

Selectboard Meeting Minutes September 25, 2023 Zoom Teleconference 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 September 11. This was seconded by Rick. Roll call vote: Bob – yes; Rick – yes; Andrew – yes. Motion passed 3-0-0.

Department Liaison Reports:

Pocket Park – Andrew has arranged a meeting to consider the feasibility of removing some of the trees from the Bridge of Flowers, that are no longer needed on the bridge, and replanting them at the home of Tree Warden Jim Richardson. If the trees survive, they could then be replanted at the pocket park. Andrew will also be meeting with Kay Cafasso and her students regarding a garden design for the park.

Veterans Services – A new veteran’s service officer has been hired. Rick reminded everyone that all West County towns served by the district have an outreach program at the Senior Center on the fourth Wednesday of each month. The quarterly meeting of the district will take place on October 12.

Town Hall – Rick has been staying in touch with the treasurer/collector who is working with the assessors on the address issues with the tax bills. Rick attended an assessor’s meeting, which helped to clarify some questions on the town-owned tax title properties.

Police Department – The chief is working on updating job descriptions. There will be 11 new job descriptions and a new policy to be discussed at a future meeting.

Village Task Force – Andrew said the task force has suspended operations for the time being. It has not been able to find a successor organization to take over from the former Business Association. The ShelburneFalls.com website will be hosted by the West County Arts and Culture group until a Business Association successor can take it over. A FRCOG three-town grant for downtown revitalization may be able to take on the search for a successor organization.

Senior Center – More than 30 people have signed up for the Conversation Café. An aerobics class will be starting up and will be held on Tuesdays.

Highway Department – The new blower, approved at Town Meeting, has arrived. A leaf vacuum will be ordered. The new dump truck should be arriving next week. The road crew is working on finishing up work on the recently paved Old Albany and Lucy Fiske Roads.

Appointments:

5:45 pm Alain Peteroy, Franklin Land Trust RE: 47 Acres Conservation Restriction for HITOR, LLC c/o Catherine Smith – Patten and Reynolds Roads – Catherine (Kiki) plans to donate a Conservation Restriction on 47 acres of what used to be the Dean Farm. She would be keeping five acres out for a house lot. The land is primarily sugarbush and goes down to the Dragon Brook wetland, which is used by rare species. The use of the land will not be changed and it will be kept on the tax rolls. The CR has not yet been approved by the state but it is expected to be soon. Selectboard approval is the final step. A vote will be taken by the Board when the state responds. Bob felt this was a wonderful concept for an area that needs protection. Kiki said she had been pursued by neighbors seeking to buy the property for housing but prefers to keep it in the hands of the local community. Norm Davenport will have access to the

sugarbush on the CR property. The property is in Chapter so there will be no change to the taxes except for the five-acre lot, which can be taxed at a higher rate.

6:00 pm Angel Bragdon, Treasurer/Collector RE: Request for Part-time Assistance – Angel would like to have another person able to sign items related to banking and to help process mail at tax times. This would also provide a backup in case Angel was unavailable for any reason. The town did have an assistant collector in the past. Funds are available for the position and Angel would use the person on an as-needed basis. Mass General Law says that a treasurer can choose an assistant with Selectboard approval. The new person would need to be bonded. Angel would like to hire Gabe Voelker who was previously Town Administrator in Orange and a treasurer in several towns. A motion was put forth by Andrew to approve the hiring of Gabe Voelker as assistant treasurer/collector, as recommended by Anele Bragdon. This was seconded by Rick. Roll call vote: Andrew – yes; Bob – yes; Rick – yes. Motion passed 3-0-0.

6:15 pm Joe Rae, Shelburne Falls Pub RE: One Day Liquor License– Joe was asking to have a one-day license in order to serve outside at the rear of the parking lot adjoining the deck and patio. This would be for a benefit on October 1, from noon until 6 pm. A section of the parking lot would be roped off. The current license only allows serving inside and on the two patio areas. ABCC says a one-day license would allow serving in the parking lot. The event would be a benefit. Joe expects 150 to 200 motorcycles to attend. Joe said he had spoken with the police and will have a police detail if the police department feels it is necessary. A motion was made by Rick to approve a one-day liquor license for October 1 for the Shelburne Falls Pub. This was seconded by Andrew. Roll call vote: Andrew – yes; Bob – yes; Rick – yes. Motion passed 3-0-0.

6:30 pm MTRSD Officials to Review Proposed District Language Changes with Selectboard and Finance Committee (Jim Burnham, Terry Mitchell, Todd Dubreuil, Jay Readinger, Finance Committee; Sheryl Stanton, MTRSD Superintendent; Martha Thurber, Jason Cusimano, Willow Cohen, School Committee members) – The wording of proposed changes to the district agreement is the same as was presented last spring. It was approved by five of the eight district member towns. All member towns must approve the changes in order to move forward. The wording changes would change the way the number of students are counted to include all students in each town, not just those that attend Mohawk district schools. The Finance Committee had concerns about a change in the language regarding maintenance and capital expenses. The concern would be that the wording could imply that regular maintenance costs could be passed on to the towns as capital requests. It was explained by school officials that no capital requests can go forward until all the towns approve them. If any town thinks some of the requests should instead be part of the maintenance budget the school committee would work with the towns to change that. Andrew suggested approving the article as written but with an added amendment to change the language regarding maintenance at a future Town meeting. Jim Burnham asked why the language was changed at all. Martha said the change was unintentional and that it would be corrected. Some concern was expressed that the language change had not been noticed until now. The Finance Committee was not prepared to recommend the article at this time, preferring to wait for a red-lined version. Martha said she would provide that but perhaps not in time for the Special Town Meeting. The Selectboard decided to wait for a recommendation from the Finance Committee before they made their decision to recommend or not. The discussion was then tabled until the next meeting, which will be on October 10.

