

Selectboard Meeting Minutes December 4, 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 and Andrew Baker and Town Administrator Terry Narkewicz.

A motion was put forth by Andrew to approve the minutes of November 20. This was seconded by Rick. Roll call vote: Rick – yes; Andrew – yes; Bob – yes. Motion passed 3-0-0.

Department Liaison Reports:

Veteran's Service Center – Rick said the veteran's budget for FY25 is close to being finished.

Police Department – Following up on questions raised at the previous meeting, Rick said the foot and bicycle patrols of the village are still standard operating procedure, though they occur less often during the winter months. In the future, various reports of the number of arrests, motor vehicle accidents, etc. will be broken down by town.

Town Hall – Rick met with Treasurer Angle Bragdon and Terry regarding tax title properties. There are 39 outstanding bills from FY'23 for an approximate total of \$57,500. Demands have been sent and Angel is working on getting the payments caught up. Rick learned that after a land Court judgement there is a 12-month waiting period, for the property owner to contest the judgement, before the property can be sold. Four properties are now ready to be sold, but that is not enough for an auction. Another 12 properties are either in Land Court or are about to enter. It will probably be next fall before any auction of property takes place. The \$57,500 in outstanding taxes is not a major concern to town finances and Rick had the impression this was a regular process.

Rick also met with a representative of Habitat for Humanity. That group has shown preliminary interest in some of the tax title properties but certain requirements need to be met before Habitat is willing to take the properties. Rick questioned how much money the town should spend on tax title properties before giving them away to Habitat. Andrew said he had been waiting for the CPA Committee to become active and planned to propose that some CPA funds could be used to demolish the barn on the Mechanic Street property and do the necessary Conservation Commission work on the Main Street properties. Andrew felt that if Habitat built homes on the tax title properties the new construction would add to the tax base. It was noted that the CPA Committee only makes recommendations for the use of funds. Town Meeting must make the final decisions.

Highway Department – Work continues on the pole barn. The roof will soon be started. This is the final week for the asphalt plants to operate so patching is still ongoing. Bob said there will be a meeting with MassDOT this week to discuss paving South Maple and Bridge Streets (aka Route 2A). Chapter 90 funds have already been allocated for that work. Those funds will now be redirected towards paving on Mechanic Street and the Church Street hill.

Senior Center – Bob reported that the new van will not be delivered until next August. The Center has received several grants. One will be used for home heating fuel assistance. Another will be used for phones and laptops to allow seniors to participate in Zoom meetings. The grant will also pay for an IT specialist to assist seniors in learning how to use the new equipment.

Appointments:

5:45 pm Board of Assessors RE: Tax Classification Hearing (Joel Dwight, Jodi

Lewandowski, Assessors; Karen Tonelli, Assistant Assessor) – The hearing opened at 5:45 pm. The Tax Classification Hearing must be held before the tax rate can be finalized. The Selectboard must decide whether to have a single or split tax rate. The town's total valuation has increased by 2.9% and is now \$334,794,133. The value of the town's 499 single family homes has increased by 4.6%. Due in part to the increase in value, if the town continues with a single tax rate it will be \$13.20, a decrease of 38¢ from last year. The average tax bill for a single-family home will be about \$4,462. The overlay balance, which is used for abatements and exemptions is \$129,192. The town's excess capacity is \$661,794. When asked about the amount of abatements and exemptions in an average year, Karen said exemptions are given to qualifying seniors, veterans, and those who are blind. She said there are about 19 individuals who receive exemptions, which amounts to between \$4,000 and \$5,00 per year. Abatements are hard to predict. Andrew asked about the NE Power abatement that has been unresolved for several years. Because nothing has happened, Karen did not feel it would be followed up. She said the town could push for a resolution, but that would create expenses for the town. Shelburne has never had a split tax rate. A motion was made by Andrew to maintain the single tax rate. This was seconded by Rick. Roll call vote: Rick – yes; Andrew – yes; Bob – yes. Motion passed 3-0-0. Three other votes were required to be taken. Shelburne does not have any property classified as open space. A motion was put forth by Andrew to reject the open space discount. This was seconded by Rick. Roll call vote: Rick – yes; Andrew – yes; Bob – yes. Motion passed 3-0-0. A residential exemption would shift the tax burden from single family to multi-family and second homes. Assessors keep track of non-owner-occupied homes by tracking mailing addresses. They have no way of tracking Air B&Bs. A motion was made by Rick to not adopt the residential exemption. This was seconded by Andrew. Roll call vote: Rick – yes; Andrew – yes; Bob – yes. Motion passed 3-0-0. The small commercial exemption benefits only building owners not business owners. A motion was put forth by Rick to not accept the small commercial exemption. This was seconded by Andrew. Roll call vote: Rick – yes; Andrew – yes; Bob – yes. Motion passed 3-0-0. The hearing was closed at 6:15 pm.

