

Town of Sherman  
Board of Selectman Monthly Meeting  
January 28, 2021 at 7 pm  
Via ZOOM Teleconferencing

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

Member's Absent: Treasurer Eric Holub

Audience & Invited: Business Manager Liz LaVia, Fire Chief Chris Fuchs, and residents from the community

Clerk: Margaret Beatty

Call to Order/Pledge of Allegiance: First Selectman Don Lowe called the meeting to order at 7:00 pm followed by the reciting of the Pledge of Allegiance.

Public Comment: None

Correspondence: John and Nancy Caulie of 10 Coburn Road East submitted a letter of opposition to the proposed cell tower site on Coote Hill Road. They strongly feel that a tower should not be in close proximity to a residential area. They also believe that a cell tower can have negative health implications. They were under the impression that other sites, particularly Wagon Wheel Road, were also in consideration for a proposed site and feel it's more isolated and can provide a better and safer alternative. First Selectman Don Low followed up the letter with a comment clarifying that no other site is being considered for the cell tower.

Jim and Margaret Dowling of 5 Coburn Road East also submitted a letter objecting to the proposed cell tower on Coote Hill Road. They feel the tower would negatively affect the esthetic appeal of a naturally beautiful rural area. The tower would negatively affect resident's property value, wildlife, and overall quality of life. They have asked if Homeland Towers provide specifics including orientation and antennae of the tower. They understand the need for better service in Sherman but believe there is a better option.

Note: First Selectman Don Lowe informed the public that the balloon test scheduled for the Coote Hill Road property will be either Saturday or Sunday depending on weather, a Nixle will be sent to confirm.

A letter of resignation was sent to the chairman of ZBA, Kenric Gubner from member Victoria Gentile Longlois. She expressed her gratitude serving on the board and wished him well in his new role as chairman.

Note: First Selectman Don Lowe commented if anyone is interested in serving on the ZBA board to contact him about the vacancy.

Frank Copsidas respectfully submitted his letter of resignation as commissioner and chairman of the Housing Commission.

Administrative Items:

A) Approval of Minutes:

12/22/2020 Board of Selectman Regular Meeting

Motioned by: Selectman Bob Ostrosky

Seconded by: Selectman Kevin Keenen                      All in Favor: Unanimous

01/2/2021 Board of Selectman Special Meeting

Motioned by: Selectman Kevin Keenan

Seconded by: Selectman Bob Ostrosky                      All in Favor: Unanimous

B) Tax Refunds: None

C) Financial Review: Business Manager Liz LaVia stated that the review is a 7 month snapshot. She indicated that the Town is running at or under budget. Some of the salary wage lines are running over but are justifiable expenses. The Senior Center obtained a grant under the CARES Act for \$2,500 to assist in re-opening the Center. The grant would cover expenses associated with the purchase of hand sanitizer, and miscellaneous supplies. She also confirmed budget requests are being submitted and the general fund budget is coming together. She engaged the board in discussion on the potential for in person meetings relating to budget hearings. The Selectman agreed that there was no reasonable way to achieve in person meetings. The idea of comfort and the possibility of exclusion for those who feel uncomfortable in a public forum where the underlining factors to continue to move forward via electronically.

D) Appointments:

Motion: To Appoint Michelle MacKinnon to a 3 year term to the Conservation Commission.

Motioned by: First Selectman Don Lowe

Seconded by: Selectman Kevin Keenan                      All in Favor: Unanimous

Information & Discussion:

Motion: To move item D) Housing Commission report to the first item in Information & Discussion.

Motioned by: First Selectman Don Lowe

Seconded by: Selectman Kevin Keenan

All in Favor: Unanimous

A) Housing Commission report: First Selectman Don Lowe read directly a report submitted by the Commission advocating for senior housing in Sherman. The report promoted the encouragement and development of availability for affordable housing for the aging population in Town by bringing together public and private resources. The Commission was an advisory commission that provided findings and reports directly to the BoS. The Commission concluded that Sherman has a growing need for senior housing. The Commission assessed that the goal would be met as a 2 pronged approach. The first approach would be a mix of 18-24 apartments in a 2 story building modeled in the typical New England style architecture in keeping with the building housing the Post Office/ American Pie Co. The apartments would be reasonably priced and not to be confused with affordable housing, the space can also include shared professional space. The project would also include space for a larger, updated Senior Center. Several privately owned parcels of land have been explored as well as the possibility of leasing town land, the most favorable piece of land for the project is located behind the American Pie Co building. The second approach would be to allow guest housing a 4 acre lots, a simple approach that can be done with a zoning provision. In conclusion, there is no one size fits all approach to meeting the needs of Sherman's senior community. The need for affordable housing has only increased. The Housing Committee thanked the Town for the opportunity to serve and offered creative solutions for the seniors. First Selectman Don Lowe opened up agenda item to the other respective selectman for discussion.

