

Town of Sherman
Board of Selectman Regular Monthly Meeting
June 24, 2021 at 7pm
Via ZOOM Teleconferencing

Member's Present: First Selectman Don Lowe, Selectman Bob Ostrosky, and Selectman Kevin Keenan (joined at 7:05pm).

Member's Absent: None

Audience & Invited: Treasurer Eric Holub, Business Manager Liz LaVia, Superintendent Jeff Melendez, Director of Finance Carrie DePuy, Fire Chief Chris Fuchs, Janet Way of the Commission on Aging, and residents from the community.

Clerk: Margaret Beatty

Call to Order/ Pledge of Allegiance: First Selectman Don Lowe called the meeting to order at 7:02pm followed by the reciting of the Pledge of Allegiance.

Public Comment: Craig Bell of Cedar Lane expressed displeasure about his concern over a piece of property on Cedar Lane being blocked off and why the BOS has not added his concern to a BOS meeting as an agenda item to be discussed. First Selectman Don Lowe replied stating he would email Mr. Bell the procedural process in order to add his concerns as an agenda item.

Stan Greenbaum of 9 Peacepipe Lane inquired as to why a special meeting was not called in response to a 23 person signature petition in opposition to the cell tower proposed on Coote Hill.

Correspondence: None

Administrative:

Approval of Minutes:

BOS Regular Monthly Meeting 5/27/2021.

Motioned by: Selectman Kevin Keenan

Seconded by: Selectman Bob Ostrosky

All in Favor: Unanimous

BOS Special Meeting 6/7/2021- Selectman Kevin Keenan highlighted a spelling typo in an exchange by the Acosta's asking about who will be responsible for maintaining the playground but the word present in the minutes was written as marinating.

Motioned by: First Selectman Don Lowe

Seconded by: Selectman Kevin Keenan

All in Favor: Unanimous

Tax Refund: Approve a refund of \$520.37

Motioned by: Selectman Kevin Keenan

Seconded by: Selectman Bob Ostrosky

All in Favor: Unanimous

Financial Review: Business Manager Liz LaVia provided the Selectman a 12 month review of the general fund expenditures. She provided them with a list of overages and underage's with an explanation, she noted that approximately \$321,000 still left to be spent for paving and public works projects as well as miscellaneous residual expenses. She added that the Town is on track to be approximately \$97,000 ahead in the general fund for the fiscal year. She noted that a good amount of the saving are attributed to Covid citing the limitation of programs and services during the pandemic which included payroll expenses for same. Lastly, she mentioned that under the Federal Stimulus package known as the American Rescue Act Sherman received \$537,000 for Covid related reimbursements, expenses and funding. She is working to decipher how the funds can be spent as the State Office of Policy Management has only limited information at this time. Treasures Eric Holub commented that any spending from the stimulus would have to go to a Town Meeting for approval. He further noted that the ARPA funds have been put into a separate fund. First Selectman Don Lowe thanked Treasurer Eric Holub and Business Manager Liz LaVia for wonderful management of the Town's finances, the sentiment was echoed by Selectman Bob Ostrosky.

Information & Discussion:

A) SVFD: Chief Chris Fuchs reported for the month of June the department responded to 38 911 calls with a total of 108 for the year. Members have been training diligently to provide the best level of care and response in regards to water recues, motor vehicle accidents, pedestrian accidents. The newest member, Ken Hoffman, completed his EMT certification, Chief Fuchs reiterated that more members that complete certifications it provides a better level of care to the community. The department is hosting the Roast Beef Dinner fundraiser on August 7th from 5-8pm. The event will be drive thru style with live music on the green, residents are encouraged to tailgate, pre-orders can be completed on the SVFD website.

B) Covid 19 report/vaccination: The state has seen a steady decline in daily Covid cases, the Town of Sherman has favorable vaccination numbers. As of the meeting, the Town has 1 new reported case. Vaccination is readily accessible and encouraged. A question was posed on the amount spent on Covid expenses and Business Manger Liz LaVia replied that a total of \$17,000 has been spent in this fiscal year to cover PPP, plexiglass to outfit Town Hall, and other related supplies.

C) Happy Acres Farm report: Farm Manager David Jellen planted a vegetable garden that has produced goods ready for selling. Along with a variety of produce, he is selling eggs, chicken, beef, and pork. The property has been maintained meticulously. The farm is looking to hold a farm day in September that will be open to the community.

D) Storage space for Town organizations: Funding for the pod units were approved at Town Meeting. The Town is just waiting for approval from P&Z, a meeting is scheduled for the beginning of July.

