

Town Of Sherman
Regular Monthly BOS Meeting
April 23, 2020
7:00 p.m. via ZOOM

Member's Present: First Selectman Don Lowe, Selectman Bob Ostrosky, and Selectman Kevin Keenan

Member's Absent: None

Audience & Invited: Treasurer Eric Holub, Business Manager Liz LaVia, and members from our community via ZOOM teleconferencing.

Clerk: Margaret Beatty

Call to Order/ Pledge of Allegiance: Meeting was called to order at 7:01 p.m. followed by the Pledge of Allegiance

Public Comment: None

Correspondence: None

Administrative: A). Approval of Minutes: 3/26/2020 BOS Regular Monthly Meeting

Motioned by: Selectman Kevin Keenan

Seconded by: Selectman Bob Ostrosky **All in Favor:** Unanimous

B). Tax Refunds: A motion to approve a tax refund to the amount of \$4,163.24,

Motioned by: Selectman Kevin Keenan

Seconded by: Selectman Bob Ostrosky **All in Favor:** unanimous

C) Financial Review: The town has 10 weeks left into this fiscal year, Business Manager Liz LaVia provided a review of the current financial standing, and she noted that that the counsel and court expenses are running under budget by \$23,000. She also pointed out that registrar's expenses will be under budget due to up and coming non- voting on town budget, the old pension plan had an unexpected \$1300 expense for administrative fees related to 6 year restatement required by the IRS. Good will items related to Covid 19, CIRMA extended their rates on a new 3 year contract for the town, leaving the first year flat and the subsequent years with no more than a one and a half percent increase. On the CT Partnership medical insurance, the company extended our current premiums through the end of September rather than increase them July 1st. We are tracking Covid 19 expenses and currently have recorded about \$2100 for protective gear, technology, and emergency management. We will continue to track more expenses as they come in.

Question from the public: Art Fasig asked what the \$1300 IRS unexpected bill?

Business Manager Liz LaVia responded that there was a six year recording requirement with the IRS, a fee for administrative reporting of restatement of the town's old pension plan to the IRS.

Treasure Eric Holub interjected that it's not a bill to the IRS rather a bill from our administrator to update our pension plan document, the IRS requires us to update every six years.

Bob Acosta also commented that the SVFD is keeping track of costs associated with the virus, the department has a running cumulative amount of \$2000 for the spraying of the fire house and as well as PPE equipment.

D). In lieu of Town Meetings, as per order of Governor Lamont's executive order 7S (due to gathering restrictions), 4 items will be voted upon for town funding by only selectman and not brought to public. The items are as followed:

I. To authorize an amount not to exceed \$26,000 from the Happy Acres Restricted Fund for repairs to the foundation of the Happy Acres barn.

Motioned by: F. Selectman Don Lowe

Seconded by: Selectman Bob Ostrosky

Discussion: Selectman Kevin Keenan is not in agreement with this expenditure, he believes it is not necessary. He does not believe the amount allotted fits the actual amount needed for repair. It falls under the criteria of esthetics rather than structural. He believes that the repair is a frivolous expense and that the town should practice a level of restraint with some of the expenditures.

Selectman Bob Ostrosky does not believe that the crack passes the eye test and that the town engineer does believe that a repair should happen.

There was an interruption from the public, which in turn, our First Selectman had to respond to the public that the current discussion is only with each respective selectman. Discussion of the barn repair got off topic and previous expenses that were discussed in financial review crept into the conversation of the barn.

First Selectman Don Lowe stated he is taking direction form our town engineer and that his vote stands in favor of the motion.

Two Selectman voted in favor of the motion: 1 opposed

All In Favor: F. Selecman Don Lowe and Selectman Bob Ostrosky

Oppose: Selectman Kevin Keenan

Note: The motion carries

II. To authorize an amount not to exceed \$4000 from the Happy Acres Restricted Fund for repairs to the garage doors on the Happy Acres storage shed.

Motioned by: F. Selectman Don Lowe

Seconded by: Selectman Bob Ostrosky

Discussion: Selectman Kevin Keenan believes there is one door in particular that needs repair, he wanted to point out that we have two separate quotes, one for \$3900 and another for \$1710. The quote for the lesser amount was submitted by company that the town crew uses on repairs to the garage. Selectman Bob Ostrosky pointed out that a decision was not made on which estimate will be used and that the town always strives to spend funds appropriately and responsibly.

