

MINUTES
SHARON SELECT BOARD
February 23, 2021

The meeting of the Sharon Select Board was called to order at 7:00 pm by Select Board Chair Emily Smith-Lee remotely via Zoom. Select Board members William Heitin and Hanna 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.

Beach fees public hearing and amend beach and boating rules

MOTION: To open the public hearing.
(Switekowski - Heitin)

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

With respect to beach and boating rules, Recreation Advisory Committee held an open meeting for public comment on December 17, 2020 and were offered some suggestions. The proposed changes are indicated in red. Over time, the need for clear and concise rules has become recognized.

Watercraft rules and violations may need Town Meeting approval due to Lake Massapoag being a great pond. Ms. Berger will research.

Select Board questioned the age of 15 unaccompanied at the beach. This change was based on the preferences of the insurer. Ms. Berger will follow up with the insurer for clarity. The Board of Health is the authority for regulations on the dates dogs are either permitted or excluded at the beach. This limitation has been in place for years.

Certification of new lifeguards can continue this season but is limited to 3-5 at a time due to COVID. It will take longer to certify lifeguards this year.

With regard to beach fees, projected expenses exceed expected income. Recreation and Recreation Advisory are looking at other revenue possibilities. It is felt that the 2019 model was more efficient. The formal recommendation was to increase beach fees by 20 percent, reduce hours and hold no preseason.

The Select Board asked what the balance is in the revolving fund. Ms. Berger replied that the balance is a positive net of \$65,000. Landscaping, and purchase of kayaks were to come from the revolving fund.

It was noted that last year the Select Board had approved a pilot proposal for a beer garden in principle. Has Recreation reconsidered this? This is likely not the year to try the beer garden but next year may be more feasible with a positive outlook for vaccination. Recreation would like to try an open market which would include local crafters but needs time to get a bid package ready.

Ms. Smith-Lee only thought is that it is clear last year's system was unpopular. Julia Wood of 111 Maskwonicut Street asked what would happen when staff is not there. Ms. Berger explained that the gate would be closed and locked at end of the evening by on-duty police officers generally during second or third shift. Gates will be held open if there are no limits on beach capacity.

Colin Barbera of 26 Tolman Street asked about access. There is a group of residents that swim from 6:30 am to 7:30/8:00 am. If the gate isn't open, there is no place to park. Ms. Berger stated parking is available at the High School and residents could walk in.

Ms. Switekowski asked whether the High School construction project would impact access to the beach. Ms. Berger stated that she awaits information on deliveries from the Standing Building Committee but is told that access to the beach will not be an issue.

Ms. Smith-Lee asked about boat launch access. Visitors are charged only for parking or can drop off watercraft and park at the High School at no charge.

MOTION: To close the public hearing.
(Heitin - Switekowski)

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

MOTION: To approve the beach fees as presented and hold the beach and boating rules until the next meeting.
(Heitin - Switekowski)

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

Recreation FY2022 budget review

The proposed budget presented by Recreation is a best attempt at a level funded budget. Salaries for Management Professionals and Administrative Professionals have not yet been figured in as the respective collective bargaining agreements have not yet been finalized. This budget includes septic cleaning at Deborah Sampson Park which is a recreation expense which has been budgeted historically by DPW. Ms. Berger states that the budget has been kept as conservative as possible. Mr. Heitin and Ms. Switekowski no questions, mostly personnel costs.

Joint meeting with Housing Authority and vote to fill vacancy

At the conclusion of the last joint meeting, the Housing Authority wished to deliberate separately before recommending a candidate for appointment. Although they felt it was a difficult choice as both candidates are adequately qualified, the Housing Authority has come to consensus on Xander Shapiro. The Housing Authority and Select Board both appreciate Mr. Arnold's and Mr. Shapiro's interest and willingness to come forward to work with the Housing Authority.

