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Sharon ARPA Advisory Committee
Oct. 17, 2022 Meeting Minutes
Draft until approved at the next regular meeting

The Sharon ARPA Advisory Committee held a regular meeting at 4:30pm. It was a hybrid meeting, in-person at Town Hall and on Zoom.

Attendees (in person):

Tom Bartram
Jill Drew
Barbara Prindle

Attendees (on Zoom):

Doug Cahill
Gretchen Hachmeister

- I. The meeting was called to order at 6:30 pm by Jill. The agenda was approved without changes and the minutes of the Sept. 7 meeting were approved without changes.
- II. Public Comment: There was no public comment raised.
- III. New Application – Tom Bartram took the chair’s role at the meeting and presented the new application:

(see recording, [10-17-22 Sharon ARPA Advisory Committee meeting, TC 1:02 – 24:17](#)) Sharon Connect Task Force, represented by its co-chair Jill Drew, applied for \$25,000 to be paid to the Town of Sharon to hire a Contract Performance Manager for the Comcast-town partnership to complete the Comcast high-speed broadband internet network in Sharon. This request is contingent upon residents’ approval of the contract’s funding and the authorization of the First Selectman to sign it.

Members discussed that this job would be publicly posted and all interested are encouraged to apply. The job requires a willingness to learn some about the technology being installed, but more importantly, the manager needs to have excellent administrative skills (including managing spreadsheets) and superior communications skills to be the day-to-day bridge among Comcast, Sharon residents, Sharon Connect Task force members, and the Board of Selectmen. The manager would report to and be officially supervised by the Board of Selectmen as a part-time contractor of the town. Doug Cahill asked if either of the co-chairs of the Sharon Connect Task Force would consider taking on this role, and Jill explained that no task force members wanted to apply for this, but they were choosing instead to stay together as a task force and, in their volunteer capacity, were eager to support and help this person to better ensure the project’s success. The \$25,000 amount is expected to be the total amount needed for the duration of the contract – whether it takes 8 months or 18 months to complete – because if the work becomes stalled and

the project period is extended, there will be little for the manager to do if no construction is occurring (i.e., while Comcast is waiting for necessary permits or perhaps for the weather to warm up).

Tom Casey, who was unable to attend in person but who submitted questions in advance, asked why the \$25,000 wasn't added to the overall project costs. Jill said that the \$1.6 million project cost is all being paid to Comcast. The Contract Performance Manager would be independent of Comcast and would therefore need to be paid by the town.

Tom Bartram asked if more of the town's ARPA dollars will be used to offset the \$1.6 million price tag or if ARPA dollars would be used to fund the individual applications submitted for specific roads to be wired. Jill responded that the individual applications have been put on hold by the Board of Selectmen pending the outcome of the vote on the Comcast proposal. It is possible that the Selectmen will choose to use the remaining dollars in the town's ARPA account to offset some of the \$1.6 million expense if the Comcast proposal is approved. Jill noted that the Sharon Connect Task Force expects to apply for a state grant to use the state's ARPA Capital Funds to fund the whole \$1.6 million of the project, but applications are not yet available for those funds and likely won't be available until early 2023. So that grant is just a maybe. If the town rejects the Comcast proposal, those individual road-wiring applications would be re-activated for Board of Selectmen consideration.

Tom Bartram also asked about discussions going on at Northwest Hills Council of Governments to work with another provider, Frontier Communications, to overlash its existing copper wires with fiber-optic lines in Sharon and other towns. Jill responded that she was aware of those discussions and had spoken that morning to someone at Frontier to learn more specific information about its plans for Sharon. The Frontier representative, for the first time, said it was planning to add some fiber-optic internet access to Sharon residents along certain routes and would be willing to discuss establishing a partnership with Sharon to wire more homes here if the town would pay it. Jill said those discussions will continue. She also said the Sharon Connect Task Force was interested in helping the region in improving broadband infrastructure.

Barbara Prindle described the Contract Performance Manager as a "clerk of the works" to look out for the town's side during the construction project.

Upon a motion made and seconded, the application was approved to move on to Board of Selectmen. Four members present voted to send it on, with Jill abstaining.

IV. Jill reviewed the Board of Selectmen actions on previously forwarded applications.

Megan Mollica of Cornwall Bridge Gardens learned that she had missed Cornwall's deadline for individual applications for ARPA assistance. Sharon's Selectmen voted

to grant Cornwall Bridge Gardens \$3,070.11 to pay Sharon property taxes. The Selectmen voted to approve \$12,000 for a one-time payment to members of the town road crew to help offset high inflation. The Selectmen voted to table for now the Herb Road application for Comcast wiring.

V. Administrative Issues

Tina is making the schedule for 2023 meetings. Members discussed how often the committee should meet and whether our dates/times should change. It was agreed to ask Tina if the room would be available on the 2nd and 4th Tuesdays of each month in 2023.

VI. There was no other new business and the meeting adjourned at 5:01 pm.

NEXT MEETING: Monday, Nov. 2 at 6:30 pm

Respectfully submitted,
Jill Drew