**Select Board Meeting Minutes February 28, 2022 Zoom Teleconference 5:30 pm**

**Call to Order**: Bob Manners called the meeting to order at 5:30 pm. Others present: Selectboard members Margaret Payne, Andrew Baker (arrived 5:32), and Town Administrator Terry Narkewicz.

**Acceptance of Meeting Minutes:** A motion was put forth by Margaret to approve the minutes of February 14 and February 17. This was seconded by Bob. Roll call vote: Bob – yes; Margaret – yes. Motion passed 2-0-0.

**Department Liaison Reports:**

**Senior Center** – The transition following the departure of Director Amanda Joao is going well, reported Margaret. A volunteer has come forward who is willing to help.

**Arms Library** – The library is launching a seed bank/seed lending library during the month of March.

**Downtown** – The Village Revitalization Task Force met in February and plans to meet again in March. The hope is to get a permanent task force that can work with FRCOG.

**Newsletter** – The March edition of the town newsletter will be coming out soon. More than 200 people have subscribed.

**Highway Department** – A grant, to be used for two speed mitigation signs, is being finalized. A capital request for a message board with radar may be reduced if the grant is received.

Bob reported that Clayton Davenport Trucking has requested to rent the town’s temporary bridge for three to four months for a project in Leyden. (*See New Business*)

**Transfer Station** – Highway crew members will be asked to help out at the transfer station. Whoever takes on the task of working at the transfer station until its closing time, will come to work later in the day than usual so as not to trigger overtime.

**Appointments:**

**5:30 pm Rep. Natalie Blais RE: Legislative Updates** – Natalie, and her legislative aide Corinne Coryat attended the meeting to touch base with the Selectboard about issues facing the town. Natalie noted that while the 1st District was changing, both Shelburne and Buckland would remain in the 1st District with Natalie as Representative. Margaret said she was thankful for Natalie’s support for the Senior Center and its quest to become a regional district. Andrew mentioned school funding, energy issues, water and sewer, and shared police departments as issues that might need legislative assistance. Natalie responded that the Rural Schools Commission should have its report out later this year with recommendations. Solar connection fees that get triggered are something that has been discussed and solutions are being sought for cost-sharing. She said there was also concern with the balance between forests and solar installations. The western Mass delegation is being careful that the state’s solar goals are not balanced on the forests of Western Mass. Natalie said the EEA has changed the rules regarding water and sewer commission to allow the MVP to assistance with costs and ARPA funds can also be used. There is money on the state budget which is intended to help small towns with the cost of transitions due to police reform. Andrew also mentioned the need for support for a Green Communities grant. Natalie said she would be happy to offer support. Bob said that rural communities were often forgotten while being saddled with unfunded mandates. He hoped that would not expand. He said that the divisions between east and west seemed to be breaking down and hoped it would continue. He thanked Natalie for all she’s done for the 1st District.

**6:00 pm Board of Assessors RE: FY’23 Budget Presentation** (Assessors Jim Richardson, Alan Coutinho, Joel Dwight, Assistant Assessor Paula Morse, Finance Committee Chair Jim Burnham) – The assessors are asking for a 5.9% increase in their stipends. This would total $250. The assessors are currently contracting with Patriot Properties for software and support. They have received a better quote from accompany called Mayflower. Buckland uses Mayflower and is pleased. Mayflower would provide DOR-required photos for properties as part of the contract, while Patriot would charge extra for photos. The current three-year contract with Patriot is for $29,760, while three years with Mayflower would be about $27,280. The Board of Assessors recommended going with Mayflower. The Board’s only comment was that a 5.9% stipend increase for the assessors would be in contrast to the 2.5%for everyone else.

**6:30 pm Shelburne Free Public Library RE: FY’23 Budget Presentation** (Elizabeth Antaya, Library Director, Ted Sicker, Treasurer) **–** The library plans to add two more hours to its operating schedule, bringing it to 13 open hours per week. Elizabeth said they would like an increase in hours for the substitute, who would now be called a library assistant. The extra hours would help to ensure that one person would not be working alone at the library, especially in the evenings. Ted explained that the increase in personnel costs, of about $5,000 would cover the additional hours of operation, the extra hours for the library assistant, and a cost of living increase. Another budget increase would be in the technology line. The current internet connection is too slow and needs an upgrade. The overall budget would increase by 5.4% but the town’s portion of the budget would increase by 2.5%. The extra funds would come from interest on the library’s endowment.