MOTION: To appoint Xander Shapiro to the Sharon Housing Authority subject to there being no conflict for joint service.
(Saunders - Heitin)

Heitin:	AYE	Melvin:	AYE	Saunders:	AYE
Switekowski:	AYE	Rahman:	AYE		
Smith-Lee:	AYE	Price:	AYE		

7-0 **PASSES**

Solid waste fees public hearing

MOTION: To open the public hearing.
(Heitin - Switekowski)

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

Mr. Turkington directed the Board to page 40 of the agenda package in which the formula used to explain the fee change in fees which is equitably divided. The only variable is the tipping fee for solid waste.

This proposal represents first increase since the program began in 2017. Variables impacting the budget are costs for increased volume. Recycling costs have increased \$70/ton and the tip fee is no longer capped. The Budget is \$2.3 million, of which \$1.4 is for collection, and \$350,000 represents tip fees. Other fees are tree removal, yard waste collection, compost area, hazardous waste day, and buried costs for monitoring landfill.

Ms. Switekowski understands that have to vote a fee structure but feels it difficult to increase fees especially given the recent tax increase.

Mr. David Pototsky of 2 Hart Road stated that he is not opposed to raising fee but wishes to incentivize smaller bins.

Ms. Debbie Tatro of 10 Sturgis Road agrees. Adding a rate increase to all consumers provides no incentive to reduce consumption. She questioned the only variable item being the tipping fee. Does that mean that Republic charges same amount to pick up and it's regardless of size? Mr. Turkington advised that they do.

Ms. Cheryl Schnitzer of 5 Terrapin Lane asked why all households are seeing an increase of the same percentage. Ms. Switekowski mentioned education. Ms. Schnitzer is also interest in creative solution and feels there is an overflow bag problem. She hears stories about overflow being picked up by Republic because the employees are kind. She feels there needs to be more enforcement and there is still money to be made in in cardboard collection.

Mr. Paul Lauenstein of 4 Gavin's Pond Road stated that trash is incinerated which causes pollution. Sharon generates more trash by household than that of neighboring communities. He feels the program should encourage people to save money by generating less trash.

Ms. Judy Crosby of 6 Condor Road states that she respects argument for solid waste reduction. She is in favor of a discount for those who compost so long as there's no deficit for tipping fees. She would like to bring awareness to the fact that some families don't have choices in the amount of solid waste they generate due to unique situations that they'd like to keep

Ellen Boardman stated that she was uncomfortable with the fees because the cost increases are the same regardless of barrel size. She would love for leadership to set the right tone with respect to conservation.

Ms. Schnitzer commented further with respect to families in unique situations or those with health issues, stating that there are exceptions for families that need them. The Sustainable Sharon "Trashy" videos are still available on Sharon Community TV. With education, she feels that waste can be reduced.

Kathy Farrell of 1969 Bay Road stated that perhaps this is an opportunity to think longer term. She has no issue about the dollar amount, but the logical thing to do would apply same percentage for those who are conscious in waste reduction.

Mr. Hooper was consulted regarding the timing of printing the bills if a decision were delayed to the March 9 meeting. A decision must be made no later than the April 1 bill or there would be a deficit.

Mr. Heitin commented that while the Town does a fair amount of educating, more needs to be done. There were great discussions when program was rolled out but not much since. He knows of no program that doesn't have a fixed rate for every household. Has fixed base rate to cover cost of program. Maybe variable should be adjusted

in this area. Half of the cost of the program is getting trucks up and down streets. That's what needs to be covered.

There was discussion about rolling fees back into the tax rate as they would be tax deductible. This requires Town Meeting vote but get residents could receive a refund of up to 1/3 back if included in the tax bills.

Ms. Smith-Lee stated it sounds like there are two conversations; how do we pay for trash, and how to do reduce trash. At this time, we can't measure how much trash is generated for each household whereas water is metered. She feels it may not be worth having trash police and is not of a mind to make any major changes to proposal for this year.

Ms. Switekowski doesn't feel comfortable voting on this tonight.