All in Favor: Unanimous, motion passes

III. To authorize an amount not to exceed \$5000 from the Capital Non-Recurring Fund for landscape design and the purchase of materials and plants for area surrounding the outside walkway entrance into Mallory Town Hall.

Motioned by: F. Selectman Don Lowe

Seconded by: Selectman Kevin Keenan

Discussion: F. Selectman noted we lowered the amount as per suggestion from the town citizens, the amount allows us to pay the designer and to buy the plants. The work will be done by the town crew, work done in line with the town green design.

Selectman Kevin Keenan wanted to point out that it is a nice project but that there are other projects at town hall that need to be addressed. In particular the roof cleaning and heating issues, and ADA compliance. First Selectman Don Lowe mentioned that the heating project will come out of our LoCIP fund and a project down the road, it will not come out of our Capital Fund.

All in Favor: Unanimous, motion passes

IV. To authorize the First Selectman to accept and administer LoCIP grant funds of up to \$12,000 for updates and renovations for the Mallory Town Hall business office. First Selectman Don Lowe highlighted that there were 3 proposals for the work, the first proposal was for over \$10,000 but subsequently the contractor pulled out, the second proposal was for \$8,900, and the third was for \$7000. We have electric worked proposed for \$1340. We will chose one of the remaining two contracts if approved.

Motioned by: F. Selectman Don Lowe

Seconded by: Selectman Bob Ostrosky

Discussion: Selectman Bob Ostrosky mentioned this fits in current guidelines for expanding workspace safety and personal space boundaries, especially with current issues associated with the virus. It helps in favor of workspace flow (the construction plan inadvertently plays in favor with personal space). First Selectman Don Lowe agreed.

Selectman Kevin Keenan asked if the money is from LoCIP grants that the town currently have, First Selectman Don Lowe answered by mentioning we have about \$100,000 funds accrued in the last three years that have not been appropriated for any projects. F. Selectman also noted several projects such as the sidewalk, heating issues can be possibly paid for by using these funds.

All in Favor: Unanimous, motion passes

Information/ Discussion:

A). SVFD: Fire Chief Bob Acosta gave monthly report stating that the spraying of the fire house/equipment was precautionary move to protect volunteers because a members spouse was diagnosed with the virus, expenses will be covered by FEMA. The department has been giving \$50 gift cards to motivate members to cover 12 hour ambulance shifts regardless of calls, this incentive has been saving the town money. Very proud of members for all their hard work and dedication. The new boat should be ready next week, the boat cost \$125,000 all paid for by donations. First Selectman Don Lowe commented that the town is grateful for all the hard work the department is doing in protecting the citizens.

B). Covid 19 Report: The town has a cumulative number of 11 cases with 1 death. From April 6th to April 22nd we stayed at 10 cases. We, as a town, need to continue to practice social distancing and being respectful of local and state guidelines. Also, we are having trouble with people not picking up after their dogs at the parks. Please be respectful of caring for our community space. We had an issue with a dog bite at Veteran's Field, if anyone has any pertinent information in regards to the Nixle that had gone out please let us know. The family of the person that was injured needs to know if the dog has current immunizations. Lastly, Park and Rec might be affected along with the summer programs, many neighboring towns have been canceling their summer programs. Sherman has not decided but can be a possibility. The State is in discussion with a possible light opening of businesses and programs starting May 20th.

Treasurer Eric Holub mentioned scheduling a meeting with Park and Rec director about discussing what steps can be taken or needed to ensure the safety of the public during the summer months. Selectman Bob Ostrosky also shared in the sentiment citing examples like manning the gate house and boat docs. The selectman were in agreement, coming to a conclusion, that a special BOS meeting to cover all potential issues that can arise from the

impact of the virus was necessary. The town took strict measures that has ultimately helped protect our citizens from the virus.

Fire Chief Bob Acosta also commented by mentioning that the annual Memorial Day Parade should be re-evaluated. F. Selectman Don Lowe commented in lieu of the parade we would have a taped commemorative ceremony honoring our Veterans on May 24, 2020, which would be live streamed to our town members.

