



TOWN OF SHREWSBURY

Select Board Meeting
Board of Selectmen Meeting Room
Richard D. Carney Municipal Office Building
100 Maple Avenue
Shrewsbury, Massachusetts 01545-5398

Tuesday, October 24, 2023 - 7:00 PM

Present: Ms. Beth N. Casavant - Chair, Mr. John R. Samia - Clerk, Ms. Michelle K. Conlin - Member, Mr. Carlos A. Garcia - Member

Also Present: Mr. Kevin J. Mizikar - Town Manager, Mr. David C. Snowdon - Assistant Town Manager - Administration and Finance, Mr. Keith Baldinger - Assistant Town Manager - Operations, Mr. Justin Dobson - Assistant to Town Manager

Absent: Ms. Theresa H. Flynn - Vice Chair

Preliminaries:

1. Approve bills, payrolls, and warrants

On a motion by Mr. Samia, seconded by Ms. Conlin, the Board unanimously approved the bills, payrolls, and warrants.

2. Approve the minutes of October 11, 2023 (meeting) and October 16, 2023 (Special Town Meeting)

On a motion by Mr. Samia, seconded by Ms. Conlin, the Board unanimously voted to approve the minutes of October 11, 2023 (meeting) and October 16, 2023 (Special Town Meeting).

3. Announcements/Reports

There were no announcements/reports

4. Town Manager's Report

Mr. Mizikar reported the following:

The 2024 Town of Shrewsbury Scholarship application period is now open and will be accepting applications through March 2024.

The Shrewsbury Police Department was awarded an approximately \$21,000 grant to fund body worn cameras and data storage for FY2024. The Town was one of only fifty-two communities across the state to be successful in applying for this grant opportunity.

NorthBridge Partners has provided an update that they continue to work on a lease agreement for the majority of the building at Centech Park North, and that they have signed a lease with WuXi Biologics, a pharmaceutical manufacturer based in Worcester, MA for a smaller portion of the building to be used for light assembly and storage.

The Toblin Hill Bridge project is now complete and open. Mr. Mizikar thanked residents of the neighborhood for their patience as this project was completed.

5. **Public Comment** - Pursuant to Select Board Policy 31, To offer citizens the opportunity to provide public comments during Select Board Meetings on matters within the Board's authority.

There were no requests for public comment submitted.

Meetings/Hearings:

6. **7:05PM Tax Classification Public Hearing and joint meeting with the Board of Assessors. The Select Board will review and take action upon the conclusion of the public hearing relative to the adoption for the FY2024 tax rate for all property classifications within the Town of Shrewsbury.**

Ruth Anderson, Principal Assessor, provided a detailed presentation on the purpose of the Tax Classification Public Hearing, updates from the Assessor's Office, the assessment process, comparisons to neighboring communities' tax rates, and available exemption options available under the Massachusetts General Laws. The recommendation of the Board of Assessors is to maintain the residential factor of 1.00 in calculating the Fiscal Year 2024 tax rate and to not accept the available exemptions.

A full copy of the presentation is attached below.

Mr. Samia highlighted the data point of cost-revenue ratio and also emphasized the importance of growing the commercial and industrial tax base to help shift the tax burden away from residential properties. Ms. Casavant also noted that the small business exemption would apply to larger corporations with smaller branches in Shrewsbury with less than ten employees, which is not what residents think of when they hear of a small business. Ms. Anderson also noted that the tax credit goes to the property owner, so it would not help a small business that leases the space.

Ms. Casavant asked if members of the public had any comments or questions. Mr. John Cygielnik, 25 Lexington Road, inquired about obtaining a copy of the presentation so that he could review the data. Ms. Casavant noted that the presentation will be posted on both the Select Board and Assessor's office webpages, but that we could provide a hard copy of the presentation as well.

On a motion by Mr. Samia, seconded by Ms. Conlin, the Board unanimously voted to close the public hearing at 7:34pm.

On a motion by Mr. Samia, seconded by Ms. Conlin, the Board unanimously voted to adopt a residential factor of 1.00 for the Fiscal Year 2024 tax rate.

On a motion by Mr. Samia, seconded by Ms. Conlin, the Board unanimously voted to not adopt a residential exemption for the Fiscal Year 2024 tax rate.

On a motion by Mr. Samia, seconded by Ms. Conlin, the Board unanimously voted to not adopt a small commercial exemption for the Fiscal Year 2024 tax rate.

7. **Meeting with Julie Tierney, Business Systems Analyst, regarding an update on the Town's online citizen services platform.**

Julie Tierney gave an overview of her role as Business Systems Analyst, a newly created role in the Town Manager's office. Ms. Tierney stated that her role focuses on helping teams, departments, and residents

learn how to best work with software tools to promote productivity and efficiency. Ms. Tierney provided an overview of her work done thus far, including meeting with department leaders, documenting all current software tools used, meeting with representatives to understand full system capabilities of software tools, and creating a strategy for future improvement. Ms. Tierney provided a timeline of incremental future improvements in alignment with the Town's 2030 Strategic Plan. Also, Ms. Tierney provided an overview of active initiatives and provided greater detail on OpenGov, the Town's customer service request platform.

Mr. Samia inquired about the \$1.4m in licensing fees for all software tools that the Town utilizes and whether there was opportunity to reduce the total fees. Ms. Tierney explained that there will be opportunities to reduce costs by removing the use of duplicative tools, but that the cost of software licensing increases annually. There was a discussion of how OpenGov assists with records retention and that residents can easily access records on the platform.

Mr. Mizikar and members of the Board commended Ms. Tierney's work in moving the Town forward in meeting its goals outlined in the 2030 Strategic Plan.