Mr. Hooper was consulted regarding the timing of printing the bills if a decision were delayed to the March 9 meeting. A decision must be made no later than the April 1 bill or there would be a deficit.

MOTION: To close the public hearing.
(Switekowski - Heitin)

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

MOTION: To accept the fee recommendation for the next two quarters as presented.
(Heitin – Smith-Lee)

Heitin: AYE
Switekowski: NO
Smith-Lee: AYE
2-1 **PASSES**

Public Works FY2022 budget review

Mr. Hooper provided the Board with an overview of the proposed budgets for Public Works and Water departments. The proposed DPW budget for FY2022 represents an increase of **\$70,696 or 1.7%**.

The proposed budget for salaries and wages is **\$2,655,178** which includes contractually obligated step increases for eligible personnel only and 1% to 1.5% cost of living increases for all personnel depending on bargaining unit. There were two staff retirements in FY2021 that accounted for one-time reduction in salaries. DPW is assuming the cost for 50% of the GIS coordinator and an additional 25% of the Assistant Town Engineer to more equitably reflect allocation of work between the DPW and Water divisions. The salary difference, and vacation and holiday pay, representing \$56,637, is carried for two personnel currently out due to a work related injury. Overtime hours are assumed to be 100% of the historical 5-year running average.

Due to potential intermediate-term behavioral changes seen during the pandemic quarantine, revenues from Railroad parking are expected to drop to approximately 10% of previous year revenues to be approximately \$55,000. Proposed expenses of \$260,583 will likely require use of the balance within the Railroad Parking revolving fund which, as of June 30, 2020, stood at \$579,599. The impact on the Railroad Parking fund balance could be reduced, but only if certain expenses (snow/ice control, salaries, etc.) were shifted to the general fund. A return to normal use of the MBTA commuter rail system is expected within 2 years.

The proposed budget assumes that the Water Department revenues, retained earnings and borrowing ability have sufficient capacity to fund operating expenses, new proposed projects: completion of Phase 3 of the Heights neighborhood water main replacement project (delayed one year due to quarantine scheduling issues)

and replacement of obsolete water meters and previously funded projects: replacement of the Massapoag Avenue tank and completion of the MWRA emergency connection project. Expected revenue for FY22 is \$4,900,000, in increase of roughly 15% due to the increased residential use during COVID-19 pandemic. Use is expected to return to normal as the quarantine conditions are eased. This revenue will fund operating expenses, \$200,000 for reserve fund and \$150,000 for MWRA connection related expenses to Norwood.

Expected revenue for FY22 is \$4,900,000. Consequently, there is no need to use retained earnings to fund operating expenses; \$200,000 for reserve fund and \$150,000 for MWRA connection related expenses to Norwood. A borrowing of **\$1,325,000** is proposed for this fiscal year to cover costs for Phase 3 of the Heights area main replacement and residential meter replacement.

A total of **\$2,646,210** is available from retained earnings as of 7/1/2020 for appropriation for the upcoming Annual Town Meeting.

Ms. Switekowski stated that the proposed budget seems straightforward. Mr. Heitin remarked that it is substantially personnel driven with slight increases in goods and services.

The Board thanked Mr. Hooper for his time this evening.

Presentation of citizen petition – Phillip King

Mr. Phillip King of 18 Ashcroft Road has filed a citizen petition with the Town Clerk's office for consideration at Annual Town Meeting on May 3, 2021. This petition would increase the size of the Select Board from three to five voting members. This is based on guidance from the Commonwealth of Massachusetts which states that the optimum number of voting members for a community the size of Sharon is five. If passed, this article authorizes the Select Board to file a Home Rule petition with the General Court of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts to file legislation on behalf of the Town to increase the elected/voting members of the Select Board to five.

