

MINUTES
SHARON SELECT BOARD
June 9, 2020

The meeting of the Sharon Select Board was called to order at 5:00 pm by Chair William A. Heitin remotely via Zoom in accordance with Governor Baker's emergency declaration regarding public gatherings. Select Board Members Emily E. Smith-Lee and Hanna R. Switekowski were in attendance as was Town Administrator Frederic E. Turkington, Jr; and Assistant to the Town Administrator, Lauren Barnes. The meeting commenced with the recitation of the Pledge of Allegiance followed by a moment of silence in recognition of all issues facing our community, our nation, and the world today, especially surrounding the death of George Floyd.

Economic Development Committee

Chair Heitin thanked the members for volunteering to re-engage the Economic Development Committee. This committee was put together a number of years ago to identify mutually beneficial business opportunities in Sharon such as billboards, cell towers and the Sharon Gallery. He would like the reactivated Economic Development Committee to review the updated mission statement and provide input for modification including any new goals. Information was provided to the members of the committee by the Town Administrator upon appointment which should be the basis for the first meeting along with a discussion of items completed, pending, and suggestions for the future. Mr. Heitin recommended that the EDC members work the Select Board office to arrange for Zoom meeting accommodations. A member of the Select Board would be happy to join in initial discussions to help get the ball rolling.

Mr. Turkington also thanked the committee members for stepping forward. He explained that the Town is pursuing a grant of \$10,000 for COVID-19 relief for microbusinesses with fewer than five employees. He has received lists of potential qualifying businesses and urged members to reach out to any business they may be aware of which might qualify.

The Town has recently received the authority to provide support for local restaurants by allowing outdoor seating. Restaurants are encouraged to submit a plan to the Select Board for outdoor seating to allow restaurants to provide for service beyond take-out and help rebuild business.

The discussion concluded with a brief discussion about the process for approval of applications.

MOTION: To approve outdoor seating and authorize the Town Administrator to review and approve applications subject to information flow to the Select Board
(Smith-Lee - Switekowski)

Heitin: AYE
Switekowski: AYE
Smith-Lee: AYE
3-0 **PASSES**

Senior Tax Relief Programs

Mr. Turkington stated that the discussion this evening continues from the Board's previous discussion on March 3, 2020. He has reviewed all programs available and feels that two items in particular should be followed up on. Outreach should be improved to encourage participation by those in need and development of a fund for the program which was adopted at Town Meeting which allows the Town to set up a fund for contributions

collected to help offset taxes of those residents in need of assistance thus allowing many seniors and longtime residents to remain in Sharon.

The information collected on the three local programs currently up and running with various degrees of participation was included the Board's materials for tonight's meeting. More discussion is needed on development of an annual appeal for elective tax relief contributions. The income difference between the trash assistance program and the water assistance program should be reviewed for parity.

The Board agreed that awareness of current programs is clearly lacking and wished to also point out that all assistance requested is kept confidential.

Mr. Turkington added that the current income eligibility requirements for the three existing programs are as follows:

	Individual	Couple/Family
Property Tax Work Off Abatement	\$61,900	\$88,000
Trash assistance	\$47,347	\$61,916
Water assistance	\$24,980	\$33,820

MOTION: To increase the income eligibility for the water assistance program to \$47,347 for individuals and \$61,916 for couples and families.
(Switekowski - Smith-Lee)

Heitin: AYE

Switekowski: AYE

Smith-Lee: AYE

3-0 **PASSES**

Diversity and Inclusion

Chair Heitin began with the meeting with the following statement.

"Thank you to those that have reached out to the Board and for the role you play in our Community as a voice of unity and a reminder that Sharon is a safe, welcoming, and diverse Town.

During my tenure on the Select Board, which has been shared with many of the people who share the screen alongside of me this evening, this isn't the first time we have addressed the community in an expression of unity resulting from a discriminatory and violent act of injustice in our country or the world. But from where we sit, one is too many.

Leadership is a role not to be taken lightly, especially in challenging times, and the most important thing we can do is to remind everyone that the leadership which is necessary to rise above the challenge lies within each and every member of our community. We are resilient because of our diversity and more so because we embrace, welcome, and accept that diversity.

Given the pandemic, these were already difficult times to layer-in the recent unacceptable acts of racism. At this critical time, we can simply say empty words or we can act by using the

power within each of us to stand tall and stand together and remind each other, particularly our neighbors of color, that we hear you, we see you, we accept you, and we stand as one community.

At this time, I am reminded of the words of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., who said, "Darkness cannot drive out darkness; only light can do that. Hate cannot drive out hate, only love can do that."

