**Select Board Meeting Minutes January 13, 2025 Zoom Teleconference 5:30 pm**

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

A motion was put forth by Andrew to approve the minutes of December 30. This was seconded by Tricia. Roll call vote: Andrew – yes; Tricia – yes; Rick – yes. Motion passed 3-0-0.

**Department Liaison Reports:**

**Emergency Management:** The emergency management plan is at Town Hall awaiting the last few signatures. The next committee meeting will be on January 16. EMD Tom Williams met with the Rec Committee regarding the use of Cowell Gym.

**Council on Aging** – The next meeting will be on January 16.

**Town Hall** – Heat has been restored to the building. An email scam occurred and has been reported to the appropriate parties. Terry had submitted an application to the Executive Office of Technology Services and Security to do a database vulnerability check. This is a free service. If any vulnerabilities are found the town can apply for a Community Compact grant. The annual audit is being conducted.

**MVP** – A group call with the regional coordinator is being scheduled.

**Highway Department** – The crew is continuing with winter storm prep, including creating a “soft plow” to use on dirt roads. They are clearing out ice dams in roadside ditches, picking up downed trees, and pre-treating roads as needed. The one ton truck was damaged last week. It is still drivable, the damage is mostly cosmetic. An insurance claim has been submitted. Guardrails are in place on Old Greenfield Road. Eversource has submitted a plan to relocate wires in the area of the temporary bridge which would allow the bridge to be rebuilt. The cost of the wire relocation is slightly over $13,000. There is money in the Fair Share account to cover that cost. Tricia expressed concern that one of the potentially relocated poles would be placed in an area that experiences flooding. Jeff Johnston and grant writer Terry Walker are applying for a Phase 1 engineering grant to replace the temporary bridge. They would then be looking for funding for a Phase 2 grant for the actual replacement of the bridge. They have applied for a Phase 2 grant to replace the culvert near the Shelburne Free Public Library.

**Police Services Advisory Committee** – Rick reported that the FY’24 report is finished. The wage classification study, being done by Capital Strategic Solutions, has not made a lot of progress, but it is promised to be delivered by January 30.

**Veterans Service District** – The group met last week and approved the budget for FY’26. The total budget s $23,000 with Shelburne’s share being $5,846, which is an increase of about 2%.

**Appointments:**

**5:45 pm Jeff Boettner, Energy Committee RE: Municipal Energy Manager Grant** – Jeff explained that there is a fairly new grant available through Mass Save to assist towns in hiring an energy manager. $120,000 per year is available. This is too large of a job for one small community such as Shelburne but it is thought that perhaps several towns could share the position. FRCOG’s Allison Gage is writing a grant to fund an energy manager and is looking to see if other towns might be interested in sharing the manager. The grant is due on January 31. This is a very short time line. Tricia asked if all Franklin County towns were being asked to participate, or just those in the Mohawk school district. Terry did not know, but said Shelburne, Buckland, and Colrain have expressed interest. Andrew mentioned several projects that an energy manager could assist with. A motion was made by Tricia to approve a letter of support for an application for a Municipal Energy Manager Grant. This was seconded by Andrew. Roll call vote: Andrew – yes; Tricia – yes; Rick – yes. Motion passed 3-0-0.

**6:00 pm Peter Bednarz, Senior Engineering Designer, Eversource RE: Pole Replacements** – Eversource is planning a reliability improvement project for the village area which would consist of upgrading and replacing primary cables and poles, and doing associated tree trimming. About 100 poles would be affected. Terry suggested that the Conservation Commission and the ZBA be consulted as to permits. This project is separate from the streetlight replacement project. Discussion followed concerning whether it would be better to get the new poles in place before the streetlights are changed. Peter thought the light conversion could be done first and Eversource would be able to keep the proper lighting angles. While the new poles will be taller than the existing poles, the light attachment height will remain the same. John Walsh, of the Streetlight Committee said the town can be provided with specific information on how the new streetlights were installed for Eversource to follow. Jeff said part the agreement with Real Time Energy (RTE) is to have the streetlights inspected after installation to make sure it was done correctly. But what happens when Eversource moves the lights a few weeks after that inspection? Rick asked the Energy Committee to find out the cost for RTE to do a second inspection, following the Eversource work. Peter said he didn’t mind working with the town to correct any mistakes, but said he couldn’t promise to pay for a second inspection. Since it is likely that it will take Eversource months to replace 100 poles it seemed unlikely that the town would want to wait until fall to switch over the streetlights. The Board will wait until the Streetlight Committee comes back with more information, before making a decision.

