**Selectboard Meeting Minutes December 2, 2024 Zoom Teleconference 5:30 pm**

**Call to Order**: Rick LaPierre called the meeting to order at 5:31 pm. Others present: Selectboard members Andrew Baker, Tricia Yacovone-Biagi, and Town Administrator Terry Narkewicz.

A motion was put forth by Andrew to approve the minutes of November 18. This was seconded by Rick. Roll call vote: Rick – yes; Andrew – yes; Tricia – abstain. Motion passed 2-0-1.

**Department Liaison Reports:**

**Town Hall** – Tricia, Terry, and Tax Collector Angel Bragdon will meet next week to discuss delinquent taxes. Tricia said that one property owner was responsible for 62% of the delinquent taxes.

**Emergency Management** – The EOC team will now be meeting monthly instead of quarterly to continue their training. A CPR class will be held on January 27. Verbal permission has been granted by the business next door to the municipal building to use the parking lot in case of an emergency.

Tricia and EMD Tom Williams attended a meeting regarding the statement of interest for Allen Brook flooding. They learned that the funds hadn’t been released and that once the funds were released it could be 18 months before work could start. It was suggested that Shelburne find a less urgent project for the MEMA Mitigation grant. The next day word was received that the funds had been released and proposals could now be accepted. Tricia may decide to resubmit the statement of interest. Meanwhile, Tom received permission from the landowners to look at the pond that may be affecting the Allen Brook drainage. Tricia, Tom, and Jeff Johnston will do a site visit. Rick asked a procedural question about whether Tricia was liaising with the highway department, when that is Andrew’s role. Agreeing there is some overlap, Andrew suggested proposals should be discussed, and approval sought, at Board meetings. Tricia then asked if following the site visit, and if Jeff agrees, if the project is worth pursuing she would submit a statement of interest for a Culvert Replacement Municipal Assistance grant. Rick and Andrew agreed to that plan.

MEMA has provided feedback from the tabletop exercise and a few changes will be made to the emergency plan. A generator for BSE is still being sought.

**Highway Department** – Jeff Johnston said an estimate for guardrails for Old Greenfield Road came in well under what was expected at a little over $40,000. Dig Safe will be contacted then the guardrails can be installed. Line painting on the road will be done in the spring. Quite a bit of the grant money will be left over and that will be used for erosion control. Andrew gave a shout out to the highway crew who interrupted their Thanksgiving to plow the first snow storm of the winter. Jeff said the temporary bridge has been loaded on a flatbed truck and should be installed later this week.

**FRTA –** Rick attended the most recent meeting where 14 towns were represented. He said the FRTA has services in 43 towns. The towns have weighted votes depending on the amount and type of services they receive. Fixed route services are still available at no charge. Demand/response services will also be free at least through June 2025. There is still a shortage of drivers.

**Appointments:**

**5:45 pm F.C. Sheriff’s Office Dog Nuisance Hearing Continuation, Colrain-Shelburne Road** – ACO Kyle Dragon reported that a fence has been installed between Ginna Vogt’s property and Gordon Meadows’ property. The five-foot tall woven wire fence runs from the road all the way to the wood line, and Kyle said it appears that it would contain Gordon’s dog. Ginna stressed that there are two dogs that come on to her property and that one of the dogs had been trained to respect a fence, the other has not. She thanked the Board for helping with this matter. Rick said the next step would be to see if the fence works over time. Kyle said he agreed the fence seemed like a good solution and agreed with the determination of no finding at this time. The hearing was closed at 5:47 pm. Andrew said if this solution does not work it will be up to Ginna to file another complaint. A motion was put forth by Andrew to take a vote of no finding on this matter. This was seconded by Tricia. Roll call vote: Andrew – yes; Tricia – yes; Rick – yes. Motion passed 3-0-0.