C). Election of Tax program as per executive order 7S Section 6: Asked by state to choose 1 of 2 options, the first being Tax Deferral and the second option being Tax Low Interest Program. First Selectman Don Lowe is in favor of the Tax Deferral Program. Selectman Kevin Keenan commented that he thought the Tax Deferral was a more straight forward option, mainly because he was under the impression that there is no application procedure but in fact there is an application process. F. Selectman Don Lowe clarified that the Tax Deferral program you must apply before July 1, 2020 you must certify that you have had a 20% or more loss in your income. If you can prove that loss you will be granted a 90 day deferment. Eric Holub also commented that you are not eligible for the program if you pay in escrow to your bank for taxes. (Applications should be applied for prior to July 1,2020) Selectman Bob Ostrosky questioned Tabitha Fazzone, our tax collector, her input on which program was more effective. She replied that the deferral would be more helpful, she stated no program is more beneficial and that her software company is set up to deal with applications.

Questions: Joe Keneally posed a question to Tabitha Fazzone, what kind of scaled impact to our citizens? She replied, as well as Selectman Bob Ostrosky, both stating there is no way to predict the impact. Treasurer Eric Holub commented that escrowed people would be excluded, retired people might not have a loss income of 20%. He explained that the town has enough cash reserve.

First Selectman Don Lowe motioned to elect a Tax Deferral system to tax paying citizens in Sherman, 90 day tax deferral extension with application.

Motioned by: First Selectman Don Lowe

Seconded by: Selectman Bob Ostrosky

All in Favor: Unanimous

D). Happy Acres Farm report: Everything at the farm is moving along, David Jellen has been working hard maintaining the property. Lescynski cattle have been moved to the lower pastures as well as David Jellen's cattle are on property. Everything is looking esthetically pleasing. Some of the public plans that were discussed at previous meetings are probably going to be set aside for future discussions due to the virus, but a community garden is still in consideration. Selectman Bob Ostrosky commented agreeing with First Selectman Don Lowe that the property looks great.

E). Happy Acres silo degeneration/ cell carriers' equipment: No new further development on the matter, AT&T is still committed to providing 1/3 of the cost, we are still

negotiating with T-Mobil to get come to the table. Selectman Kevin Keenan posed a question that if T-Mobil is not committed to help is there a reason to rebuild the silo? First Selectman Don Lowe responded that it will have to be looked into, there is damage to the equipment.

F). Playhouse/ESF/Mallory Town Hall well installation: First Selectman Don Lowe reported that the project was a success. The purpose of the project was for the well to produce more water and improve the quality of water, the water has been deemed potable. Extensive testing must be done by the state to certify a new well, the objective is to have low sodium content and chloride content and the new well passes both standards. The sodium levels come in at 95mg, the standard for testing is 100mg, and the chlorides tested at 246mg slightly below the 250mg standard. The new well offers a much better functioning option. Lastly, the well went slightly over budget, the initial budget was \$15,000, but there is a possible overage of \$1000 to \$1200 due to electrical work. The supplemental cost can be taken out of the Maintenance Fund rather than the Capital Fund.

Treasure Eric Holub asked whether the new sodium levels would degrade the equipment? F. Selectman Don Lowe responded that it wouldn't be caustic to the operating equipment and inner workings of the building. The new water will be more favorable to preserving the life of the buildings.

Other Business: None

Public Comment: Treasurer Eric Holub had received an email from the BOE asking to waive the remaining tuition of a student that is out of district since school is not actively in session. The family of the student have paid 6 of the 10 month payment plan but due to the virus students are not actively participating within the institution. Eric Holub stated that it was reasonable request. All selectman and Treasure Eric Holub were in agreement with the request, First Selectman Don Lowe would write to the BOE the following morning granting the tuition waiver for the remainder of this calendar school year.

Joe Keneally had a general inquiry about whether ZOOM will be used for the upcoming Town Meeting for Saturday 25, 2020, if the meeting is projected to have a turn out, he also wondered if there will be a lot of public input or, as per the Governor's executive order, if the budgets will be at the discretion of the selectman. First Selectman Don Lowe responded that all input from constituents will be weighed in the decision process.

First Selectman Don Lowe motioned to move the meeting to Executive Session inviting Treasurer Eric Holub and Business Manager Liz LaVia.

The Board of Selectman moved to executive session at 8:21p.m. On land sale legal discussion, no action taken. On personnel issues, action taken to not allow for Comp time payouts and discontinuance of comp time practice by means of Modification of Agreement for Teamsters union contract. The executive session adjourned at 8:37 p.m.

The Board of Selectman reconvened at 8:38 p.m. With no further business, the regular BOS's meeting adjourned

Motion of First Selectman Don Lowe with a second by Bob Ostrosky at 8:39 p.m.

Notes respectfully submitted by Margaret Beatty on April 27, 2020.