Mr. Heitin had no questions or comments. He feels that the current composition runs efficiently and a larger Board increases the potential for disagreement and politics. Ms. Switekowski noted that the topic of a five member Select Board has been brought before Town Meeting in the past and has failed. Ms. Smith-Lee is agnostic on the topic. She also came to Select Board from a committee. She feels that the change in composition is not unnerving but she is interested to see how the conversation develops. The Board will not vote this evening nor take a position prior to town meeting.

Review Personnel Board recommendation on executive group salary schedule

Mr. Turkington shared that the Personnel Board voted to recommend pay increases of 2.1 percent. At this time, executive salaries will not be included in budget and will be voted at that Town Meeting.

Proposed FY2022 Select Board sector budget review

The proposed FY2022 budget now stands at \$14,798,351 or \$81,486 above the preliminary target set by the Priorities Committee. Governor Baker's proposed budget includes a net increase of \$987,221 in state aid that is not computed in the initial priorities allocation. In addition, there are other changes in fixed expenses for workers' compensation insurance, unemployment compensation, retirement fund contribution, and cash capital as recommended by the Capital Outlay Committee that will reduce the priorities allocation. The working assumption is a 2.8% to 3.1% increase, rather than the 2.03% initially forecast, will be the budget ceiling. Note that the preliminary budget includes an estimated general wage increase of 1.5% for all unsettled contracts for FY2022 and steps as applicable. If the projected increase in the sector allocation is approved by the Priorities Committee, the budget ceiling will be \$14,837,732 meaning are already within target by \$39,381.

Step increases in collective bargaining agreements range from 1% to 2%, depending on bargaining agreement. We will soon commence bargaining with firefighters, police officers and supervisors, and administrative support

personnel, contracts which will expire on June 30, 2021. In addition, the Personnel Board is finalizing the executive group salary schedule; the preliminary budget includes those projected changes.

Outlined below are noteworthy variances compared to the FY2021 adopted budget:

The budget of the Select Board includes \$5,000 to complete training recommended by the Diversity, Equity & Inclusion Committee and reclassification of the Assistant to the Town Administrator to Assistant Town Administrator. The Elections/Registration budget does not include \$18,990 to cover the costs of a fall 2021 Special Town Meeting.

The budget of the Planning Board includes \$22,700 (increase of \$11,700) for a consultant to spearhead implementation of the Master Plan in FY2021 and beyond. There are funds (approximately \$76K) from a bequest to the Town to supplement this expense. The consultant will also support economic development initiatives.

The Conservation Commission budget reflects new hires for both the Conservation Administrator in March 2020 and the secretary in November 2020, as well as a seasonal laborer position for trail management. Funding of \$27,800 is proposed for inspections and emergency action plans for various dams.

The Police budget does not yet reflect the savings of any changes in the administrative structure that is contemplated (retirement of chief and deputy chief in February 2022; promotion of a lieutenant to chief, a sergeant to lieutenant, and patrol officer to sergeant thus reducing administrative staff from 5 to 4; and hiring of two patrol officers).

The Public Works budget reflects the retirement of the custodian assigned to the library (reduced to 18 hours per week); transfer of 25% of assistant town engineer salary and 50% of GIS specialist salary from Water budget to the DPW budget; and contracted services for maintenance of Town athletic fields included for the first time in FY2018 is enhanced by \$20,000 following field maintenance analysis. We are evaluating restructuring senior management to provide for a shared operations/forestry position that would add a body in the field. The MS4 permit project has been shifted to the Water budget. The cost for the part-time energy manager for town and school issues (purchased from Norwood Light Co. and now also shared with Walpole) in FY2022 and beyond will be funded as part of the municipal aggregation project.

Tax levy 2.25 percent not 2.5 saves approximately. Managed to accomplish. Scheduled tax increases for High School project were far below expected. If can bring prop 2.5 down

Review and approve consent calendar

- I. Vote to approve the regular session and executive session minutes of February 9, 2021
- II. Vote to approve the license agreement for One School Street
- III. Vote to adopt and sign Continuing Disclosure procedures

MOTION: To approve the consent calendar, holding item number II for discussion.
(Heitin-Switekowski)

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

The license agreement for One School Street, just for explanation, involves a license for the Police and Fire Museum which is still operating until Library project is finalized. This agreement includes a 60-day notification clause.

