

**Town of Sherman
Board of Selectman Monthly Meeting
May 27, 2021 at 7pm
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, Superintendent Jeff Mellendez, Chair of the Commission on Aging Arthur Von Plachecki, OEM Director Jim Reilly, and residents from the community

Clerk: Margaret Beatty

Call to Order/ Pledge of Allegiance: First Selectman Don Lowe promptly called the meeting to order at 7pm followed by the reciting of the Pledge of Allegiance. Selectman Bob Ostrosky offered a public service announcement reminding listeners/participants to remain muted during the meeting unless speaking during public comment or when discussion is open to the general public on a specific topic.

Public Comment: None

Correspondence: None

Administrative: A) Approval of Minutes:

4/22/2021 Board of Selectman Regular Meeting

Motioned by: Selectman Kevin Keenan

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

5/8/2021 Board of Selectman Special Meeting

Motioned by: Selectman Kevin Keenan

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

B) Tax Motioned by Refunds: Approve a refund of \$7,384.68

Motioned by: First Selectman Don Lowe

Seconded by: Selectman Kevin Keenan **All in Favor:** Unanimous

C) Tax Suspense List: Taxes deemed by the Tax Collector uncollectible to the amount of \$3,623.04 therefore the Town suspends attempts to collect.

Motioned by: Selectman Kevin Keenan

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

D) Financial Review: The Town is within 4 weeks to the end of the fiscal year and expenses are tracking on target, 83% of the General Fund has been spent for the year. The Resident State Trooper cost has been the one outstanding expense that has not been paid amounting to \$163,000. Public Works showed a surplus and will use the funds to repair roads under contracted services. The road repair will begin on June 7th for 10 days and tree work will also commence on June 7th.

Information & Discussion:

A) SVFD: Representative Rob Acosta filled in for Chief Fuchs, he noted that the department responded to 163 on the year. Three members are currently working on their Firefighter 1 course, 2 members are taking an EMT course. The department met with CLA to review lake safety and response for the season. He added to refrain from driving over downed /active powerlines, it poses a safety issue. First Selectman Don Lowe added that the CLA patrol chief sent a letter of recognition to him acknowledging how impressed he was by our SVFD members in the department.

B) ESF Flooring quotes: Quotes were sent to the Selectman, broken down into 2 quotes that amounted to an estimate of \$26,000-\$30,000. The project will be sent out to bid and then brought to Town Meeting for the residents to decide on the expense.

C) Covid 19 report/ Vaccination report: In the last 3 weeks only 1 reported case in Town. Jim Reilly, the OEM Director, provided a details account of infection and vaccination rate in Town. He noted that to date the Town has had 238 total cases, 87% of residents 65+ are fully vaccinated, 49% of adults 45-64 are vaccinated, and ages 15-44 demographic is vaccinated at 34%. Town wide 55% of the population has had 1 dose and 46% have had their 2 dose. These numbers reflect the last 2 weeks, as of May 19th, so statistics will change. The last day of the shared clinic with New Fairfield was on May 20, 2021, the clinic totaled 4,719 shots with 400 of those to Sherman residents. He also added to be mindful of restrictions, guidelines are fluid and at the discretion of businesses and state guidance. Lastly, Town Hall is scheduled to reopen to the public on June 8th. Commission meetings can commence in person after July 1st, if enough time is given to warn an in person meeting then the commission can gather in June.

D) Happy Acres Farm report: The farm has been manicured to the highest standard, Farm Manager Dave has planted a vegetable garden. He is still selling eggs, pork, chicken, and beef. A possible event will be planned in the fall for a farm day, which will be open to the community and allowing for more engagement to the residents.

E) Storage space for Town organizations: First Selectman Don Lowe reported that the Town is ready to order 5 units to be shared with organizations in Town. The units need approval from Planning and Zoning and that the request falls under an 824 Referral request with a copy of an 8-2 Survey with the proposed area sketched out. Structure plans must be submitted as well as a copy of the special permit application and an updated copy of an application to update the state permit for storm water discharge showing the new proposed activity. All the necessary applications have been gathered and will be given to P&Z, which in turn, the agenda item can be added to the next scheduled meeting to seek approval.

F) Statement from the Commission on Aging: The Chair of the Commission on Aging Arthur Von Plachecki provided a statement on behalf of the organization stating that the board unanimously voted to establish a new home for the Seniors/ Social Services department. A feasible study was conducted and agreed upon to move forward with the plans to provide a new building for the Seniors in Town as well as the Social Services department, which services all residents. He also requested that the BoS continue to add the COA to the regularly scheduled monthly meeting for follow up discussion.

G) Response to Dr. Melendez’s letter regarding School capitol repairs and projects: Superintendent Jeff Melendez submitted a letter to the BoS on May 7th. First Selectman Don Lowe read aloud the drafted letter, on behalf of the Selectman, in response to Dr. Melendez. The contents of the letter submitted by the Selectman outlines the recommendations of the BoS when addressing the capital needs without overextending the community financially. All Selectman are in agreement with the drafted BoS letter and all approve for signature. In addition, Selectman Bob Ostrosky would like clarity as to the role of the Special Committee on Capital Planning and whether it is in purview of proper school by-laws. He would like an explanation and would like the process to be legally correct so that projects are done above board without the possibilities of challenges from residents that can hinder progress.

Comments: Martha Watson of Partridge Trail questioned how long the SCCP committee for the school has been active and not to get caught up in details that might derail any progress. First Selectman Don Lowe responded that the letter put forth by the BoS is the first step in addressing the needs of the school. Selectman Bon Ostrosky commented on the record that he is signing the letter.

