**Select Board Meeting Minutes February 10, 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 (joined 5:35 PM), Tricia Yacovone-Biagi, and Town Administrator Terry Narkewicz.

A motion was put forth by Tricia to approve the minutes of January 27. This was seconded by Rick. Roll call vote: Tricia – yes; Rick – yes. Motion passed 2-0-0.

**Department Liaison Reports:**

**Police Department:** The complete draft of the wage and classification study was received on February 2. The Chief, Terry and Rick met to review it.  It is two parts, wage study with comps, and job description updates to meet the changing state requirements. The consensus was that it was a very thorough and well-done study.  The study will be evaluated by the Police Services Advisory Committee before sharing it with the Select Board for final approval.

**Police Services Advisory Committee:** The committeewill meet February 19th to review the proposed FY’26 Police Department Budget and to review the draft Wage & Classification study.

**Mohawk Trail Regional School District Personnel Negotiations Subcommittee:** The subcommittee has met several times in executive session for planning the negotiations with Unit B - Paraprofessionals. An executive session meeting with the Paraprofessional’s Team to discuss ground rules and begin the process will be held later this week. Meetings will continue regularly until negotiations are complete.

**Town Hall:** Excisetax bills are going out in the next two weeks. Terry and Angel are working on a process for distribution of the transfer station tags. Joe is preparing for the Town Election in May. Nomination papers will be ready by March 1 to give candidates 45 days to gather signatures.

**Emergency Management:** A very successful CPR-AED training was recently held. The final signature on the Comprehensive Emergency Management Plan (CEMP) has been completed. Tricia attended informational meetings about possible grant opportunities through MEMA. Tom Williams met with Jeff to discuss Town Garage flooding and the salt shed.

**MVP:** Tricia met with Allison Gage at FRCOG to finalize the list of partners. A joint meeting with Allison Gage and team at Weston & Sampson was held to review scope, changes to last year's project idea, and how best to position the grant application for this round. The MVP Regional Coordinator said the focus this year is on small towns who have not done an Action Grant, this includes Shelburne, but there's no news about funding yet. Everyone is clear that we won't move forward if there's a significant cash match for the Town. Tricia will work on a draft letter of support for our potential partners for FRCOG and W&S review. Awaiting the Perched Culvert grant opportunity from DER for Allen Brook (Colrain-Shelburne RD flooding). Shared last year's META grant application with Energy Chair to scavenge text as needed.

**FRCOG:** Andrew reported thatMass DOT has a new small bridge & culvert program.The new $100 million addition to the Chapter 90 program provides additional funding for towns, but according to Linda Dunleavy needs lobbying to change the allocation formula to assess road miles per town only.  The current formula disadvantages small towns with low population and low employment.FRCOG budgets are increased by 3.5% this year based on NE CPI.We now have a county-wide Emergency Preparedness Center.  FRCOG will be going to the towns to provide more information and coordinate. FRCOG is proposing a number of changes to its charter, mostly housekeeping. These have been approved by FRCOG Exec. Committee and the full FRCOG Council.  However, these must be passed by 2/3 of member towns at ATM by a 2/3 vote at each town.  Because they will require a substantial amount of paper on the town warrant to explain, a pre-meeting may be helpful to facilitate understanding and efficient discussion at ATM.

**Appointments with Finance Committee Members: (**Todd Dubreuil, Jim Burnham, Finance Committee)

**6:00 pm Joe Judd, Town Clerk Budget Presentation** – Joe would like to see his salary increase to be more in line with that of Town Clerks from other area towns. He had shared a survey he had done of nine other comparable towns and is asking for a mid-range amount as compared to those towns. He is currently making $25.69 per hour and the hoped-for increase would raise that to slightly more than $32.00 per hour. Joe also asked for $3,500 for clerical help. He felt if such person were to learn various aspects of the Town Clerk’s job, they would be able to assist a new Town Clerk if that were needed. Joe said he would have a better idea of the hours needed and the wage after a year. Most felt having extra help would be a good idea. Moving on to Records Preservation, Joe asked for $7,000. This is more than usual, but last year this item “fell through the cracks” and no money was appropriated. Joe’s other budget requests did not cause any significant discussion.

**6:30 pm Shelburne Free Public Library Budget Presentation** (Ted Sicker, Trustee; Betsy Antaya, Librarian) – The overall budget is about the same with the town being asked for only about $1,000 increase. The most significant changes are a 3% raise for employees, as suggested, and an increase in the maintenance budget. The person who cleans is now being paid from the library budget. In the past the payment came directly from the town.

**6:45 pm Arms Library Budget Presentation** (Dan Alden, John Cornman, Trustees; Laurie Wheeler, Librarian) – Dan explained that the goal of the budget was to keep even with inflation by asking for an increase in funding of 2.5% from both Shelburne and Buckland. Line items were adjusted primarily based on the amount spent in the past six months. Discussion was held on whether the cost of cleaning the library was included in the maintenance line or if that was just for repairs. The intention of the budget was that maintenance would be only repairs, but Andrew felt cleaning should be included so that both towns would share in paying for it. Andrew commented that it was sometimes hard to decide which items should be paid for by the owner of the building (the town) or by the user of the building (the library). It was decided that cleaning would be covered by the maintenance line item. No attempt had been made to determine the percentage of library use by Buckland and Shelburne. Both towns were being asked to increase their contribution to the library by 2.5%. Last year Buckland did not pay what was asked. The library’s endowment was used to make up the difference. According to John, Buckland officials would like to meet with their Shelburne counterparts and come up with a MOU, in writing, about library funding. The split now is 60/40 and John said a study a few years ago found that was a quite accurate representation of use. Jim said the populations of the two towns were roughly equal, and as the library is open to all residents, he felt the financing should be equal as well. Jim said the funding was 50/50 for decades until the 1980s when Buckland decided to pay less and that has been the case ever since. He also mentioned that Shelburne pays the insurance on the building, which is another hidden cost absorbed by Shelburne. Todd asked if progress was being made towards funding a new elevator. CPA funds have been applied for. If those funds come through and are added to what was appropriated at last year’s Town Meeting, the library may be able to come up with the rest of the funds. Tricia said she would like to be sure the MOU with Buckland is in place before the next budget season.