Another Eversource project is to move some poles in the area of the temporary bridge over Dragon Brook. Tricia said the area where one pole is to be moved is a place that floods during heavy rain and she felt the area near the pole could destabilize over time. Peter had not been aware of the flooding problem and said he would have to see if the pole could be relocated somewhere else. He will revisit the area and have more information as to where the pole might be placed and if there is an additional cost by the end of the week. A motion was made by Andrew to authorize the highway superintendent to accept the price quote from Eversource for moving poles near Dragon Brook pending conformation from Peter Bednarz, and if the cost varies by more than $3,000 the superintendent can make the decision at his own discretion. This was seconded by Tricia. Roll call vote: Andrew – yes; Tricia – yes; Rick – yes. Motion passed 3-0-0.

**Old Business:**

**Community Action Food Pantry Services RE: Possible Funding Source** – The Buckland Town Administrator had consulted that town’s legal services and learned that it would be possible to help fund the pantry using loan repayments associated with FCRHRA’s Housing Rehabilitation Program. Terry asked if the Board would support this. Andrew wanted to know the actual cost of running the pantry at Cowell Gym. Frances Hall, of Community Action’s Community Services said the cost was $50,000, which means that Buckland and Shelburne have been funding the entire cost of the pantry in recent years. She said the pantry could continue to operate until September. In the meantime, they are looking into other funding sources. Community Action is committed to serving the community said Frances. Andrew said he was willing to use the housing funds but cautioned that once those funds were gone they would not be replenished. Tricia asked for data about who uses the West County Pantry. That will be provided. It is known that between September and December 98 Shelburne residents used the pantry. A motion was put forth by Tricia that the Board support using funds from the Housing Trust Fund account to supplement continued operation of the West County Food Pantry if annual town meeting voters approve. This was seconded by Andrew. Roll call vote: Andrew – yes; Tricia – yes; Rick – yes. Motion passed 3-0-0.

**New** **Business**

**Department of Veteran’s Services RE: Hero Act, Chapter 178 pf the Acts of 2024** – This act would honor and recognize veterans by adding two new property tax exemption clauses, if the town accepts them. It was agreed that the Board of Assessors should weigh in on this before any decision is made. Rick will contact the Veteran’s Service Center to see how many veterans might qualify for the new exemptions. Andrew was curious as to how the new exemptions might fit in with existing exemptions.

**Shared Police Services FY’24 Analysis of Actual Expenditures** – The shared police agreement allows funds to be refunded to Buckland if all of Buckland’s financial contribution is not used. Buckland recently asked for an accounting of FY’24. After analysis, it was found Buckland owes an additional $4,737.73. While the agreement says unused funds must be returned, there is nothing that says additional funds must be paid. Terry explained that budgets are based on the prior fiscal year, with reasonable increases factored in. A contingency could also be factored in. The police advisory board will discuss how discrepancies could be handled in the future. Rick said that a $4,700 difference in a budget of $388,000 was quite accurate for the first year.

**Megan McDonough, Pioneer Valley Habitat for Humanity RE: Request for Letter of Support for $500,000 Earmark under Affordable Homes Act** – If received, Habitat would like to use the funds for construct a warehouse to hold tools and materials for projects in Franklin and Hampshire Counties. Currently various storage spaces are leased. A motion was made by Andrew to approve a letter for support for Habitat’s application. This was seconded by Tricia. Roll call vote: Andrew – yes; Tricia – yes; Rick – yes. Motion passed 3-0-0.

**Any Other Business:** None.

**Next Meeting** – The next Board meeting will be on January 27, at 5:30 pm via Zoom.

**Correspondence:** None.

**Public Comment:** None.

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

Respectfully submitted,

Faye Whitney, Recording Secretary