We, as your Chief Elected Officials, want you to know that equality and humanity are our priority and we, in fact, recognize that it is the very thing that makes Sharon a resilient community. Further, we will not waiver on that priority. To our neighbors, locally, and in every municipality, we commit to always be intolerant of racial injustice, abuse of power, and we support you in your efforts to do the same. We have always welcomed and valued the diversity in our community and implore every resident to do the same. We commit to do more than just speak the words, but to act and make decisions that support and represent the interests of every member of our community regardless of your color, race, religion, national or ethnic origin, disability, sex, sexual orientation gender, or gender identity or expression. To that end, this Board will assure the residents of the Town of Sharon that all Town employees and public officials and School Department employees and School Committee Members will be required to attend diversity and anti-race training similar to what the Town employees and a number of town public officials took part in two years ago during Employee Development Day and similar to the mandatory training our Police Department has done for years. We are committed to making this happen. Let me repeat, we are committed to making this happen.

It has been over 13 years since a joint effort was made to establish the Sharon Pluralism Network, which is a collaboration among organizations and groups in Sharon that partner to support multicultural and interfaith understanding and engagement. This is a group that former Town Administrator Ben Puritz and the late Selectman Joe Roach were very passionate about and were actively involved. This is the group that has brought us all together over the years, both in times of stress like today and in times of joy. Tonight, I am asking all Sharon residents to become involved in this collaboration in some fashion. Reach out to them. Look at their website. I am very pleased that over the past week we have received inquiries from residents on how they can become engaged in this wonderful group. This is a proven joint effort that brings together our community. Their last well attended community wide event was held just before COVID on February 9th and was entitled "Take a step for positive change."

Most recently, the Sharon Interfaith Clergy Association was established, which was originally the idea of the late Father Robert Bullock, which is made up of leaders from faith-based institutions in Sharon. The original program *Facing History and Ourselves*, an international program to educate middle and high school students about human rights and social justice used lessons from the Holocaust and the Civil Rights Movement.

We support and stand alongside the Sharon Police Department and its officers and staff who serve this community with the utmost respect. Over the years they have really reached into and engaged deeply in our community. This goes for all our public safety officers and Town employees.

Members of these three organizations are here this evening to speak to the current issues and advise the community on planned actions and programs we hope the community will embrace over the next few months. In addition to these community wide programs, this Board, as

always, will listen to the residents as we continue to review and consider ways to improve how we do things in Town and in our Schools.

Equality and humanity are a priority in this community and it was recognized that it is the very thing that makes Sharon a resilient community. Diversity in this community is welcomed and every resident is encouraged to do the same. The Select Board is committed to do more than just speak the words, but to act and make decisions that support and represent the interests of every member of our community regardless of your color, race, religion, national or ethnic origin, disability, sex, sexual orientation gender, or gender identity or expression. To that end, this Board will assure the residents of the Town of Sharon that all Town employees and public officials and School Department employees and School Committee Members will be required to attend diversity and anti-race training similar to what the Town employees and a number of town public officials took part in two years ago during Employee Development Day and similar to the mandatory training our Police Department has done for years. Again, the Select Board is committed to making this happen.”

Rabbi Fish of Temple Israel, Beth Hoke of the Sharon Pluralism Network, Chief John Ford, Deputy Chief Brewer, and Lieutenant Coffey of the Sharon Police Department delivered statements centered around the need for positive change in response to recent violent acts of injustice. They explained what current initiatives or training programs have been undertaken and outlined areas for improvement.

Many residents were recognized by the Chair and shared their past experiences both as part of the Sharon community and as members of other communities. An abundance of praise for the Sharon Police Department for their work in the community was expressed. Issues were raised around social media and an incident involving a school fundraiser. It was stated that although Sharon has a diverse population, it is not inclusive.

The Board acknowledges the need to do more and wishes to take thoughtful, methodical action so as to promote a successful committee. They will work collaboratively with the many networks in Town and bring forward a plan at the next Select Board meeting. In the meantime, individuals who wish to be considered as part of a Diversity and Inclusion Committee should express their interest to the Select Board’s office.

Acceptance of easement for Spring Valley Pump Station

Public Works Superintendent Eric Hooper explained that the purpose of this easement is to provide a location of the pump station for the WMRA emergency interconnection with the Town of Norwood. It is location off of Tiot Street and adjacent to The Cape Club. This project has been in the works for the past six or seven years now. The Intermunicipal Agreement with the Town of Norwood was recently finalized and the execution of this easement marks another step toward construction. The MWRA emergency connection has been a priority item for the Water Division for some time now.

MOTION: To approve acceptance of an easement granted to the Town of Sharon for the Spring Valley Pump Station.

(Smith-Lee - Switlekowski)

Heitin: AYE

Switlekowski: AYE

Smith-Lee: AYE

3-0 **PASSES**

Flag Day proclamation

Chair Heitin stated this year's Flag Day event would be held at Rock Ridge Cemetery which is a change from previous events.

MOTION: To proclaim Sunday, June 14, 2020 as Flag Day in the Town of Sharon.
(Switlekowski – Smith-Lee)

Heitin: AYE
Switlekowski: AYE
Smith-Lee: AYE
3-0 PASSES

Pride month proclamation

The Town is working toward the development of a formal flag policy, particularly for Town Hall, to avoid any unforeseen consequences of having any flag other than the American Flag situated on the flag pole. In the near term, the Board wishes to embrace Pride Month in Sharon. A parade is planned for Saturday, June 13 starting at Shaw's Plaza. The Board would like to integrate this proclamation into the planned activities.