8. Meeting with Jeffrey Howland, Director of the Department of Public Works, regarding a progress update on the ADA Transition Plan.

Mr. Howland provided a presentation on the Town's progress towards remedying issues identified in the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) Self-Evaluation and Transition Plan which was completed in 2022. Mr. Howland pointed out that the report identifies current accessibility issues, but at the time the facilities were constructed they met the accessibility requirements. He also provided a detailed overview of the differences between the federal and state accessibility requirements.

Mr. Howland provided an update on several recent projects completed by the Town that remedied some of the accessibility issues identified in the report. He also reported that the Town has submitted several projects for funding through the Massachusetts Office on Disability (MOD) ADA Project Improvement grant program.

There was a discussion about the maintenance requirements associated with playground mats versus poured in place rubber. There was also a discussion of the differences between the federal and state accessibility requirements, and the process of complying with both regulations. Ms. Casavant thanked Mr. Howland for work done by the Department of Public Works and noted that improving accessibility is a priority for the Select Board.

New Business:

9. Review the October 16, 2023 Special Town Meeting

Mr. Mizikar provided a summary of the October 16, 2023 Special Town Meeting and that all nine proposed warrant articles were passed. Mr. Mizikar noted that he looks forward to working with the Select Board relative to the Moderator's discussion of how to improve Town Meeting.

10. Review and act to authorize the chair to sign a Disclosure By Non-Elected Municipal Employee of Financial Interest and Determination by Appointing Authority as required by M.G.L. Chapter 268A, Section 19, to authorize the Town Manager to serve as a Steering Committee and Board Member on the West Suburban Health Group

Ms. Casavant summarized the agenda item and noted that this is a recurring item that the Board votes on annually. On a motion by Mr. Samia, seconded by Ms. Conlin, the Board voted unanimously to authorize the chair to sign a Disclosure by Non-Elected Municipal Employee of Financial Interest and Determination by Appointing Authority.

11. [Review](#) and act on the recommendation of the Insurance Advisory Committee (IAC) relative to the Medicare Eligible Retiree Health Insurance Program for the calendar year 2024 pursuant to M.G.L. Chapter 32B, Section 3

Ms. Casavant summarized the agenda item. Mr. Mizikar noted that these rates have been recommended by the West Suburban Health Group and voted upon by the Town's Insurance Advisory Committee (IAC). Over the few years, there has been little to no cost increases for these plans, but as utilization increases after the pandemic, there has been a cost increase to these rates.

On a motion by Mr. Samia, seconded by Ms. Conlin, the Board voted unanimously to approve the recommendation of the IAC relative to the Medicare Eligible Retiree Health Insurance Program for the calendar year of 2024.

12. [Review](#) and act on the annual "Fill the Boot" drive to benefit the Muscular Dystrophy Association utilizing intersections of Main Street and Boylston Street, Harrington Avenue and Boston Turnpike Route 9, on November 4, 2023 from 9:00am to 3:00pm (Rain date November 5, 2023).

Ms. Casavant summarized the agenda item and noted that this is an annually recurring request of the Board.

On a motion by Mr. Samia, seconded by Ms. Conlin, the Board unanimously approved the 2023 annual "Fill the Boot" drive to benefit the Muscular Dystrophy Association utilizing intersections of Main Street and Boylston Street, Harrington Avenue and Boston Turnpike Route 9, on November 4, 2023 from 9:00am to 3:00pm (Rain date of November 5, 2023).

Correspondence: The Select Board will review and possibly act on the following:

13. Email, received October 12, 2023, from Xi Jiang, 140 South Street, re: A Complaint About the process of Special permit R-23-969 on Property 147-151 South Street

Ms. Casavant summarized the correspondence item and noted that Mr. Mizikar has followed up with this resident to resolve their complaint.

14. Email, received October 14, 2023, from Paul Lincoln, 310 S. Quinsigamond Avenue, re: Traffic/safety Issue So. Quinsigamond Ave

Ms. Casavant summarized the correspondence item and noted that this was referred to the Town's internal traffic safety committee.

15. Email, received October 16, 2023, from Kathleen M. O'Grady, 56 Pointe Rok Drive, Worcester, MA 01604 re: letter regarding safety concerns on Oak Island and Flint Pond.

Ms. Casavant summarized the correspondence item and that it was a letter signed by many residents of Worcester outlining concerns of Oak Island and Flint Pond. Ms. Casavant noted that the Town will work with the Lake Quinsigamond Committee, the Environmental Police, and the Shrewsbury Police Department to address these concerns.

16. Email, received October 16, 2023, from State Representative Hannah Kane, re: Governor Healey Announces State's Emergency Family Shelter System Will Reach Capacity By End of Month

Ms. Casavant summarized the correspondence item.

17. Email, received October 18, 2023, from Karen M. Mirabile, 8 Alden Avenue, re: No parking signs on Alden Ave - request

Ms. Casavant summarized the correspondence item and noted that this was referred to the Town's internal traffic safety committee.

18. Email, received October 19, 2023, from Brian Niemi, 13 Pineland Avenue, re: Pineland Avenue

Ms. Casavant summarized the correspondence item and explained that it relates to a private road. Town staff has provided information on the process of converting a private road to a public road.

19. Email, received October 20, 2023, from Sandra Fryc, 21 Pheasant Hill Drive, re: Pointe at Hills Farm

Ms. Casavant summarized the correspondence item.

Respectfully submitted,



Justin K. Dobson
Assistant to Town Manager

Referenced Materials:

- Copy of Tax Classification Hearing Presentation by Ruth Anderson, Principal Assessor
- Copy of Presentation by Julie Tierney, Business Systems Analyst
- Copy ADA Self-Evaluation and Transition Plan Presentation by Jeffrey Howland, Director of the Department of Public Works