**7:00 pm Tom Williams, EMD RE: FY’23 Budget Presentation** – Tom said his goal was to take emergency management to the next level. Both FEMA and MEMA have increased management efforts and he the thought the town should as well. Tom felt that with climate change flooding, severe storms, and power outages could become more prevalent. Budget line items totaled an increase of 246%. The increase would be less than $3,000. The budget has seen no increases for the past two years. Andrew mentioned that grant sources might be available through the highway department or through FRCOG. Tom has a grant in process and two more to work on following that.

**7:30 pm Liquor License Hearing RE: Hilltown Lodge, LLC** – The hearing was opened at 7:30 pm by Bob Manners. John Lauricella, owner of Hilltown Lodge, and his general manager Brolin Winning attended the hearing. The business will be a boutique hotel with a small bar and a commercial kitchen. There will be a total of seven suites. An outdoor garden area will have seating. There will also be a small stage for events. Brolin has worked in bars and served alcohol in the past. He has a background in the hospitality industry. John has also served alcohol in the past. Both will complete TIPS training before the business opens. It is hoped that the facility can be open to the general public, but as the space is small it may need to be limited to guests only. The facility should be open by late summer. Interior work is nearly complete, exterior work will continue as the weather allows. Bob said the revitalization of the space was great. There was no public comment. Bob closed the hearing at 7:41 pm. A motion was put forth by Andrew to approve the application for an on-premises all alcoholic beverages liquor license for Hilltown Lodge LLC, at 904 Mohawk Trail. This was seconded by Margaret. Roll call vote: Bob – yes; Andrew – yes; Margaret – yes. Motion passed 3-0-0.

**Old Business:**

**Senior Center Expansion RE: West County Senior Services District** – The Selectboards of the three member towns will hold a joint meeting on March 8 at the Buckland Town Hall. Finance Committee members from the three towns may also attend. The meeting will be to discuss the district agreement and an updated executive summary. The document has been reviewed by an independent counsel and is now being reviewed by a bond counsel. It will also be reviewed by the Town Counsels of the member towns.

**Little Mohawk Road 2/14/22 Tree Hearing – Final Vote** (Jim Richardson, Tree Warden) – At the previous meeting concern had been expressed that abutters may not have been adequately notified. Since then letters were sent to all 27 abutters. Two letters were received in return, both by abutters requesting that they get the wood. No other concerns have been raised. Both Andrew and Margaret have since driven the road. Jim said some of the trees that may look healthy are either leaning over the road or would be in the way of construction. A motion was made by Andrew to accept the recommendation of the tree warden regarding the list of trees to be removed on Little Mohawk Road, as presented at the February 14 tree hearing. This was seconded by Margaret. Roll call vote: Bob – yes; Andrew – yes; Margaret – yes. Motion passed 3-0-0.

**Town of Buckland RE: Proposed Shared Police Chief – Interim Basis** – Police Chief Greg Bardwell’s contract has been extended for another three years. Further, the Board authorized him to negotiate a contract with Buckland for administrative services. Chief Bardwell will provided approximately five (5) hours per week outside of his hours worked for Shelburne. The Board has also supported a joint application to the DLS for a $200,000 grant to fund exploration of a more comprehensive shared services agreement, which would be brought before Town Meeting in 2023. If the shared department project moves forward, the grant could also be used to fund some construction to both the Buckland and Shelburne police stations. Bob reminded everyone that the shared police department idea is partially driven by the requirements of police reform, which could eliminate all part-time officers and require towns to hire more full-time officers.

**Town Mask Mandate: Will be rescinded effective March 7, 2022** – The Board of Health has been watching the numbers of COVID cases declining. They settled on a date of March 7, to coordinate with Buckland’s lifting of their mask mandate. The Board of Health is still encouraging the use of masks in situations where social distancing can’t happen. A motion was put forth by Andrew to support the Board of Health’s decision to rescind the mask mandate on March 7 and to support the advisory to wear masks when social distancing is not possible. This was seconded by Margaret. Roll call vote: Bob – yes; Andrew – yes; Margaret – yes. Motion passed 3-0-0.