**6:00 pm Board of Assessors RE: FY’25 Tax Rate Classification Hearing** (Karen Tonelli, Assistant Assessor, Joel Dwight, Assessor, Jodi Lewandowski, Assessor) – The hearing was opened at 6 pm. Karen explained that before the tax rate can be set and tax classification hearing must be held. The total value of the town is $372,724,033 which is up by about $37 million from last year. About $20 million of that increase is from the utilities. Residential properties make up 73% of the town’s properties, with the rest being a combination of commercial, industrial, and personal property. Andrew asked if the utility company was aware of the amount their taxes would be increasing. Karen explained that they would not know about that until they receive their tax bills, everyone has until February 1 to appeal their bills. Karen said there is enough money in the overlay account to cover any costs if values are appealed. The amount to be raised by taxes is $4,785,776, which is $343,000 more than last year. If there is a single tax rate it would be $12.84 compared to last year’s rate of $13.26. The average tax bill will be about $4,515. Shelburne has never had a split tax rate. A motion was made by Andrew to approve a single tax rate of $12.84. This was seconded by Tricia. Roll call vote: Andrew – yes; Tricia – yes; Rick – yes. Motion passed 3-0-0. The next vote concerned an open space discount. Shelburne has no land classified as open space. A motion was put forth by Andrew to take no action on the open space discount. This was seconded by Tricia. Roll call vote: Andrew – yes; Tricia – yes; Rick – yes. Motion passed 3-0-0. A motion was made by Andrew to pass over the residential exemption. This was seconded by Tricia. Roll call vote: Andrew – yes; Tricia – yes; Rick – yes. Motion passed 3-0-0. A motion was made by Andrew to pass over the small commercial exemption. This was seconded by Tricia. Roll call vote: Andrew – yes; Tricia – yes; Rick – yes. Motion passed 3-0-0.

**Old Business:**

**ARPA Funding Requests** – The balance remaining is $40,315 which needs to be allocated by the end of the year. $35,000 is to be used for landscaping at the pocket park. It was decided that the remaining $5,315 should be used for Cowell Gym deferred maintenance projects. The town had appropriated funds for the most urgent items but more work needs to be done. Terry thought that exact funding amounts did not need to be exact as long as projects were defined by the end of the year. A motion was put forth by Andrew to allocate up to $35,000 of ARPA funds to the pocket park, and $5,315 for Cowell Gym improvements. Any unspent balance from the pocket park would be used for Cowell Gym capital improvements. This was seconded by Tricia. Roll call vote: Andrew – yes; Tricia – yes; Rick – yes. Motion passed 3-0-0.

**Solar Array Installation @ Highway Pole Barn – Complete –** All that remains is for the array to be energized. **Community Action Pioneer Valley RE: Future Funding** – The town has funded Community Action’s West County Emergency Food Pantry for several years via CDBG funds. With no such grants coming up that funding source no longer is available. The state’s anti-aid amendment prevents cities and towns from appropriating funds for projects such as the food pantry. There seems to be nothing the town can do. Andrew said it was now up to the food pantry to raise funds.

In a related topic, grant writer Linda Overing announced her retirement months ago. She will close out the current grant then she is done. Andrew thought it might be helpful to have a final meeting with Linda to consider plans and tips for the future. Terry will see if Linda is willing to come to a meeting.

**New** **Business:**

**Mass DEP Amends Rules for Low Emission Vehicle Program** – The highway department, finance committee, and Selectboard have worked together to create a 10-year capital replacement plan. If the new state rules go into effect, it may soon not be possible to buy vehicles with diesel engines which do not meet the emissions standards. At the present time the technology needed to meet the emission standards is not available for heavy duty highway equipment. Jeff had wanted to bring the new standards to everyone’s attention as the town needs to plan ahead. A hearing on the amended rules will be held on December 9 and Tricia plans to attend. Vehicles meeting the emissions standards may not be practical for towns such as Shelburne. Jeff said in a typical snow storm, four trucks and a loader are used, along with about 200 gallons of fuel. A six-inch snowfall means four to eight hours of work for the highway crew. In a snow plowing event electric vehicles would be hampered by the cold temperatures, weight of the plows and sand, and the hilly terrain. Andrew’s primary question was whether there are vehicles available that could get the job done at a comparable cost to a diesel truck. Emergency vehicles are exempt from the emissions rules, are snow plows considered emergency vehicles? Jeff said that was a good question. Police, fire, and medical vehicles can’t get to where they are needed if the roads aren’t plowed.

**Any Other Business:**

Andrew said he understood that there had been a complaint against a member of the Selectboard. He didn’t know what the complaint was or who it was directed at. Rick said this could not be discussed in open session.

**Next Meeting** – The next Board meeting will be on December 16, at 5:30 pm via Zoom.

**Correspondence:**

**Water Street Tree** – A resident of Water Street has emailed about a tree that was to have been removed. It was felt that the tree warden had been unresponsive. Terry was asked to contact the tree warden to check on the status of the Water Street project.

**Public Comment:** None.

**Adjournment**: At 7:06 pm a motion was made by Tricia to adjourn the meeting. This was seconded by Andrew. Roll call vote: Andrew – yes; Tricia – yes; Rick – yes. Motion passed 3-0-0.