E) Statement from the Commission on Aging: First Selectman Don Lowe introduced board member Janet Way to provide the statement addressing the progress on the new Senior Center. Before Janet Way provided her statement, First Selectman Don Lowe thanked her for 5 years of commitment to the board as the Chair and has now taken on the role as Vice Chair. The statement provided by the Commission reiterated the commitment of the members to move forward on the project that would provide a new home to residential seniors as well as the Social Services department. The project would provide an array of much needed services to the community and also provide awareness regarding the mission and intent. The statement will be published in the Town Tribune.

F) Playground Presentation: Superintendent Jeff Melendez provided a PowerPoint with slides detailing the deterioration of the current playgrounds as well as the new conceptual designs and costs. The presentation provided the context of how the BOE came to their recommendations. The BOE is requesting an amount not to exceed \$300,000 to repair the Pirate Ship playground and replace lower playground. Carrie DePuy, Director of Finance at the school, explained the bidding process that the school used to secure the designs. She explained that the school used a company called Source Well which takes the need of a municipality and sources out the right contractor at a competitive price. The company works with smaller municipalities on projects that are under time constraints and in a certain perimeter of cost. An in person Town Meeting will be warned for July 10th at 10am to the public so residents can participate and ask pertinent questions and vote whether to approve funding. The topic was opened to the public for questions.

Questions/Comments: Barbara Ackerman of 6 Anderson Rd. West emphasized that she was in favor of a new playground but believes the tax payers should be provide more information than what has been currently presented. She also acknowledged that Town projects go through a bidding process and she questioned why no details are available to compare and contrast different contractors/costs. She supports the projects but would like more tangible details to ease any concerns.

Al Zeisler 4 Rising Sun Trail commented that he contacted the Department of Administrative Services contract board that handles playgrounds for the state of Connecticut. He noted that the department had no information on Sherman and plans for a playground. He also stated that the department provided him with the state authorized playground providers and why the school did not use that avenue to come up with the contractor that is providing the current design. He also expressed concerns with certain design aspects of the playground and potential risk of injury. He highlighted that only one teacher served on the playground commission and worries that not enough input was provided by educators responsible for all the students well-being.

Selectman Bob Ostrosky suggested that the school has presented a viable option to bring to Town Meeting. He supports the project and believes that a new, safe and updated playground provides value to the Town not just for the student body but also weekend residents with children that use our facilities. First Selectman Don Lowe added that the plans for the playground are on the Town and school website for every/anyone to study.

Selectman Kevin Keenan acknowledged the comments from competing perspectives and noted that each provided value in context. He does believe there is a need for a new playground but more detailed information should be provide for the justification of the price.

Al Zeisler of 4 Rising Sun Trail suggested doing the projects in phases.

Joe Keneally of 50 route 37 felt the Pirate Ship playground was a good value for the price. He also wanted to know if the playground located by the Town beach was an option for kids. Superintendent Jeff Melendez responded that the walk was too far for students to make and was not ADA compliant.

Rick Hudson of 20 Crooked Furrows commented that he liked the idea of breaking up the project into phases but he argued that it would cost more money over time to come to the same conclusion.

G) Traffic Safety: The issue of speeding in Town has become prevalent. First Selectman Don Lowe thanked Rick Hudson for providing the speed indicator sign that has been strategically placed throughout portions of Town. First Selectman Lowe would like to further explore the idea of purchasing solar speed indicator signs to be placed in high traffic areas. The cost of one sign amounts to \$2500 and would need approval from state DOT. He added item to agenda to gauge interest from the other Selectman for future discussion. Both Selectman Ostosky and Keenan echoed the need to do more research but would like to keep on agenda for future meetings.

H) Tax relief for Vets: First Selectman Don Lowe clarified that state statutes are more involved with the execution of a tax decrease for veterans. He noted that the tax relief would have to be taken off the assessed value of his/her property. An income requirement is also needed which will be based on the federal poverty line. The tax relief does not pertain to this fiscal budget and will start the next year. The item will be revisited at another BOS meeting when figures are finalized.

Other Business: None

Public Comment: Al Zeisler of 4 Rising Sun Trail sought clarification as to the rules of revised bidding ordinance of the purchase of school supplies. He noted that the playground did not fall under the BOE budget or appropriations so he asked whether the bidding process go in accordance to the municipal bidding process.

Rick Hudson of 20 Crooked Furrows commented that he was delighted to see the brake lights of cars as they approached the speed sign.

Selectman Bob Ostrosky moved to adjourn the meeting at 8:20pm.

Motioned by: Selectman Bob Ostrosky

Seconded by: Selectman Kevin Keenan

All in Favor: Unanimous

Notes respectfully submitted by Margaret Beatty on July 1, 2021.