

Selectboard Meeting Minutes August 14, 2023 BSE, Mechanic Street 5:30 pm

Call to Order: Bob Manners called the meeting to order at 5:30 pm. Others present: Selectboard members Rick LaPierre, Andrew Baker, and Town Administrator Terry Narkewicz.

A motion was put forth by Andrew to approve the minutes of July 26 and July 31. This was seconded by Rick. Roll call vote: Bob – yes; Rick – yes; Andrew – yes. Motion passed 3-0-0.

Department Liaison Reports:

Town Hall – Rick continues to meet regularly with the Town Administrator Town Clerk, and Town Treasurer.

Veterans Services – Rick reported that a new veteran’s service officer is needed. The opening will be posted. In the meantime, veteran’s services will not be interrupted in West County.

Police Department – The merger of the two is almost complete. Some IT issues are still being worked out. All officers will soon be wearing body cameras.

Village Task Force – The group is still working on creating a successor to the former business association. A FRCOG grant to explore downtown management and revitalization may bridge into finding a successor organization.

Senior Center – Bob said the center is always looking for more volunteers. The annual picnic will be held this week.

Highway Department – The crew is working on roadside mowing. Mark Shippee and Bob met with Mass DOT regarding the paving of South Maple Street, aka Route 2A. The department will soon be advertising for winter help. Snow plow drivers and someone to do sidewalk maintenance are needed.

Appointments:

5:40 pm Energy Committee RE: Streetlight Presentation – Tom Johnson, Chair of the Energy Committee gave a presentation on streetlights. The town options are accepting an offer from Eversource to install LED lights in all of the town’s 99 streetlights, or hiring a streetlight consultant to assist the town in purchasing the streetlights, conducting an audit, purchasing LED bulbs, and assuming responsibility for installation and maintenance of the lights.

Starting with the Eversource offer Tom said the LED lights would reduce usage by more than 30,000 kilowatts per year, the town would be going with a known company that would continue maintenance as usual, and the shift could happen soon. However, the proposed LED lights are too bright and glaring for residential areas, and perhaps not bright enough for Route 2, and the illumination pattern is too broad. Eversource charges a rental fee of about \$8,200 per year.

Town-owned lights would save the town \$6,000 per year as there would be no rental fee and the maintenance fee is \$2,400 annually. The LED lights chosen could be warmer color, they could be dimmable, and they could have an illumination pattern that would not light up homes and yards. The wattage could be lower in residential areas and higher on Route 2 and in parking lots. Tom estimated that over the 25-year lifespan of the lights, the town could save a quarter million dollars. However, the upfront cost of owning the lights would be about \$55,000 and no funds are currently set aside for that purchase Grants may be available or a lease/purchase arrangement could be made. Due to lengthy grant timelines, it could be as long as two years before a switch is made. There is also uncertainty about maintenance costs, which would partially depend on whether lights were added or removed. Other towns have said that the initial quote from a

lighting consultant turned out to be the final price. The Energy Committee asked the Selectboard to defer on accepting the offer from Eversource and authorize the Energy Committee to seek funding to hire a lighting consultant, acquire ownership of the lights, and install new LEDs using primarily Green Communities funds. The Energy Committee had spoken with five towns, chosen at random, who had purchased their own lights and all were very happy with the choice and confirmed the savings. Bob asked who would be the point person if the town were to buy the lights. That had not been decided yet. The Selectboard's decision to accept the offer from Eversource was based on the fact that there would be a saving in energy use and there would be no cost to the town for the transition. Bob said the decision was made with the best interests of the town in mind. Rick expressed concern about dimming lights and possible liability issues. Andrew responded that dimmable lights were only an option and lighting experts would be consulted. He also said that all residents, even those in the rural areas, would benefit from any cost savings. Bob suggested that the matter be tabled until the next meeting to give the Board a chance to read letters that have been submitted. Finance Committee member Todd Dubreuil asked about non-routine maintenance costs and the town's liability. Tom Johnson said he thought the amount of money the town would be saving would be more than enough to cover unanticipated costs.

At 6:26 pm the Selectboard meeting was recessed for the purpose of a Special Town Meeting.

6:30 pm Special Town Meeting – The meeting was called to order at 6:30 pm by Moderator Roland Giguere.

Article 1 asked for the transfer of funds, in the amount of \$63,000 for the purchase of a police cruiser. It was explained that the 2016 cruiser, which was scheduled to be replaced next year, needed such extensive repairs that it should be replaced now. Police Chief Greg Bardwell said that half the funds were coming from Shelburne and the other half from the police regionalization grant. In the future, capital costs will be shared equally by Shelburne and Buckland. The motion was approved unanimously.

Article 2 asked to raise, by taxation, \$300 for the highway department's snow and ice account. This was the amount of funding originally requested at annual town meeting. The motion was approved unanimously.