**New Business:**

**Leanne Dowd RE: Resignation as Outreach Coordinator, Shelburne Senior Center** – Leanne has submitted a letter of resignation, giving a three-month notice. She will volunteer to continue doing SHINE phone calls. The Board was disappointed and said Leanne will be truly missed as she has been aa great resource to area seniors. A motion was put forth by Margaret to accept, with regret, the resignation of Leanne Dowd as Outreach Coordinator at the Senior Center. This was seconded by Andrew. Roll call vote: Bob – yes; Andrew – yes; Margaret – yes. Motion passed 3-0-0.

It is hoped that interviews for a new Senior Center Director will start soon. Once that position is filled a new outreach coordinator will be sought.

**F.C. Community Development Corp. RE: Proposed Coordinated Business Support Program** – The Community Development Corp and FRCOG have proposed a coordinated business support program to assist businesses that were just starting up when the pandemic hit. ARPA fuds could be used for this program. Terry hoped the Board would soon consider the town’s lengthy list of proposed ARPA funded projects. Andrew supported adding the coordinated business support to the project list but would like to know how the funds already provided to businesses have been used.

**Constance Clarke RE: Resignation from Shelburne Cultural Council 2/28/22** – Connie has submitted her resignation with a detailed letter explaining the status of the Cultural Council. The Board appreciated the informative letter as well as all that Connie has done. A motion was made by Andrew to accepted the resignation of Constance Clarke, from the Cultural Council, with appreciation for her service. This was seconded by Margaret. Roll call vote: Bob – yes; Andrew – yes; Margaret – yes. Motion passed 3-0-0.

**Atty. Kevin Parsons RE: Request to Modify Sweetheart Realty Tax Incentive Agreement** – A TIF for the Sweetheart had been granted for five years and is soon coming due. Kevin is now asking for the TIF benefits to start in FY’24. However, the benefits have already been accruing since FY’20. The assistant assessor said that between FY’20 and FY’24 $32,856 will be received in tax relief. The Board understood that the project got a late start and that the pandemic may have held up progress, but they were not ready to grant a lengthy extension. A meeting between the Board, Kevin Parsons, Joe Rae, and the Finance Committee will be arranged to discuss this further.

**Elizabeth Boltz RE: Village Easter Egg Hunt, April 17, 2022** – Elizabeth would like to host an Easter Egg hunt for children and adults. About 1,500 to 2,000 eggs would be hidden around town. The event would be sponsored through donations. While not wanting to over regulate, the Board expressed some concerns about safety. It was suggested that an area for the hunt be defined and that residents be made aware that the event would be happening. A motion was made by Andrew to support the April 17 Easter egg hunt with more details about the event and safety measures being provided. This was seconded by Margaret. Roll call vote: Bob – yes; Andrew – yes; Margaret – yes. Motion passed 3-0-0.

**Temporary Bridge** – CD Davenport has asked to rent the town’s temporary bridge. It would be used for three or four months in the town of Leyden. He is aware of the town’s policy that the cost would be $40/day for the first 90 days and $25/day thereafter. A signed agreement and proof of insurance is required. Proceeds would go into the Highway Equipment Stabilization Fund. A motion was put forth by Andrew to approve the request of CD Davenport for the rental of the temporary bridge for use in the town of Leyden for a four month period. This was seconded by Margaret. Roll call vote: Bob – yes; Andrew – yes; Margaret – yes. Motion passed 3-0-0.

**Board of Assessors** – Assessors Alan Coutinho and James Richardson have announced that they will not be seeking re-election. Anyone interested in the positions should contact Town Clerk Joe Judd about nomination papers.

**Spare Driver** – Jeremy Batite, a former Highway Department employee is interested in becoming a spare driver for the department. Bob said it was a good idea to have a pool of qualified drivers. A motion was put forth by Margaret to approved the application of Jeremy Batite as a spare drive for the Highway Department. This was seconded by Andrew. Roll call vote: Bob – yes; Andrew – yes; Margaret – yes. Motion passed 3-0-0.

**Any Other Business:**

**Shelburne Falls Village Task Force Development Meeting** – March 10, 2022, at 6 pm

**Next Meeting** – The next Board meeting will be held on March 14, at 5:30 pm.

**Buckland & Shelburne Joint Public Hearing for Renewal of Comcast License** – March 15 at 6:30 pm

**Correspondence:** None

**Public Comment:** None

**Adjournment**: At 8:10 pm a motion was made by Margaret to adjourn the meeting. This was seconded by Andrew. Roll call vote: Bob – yes; Margaret – yes; Andrew – yes. Motion passed 3-0-0.

Respectfully submitted,

Faye Whitney, Recording Secretary