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By Linda Amerighi at 8:12 am, Nov 17, 2021

Sharon ARPA Advisory Committee
November 15, 2021 Meeting Minutes
Draft until approved at the next regular meeting

A regular meeting of the Sharon ARPA Advisory Committee was held in person at Town Hall and on Zoom at 6:30PM.

Attendees:

In person at Town Hall

Jill Drew
Barbara Prindle
Carol Flaton
Doug Cahill
Sophia Wang

On Zoom

Gretchen Hachmeister
Tom Casey
Tom Bartram
Donna DiMartino

1) The meeting was called to order at 6:30pm.

2) The proposed agenda was approved.

3) Minutes of the ARPA meeting 11/03/21 were approved.

4) Public comment: No members of the public in the meeting. Jill Drew commented on public comment: The Board of Selectmen allows public comment at the beginning of their meetings, and also allowed comment on agenda items as they are raised. The ARPA Advisory Committee will follow the same procedure.

5) Dates/times for 2022 meeting schedule: The 2022 schedule was adopted as follows and will be sent to Tina Pitcher to book use of Chapin Meeting Room on the Town Calendar:

Wednesday, Jan. 5 - 6:30 pm

Monday, Jan. 24 - 4:30 pm

Wednesday, Feb. 2 - 6:30 pm

*Monday, Feb. 14 - 4:30 pm (**Zoom only**)**

Wednesday, March 2 - 6:30 pm

Monday, March 21 - 4:30 pm

Wednesday, April 6 - 6:30 pm

Monday, April 18 - 4:30 pm

Wednesday, May 4 - 6:30 pm

Monday, May 16 - 4:30 pm

Wednesday, June 1 - 6:30 pm

Monday, June 20 - 4:30 pm

*** 4th Monday to avoid holiday on Jan. 17**

**** 2nd Monday to avoid holiday on Feb. 21**

Wednesday, July 6 - 6:30 pm

Monday, July 18 - 4:30 pm

Wednesday, Aug. 3 - 6:30 pm

Monday, Aug. 15 - 4:30 pm

Wednesday, Sept. 7 - 6:30 pm

Monday, Sept. 19 - 4:30 pm

Wednesday, Oct. 5 - 6:30 pm

Monday, Oct. 17 - 4:30 pm

Wednesday, Nov. 2 - 6:30 pm

Monday, Nov. 21 - 4:30 pm

Wednesday, Dec. 7 - 6:30 pm

Monday, Dec. 19 - 4:30 pm

6) Update on technology to enable hybrid town meetings: The system we are borrowing costs roughly \$4,500. If we decide to recommend this system, we will want to include 1 or 2 external monitors, a locking storage cart (for security and mobility) and perhaps an additional camera, so total cost will rise to perhaps \$6,000-\$7,000. Jill and Doug Cahill consulted a vendor who offered a preliminary estimate of \$30,000-\$40,000 for a custom solution. Tom Bartram suggested we consult other vendors. Gretchen Hachmeister will share information about what the library is doing re: video conferencing. Tom Casey warned that the technology consulting was starting to drift far afield from the Advisory Committee's mission. After discussion, it was agreed that Jill will talk with different suppliers and write a memo to the Board of Selectmen with options. Feedback from the BOS will be shared at an upcoming meeting.

7) Resident survey responses: A total of 62 responses have been received so far – 56 online and 6 on paper. The Committee discussed how to increase outreach and it was decided to post on the Sharon Community Facebook page and to ask Marshall Miles to mention it on Robin Hood Radio. The Spanish language version of application and survey form should be completed this week.

8) Format and logistics for Dec. 1 Community Meeting: 14 people have signed up to attend the Dec. 1 meeting in person. Pandemic restrictions limit the total number of in-person attendees to 18. Others will join on Zoom. The meeting will start with an explanation of why the Committee was formed, what its mission is and what the rules are for allocating the federal funds. Meghan Flanagan will present the survey results. Following the presentation there will be an open Q&A with members of the public online and in person. Some members of the committee expressed a desire to hold a special meeting shortly after the Dec. 1 meeting to debrief. Jill will send out a Doodle poll suggesting a few times/dates for those who wish to attend. Once a date/time is sent, Jill will create an agenda and send it to be posted on the town website.

9) Housatonic Youth Service Bureau funding request: After discussion, committee members agreed to delay a decision on HYSB's request until mid-January, after the deadline for initial funding applications. This will allow the committee to assess the request in relation to others. Jill will email the HYSB executive director to let her know and ask her what HYSB would do if only the Town of Sharon allocated \$60,000 to it.

10) Additional applications/ideas for funding: Two new applications were received – one from Silver Lake Shores Association, asking for \$50,000; another is an individual application from a small business owner whose business plan was impacted by COVID asking for help to re-launch the business. Jill will share the Silver Lake Shores application with committee members and schedule a review of this request in Jan meeting. Jill will consult U.S. Treasury Rules and the CT Freedom of Information Law to recommend a process that can offer appropriate privacy protection while satisfying legal and regulatory requirements.

The idea of improving sidewalks was discussed: Carol Flaton noted Sharon applied for a state grant in 2018 but it was denied. Carol said Sharon applied for another grant in 2020. Jill will check to see what happened with that application.

Gretchen asked about the process of applying for a grant to fund an adult mental health program at the library. Members agreed the library should apply, not the provider, since the library is sponsoring the program. Gretchen agreed to recuse herself on any vote in the committee regarding that grant.

Donna DiMartino said the Sharon Social Service Agent is in urgent need of a new computer and printer, as the old equipment is making it nearly impossible to handle the increased service requests caused by COVID. After discussion, the committee agreed to review a funding request and urged Donna to work with the town to submit an application.

11) Discuss actions in other towns: Members discussed the possibility of hosting a challenge for Sharon Center School students to propose a project to be funded with ARPA dollars that would benefit students at the school. This is modelled after a state program that students at Housatonic Regional High School are participating in. Doug agreed to ask Dr. Karen Manning if there might be interest.

12) Other new business – none

13) There was unanimous approval of a motion to adjourn and the meeting concluded at 7:40pm.

Respectfully submitted,
Sophia Wang