

**Town of Sherman
BOS Special Meeting
August 17, 2020 at 7:00 p.m.
Via ZOOM Teleconferencing**

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 residents from the community

Clerk: Margaret Beatty

Call to Order/ Pledge of Allegiance: First Selectman Don Lowe called the meeting to order at 7:01 p.m. followed by the reciting of the Pledge of Allegiance.

1) Discussion of the Steep Grant Program and exploring projects: First Selectman Don Lowe began meeting reviewing qualifications for applying for the Steep Grant Program. He noted that the Steep Grant is capped at \$128,205 and the possibility of matching funds. He brought the idea as a special meeting agenda item for its potential in aiding the cost of the suggested proposal for replacing the school playground. The application deadline for the program is August 28, 2020. Decisions would have to be made prior to the deadline. First Selectman Don Lowe opened up the topic for discussion with the other respective selectman and Treasurer Eric Holub.

Discussion: Treasurer Eric Holub clarified the matching aspect of the grant explaining it in context of the proposed school playground. He illustrated that the proper municipal funds to cover the scope of a large proposed project would have to come from the Towns Capital Non-Recurring Fund. He went on to explain that the Town would be eligible for the maximum grant funding if the Town was able to fund at least 50% of a proposed project.

Selectman Kevin Keenan commented on the potential for using the Steep Grant Program for the Happy Acres farm house repainting.

2) Discuss/review plans to possibly bring to Town Meeting an expenditure not to exceed \$400,000 from the Capital Nonrecurring Fund for a new playground at the Sherman School: First Selectman briefly described the current status of the playground. He then offered comment to Principal Jeff Melendez to give a brief synopsis of the BOE proposal. In turn Jeff Melendez went on to describe options to streamline the process and make the project as cost

effective for the Town. First Selectman Don Lowe interjected stating the purpose of this meeting concerning the topic is whether to bring the item to a Town Meeting.

Discussion: Selectman Kevin Keenan commented inquiring from Jeff Melendez if the estimated price was based on how many proposals. Jeff Melendez responded that a playground committee was formed in September of 2018. The committee identified several contractors that handle all aspects of the project, such as design, installation, and materials. He noted that this type of project does not go out to bid. The team interviewed 3 firms and the committee then narrowed down the search to one company called Little Tykes.

Public Comment: Al Zeisler expressed concern over the cost of the proposed school playground. He remarked that he had done extensive research on the typical cost of commercial playgrounds citing that the national average for expense is \$1000 per student. He believes the proposed \$400,000 exceeds the current student enrollment value. He believes the school owes the residents a priority list on items/projects that reflect top precedence. He cited concerns with Covid and whether the school implemented proper ventilation to protect the student body from contracting the virus. He is worried about future expenses the school will present to the Town to cover financially. He sought clarification as to why the replacement of the playground was the board's top priority. He noted that more transparency will win the vote but rushing the project leaves many questions along with a large price tag.

First Selectman Don Lowe noted that any residents that express any concerns can direct their questions to Jeff Melendez and the BOE for more clarification.

Barbara Ackerman expressed the same sentiment as Al Zeisler. She noted that she is not against the idea of replacing the playground but rather the timing and lack of information presented for the residents to make an educated decision. She would like a detailed, and clear perspective as to the justification of the proposal.

Corinne Kevorkian supported all of the questions raised. Her concern is the price tag of the project. She also does not object to the idea of replacing the playground but the timing. She brought up concerns on the relevance of playground use during time of Covid. Will students actually be benefiting from the construction of the playground? She questions the priority of the project. She feels strongly on wasting money if other issues arise.

Selectman Kevin Keenan raised a question as to the circumstance of the Pirate playground and whether the \$400,000 covers that area.

Jeff Melendez replied that the BOE requested more funds for the project than possibly needed in order to include some demolition of the area and removal of the surfacing. The initial quotes for the project amounted to about \$350,000 but the board decided to request a larger sum in the event of costs accrued from demolition and repair.

Arthur Von Plachecki voiced concern on how the Town will arrange a meeting to discuss the project and allow for the residents to voice their opinions. Is the project in jeopardy by rushing

it? He has concerns on whether the Town would gather adequate response from the majority of the residents.

Public discussion ensued on the proper course of action to bring meeting to residents. Options mentioned were public meeting with adequate social distancing, hybrid option with public attendance as well as ZOOM, pick up a ballot, and/or just ZOOM teleconferencing. Ideas were exchanged but the safest way for residents to participate would be via ZOOM.

Motion: Bring to Town Meeting an expenditure not to exceed \$400,000 from the Capital Non-Recurring Fund for a new playground at the Sherman School.

Motioned by: First Selectman Don Lowe

Seconded by: Selectman Bob Ostrosky

All in Favor: Unanimous

Selectman Kevin Keenan added that he agreed with the public comment on the lack of information justifying the playground expense of \$400,000. He believes more information should be provided. He also wanted to confirm that a Nixle will be sent to notify town residents of a meeting. Selectman Bob Ostrosky in turn replied that multiple warning will be sent to confirm meetings.

3) Review the painting bid for the Happy Acres barn and discuss the extra expenses associated with the painting project and possibly bring that expense to a Town Meeting: First Selectman Don Lowe reviewed the basic details of the project. He noted that since the original bid extra wear and tear due to weather has changed the scope of the repairs. He stated that the original bid was \$54,000 but the extra repair estimate has amounted to \$34,400. First Selectman Don Lowe opened up the item for discussion.

Discussion: Selectman Kevin Keenan expressed that the extra repair work should go out to a new bid. He stated that the municipal bid ordinance which suggests any project exceeding \$10,000 falls under a new project.

First Selectman Don Lowe commented that we can rebid the project but he doesn't foresee the town changing contractors.

Selectman Bob Ostrosky offered input commenting that he would support First Selectman Don Lowe bringing the item to Town Meeting but that the item may still have to go out to bid if the town residents do not buy the argument.

Motion: Bring to Town Meeting an expense not to exceed \$90,000 from the Happy Acres Restricted Fund to resurface, paint, window replacement, cupola repairs, and siding replacement.

Motioned by: First Selectman Don Lowe

Seconded by: Selectman Kevin Keenan

Opposed: Selectman Kevin Keenan

Selectman Bob Ostrosky commented that he supported First selectman Don Lowe motion to bring the item to Town Meeting to make his case.

Discussion: Treasurer Eric Holub raised a final question before meetings end addressing pursuing a Steep Grant for the farm repair in the event the playground proposal gets defeated and if that needs to be a separate item warned at Town Meeting.

First Selectman Don Lowe responded by questioning if the BOS has to approve at a Town Meeting applying for the Steep Grant.

Business Manager Liz LaVia and the other respective selectman simultaneously responded yes. Business Manager Liz LaVia also added that a resolution be submitted, she noted that the item would have to go on an agenda and that item must go through all the formal channels.

First Selectman Don Lowe concluded that a resolution would need to be drafted and another back up resolution in lieu of the first one failing.

Lastly, an executive session was motioned discussing the AT&T Cost Share Agreement.

Motion: Move to Executive Session

Motioned by: Selectman Bob Ostrosky

Seconded by: Selectman Kevin Keenan

All in Favor: Unanimous

Selectman Bob Ostrosky motioned to adjourn the meeting at 8:17 p.m.

Motioned by: Selectman Bob Ostrosky

Seconded by: First Selectman Don Lowe

All in favor: Unanimous

Notes respectfully submitted by Margaret Beatty on August 19, 2020.