MOTION: To approve the license agreement for One School Street.
(Switekowski – Heitin)

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

Report of the Town Administrator

The Town Administrator presented the following report:

The state has eliminated distribution of vaccine to most municipalities at this point, putting on hold plans for local clinics. There is an effort to identify citizens willing to transport seniors over age 65 to Gillette to facilitate distribution to our most vulnerable population.

In coordination with Fire Chief and health department and Council on Aging, program where 35 volunteers to drive seniors to Gillette. Interested in getting involved or need, contact Council on Aging to arrange.

We received two proposals from consultants to work 15-20 hours per week on implementation of the Master Plan and to support economic development initiatives. Both are well qualified, but the fee proposals far exceed the allocated funding. I will consult with the Planning Board and EDC, but anticipate recruiting a part-time employee in lieu of a consultant.

The Personnel Board approved the job description and classified the position within the MP contract so we can begin recruitment. As you will recall, the assistant town engineer left for Foxborough as their town engineer nearly a year ago. We elevated the health agent to assistant town engineer. While he kept that portfolio, we modified the lower level engineer/land use professional to support the Planning Board and some of the other temporary advisory committees that overwhelm Town Engineer Peter O'Cain (Transportation Advisory, Library Reuse, etc.).

The Personnel Board has voted concurrence on the application of the performance evaluation process in my review of the executive group performance for calendar year 2020. The preliminary budget includes increases from 3% to 3.5% based on those evaluations. There were no significant changes in performance noted from the prior year.

March 22 meeting will include a review of the Select Board budget. This year, in lieu of notebooks, one print version will be available to the Board as well as electronic version but will include only back up materials for the larger budgets. The next agenda packet will have details on budget as one continuous document. Ms. Smith-Lee stated that she prefers and electronic copy.

The DEI committee is taking charge on the topic of Columbus Day and arranging presentations. As this is not impactful for this fall, the presentations can be pushed out a bit. March will be a busy month with budgets and Town Meeting preparation. There is a lull the last week of April but after Town Meeting would be preferable.

Select Board Correspondence/Announcements

We received 12 pieces of correspondence between 12 noon on January 14 and 12 noon on February 4:

- A total of 6 emails asking the Board to retain Columbus Day designation or to consider joint recognition with Indigenous People's Day on the second Monday or October.
- Emails from Jennifer Illuzzi, Karen Woods and Nicholas Giammaria asking the Board to change the designation of Columbus Day to Indigenous People's Day.
- An email from Susan Price asking that the Welcome to Sharon signs include the addition of a plaque to acknowledge the Sharon High School Theatre Company (SHSTC) win at the Massachusetts Educational Theater Guild (METG) state competition in spring 2018.
- Emails from Beth Oknin requesting the capital administrative fee \$60 per quarter be removed from the separately billed water meter for irrigation systems.
- An email from the Sharon/Stoughton League of Women Voters about the virtual local government program on Wednesday, February 24.

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

None

Adjourn

MOTION: To enter executive session at 9:45 pm for the purpose of discussing strategy with respect to the purchase, transfer, or sale of real property located at 66 North Main Street and adjourn for the evening at the conclusion. Discussion of these items in open session may have a detrimental effect on the bargaining position of the Town.

(Heitin – Switlekowski)

Heitin: AYE

Switlekowski: AYE

Smith-Lee: AYE

3-0 **PASSES**

List of Documents

- Public hearing presentations (2)
- Budget materials
- Candidate letters of interest (2)
- Citizens petition
- Mass. Municipal Association Forms of Municipal Gov't
- Draft budget materials
- Minutes
- Agreement
- Continuing disclosure procedures
- Town Administrator's report