Article 3 asked for the transfer of \$6,000 from the Bridge Street Tree Stabilization account for the purchase and installation of permeable materials for each of the tree wells on Bridge Street. The motion was approved unanimously.

Article 4 asked for the transfer of \$40,000 from stabilization to the Memorial Hall Theater Renovation account to be used as matching funds for a Cultural Facilities grant. The motion was approved unanimously.

The meeting was closed at 6:40 pm

The Selectboard meeting resumed at 6:40 pm.

Matt Popoli of the Finance Committee asked several questions about costs, price guarantees, and liability issues. Tom Johnson replied that there had been no lawsuits in the towns they had spoken with. Andrew said actual costs would not be known until the project went out to bid. Discussion continued on the amount of possible savings. Bob said the discussion should be tabled until the next meeting and the other Board members had no objections to that.

Old Business:

Streetlights – See above.

Cowell Gym HVAC Project (John Walsh) – John Walsh said the work should be complete next week. An inspection would likely be needed. The project will not be completed in time for the fall round of Green Communities funding. Another round of funding will be available in the spring.

West County Senior Services District Board of Managers Appointees – Three people from Shelburne have expressed interest in serving on the Board of Managers.

Relocation of Veteran's Memorial – The memorial will soon be moving to a location near the Arms Library. Librarian Laurie Wheeler will be contacted regarding the details.

Newsletter Guidelines – Rick felt the town would be remiss if it had no guidelines and had presented a list of procedures to the Board. He had been asked to make a change to one item but had then decided not to make that change. The insert regarding the newsletter, which had been sent out with the tax bills had indicated that the newsletter would report on not only town boards and committees but also libraries, the Village Task Force, etc. Andrew asked if hypothetically the newsletter editor was a member of the Selectboard how could the newsletter be reviewed by the Board without a posted meeting. Rick said the review would take place during a posted meeting. That would likely change the timing of publication. Andrew also asked if non-profit groups could be included. Since the newsletter uses a town email address it is not appropriate to include non-profits. Those words were removed from the guidelines. Andrew mentioned that while the guidelines would be for any newsletter that was under the auspices of the town, other newsletters could be created independent of the town. A motion was made by Rick that the Board accept the list of eight Town of Shelburne newsletter procedures and guidelines as a preliminary outline for the operation of a town newsletter, as of August 14, 2023, subject to future amendments. This was seconded by Andrew. Roll call vote: Bob – yes; Rick – yes; Andrew – yes. Motion passed 3-0-0.

Community Preservation Act Committee – The various town boards who are required to have members on this committee have chosen their representatives. However, there have been no applicants for the at large seats, which are the only ones the Board has to appoint. It was also questioned as to whether the bylaw creating a committee must be approved by the Attorney General's Office before the committee is appointed. No action was taken.

New Business:

Jim Kessler, Memorial Hall Assoc. RE: Request to Reactivate MHA Lease, Oct. 1st –

During the pandemic, when restrictions made using Memorial Hall impossible, the lease agreement between the Town and the Memorial Hall Association was suspended. Now MHA would like to reactivate the agreement. Rick said since there is time before Oct. 1, he would like to have a chance to study the lease before voting. This was tabled until a future meeting.

Bill Buck RE: Resignation as Cowell Gym Director – Bill has submitted his resignation as of September 30. He was thanked for his work. The position will be advertised. A motion was put forth by Andrew to accept the resignation of Bill Buck as Cowell Gym Director with appreciation and regret. This was seconded by Rick. Roll call vote: Bob – yes; Rick – yes; Andrew – yes. Motion passed 3-0-0.

Faye Whitney RE: Resignation as Planning Board's Administrative Assistant – Faye has submitted her resignation, effective as of October 1. Bob said she has a lot on her plate as she works for several town boards. Rick described her as an incredible asset to the Planning Board.

A motion was made by Andrew to accept the resignation of Faye Whitney as Administrative Assistant to the Planning Board. This was seconded by Rick. Roll call vote: Bob – yes; Rick – yes; Andrew – yes. Motion passed 3-0-0.

Any Other Business: None

Next Meeting – The next Board meeting will be on August 28 at 5:30 pm via Zoom.

Correspondence: None

Public Comment:

Suzette Agey- Nichols requested an updated copy of the Energy Committee’s streetlight report She was given one.

Beth Baron thought it was implied that the decision to accept the offer from Eversource was not well thought out. That was not her impression. She also felt the cost comparisons were not comparing “apples to apples.”

Someone thanked everyone for their work on the complex issue of streetlights.

Adjournment: At 7:35 a motion was made by Rick to adjourn the meeting. This was seconded by Andrew. Roll call vote: Andrew – yes; Rick – yes; Bob – yes. Motion passed 3-0-0.

Respectfully submitted,
Faye Whitney, Recording Secretary