehensive Watershed-Based Plan (WBP) for 2025-2050 and a high-dose alum treatment for legacy phosphorus. Additionally, alternative technologies are being investigated for invasive weed control. The organization emphasizes the need for ongoing administrative support and funding for maintenance and testing new technologies.

LMAC requests a big picture review of lake stewardship options, especially regarding stormwater runoff and specific areas of concern. A draft warrant article proposes alternative public notice methods, including electronic return receipt of certified mail. The need for legal advice regarding this proposal is highlighted.

The \$525,000 CPC grant for alum treatment has been approved and is pending reviews by the Board of Health, Conservation Commission, and Planning Board.

The Board thanked Ms. Russell for this overview of the budget.

Personnel bylaw updates and governance

The Board discussed the progress made during the joint meeting with the Personnel Board last week. Ms. Pierre-Louis gave an overview of the previous discussion. The updates to the personnel bylaw have been drafted with the help of a consultant and are nearly ready and will be finalized by the Personnel Board shortly. Both Boards agreed to independently discuss thoughts on advisory versus oversight and the appointment process.

Ms. Switekowski maintains her position that the Select Board should be the appointing authority for the Personnel Board. Ms. Smith-Lee also prefers the open and transparent process in place already by the Select Board as they meet openly at least every two weeks. In addition, there is a level of accountability with the process as well.

Mr. Turkington mentioned his concerns, particularly that the Personnel Board does not “set” a ceiling for collective bargaining. They do not advise the School Committee on employment issues. If they are advisory, they will direct our office to conduct a salary survey. Review the survey and advise the Select Board on a salary range based on the data of peer communities. Tonight, they are meeting to discuss whether they are willing to cede some of the setting authority versus advisory role on a variety of topics including search committees, classification, executive salaries. Non-union salaries make up 15 employees out of 155 employees on the town side. They are exercising authority on salary decisions which goes beyond verifying the performance system is administered fairly or writing a job description and recommending language for the job description. The decision on March 12 will be is there a compromise. Will the bylaw upgrades will be supported jointly or have the decision made by Town meeting. Alternatively, this could be developed further over the next year and proposed at 2025 Annual Town Meeting.

The Board will discuss further, jointly with the Personnel Board, during their meeting on March 12.

Order articles for Annual Town Meeting

A list, in the proposed order, was drafted and distributed to the Board for consideration. The Board deliberated and agreed on the following order:

Proposed Article No.	CA	Agenda Topic
1	CA	Act on Reports
2	CA	Sharon Friends School Fund Records and Appointments
3	CA	Approve Changes to Compensation Plan in Personnel By-Law
4	CA	Property Tax Exemptions
5	CA	Revolving Fund Authorizations
6	CA?	Amend the General By-Laws to Establish a Electric Vehicle Charging Stations Revolving Fund
7		Appoint Finance Committee Members and Nominating Committee of the Finance Committee Members
8		Compensation of Elected Officials
9		Capital Outlay
10		Fiscal Year 2025 Budget
11		Community Preservation Act Annual Funding and Projects
12		Amend General By-Law to codify role and authority of Moderator
13		Amend Personnel By-Law
14		Powers and appointing authority of Personnel Board

15		Citizen Petition - Special Act regarding the recall of elected officers
16		Amend General By-Law to establish removal provisions for appointed members of committees
17	CA?	Acceptance of MGL c.64G, s. 3D
18		Accept Lily Lane and Juniper Road as Public Ways
19		Land swap - septic for potential old library reuse
20		Multi-family zoning districts for MBTA communities
21		Amend Zoning By-Law - Modifications to Business District A
22		Citizen Petition - Extend Artificial Turf Field Moratorium for additional five years
23		General By-Law - Opt-In Specialized Stretch Code
24		General By-Law: Establish Historic District on East Street
25		Seek Home Rule Petition to Permit Legal Advertisements Online
26		\$1 Million Appropriation from Free Cash for treatment of Lake Massapoag

The Board felt that the order presented makes sense.

MOTION: To approve the order of articles for Town Meeting as discussed.
(Switekowski– Smith-Lee)

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

Consent calendar

- I. Vote to approve the following banner request/requests:
 - a. Sharon Soccer Association registration – March 4-11, 2024 in 1st position
 - b. Islamic Center of New England Sharon Eid Mubarak holiday greetings – April 8-15, 2024 in 1st position
- II. Vote to extend the term of the Governance Study Committee through the end of the May 2024 Annual Town Meeting
- III. Vote to reappoint Marc Bluestein as the Select Board appointee to the Community Preservation Committee through December 31, 2025
- IV. Vote to award a contract to MCI Contracting, Inc. of Stoughton, MA for Sharon Water Department Water Building Renovation Project in the amount of \$823,000

MOTION: To approve the consent calendar.
(Smith-Lee – Switekowski)

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

Report of the Town Administrator

Mr. Turkington provided a brief update due to the late hour. The current services budget is \$110,000 over the priorities number. Potential areas for reduction to current services were listed, if needed. Such measures include deferred hiring for vacant positions. There is time to finalize such actions.

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

None.

Adjourn

MOTION: To adjourn at 9:14 pm.
(Smith-Lee – Switlekowski)

Switlekowski: AYE

Smith-Lee: AYE

Pierre-Louis: AYE

3-0 **PASSES**

List of Documents

- Memorandum
- Roadway layout
- Presentation
- Hearing notice
- Proposed rates
- Budget summary (2)
- Proposed budget (2)
- Draft updated bylaw
- Article list
- Banner request forms
- Charge and composition
- Membership list
- Memorandum
- Notice of award
- Agreement