Selectman Kevin Keenan commented that Sherman is the only Town in the region that has not addressed the needs of senior housing. He does believe the Town should reconsidered and felt that the original presentation to the Town was misunderstood.

First Selectman Don Lowe added for a point of reference that only 3% of senior housing comes through a municipal initiative and mostly done through non-profits. He believes the Town should look for other avenues to address the topic.

Selectman Bob Ostrosky agreed with First Selectman Don Lowe and elaborated further by suggesting looking at zoning changes and believes there are multiple ways of addressing housing issues.

All Selectman thanked the Commission for their hard work and dedication.

Several board members from the Commission were present for the meeting and spoke. Barbara Ackerman began by expressing her gratitude having the opportunity to serve the community. She believes the Commission reached the conclusion it needed and also respectfully submitted her resignation. Ted Hollander also shared the sentiment Barbara Ackerman expressed. He enjoyed working on the Commission and believes the job has been completed. He also submitted his resignation to the Commission.

Author Von Plachecki of 10 Sail Harbor Drive shared in the need to address the lack of housing for seniors in Sherman. He complimented the Commission for all of their hard work, he agreed that the proposed location behind the Post Office/ American Pie Co is ideal. He would like to see a plan to help move the idea forward.

Al Zeisler commented that society is measured by the way it cares for the elderly. He supports the need for senior housing and believe if we can provide housing for the elderly it can invigorate younger families to move to Town. He feels it's time to act not study.

Stan Greenbaum he believes that establishing a mechanism for moving forward is very crucial. Park and Rec also has vested interest in establishing a space so the organization can better serve the community.

Rick Hudson of 22 Crooked Furrows hopes the idea will come to fruition and provide adequate needs for the Town's seniors.

Amanda O'Neill of 7 Big Trail applauded the idea of senior housing. She feels a sense of duty to help our seniors but is concerned about the effects of Title 19 and its potential to change the dynamics of Town. She would like to see it done privately.

B) SVFD monthly report: Fire Chief Chris Fuchs gave a brief overview of the departments activities. He stated that calls have increased significantly, for the year 2020 the department responded to 502 calls which was a large departure from 2019 with 399 calls. For the year 2021 the department has responded to 33 calls, 2 which were structure fires. He reiterated the importance of having working smoke detectors at home. The department continues to respond to Covid + patients and currently 40 members have received the Covid 19 vaccine. The Selectman were gracious for the hard work and dedication provided by the members.

C) Covid 19 report: First Selectman Don Lowe provided a review of the Town's status. He confirmed that the Town's case load has lessened over the last 6 weeks since the peaks of November and December. Sherman has one of the lowest infection rates in the state currently, there has been a steady decline in cases for every 2 week interval. Sherman has to date a total of 98 cases. The Sherman School has temporarily gone remote but has projected that in school learning will resume early February. Vaccination is currently in the 1B phase, once all applicable members of Phase 1B are complete vaccination will begin with essential workers. The only setback with vaccination is distribution. The New Fairfield/ Sherman clinic begins on February 2 at 10 am, this provides another local option. All registering to receive the vaccine still needs to register through VAMS. If you have any issues registering through VAMS please contact the Town's social services or Senior Center.

D) Happy Acres Farm report: The farm has slowed down due to the winter season, not many chores require immediate attention. Davis Jellen has been working on readying equipment for Spring/Summer chores. There is ongoing discussion about the direction some of

the equipment, whether items will be auctioned, repaired, scraped, or sold to David Jellen. The farm is selling beef, pork, chicken, and eggs.

E) Hubbell Mountain Road guard rails (possibly bring to Town meeting): Selectman Kevin Keenan inquired as to why that specific location. First Selectman Don Lowe responded that the discussion on guard rails is not specific just to Hubbell Mountain Road, there are several other locations also under consideration. He went on to add that several accidents have occurred in the location in question on Hubbell Mountain Road making it an immediate safety issue and priority. Several proposals have been submitted and First Selectman Don Lowe advocated for the company Evolution Edges and would like to see the proposal go to Town meeting. First Selectman Don Lowe confirmed that the options provided by Evolution Edges was the most esthetic and cost prohibitive. All Selectman agree to bring the topic to a Town meeting.

Motion: Bring to Town Meeting an expense not to exceed \$9,999 for 450ft of guard rail on Hubbell Mountain Road.

Motioned by: First Selectman Don Lowe

Seconded by: Selectman Bob Ostrosky

All in Favor: Unanimous

F) Public Works equipment needs to possibly bring to Town meeting: Refurbish old SVFD Tanker, Kubota mower, wood chipper, roadside mower, Ford 550, new trailer: First Selectman Don Lowe was gaging the temperature from the Selectman on the possibility to compile quotes to replace the items categorized.

