**MINUTES**

**SHARON BOARD OF SELECTMEN**

*May 23, 2017*

The meeting of the Sharon Board of Selectmen was called to order at 7:00pm in the Town Hearing Room at the Sharon Community Center with Chairman Walter B. Roach, Clerk John J. McGrath, Selectman William A. Heitin, Town Administrator Frederic E. Turkington, Jr., and Assistant to the Town Administrator Lauren Barnes.

**Special Election Announcement**

Selectman Heitin read the precept from Senate President Stanley Rosenberg, announcing the vacancy in the Bristol and Norfolk senatorial district, which encompasses precincts 1, 4 & 5 in the Town of Sharon. The general election will occur on Tuesday, October 17, 2017.

**Diversity Banner Discussion**

Chairman Roach reminded the audience to be respectful as the three speakers speak.

Keevin Geller offered the following prepared remarks:

Members of the Board of Selectmen – I have received many hate emails regarding my request to have the Iranian Flag Banner removed. I responded to one of them today, and it occurred to me that my response sums up my presentation to you, so I will read my brief email.

“I am aware that you sent an email to the Board of Selectmen, accusing me of bigotry, since someone posted a racist remark on my Facebook page. You also stressed that I should have removed it. First of all, I confess to being a "computer illiterate,” and would have no idea how to remove someone else's posting. I don't slavishly check in to Facebook every two seconds, so I was not even familiar with said remark, until I just went back and looked it up. Unlike you, I don't condone bigotry!

You, and the others who support the display of the Iranian flag, are the true bigots. I want to remove the flag of a terrorist supporting nation that is the sworn enemy of the USA. I'm sure that is unimportant to you, but there is much more. \_\_\_\_, are you aware of even a portion of the disgusting human rights violations regularly committed by Iran? Your only alibi could be that you, and the other supporters of displaying this flag, are unaware of Iran's atrocities, which we both know is not true. Here is some information for you, very easy to verify.

Iranian authorities often throw homosexuals off high buildings, to their deaths, merely for being gay. Iran officially denies the Holocaust, while promising to give Jews "a real holocaust." Iran treats women like chattel, or third class citizens. Women are denied education, rarely allowed to work, and only then at meaningless jobs, and are forced to cover all but their eyes. Women are subjected to genital mutilations, for the purpose of denying them sexual pleasure. Eighty and ninety year old men are allowed to "marry" and have sex with girls not even ten years old. Women are regularly stoned to death for even being suspected of adultery; however, if a woman accuses a man of rape, it is essentially impossible for her to prove it, and she will be disowned by her family for seeking justice. (I have always wondered, "Where is the outrage from U.S. 'feminists?' on these issues, haven't you?) Iran openly funds and supports terrorist activities all over the globe, providing money and arms to ISIS and others in many countries from whence our young servicemen and women often come home in body bags. Iran openly and officially calls for the obliteration of the State of Israel, and the extermination of Jews and Americans worldwide. Iran is working feverishly to produce a nuclear bomb, which they promise to use. Iran has driven hundreds of thousands of Christians and Jews out of their country since the ayatollahs took control, after confiscating their wealth and possessions. I guess Iran doesn't exactly "celebrate diversity," does it?

So, despite knowing these unpleasant little truths about Iran, you still choose to display their flag on a banner, on town property, honoring that country in the name of "celebrating diversity?" This is Orwellian "DoubleSpeak" at its finest! If there is anything I have written here that you can prove to be false, I'd love to hear it! You claim that your actions are "non-political," yet they are 100% political in effect, if not intent- for which I will give you the benefit of the doubt. You have posted a number of banners displaying flags of nations that are openly hostile to the United States, yet I have chosen to focus only upon the worst one, Iran. Whatever conceivable benefit there could possibly be to honoring the flag of a deplorable country like Iran, is

far outweighed by its atrocities as listed above.

For these reasons, I will respectfully request that the Board of Selectmen vote to remove the Iranian flag banner as soon as possible.”

Sincerely,

Keevin Geller

I really don't focus upon diversity, which inevitably leads to discrimination. I live in a small condominium complex where we happen to have Christian, Jewish, Indian and Israeli owners. I really don't care who they are, or where they are from. What I am concerned about is that they happen to be nice people. All of our ancestors were immigrants from somewhere, but who cares? Both sets of my grandparents came from Kiev in the Ukraine, so am I supposed to consider myself a "Ukrainian-American?" Enough of this divisive, "hyphenated" garbage. We are all Americans, period! Why can't we celebrate unity, instead of constantly pigeonholing people by their origin or the color of their skin? Thank you for having me.