**7:10 pm Jeff Johnston RE: Highway Overtime Discussion** – The current overtime policy is that overtime is only allowed when an employee works more than 40 hours per week. Holidays are included as time worked. Jeff felt that overtime should be given when an employee works more than eight hours in a day. This is important especially during the winter months when the crew often works all night during snow storms. Jeff felt that department heads should be able to maintain discipline on how often overtime is used and be able to consider the individual circumstances. Employee morale is better if overtime is given after eight hours. Jeff said that surrounding towns are losing highway employees and are unable to replace them. Shelburne should work to retain its employees and changing the overtime policy would help with both retention and recruitment. Andrew felt the supervisor should have discretion about sick time and family emergencies and should be able to approve those things, but he was not so sure about vacations and personal time. Andrew’s bottom line was that the supervisor needs to manage overtime in the best interests of the town. Tricia said in looking over past Selectboard minutes she found that in April 2021 it was mentioned that the overtime policy was to be evaluated. Rick said there had been no formal evaluation but there had been conversations. Tricia asked what had prompted the 40-hour overtime policy. Terry said it had originally been flagged in an audit, then a trend was noticed in time sheets regarding overtime. Tricia said that with climate change and more intense storms there could be more overtime in the future. She wondered how that would affect the town fiscally. She added that it is Jeff’s responsibility to see that his people aren’t abusing the overtime policy, and she was sure he would do that. She said the eight-hour overtime policy was the way to go. Terry said that the policy encompasses all employees, not just highway, and Town Counsel might have problem with having different policies for different departments. The Finance Committee is willing to listen and help with working on the overtime policy. Rick said this topic will be brought up again in the future.

**Old Business:**

**Community Action Food Pantry Services RE: Possible Funding Source** – Both Buckland and Shelburne have discussed using housing trust funds to help fund the food pantry. Buckland expects to contribute $25,000 for each of the next two years. Each town should seek Town Meeting approval for the same amount of funds. For the past few years the two towns have been funding about half of the $104,599 food pantry budget. It has been learned that about half the users of the pantry are from other towns. Should those towns be asked to help fund the pantry? It was decided that this should be discussed with the food pantry and perhaps someone from the pantry could reach out to the other towns. The Board also wants to know what the future funding plans might be as the housing trust funds will only be available for about two years. Andrew would like to know if Ashfield and Colrain might have any funding sources they might be able to use and where Community Action expects future funding to come from.

**Department of Veteran’s Services RE: Hero Act, Chapter 178 of the Acts of 2024** – The assessors had been asked to give input on this. That board is meeting tonight and will be discussing it. This item was passed over until the assessors’ input is available.

**Memorial Hall Theater Renovations RE: MHA Fund Raising Idea for Seats –** An Attorney from the Division of Local Services initially recommended that any funds raised from the Take-a-Seat and Name-a-Seat campaigns, go to the town, not to the MHA. The money would go into a separate, new account called the gift account which would be used for Memorial Hall renovation expenses. In a subsequent conversation, the Attorney indicated that MHA could retain the funds from the “seat campaign” providing that they were earmarked for the renovation project. The MHA renovation committee had recommended that the new theater seats be stained with India Teak on Maple and the seat fabric be Shire Red Rose. A motion was made by Andrew to approve the stain and fabric choices for the new theater seats, as recommended. This was seconded by Tricia. Roll call vote: Andrew – yes; Tricia – yes; Rick – yes. Motion passed 3-0-0. A motion was put forth by Andrew to approve the total product data submitted for the theater seats. This was seconded by Tricia. Roll call vote: Andrew – yes; Tricia – yes; Rick – yes. Motion passed 3-0-0.

**New** **Business:** None.

**Any Other Business:**

**Emergency Management** – A request for Board approval of a statement if interest had been independently approved by Board members outside of a meeting.

The EMD would like to invite the Town Administrator, Selectboard members, the Fire Chiefs, Police Chief, Highway Superintendent, and others as seen fit, to participate in an Emergency Operations Center training event. The date and time are as yet undecided.

**Next Meeting** – The next Board meeting will be on February 24, at 5:30 pm via Zoom.

**Correspondence:**

**Julie Petty, Conway, MA RE: Native Plantings on bridge Street Proposal** – The proposal was to enhance the streetscape by adding plantings under the trees on Bridge Street. Considering the expense and time involved in getting the trees planted with specific planting materials and the accessibility hazard such plantings would pose, the Board was not inclined to approve this proposal.

**Public Comment:** None.

**Adjournment**: At 8:14 pm a motion was made by Andrew to adjourn the meeting. This was seconded by Tricia. Roll call vote: Tricia – yes; Andrew – yes; Rick – yes. Motion passed 3-0-0.

Respectfully submitted,

Faye Whitney, Recording Secretary