

Selectboard Meeting Minutes February 12, 2024 Zoom Teleconference 5:30 pm

Call to Order: Andrew Baker called the meeting to order at 5:30 pm. Others present: Selectboard member Rick LaPierre and Town Administrator Terry Narkewicz.

A motion was put forth by Rick to approve the minutes of January 29. This was seconded by Andrew. Roll call vote: Rick – yes; Andrew – yes. Motion passed 2-0-0.

Department Liaison Reports:

Police Department – Rick reported that the new cruiser, a 2023 Ford Explorer hybrid, is now in service.

Emergency Management – Rick spent some time with EMD Tom Williams, who noted that the Emergency Management Committee had been having difficulty getting a quorum for meetings. Tom and Rick discussed the proper protocol for applying for grants. Rick learned that the \$700 for clothing from a recent grant was for identifying clothing for the 17 people who would be part of the emergency management team in the event of an emergency. The emergency radios, which have been housed at the fire station, will be moved the emergency headquarters at the police station. The backup generator system lacks only a test by the manufacturer before becoming operational. Some emergency materials are stored at the Cowell Gym. Andrew thought there might be a storage shed at Mohawk that could be used.

Veterans District – Rick said there is a requirement that veteran’s service districts be authorized by the state every two years. The current authorization expires on July 1. All district member towns have to apply to continue the district.

Highway Department – Mark Shippee is working on finalizing a contract for a MassWorks grant to begin work on the Old Greenfield Road construction project. The crew has been cutting brush and trees while awaiting snow storms. Grant funded signs are to be installed on Mechanic Street. One homeowner was not pleased with the size and proposed placement of one of the signs. Andrew agreed that the signs were too large for residential areas and it might be worth getting public input before they are installed. He suggested that Mark reach out to MassDOT to see if there are smaller signs available. John Walsh is helping design the RFP for the pole barn solar project.

Pocket Park – The area has been posted as a construction site. The Franklin Tech students are back on the job.

Appointments:

5:45 pm Eversource Pole Hearing: Install a Mid-Pole along Colrain Shelburne Road Between Pole 17/48 and 17/49 – Future Site for Sayagi U Ba Khin – Andrew opened the hearing at 5:45 pm. Matthew Kitchen, a designer for TRC who is doing the design for Eversource, and Isaac Baker of the solar company Resonant Energy, were present. The Vipassana Meditation Center is installing a solar facility. A new pad-mounted transformer is needed and a new pole is required to feed a cable to the transformer to get power to the solar field. The pole would be installed between two existing poles. Rick commented that the solar facility is in a perfect spot and is well screened from the road. There was no public comment. Andrew disclosed that Isaac Baker is his son. As the disclosure was made and the as the town has no financial interest in the project, Andrew was free to vote on this request. A motion was made by Rick to approve the application for a new pole at the described location. The motion was seconded by Andrew. Roll call vote: Rick – yes; Andrew – yes. Motion passed 2-0-0. The hearing was closed at 5:53 pm.

6:00 pm Arms Library Budget Presentation with Finance Committee (Jim Burnham, Todd Dubreuil, Jay Readinger, Finance Committee; Dan Alden, Clay Connor, Arms Library Trustees; Laurie Wheeler, Arms Library Director) – The total budget showed an increase of 5.7% largely due to the proposed 9% increase in pay rates. Trustees wanted to put the director’s salary in the same level as that of the director of the Shelburne Free Library. The assistant librarian, page, and temporary workers pay was to rise to be in line with the average pay shown by a FRCOG wage comparison. Last year a study had been done by an ad hoc committee as to how the budget was apportioned between Shelburne and Buckland which resulted in Shelburne paying 60% and Buckland 40%. Andrew would like to see a more in-depth study done using many points of reference and possibly having a volunteer at the door asking people which town they lived in. Laurie felt that was too invasive. Rick thought last year’s study seemed quite accurate. Clay said the trustees had already committed to gathering more data and said it would be best not to have data gathering done by a volunteer. Now that the library is open on Sundays, Andrew suggested that library trustees consider shifting their hours of operation and exclude Mondays. By doing so, it would increase the hours available to residents as so many Holidays fall on Mondays. Dan recommended that Andrew’s suggestion be brought up at a meeting of the trustees. The increase in pay rates caused further discussion, with the reminder that the Selectboard had authorized a 4% increase for town employees. Dan said the numbers presented were not the final official numbers and is willing to come back with an updated request for pay increases. Capital requests included setting aside \$10,000 a year for 10 years, for replacement of the library elevator. Terry thought that should be addressed sooner, as the elevator is unlikely to continue functioning for 10 years. Andrew said the idea was to buy time to set aside funds and to look for other sources of funding, such as grants. If the elevator were to stop working the request for funds would quickly come to the town, but in the meantime some funds might have been set aside. Terry said that the Housing Trust account, which contains about \$195,000 has been typically used for handicapped access improvements and perhaps some of those funds could be set aside specifically for the library elevator. A discussion followed on whether the town or the library was responsible for capital improvements. Dan said grants for the elevator had been applied for but none have been successful so far. Andrew said sometimes grants are more successful if it is known that matching funds are available. The second capital request was for oil tank replacement. It has recently been learned that the tank is in good shape and should last for many more years. The request will likely be removed.