Eileen Cohen, Secretary of the Sharon Lions Club, offered the following prepared remarks:

Sixteen months ago, in honor of the upcoming 100th anniversary of Lions Clubs International and The Rotary Foundation, our two Sharon clubs joined forces to run a centennial legacy project that would leave a permanent gift to the town – one which would serve as a reminder of just how important our clubs are to this community. We chose to celebrate the DIVERSITY in the town of Sharon – a theme that is consistent with the messages of dignity, equality and humanity of both our organizations. Diversity was one of the major characteristics that led to Sharon being named by Money Magazine as the Number One best place to live in the U.S. in 2013, and Number Three in 2015.

In addition to hosting a number of community events throughout the year, to recognize our incredible diversity, we decided to hang banners throughout the center of town displaying the flags of various cultures representing the residents of Sharon. Our list of places of origin reached 90 – amazing to realize that we have families from over 1/3 of the world’s countries co-existing peacefully in our special community. Certainly something to celebrate! With the support of the Town of Sharon and thanks to the generosity of our major sponsors, the banners were produced and hung a few weeks ago in late April.

It is important to clearly explain what these banners are, and what they are not. Each banner is 4 feet tall and 2 feet wide with over half of each banner displaying a tree made up of hands of all shapes and sizes, encircled with the message: Town of Sharon Celebrates Diversity. The bottom section of each banner recognizes the 100th anniversary of the Lions and Rotary organizations. The remaining space – less than 25% of the entire banner – contains a 7-inch by 14-inch picture of a flag and the name of a country representing a place that at least one Sharon family USED to call home before they moved to our town. That is all they are intended to show – here is where our neighbors came from.

The banners are not representations of governments, nor are they statements of support of countries’ politics. Both Rotary and Lions are international organizations with presence in over 200 countries worldwide, and both are prohibited by our constitutions from taking any political stand.

The request to remove the Iran banner implies that hanging the banners was to show support of foreign governments. If, for argument’s sake, that was the intention – which it certainly was NOT – then we would have to remove any country that is or was at some time in the past, an enemy of the United States or its citizens of any faith; and any country that ever practiced terrorism or racism or violations of human rights against its own citizens or those of other nations. In doing so, we would have to remove not only Iran, but Iraq, Syria, Russia, Japan, Israel, Germany and many other European, Asian and African countries, as well as our own United States banner. It is sad to say, but I suspect that very few banners would remain. That is not what this celebration is about – the banners are hanging to celebrate the diversity of backgrounds of the residents of Sharon; they are not glorifying autocratic regimes.

Taking down one banner would be an act of discrimination or censorship – sending a message to the families who used to call that place home, that they are not as “accepted” as everyone else. Our project’s mission from the very beginning was to emphasize inclusion. We saw a wonderful demonstration of that this past Sunday when we hosted “A Taste of Sharon’s Diversity” as part of our year-long celebration. Our list of volunteers and performers, combined with those who attended the event numbered between 700 and 800 people from all over the world. It was a wonderful display of camaraderie among families from all different countries of origin. That is what our diversity celebration is all about.

David Clifton from the Sharon Rotary Club offered the following extemporaneous remarks:

He is speaking on behalf of the Rotary Club, which has been in Sharon for 47 years, and has added to the quality of life in Sharon. He spoke about the mission of the Rotary Club International. Sharon has been a special community – good education, quality recreation, public safety, etc. When Rotary and Lions came together for this project, they intended to bring people together, not divide them. There is a difference between cultural identity and political identity. The banners were hung to represent our neighbors. It is important to come together and try to work this out, and to try the best we can. He was disturbed that Sharon was described as “disgraceful” on the radio. He feels there is a tremendous amount of misunderstanding. Mr. Geller has a right to express his opinion, but Mr. Clifton felt Dan Rea crossed the line with the radio ads. Sunday’s *A Taste of Diversity* event proved there is unity and diversity in Sharon. Sharon needs to set an example and other towns are watching Sharon right now.

Selectman McGrath expressed concern that someone called Mr. Geller a racist and bigot on Facebook, and do

Mr. Geller clarified that Dan Rea called him to appear on his radio program, and provided the contact information for Ms. Cohen and Mr. Clifton to appear on the program with him.

Chairman Roach explained that the Board is seeking feedback from residents via email, and that the Board will be reconvening at another date. Selectman McGrath noted that often comments are very repetitive, and that is the reason why comments are not allowed this evening. Selectman Heitin added that the Board has a sense of the opinions within the room. He feels that a resolution could be reached within the next couple of weeks.

