

# Shelburne Recreation Committee Meeting Minutes for 3-19-25

**Attending:** members Diana Hardina, Mary Lou Gallup, Stefan Topolski, and Norman Beebe, Cowell Director John Walsh, and guest Selectboard Chair Rick LaPierre

## 1--- Call to order

\* **Appointment of secretary pro-tem** - Stefan appointed with no objection. Immediate discussion followed to change order of minutes to prioritize town meeting report, budget, and other prior items which have been delayed months or more did not pass

2:2. Proposal to limit discussion to 2 minutes did not pass 2:2. Point of order was raised by one member stating their concern for meeting process, ineffectiveness of process, lack of officer election, lack of ethics training, preference for written reports, feeling of 2.5 years without progress on issues/concerns/programming. Discussion followed. Mary Lou began to leave. Stefan asked the committee to consider a change to the order of the agenda to avoid Mary Lou leaving. Mary Lou left the meeting.

\* **Review/approve meeting minutes for February 12<sup>th</sup> meeting** - Approved w/ no objection

## 2--- Updates/reports/program check-ins

\* **Cowell Director's report** - Change the Four Rivers nonprofit school rental from \$150 to \$200 for two unusual longer sessions passed 3:0; Approved Director's request for Eversource LED lighting in basement 3:0, Selectboard has approved window replacement project in a history reflecting cost sensitive amount of \$45,405 with deadline of May 30 Improvements include new windows, e-respecting motorized window shades to replace the broken and missing originals has gone out to bid, Art Garden request for programming approved 3:0, and tennis net was installed outside.

\* **Community Preservation Committee** - The CPC voted down all requests regarding pickle ball because there are town monies in two recreation related accounts in the amounts of \$22k + \$9k which members did not know they had access to. The director clarified the money that exists, is "limited", and only for capital improvements. (More on these accounts later in the minutes under **Recreation related accounts**.) The CPC did approve a \$1000 for the purchase and installation of two bulletin boards.

\* **Cowell Youth Winter Program** - Basketball, ping pong, open gym, Fridays' family pizza nights were discussed including access, attendance, proctoring challenges.

\* **Pickleball** - Mary Lou had left yet therefore discussion was limited, committee voted to approve their \$720 budget request to spent out of FY25 funds 3:0.

• **Basketball** - \$60-100 income per Thursday for 20-30 people attending, Tuesday has rebounded from its previous month's lull.

\* **Ice skating** - Final participant tally 66+ people enjoyed ice sculpture, foot sliding, broom ball, boot hockey, and ice soccer but the water cost this year will be very high, cost is a serious concern, need for metering without limiting flow, need for colder weather impairs program same as other programs across the northern tier states and Southern Canada, next year's rink may need to be much smaller.

\* **Ping pong** - Basement room wonderfully painted, ads run, press release discussed, fees reflect the basketball fee structure but there are no proctors, and no schedule yet.

\* **Gym floor cleaning guidelines** - Written text reviewed, Mary Lou not present to discuss, Diana asks for clarifications, when reminded that these can always be amended it was approved 3:0.

\* **Elections update** - Gym closed May 16-20 for town elections.

\* **Any other updates that are time sensitive** - None presented

### **3--- Ongoing/pressing business**

\* **Tom Williams at 8 pm: Designation of Cowell as an emergency shelter and warming/cooling center** - Tom Williams' request to designate the Cowell Gym as an emergency shelter and warming/cooling center approved 3:0. Tom made the committee aware that there are other facilities designated for warming/cooling including the senior center, Arms library, possibly other.

\* **FY26 budget request** - Gym floor report was discussed, capital improvement monies are NOT for maintenance or repair of holes, leaks, rots and the other serious deferred maintenance care deficit of the building infrastructure. Math corrected in report from Mary Lou as not 16 but rather 40 square feet average for each of 3 areas of trial repair of floor. Final vote was to increase the requested funding from \$4k to \$5k not \$6k 2:0 with 1 abstention as Stefan felt the politics of financing risk leaving the floor repair unfinished at the lower requested amount.

The committee supported John's request for \$30,000 for TAB Room shed retrofit. Discussed including future ideas for deferred gym maintenance donated by Charlemont Academy, a public volunteer day, or other group efforts as a private cleaner is too costly. In light of the failure to secure CPA funding for Cowell outdoor court renewal the committee voted 3:0 to have Norman work with the town administrator to get an article on the town warrant to appropriate \$21,000 from the Cowell User Fee Account. This article would expand the existing court surface; patch the cracks in the current surface; repaint the current lines; line additional pickleball courts; and clearcoat the entire court. These improvements would allow us to meet the increased need for pickleball courts (without impacting the basketball court), stop the deterioration of the current court surface, and protect the entire surface going forward.

\* **Recreation related accounts** – There are three recreation town related accounts. They are a Recreation Account (appropriated annually for Director’s salary), the Cowell Revolving Account (balance of \$9k plus of which \$3k can be spent by the recreation committee), and Cowell Fees Reserved for Appropriation (balance of \$22k plus).

The town accountant and town administrator are requesting changes to these accounts to be put on the Town Warrant. The wording for these changes were carefully reviewed with the select board chair and approved 3:0. They request the combining of the Cowell Fees Reserved for Appropriation account and the Cowell Revolving account, and to add a \$3,000 line item to the town budget for recreation expenditures with all unspent annual monies reverting to the town’s general fund.

\* **Town Report** - Norman circulated a draft town report. Members need to provide input within the next week as it is due shortly.

\* **Agenda items for April, May, and June meetings** - committee processes will be on the agenda for April.

**4--- Any other business that is time sensitive and not on the agenda** - Gym director reports that tennis/pickleball court sharing is “not sustainable” in the long term because of conflicts of the number of lines and limited/conflicting access to the shared court space. The question of a new separate pickleball court elsewhere on the grounds was dismissed by the chair without discussion.

The river trail planning awaits a surveyor.

Dianna suggests using AI for note taking. Discussion supported possible trial use in the future.

**5--- Correspondence/visitor comments** - Guest, selectboard chair Rick LaPierre, offered clarifications to points brought up by Mary Lou’s email prior to the meeting and in discussion at tonight’s meeting. The meeting belongs to the chair. The chair controls the agenda. The chair can move items around in any way they best see fit. Moving items does not need a vote. Meetings can run over time and often do. Additionally, there were no opinions being expressed initially in the emails regarding rescheduling of the meeting and therefore not a violation of open meeting laws. Mary Lou’s email was clearly in violation of open meeting law because she was expressing opinions, i.e. deliberating with a quorum of members on the email, and not making mere statements of fact for coordination of committee activity.

**6--- Next regular meeting Wednesday, April 9<sup>th</sup> at 7 pm**