6:00 pm Dani Eaton, Power Engineers, Inc. RE: National Grid Transmission Line

Improvement Project (Joe Carroll) – The purpose of this appointment was to explain a future proposed project called the Central to Western Mass Energy Improvement Project. It is not scheduled to begin until 2027. The transmission lines in this area were built in the early 1900s. The project area would cover 690 structures through 16 communities with a right of way of about 67 miles. The goal is to completely rebuild the structures. In Shelburne, 72 structures would be affected with a net reduction of four structures. The current right of way standard is 125 feet in width. Any widening will remain within existing easements. The existing lattice towers would be replaced with taller structures. Federal, state, and local permits will all be required for the project. Community open houses will eventually be scheduled to allow anyone interested to have a chance to interact with and ask questions of the project team.

6:15 pm Weston & Sampson Engineering RE: MVP Action Grant (Tricia Yacovone-Biagi) –

This meeting was to present the MVP Expression of Interest for a project titled Resilient Risk Assessment of Critical Culverts. The top two hazards identified in Shelburne are extreme weather events and flooding. FRCOG has already done an inventory of areas of concern and the

goal of this project would be to identify and prioritize upgrades to those critical locations. The expression of interest is due this month. Depending on the feedback received, the town could then decide to apply for an MVP Action Grant in the spring. The proposed project includes a resilient roadway improvement plan, a resilient drainage plan, and improving community connections and emergency communications with vulnerable populations. Highway Superintendent Mark Shippee's input will be sought. The state requires that each town have an MVP Coordinator. A motion was made by Rick to appoint Tricia Yacovone-Biagi as town MVP Coordinator. This was seconded by Andrew. Roll call vote: Rick – yes; Andrew – yes; Bob – yes. Motion passed 3-0-0. A motion was put forth by Rick to proceed with the expression of interest as presented. This was seconded by Andrew. Roll call vote: Rick – yes; Andrew – yes; Bob – yes. Motion passed 3-0-0.

Old Business:

Proposed Solar Array for Highway Pole Barn Roof (see New Business)

New Business:

Portable Bathroom Near Visitor's Center RE: Winter Rates – If the porta-potty will be used during the winter months, the daily rate will increase by \$7 for winterization. The Visitor's Center is not open in the winter. The only other facilities are in the Town Hall. It was thought the porta-potty might be uncomfortably cold in the winter. A motion was made by Rick to suspend the services or the porta-potty for the winter months. This was seconded by Andrew. Roll call vote: Rick – yes; Andrew – yes; Bob – yes. Motion passed 3-0-0.

FRCOG RE: Professional Services Agreement for RFP – Solar on Pole Barn – Terry highly recommended using FRCOG to create the RFP. The fees for this would likely come from the funds already earmarked for the project. A motion was made by Andrew to hire FRCOG to create the RFP for the solar project on the pole barn, this was seconded by Rick. Roll call vote: Rick – yes; Andrew – yes; Bob – yes. Motion passed 3-0-0.

FY 22/23 CDBG Budget Amendment for West County Emergency Food Pantry – This amendment would not change the bottom line. The only changes are shifts in line items. A motion was put forth by Rick to amend the FY22/23 CDBG contract with Community Action Pioneer Valley to operate the West County Emergency Food Pantry as presented in Amendment #1. The revised budget transfers costs between personnel, fringe, and the federally approved indirect rate, all of which have changed since the town applied for CDBG funds in March 2023. This was seconded by Andrew. Roll call vote: Rick – yes; Andrew – yes; Bob – yes. Motion passed 3-0-0.

ABCC RE: 2024 Seasonal Population Increase Estimate Form – The Selectboard signs off annually on this form affirming that the town does not have drastic seasonal changes in its population. A motion was made by Andrew to approve the Seasonal Population Increase Estimate Form as presented. This was seconded by Rick. Roll call vote: Rick – yes; Andrew – yes; Bob – yes. Motion passed 3-0-0.

Any Other Business: None

Next Meeting – The next Board meeting will be on December 18, at 5:30 pm via Zoom.

Correspondence: None

Public Comment: None

Adjournment: At 7:10 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