Mr. Turkington clarified that this is not a public hearing, so comments are not generally allowed.

Selectman McGrath added that there has been a lot of comments on Facebook, and some of the comments have been nasty. There are two very different perceptions, and the Board needs to take all perspectives into consideration. He asked people to be kind on social media. Selectman McGrath believes both sides of this are well-represented, and feel they can come to a decision. The Board thanked everyone for attending.

The Board took a brief recess.

**Residential Development Discussion – 126 Morse Street**

Developer Christopher Piazza appeared before the Board, along with his attorney, Michael O’Shaughnessy.

They are looking for guidance from the Board pertaining to this proposal as a LIP/friendly 40B development and are looking for the Board’s feedback and potential support for this LIP project. Part of the intent of proposing this is to provide housing opportunities to the residents of Sharon. This is modeled after a project in Westwood. Its proximity to Lake Massapoag is desirable.

Attorney O’Shaughnessy reviewed rendering for a conceptual development for a 55+ apartment complex on Morse Street:

3 buildings for a total of 82 apartments

* 24 (2) bedroom apartments
* 58 (1) bedroom apartments

Buildings 1 and 2 consisting each of:

* 10 (2) bedroom apartments
* 20 (1) bedroom apartments

Building 3 consisting of:

* 4 (2) bedroom apartments
* 18 (1) bedroom apartments
* All resident amenities
	+ Fitness center
	+ Common room
	+ Billiards room
	+ Leasing office

Mr. Turkington asked the approximate distance between buildings, and Attorney O’Shaughnessy believes it is approximately 40 feet (50-60 feet between buildings 2 and 3). Mr. Turkington questions about the proximity to other neighbors. He asked if a market study has been done, and Attorney O’Shaughnessy replied that it has. Mr. Turkington asked if Mr. Piazza has met with the Conservation Administrator, and Mr. Piazza noted that he did speak with the Conservation Administrator and they spoke about the wetlands. Selectman Heitin asked if the open space would be available to the town, and Attorney O’Shaughnessy noted that it would be up to the Board. Selectman McGrath assumed that a traffic study has not been done; Attorney O’Shaughnessy noted that it would be done during the Board of Appeals process. Attorney O’Shaughnessy said that it is their intent to not see these buildings from the street, with the buffer and it being set back from the road 300 feet.

Selectman McGrath would like to walk the property with these plans and would like to hear what the neighbors think of this plan. Attorney O’Shaughnessy added that Mr. Piazza lives in town and wants to build something respectful. Selectman McGrath noted the only thing he can say about this project is that it is interesting. Selectman Heitin added that the Board wants to identify strategic projects to ensure Sharon reaches 10% affordable. Mr. Piazza said that this site is eight acres, and this project would impact about 40% of the site. Selectman Heitin said that the Board will entertain something, but needs more detail.

The Board thanked Mr. Piazza and Attorney O’Shaughnessy for their time.

**Finance Director Screening Committee Appointments**

Mr. Turkington explained that as the bylaw permits us to appoint up to 5 members, he recommends that we appoint Kevin Brown and Tom Gillen to join Personnel Board representative Gloria Rose to form the Finance Director/Town Accountant Search Committee. Mr. Brown serves on the Audit Committee and Mr. Gillen is a VP at South Shore Bank with experience serving on the Police Chief Screening Committee. As we have a handful of interesting candidates that we are currently pre-screening, he expects the group may need to meet only once or twice to complete the charge.

**MOTION:** To accept the recommendations of the Town Administrator and appoint Kevin Brown and Tom Gillen to the Finance Director/Town Accountant Screening Committee

(Heitin – McGrath) 3-0 **PASSES**

**Consent Calendar**

1. Vote to approve regular session minutes of May 9, 2017
2. Vote to approve the banner request from the Council on Aging to announce their Lakeside Gallery Exhibit – June 19-26, 2017, 2nd position and waive fee
3. Vote to approve the Southeastern Regional Services Group (SERSG) contract for Water & Sewer Treatment Chemicals as detailed in the IFB bid for a twelve month period commencing July 1, 2017 in the amount of $99,681
4. Vote to approve the Southeastern Regional Services Group (SERSG) contract for DPW Supplies for a twelve month period commencing July 1, 2017 in the amount of $442,559.80
5. Vote to approve supplemental pay for three employees in Accounting Office

**MOTION:** To approve the May 23, 2017 consent calendar, as read and understood

(McGrath - Heitin) 3-0 **PASSES**

**Town Administrator’s Report**

Mr. Turkington reported the following:

* At last night’s Finance Committee, Pat Achorn was appointed Chair, Bill Brack and Ira Miller were appointed Vice-Chairs, and Alex Korin was appointed Clerk. During that meeting, the Finance Committee approved two reserve fund transfers: one for the Town Clerk and the other for the Accounting Department.
* With respect to collective bargaining, he and Selectman McGrath have been working hard and have a tentative agreement with the Fire union, and Mr. Turkington has a tentative agreement with the Management Professionals union. He is awaiting a vote from the AFSCME union on their agreement.
* Following up on the actions at Town Meeting: the Metropolitan Area Planning Council (MAPC) will apply for a grant to assemble the Green Communities program energy baseline report; the Town Engineer will engage a surveyor and Town Counsel will prepare deeds for the Gavins Pond land to effectuate the transfer of conservation land; an informational meeting was held to review changes in the property tax workoff program, and which the thresholds were approved at Town Meeting; and the Town Clerk has submitted all bylaw changes to the Attorney General’s Office for review
* The FY16 audit is being finalized.
* The online quarterly railroad parking pass registration is delayed a week due to the Jewish holiday. It will now take place on Thursday, June 8 at 7:00pm
* Topics for the June 7 meeting include an update on negotiations with Republic Services regarding trash and recycling collection, a Town Hall project status report and a discussion on the timing and agenda for a fall Town Meeting.

With respect to the proposed Edge Hill Road 40B and the project eligibility by MassHousing, Mr. Turkington met with the developer last Friday, reiterated the town’s concerns, and encouraged them to consider a smaller project. Their next step is to meet with the Zoning Board of Appeals.

**MOTION:** To approve the 2017 Household Hazardous Waste Collection Contract with Stericycle formerly known as PSC Environmental Services, LLC

(Heitin – McGrath) 3-0 **PASSES**

**Memorial Day Proclamation & Programming Announcement**

Selectman McGrath read the Memorial Day proclamation prepared by Governor Baker.

The schedule of Sharon’s Memorial Day activities are as follows:

Friday May 26, 2017

6:00 P.M.

Decoration of Veterans Gravesites - Rock Ridge Cemetery Sharon, MA

\*\* Should there be heavy rain Friday, assembly will take place Saturday May 27, 2017 at 10:00 A.M.

Volunteers are needed: You need not be a Veteran.

Sunday, May 28, 2017

1:30 P.M. Gravesite Services – Rock Ridge Cemetery

 Assembly at 1:15 P.M. at the intersection of East and Mountain Streets

2:20 P.M. Civic Ceremony

 A Civic Ceremony will take place in front of Town Hall, 90 South Main Street

 Essays will be read by Middle School students as part of the ceremony.

**Board Reorganization**

**MOTION:** To appoint Selectman McGrath as Chair

(Roach – Heitin) 3-0 **PASSES**

**MOTION:** To appoint Selectman Heitin as Clerk

(McGrath – Roach) 3-0 **PASSES**

**Topics not reasonably anticipated forty-eight (48) hours in advance of the meeting**

None.

**Executive Session**

The Board did not feel the executive session was necessary, as they were prepared to vote on the collective bargaining agreement for the police lieutenants.

**MOTION:** To approve and affirm the Police Lieutenants contract, as drafted

(Heitin – McGrath) 3-0 **PASSES**

**Adjournment**

**MOTION:** To adjourn at 8:21pm

(Heitin - McGrath) 3-0 **PASSES**

List of Documents

* May 4, 2017 Letter from William F. Welch, Clerk of the Senate re: Special Senate Election on October 17, 2017
* May 4, 2017 Precept announcing Special Election from Stanley Rosenberg, President of the Senate
* Proposal and Plans from Christopher Piazza regarding 126 Morse Street – age restricted apartment development
* Finance Director Search Committee candidates spreadsheet & resumes
* Finance Director Search Committee advertisement
* May 9, 2017 Board of Selectmen Minutes
* Banner request applications: Council on Aging Lakeside Gallery Exhibit – June 19-26, 2017
* SERSG Contract Bid Awards: Water & Sewer Treatment Chemicals and DPW Supplies
* Memo from Frederic Turkington re: supplemental pay for Accounting Staff Employees
* Report of the Town Administrator
* Email from Ani Krishnan of MAPC: META Grant update/Green Communities
* Email from Seth Pickering, Green Communities Regional Coordinator, MASS DOER re: Green Communities Designation
* Important Changes to the Property Tax Work Off Program update
* FY2018 Local Aid Estimates for Sharon
* Letter from MassHousing re: Edge Hill Road 40B eligibility
* Memorial Day Proclamation and programming schedule
* Miscellaneous Correspondence