6:50 pm Review of Special Town Meeting Warrant with Finance Committee and Moderator – The moderator was not present. The Finance Committee and Selectboard felt they had already reviewed articles two, three, and four. As for article one, it was the understanding

that it would be passed over or tabled and brought to Annual Town Meeting. All were in favor of that plan.

Old Business:

Streetlights RE: Appointment of a Streetlight Committee & Review of Real Term Energy's Proposal for Inventory/Assessment of Existing Lights – Bob said the committee should include a member of the Selectboard, one from the Finance Committee, one from the Energy Committee, and a citizen at large. He would also like to have John Walsh serve on the committee due to his expertise. Jeff Boettner of the Energy Committee and Laurie Wheeler as citizen at large have been suggested. Both are willing to serve, as is John. Rick thought Bob should be the Selectboard representative. Paul Hollings and Doug Engle have also expressed an interest in serving, but the committee should not include too many people from any one board. This committee would be long-term and would continue if the town chooses to own the lights. John said he did not want to be on a long-term committee but was willing to stay through town meeting and through the implementation period. As the Selectboard appoints the Streetlight Committee, it was decided that it would be a conflict of interest for any Selectboard member to be on the committee. A motion was made by Andrew to appoint the following to the Streetlight Committee: John Walsh, Jeff Boettner, Doug Engle, Laurie Wheeler, and the Chair or representative of the Finance Committee. This was seconded by Rick. Roll call vote: Andrew – yes; Bob – yes; Rick – yes. Motion passed 3-0-0.

The proposal from Real Term Energy for inventory and assessment of existing lights had been circulated and reviewed by the Board. A motion was put forth by Andrew to accept the proposal submitted by Real Term Energy. This was seconded by Rick. Roll call vote: Andrew – yes; Bob – yes; Rick – yes. Motion passed 3-0-0.

Cowell Gym HVAC Project – Project Complete (John Walsh) – John said the project is complete. Invoices should be coming soon. He has added hygrometers to keep track of humidity levels. Andrew asked if the heat pump covers should have cages to protect them from stray basketballs. John said they are warranted for a year and supposedly can withstand basketballs.

West County Senior Services District Board of Managers Appointees – Nothing new to report.

Relocation of Veteran's Memorial – The monument should be put in place later this week, pending weather.

Community Preservation Act Committee – Nothing has been received from the Attorney General's office. One email has been received from a resident expressing interest in being on the committee.

Joe Giard, Transfer Station Attendant RE: Proposed Additional Staffing & Free Store – Currently a member of the Highway Department covers some hours one day a week. There is concern about this person regularly getting overtime for covering the transfer station and the thought was that his Highway Department hours should be changed to eliminate the overtime. Terry mentioned that a half hour of overtime was not a lot given that the employee had stepped up to help. If a new person is found to help at the transfer station this problem will disappear. Once the snow starts falling, the transfer station will need to close early that day in order for plowing to occur in a timely manner. The position is not in the budget but last year there was money left over which should cover it. A motion was made by Rick to advertise for part time help at the transfer station for eight hours per week. This was seconded by Andrew. Roll call vote: Andrew – yes; Bob – yes; Rick – yes. Motion passed 3-0-0.

Town-Owned Tax Title Property, Brook Road RE: Proposed Auction – This item was tabled.

New Business:

Generator Bids for Municipal Building, 623 Mohawk Trail RE: Vote to Award – This item was passed over until the next meeting.

ARPA Fund Request for Pocket Park – As mentioned under liaison reports, trees from the Bridge of Flowers may be available to plant at the pocket park. Andrew does not have details regarding the cost or the timing but he thought it would be helpful to allocate ARPA funds so the project could move ahead. He will have more details by the next meeting. Rick preferred to wait until more details are available.

Any Other Business:

Town-Owned Tax Title Property on Main Street – A large tree has fallen on property adjacent to the town-owned properties on Main Street and has done damage. The affected homeowner would like some financial assistance from the town as the tree may have been located on town-owned property. The tree was located very close to property lines and a plot plan will be needed to determine if the town is involved. Terry will follow up on this.

Next Meeting – The next Board meeting will be on October 10, at 5:30 pm via Zoom.

Correspondence: None.

Public Comment:

John Walsh commented that the town should consider deferred maintenance at Cowell Gym, both inside and outside projects need to be done.

Bob asked John if he would chair the Streetlight Committee. John thought that decision should come from the committee.

Adjournment: At 7:58 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