MOTION: To declare the month of June as Pride Month and approve and sign the prepared proclamation.
(Heitin – Smith-Lee)

Heitin: AYE
Switlekowski: AYE
Smith-Lee: AYE
3-0 PASSES

Set date and time for public hearing for all alcohol package stores

The two meetings in July are scheduled for the 14th and the 28th. Mr. Turkington would like to avoid conflicts with any travel plans. July 28th allows the Board the most time to ensure all applications and application materials are in order and allow for follow up. The hearing must be publicized in the newspaper and abutters must be notified so having a firm date and time in place now will ensure advertising accurate information for the hearing. Ms. Smith-Lee commented that since an increasing amount of people are returning to work, perhaps the Board should consider returning consistently to a 7:00 pm start time for meetings to provide for resident participation.

The Board agreed to set the date and time for the public hearing for all alcohol package stores of July 28, 2020 at 7:00 pm. Application packages will be made available to the Board for review prior to that date.

Review and approve consent calendar

- I. Vote to approve May 26, 2020 regular session minutes
- II. Vote to waive administrative fees for Alteration of Premises applications for restaurants to accommodate service of alcohol for outdoor dining through November 1, 2020
- III. Vote to approve the banner request for First Congregational Church of Sharon Annual Christmas Bazaar from November 30 through December 5, 2020 in first position

- IV. Vote to appoint election workers for the period beginning September 1, 2020 at the request of Marlene B. Chused, Town Clerk
- V. Vote to approve changes to parking violation fines
- VI. Vote to approve changes to Town of Sharon Traffic Rules and Orders.

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

Heitin: AYE
Switlekowski: AYE
Smith-Lee: AYE
3-0 **PASSES**

Report of the Town Administrator

The Town Administrator provided the following update.

- The Commonwealth of Massachusetts has approved the vote of the Select Board for the July 1/12th budget.
- Plans are being considered to hold Annual Town Meeting in September or early October.
- The Finance Committee has requested that the Select Board reconsider the proposed budget, Capital Outlay and Personnel Bylaw articles and are holding off recommendations for now. The Priorities Committee will reconvene tonight at 6:30 to discuss potential revenue and state aid impacts and Capital Outlay will reconvene on Thursday at 7:00 pm to discuss prioritization of capital expenditures. It was noted that a 10% reduction in state aid will affect the budget by \$850,000, roughly 1% of the operating budget.
- The quarterly sale of train passes on Thursday night resulted in the sale of 114 passes, likely influenced by the gradual return to work. Plans are being developed to offer a pro-rated sale of train passes in mid-August for the month of September.
- Staff has been working collaboratively with the Independence Day Committee on a possible celebration in late September or early October dependent upon the availability of the fireworks vendor.
- Concerns have been expressed by many residents about unmonitored access at the beach, overcrowding on the weekends, accumulation of trash and complaints about non-resident use. Staff is discussing whether it is prudent to hire gate guards to monitor access to the beach. The beach is supported wholly by user fees and not with tax revenue.
- There is a call planned with Town Counsel tomorrow to get an opinion on swim at own risk.
- KP Law prepared suggested revisions which have been exchanged with DSD who accepted some of the changes. There will be follow-up on important items. It is hoped that negotiations will be finalized by next meeting.

Mr. Turkington requested input from the Board on the issues surrounding the use of the beach. The question was raised as to whether the Recreation Department is able to hire and train staff quickly enough to be present for the upcoming weekend. The cost to support staffing at both beaches through June 27 amounts to roughly \$6,000. This amount would need to be supported either by revolving fund or exploring the possibility of applying for CARES Act funding for monitoring social distancing. Due to evidence that significant numbers of people are using the beach, the Board feels that there is a responsibility to staff the gates and provide some control over activity there.

Ms. Switekowski wished to extend congratulations to Sharon High School class of 2020 on behalf of the Select Board. The Schools did a great job in preparing the graduation ceremony and celebration. It was a nice way for the community to come together in honor of the Sharon High School Class of 2020.

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

None

Adjourn

MOTION: To adjourn at 6:14pm.
(Smith-Lee - Switekowski)

Heitin: AYE
Switekowski: AYE
Smith-Lee: AYE
3-0 **PASSES**

List of Documents

- EDC mission statement
- EDC membership list
- Email of June 2, 2020
- Information on outdoor seating
- Information on administration of property tax relief funds
- Summary of Sharon relief programs
- Email of June 2, 2020
- Resident emails
- Missions of other communities
- Police training highlights
- Easement plan
- Final draft of grant of easement
- Pump station plans
- *Minutes*
- Banner request form
- Request letter from Town Clerk
- Proposed changes to parking violations
- Proposed changes to Town of Sharon Traffic Rules and Orders