Al Zeisler of Rising Sun Trail inquired if the bid packages and list of bidders available for the public to see. First Selectman Don Lowe responded that the information will be available to the public and that some of the project requests are at differing degrees of progress. Jeff Melendez interjected replying that currently the bid list has not been released and that pertinent information can be found on the school website under the BOE Request for Proposals bids tab. He added that there is a process of advertisement for bids which acts as a conduit to contractors to submit their estimates. Superintendent Jeff Melendez finished by asking First Selectman Don Lowe if the BOS has any concerns as to the requested amounts for pending projects. In turn, First Selectman Don Lowe responded that any discussion as to the funding would come after estimates were submitted. The bidding process helps alleviate any concerns.

H) Bring to Town Meeting “Authorize an appropriation of \$20,000 funded from the accumulated cell tower revenue for farm related maintenance and expenses for the fiscal year of 7/1/2021 through 6/30/2022”: Voting to bring to Town Meeting

Motioned by: First Selectman Don Lowe

Seconded by: Selectman Bob Ostrosky

All in Favor: Unanimous

I) Bring to Town Meeting “Authorize an appropriation transfer of \$35,000 from the Happy Acres Farm Operating Fund for Contracted Property Management Services for the fiscal year of 7/1/2021 through 6/30/2022”:

Motioned by: First Selectman Don Lowe

Seconded by: Selectman Kevin Keenan

All in Favor: Unanimous

J) Bring to Town Meeting “Authorize an expenditure of \$30,000 from the capital non-recurring fund for the partial funding of a patrol boat for Candlewood Lake Authority as requested by Candlewood Lake Authority for the 2021/2022 budget year”:

Motioned by: First Selectman Don Lowe

Seconded by: Selectman Bob Ostrosky

All in Favor: Unanimous

K) Bring to Town Meeting “Authorize an expenditure of \$10,000 from the capital non-recurring fund for the partial funding of miscellaneous capital projects and expenses for Candlewood Lake Authority as requested by Candlewood Lake Authority for the 2021/2022 budget year”:

Motioned by: First Selectman Don Lowe

Seconded by: Selectman Kevin Keenan

All in Favor: Unanimous

Discussion: Selectman Kevin Keenan inquired as to the purpose of the \$10,000 that the CLA was asking. First Selectman Don Lowe replied that the CLA raised their budget and that the Town strategy was to break up the payments from the capital non-recurring in the event the budget request would not pass. Treasure Eric Holub interjected stating the \$10,000 expense requested by the CLA was to build up their Capitol Revenue Fund over time for future needs.

L) Conditions to determine hardships for waiver of Pre-school tuition: A definitive description of financial hardship discussed for eligibility for assistance, the Selectman determined that the Federal poverty levels of family income thresholds would set the requirements. They discussed whether to base requirements on 200% to 250% above the federal poverty level. The Selectman were provide numbers as to the requirements and agreed that the 250% threshold was appropriate. Social services will determine eligibility in Town.

M) Ordinance concerning tax relief for disabled Veterans: The ordinance would determine eligibility by percentage of disability. The Selectman agreed to determine abatement by percentage of disability with a cap of \$500 at 100% disabled. The Town attorney will draw up the ordinance then present at a Town Meeting. There a currently 9 Veterans in Town eligible for tax relief.

N) Traffic Safety: There has been a steady increase in unsafe driving in Town. The Town is looking to increase the signage, especially flashing signs. The Town is looking to repaint indicators on the road to slow down, install speed bumps on Saw Mill, and increase Trooper presence.

O) Future BOS meeting status: Advocate for in person meetings for June. All Selectman align with the idea.

Other Business: Selectman Bob Ostrosky suggested clarity on the role of the SCCP Committee.

Public Comment: Craig Bell of Cedar Lane inquired as to the status of the barricade inhibiting road access on a segment of road on Cedar Lane. First Selectman Don Lowe cautioned that the roadway in question is a dead end and anyone who attempts to access it is trespassing a portion of someone's private property. Selectman Bob Osrtosky interjected with a point of order and suggested the topic be a separate agenda item for a more indebt conversation.

Amanda O'Neill of 7 Big Trail expressed her frustration with BOE and BOS inability to compromise on school capital projects. She also added that the SCCP Committee has been in place for several months and questioned why questions are being raised as to its validity. She also noted that the Town should be receiving funds from the government for Covid relief directed for school use and what/where those funds are being used. First Selectman Don Lowe replied that the Town has received no funds as of the current moment so no plans are in place for allocation. Selectman Bob Ostrosky entered the conversation that the BOS unanimously agreed to sign the letter presented by the BOS to work with the school's needs. He emphasized the need to confidently validate the legitimacy of the SCCP so that projects are not stalled. Chair of the BOE Kasey Diotte noted that the board attorney was consulted on topic and that the BOE is open to conversations between the BOS and respective attorneys to alleviate any concerns.

Rosemarie D'Ostilio of (address) expressed concerned that the bigger picture is being overlooked when addressing the shortcomings of the school maintenance. She doesn't feel it's in the best interest to repair segments of the school that she feels will need revisiting later in the future. First Selectman Don Lowe replied that in the year of a pandemic it's difficult to approach the Town about a large expenditure when the school is in desperate need of actual repair and can be addressed in the short run at a lower expense.

Selectman Bob Ostrosky moved to adjourn the meeting at 8:31 pm.

Motioned by: Selectman Bob Ostrosky

Seconded by: Selectman Kevin Keenan

All in Favor: Unanimous

Notes respectfully submitted by Margaret Beatty June 7, 2021.