John Wheeler, Planning Board Budget Presentation with Finance Committee – The Planning Board is asking for the same amount as last year. John pointed out that the line item for administrative assistance has not all been used in the past two years. The assistant, Faye Whitney, does not have the time to put in more hours and has tried to leave the position, but no one can be found to take the job. Terry said it was difficult to find people for this type of position, they want more hours and benefits.

6:45 pm Shelburne Free Public Library Budget Presentation with Finance Committee – This appointment has been postponed until March 11.

Old Business:

Proposed Solar Array for Highway Pole Barn Roof (Schedule Working Meeting) – Terry will continue working with John Walsh on the RFP.

New Business:

Audit Proposals for FY'24, FY'25, & FY'26 – The town is now in the final year of its current audit contract. Terry solicited proposals and two firms responded. A third was sought with no response. Roselli, Clark and Associates proposed \$21,000 for each of the next three years. Marcum, the current auditors, proposed \$23,000 for the first year, \$24,500 for the second year, and \$26,000 for the third year. Terry recommended going with Roselli, Clark. A motion was put forth by Rick to proceed with accepting the proposal from Roselli, Clark and Associates for auditing for the next three years at \$21,000 per year. This was seconded by Andrew. Roll call vote: Rick – yes; Andrew – yes. Motion passed 2-0-0.

Town Website RE: Boards & Committees Use in Keeping Public Informed – Rick said that while the legal posting place of meetings is the Town Hall, he would like to see more use made of the town website, by asking boards and committees to post their agendas there, as well. Terry said not many boards had been doing that unless they had an administrative assistant, but it would be nice to have everyone do it. Andrew suggested making posting on the website a town policy. A motion was made by Rick to recommend that boards and committees post meetings and agendas on the town website as well as at Town Hall and later this will be added to the guide for boards and committees. This was seconded by Andrew. Roll call vote: Rick – yes; Andrew – yes. Motion passed 2-0-0.

Susan Flaccus RE: Resignation from Community Preservation Committee (Member at Large) – A letter of resignation has been received from Susan, who is soon moving out of town. The resignation was accepted with regret.

Bridge Street Phase II Change Order #5 RE: Adjusted Contract Price \$13, 824.47 – Total project costs will be increased by \$13,824.47, using ARPA funds already designated as the project contingency fund. While many costs were under budget. The cost of police details was triple the original estimate. A motion was made by Rick to approve Change Order #5 to the contract between the Town of Shelburne and GEG Construction for Bridge Street Phase 2 Improvements, which will increase the total project costs by a total of \$13,824.47. This was seconded by Andrew. Roll call vote: Rick – yes; Andrew – yes. Motion passed 2-0-0.

STAM Legislative Priorities RE: Vote to Support – The Small Town Administrators of Massachusetts (STAM) has created a list of legislative priorities to be submitted to state legislators. It includes changes to the Chapter 90 formula, changes to the education funding formula, increasing procurement thresholds, and reforming the PILOT program. A motion was made by Rick to support the 2024 STAM list of legislative priorities. This was seconded by Andrew. Roll call vote: Rick – yes; Andrew – yes. Motion passed 2-0-0.

Any Other Business:

Veterans Service District – As mentioned under liaison reports, the veteran's district needs to be reauthorized by the state every two years. A motion was put forth by Rick to sign the approval requesting that the state authorize the Upper Pioneer Valley Veterans' Service District for two more years. This was seconded by Andrew. Roll call vote: Rick – yes; Andrew – yes. Motion passed 2-0-0.

Next Meeting – The next Board meeting will be on February 26, at 5:30 pm via Zoom.

Correspondence: None

Public Comment: None

Adjournment: At 7:28 a motion was made by Rick to adjourn the meeting. This was seconded by Andrew. Roll call vote: Rick – yes; Andrew – yes. Motion passed 2-0-0.

Respectfully submitted,
Faye Whitney, Recording Secretary