1) Old Tanker: currently one bid is on record for \$27,000. All Selectman agreed more info and bids are needed but also agreed to pursue.

2) Kubota mower: current mower is 22 years old, replacing would cost in the ball park of \$15,000. The current mower poses a safety issue. All Selectman agree to pursue bids.

3) Wood chipper: current chipper is 26 years old and also a safety issue. All Selectman agree to pursue. Selectman Kevin Keenan raised the possibility of trade-in value.

4) Roadside mower: the Town currently outsources the roadside mowing, purchasing our own would make the Town self-sufficient. First Selectman Don Lowe agreed to research multiple options and price ranges that would provide the best option for the Town's needs.

5) Ford 550: the current truck in the Public Works fleet Truck #3 is inoperable due to maintenance issues amounting to \$6,000. The truck is beyond repair and a safety issue. All Selectman agree to compile quotes.

6) New trailer: the current trailer is 21 years old and was purchased used at the time. All Selectman agreed to pursue.

Note: First Selectman Don Lowe mentioned as a point of consideration for future discussion is replacing Truck #6 and a snow pusher attachment.

The items discussed are not being presented at a Town meeting until all adequate quotes/bids have been compiled.

G) Ransomware: The board is potential exploring the addition of Ransomware to the current protections. It offers an extra line of defense and would increase the budget approximately \$6,840. The Selectman and Business Manager Liz LaVia agree that it is a wise idea to pursue ransomware. Any costs associated with the compromising of our IT system is more problematic and expensive than if the Town enlisted in an extra layer of defense.

H) Storage space for Town organization: First Selectman Don Lowe will provide quotes and proposals at the next monthly meeting. He confirmed that he will speak with leaders from boards/commissions and what would satisfy their organizational needs. He also put into motion with planning and zoning a municipal zoning change to help accommodate the units at the Town garage. First Selectman Don Lowe added that the unit price ranges between \$4,000-\$6,000. For the next meeting, he plans to be in the positions to bring the agenda item to a Town meeting.

I) Exploratory discussion on a new Senior Center: First Selectman Don Lowe is looking for interest from residents to volunteer on a committee to assess the needs of our seniors. The agenda idea is to gauge the temperature on the idea and asses what type of building would address the needs for a Senior Center. In a larger picture, he feels that if the Town would consider a new Senior Center the current building can serve as an adequate home for the Veteran's Association headquarters. Selectman Bob Ostrosky agreed it was a good idea to explore.

Stan Greenbaum commented that Park and Recreation has underserved the senior community in Town and would like to find a path to help expand their reach to seniors.

Other Business: None

Public Comment: Phyllis Fox Schaer of 6 Oak Drive was looking for guidance on addressing the issues of short term rentals in Holiday Point. The high turnover rate lead to excessive noise, partying, and increased travel and congestion on the narrow roads which was a safety issue for emergency vehicles to travel through. First Selectman Don Lowe responded that the rules for rentals are outlined in the Town regulations. He suggested bringing the issue to Planning and Zoning.

Richard Lenihan of Osborn Road commented that he would be interested in joining the exploratory Senior Center committee. He also mentioned the reporting on Covid only discussed new cases but not fatalities. He was interested in knowing if any new deaths have been reported in Sherman. First Selectman Don Lowe responded that he reported 2 deaths early into

the onset of the virus but nothing as of recently. James Reilley also commented that the state has Sherman listed as 3 deaths but he was not sure as to the specifics of that reporting.

Bob Acosta of 9 Atchison Cove inquired whether Public Works enlisted a replacement plan with the Town regarding the wear and tear on trucks/equipment. He also wanted to know if the crew consistently washed the trucks/equipment after snow storms to prevent corrosion and protect the life of the equipment. First Selectman Don Lowe responded that Public Works has a Capital Plan but not always followed. He also confirmed that the Town crew does regularly use the wash to maintain vehicles.

Ed Hayes of 4 Circle Drive reiterated the concerns Phyllis Fox Schaer addressed about the short term rentals in Holiday Point. He also commented that it is confusing what the authority of the home owners association to enforce rules and protocols.

Terri Hahn of 13 Pepper Pond Road commented that the problems plaguing lake communities is shared in most private communities in Sherman. She expressed interest in forming a potential informal group that would address the issues of private communities and discuss what direction they can take to improve their communities. First Selectman Don Lowe agreed that pursuing a group was a good idea.

Possible Executive Session: No

Selectman Bob Ostrosky moved to adjourn the meeting at 8:40 pm.

Notes respectfully submitted by Margaret Beatty on February 3, 2021.