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SHARON BOARD OF FINANCE

Draft until approved at the next regular meeting

A regular meeting of the Sharon BOF was held on March 19, 2024 at 6:30PM at the Town Hall. Present were regular members Bartram, Flaton, Robertson, Hecht and Duncan; alternate Pastre; BOS Flanagan, Kearcher and Brett; BOE Cahill, Martin and Visconti; Principal Tomkalski, Board Clerk Webb, Regional Business Manager Herrick, Region 1 Representative Cousins, Barbara Prindle, Marleen Woodman, Terry Vance, reporters Epstein and Hawken, the Secretary, VIA ZOOM David Levinson, Scott Dillman, BOE member Vance, Superintendent Carter, Karen Joyce, and Jill Drew.

Chairman Bartram called the meeting to order at 6:30. Ms. Fowler designated Mrs. Pastre to vote in her place at this meeting.

It was the request of the contract sub-committee to delete Item #10 on the agenda and Mr. Bartram suggested switching Items #5 & #6 (the budget presentations). Ms. Flaton made a motion to adopt the agenda as amended, seconded by Mrs. Robertson, with all in favor.

David Levinson, who is an abutter to 64 Hilltop Road – the location of the solar array, made comments on what he feels are the financial risks within the PPA, concern with the storm water management plan accepted by the Planning and Zoning Commission and asked that the BOF review any additional amendments to the contract before it is signed.

Ms. Flaton brought to the attention of the Board that at the 2/20/24 meeting, Mr. Rick should not have been allowed to speak under public comment or pass out his information on the solar project as this topic was not an agenda item. She further offered that since it was on the agenda for this evenings agenda, he could speak and submit his information. Mr. Bartram stated that it didn't occur to him when it happened. Ms. Flaton made a motion to accept the minutes, seconded by Mr. Hecht, with all in favor.

BOE Chair Doug Cahill and Principal Tomkalski presented the BOE's proposed 2024-2025 budget. The Net Budget is \$57,396 down from the current budget. They have no capital improvements in this budget but there are some that the Board will be considering. The Board will be dealing with these at a later meeting but anticipate spending the allocation in the current budget of \$178,775 plus the funds in the Capital Non-recurring Account of \$119,401.57. The budget does not factor in any potential savings from the solar array. The proposed budget was reviewed page by page with questions asked from the BOF. The BOE feels that this budget is MBR (Minimum Budget Requirement) compliant and this is the lowest this budget can go. Sam Herrick stated that for this budget cycle, they did request a resident student deduction. Now whether the State approves this is or not is yet to be known. Sharon's per pupil costs were discussed. Mr. Bartram asked Mr. Cahill if the BOE had made any progress looking at Sharon's costs vs Cornwall's. Mr. Cahill stated that the Board is updating their Capital Plan. If the BOE has any project that they would like funding for, the BOF needs to know now so that the amount can be placed in the Town General Budget, if this is what the BOF decides later in this meeting. Mr. Herrick went through a power point presentation of the Regional proposed budget.

First Selectman Casey Flanagan presented the BOS's proposed 2024-2025 budget. He commented on the process that the Board took. They looked at safety, recreation and wages. The Union contract has not yet been finalized but they have a tentative agreement. Once this is accomplished the appropriate line items will need to be adjusted: Highway wages, social security & Medicare and pension. Jamie Reid, Road Foreman, joined the meeting at 8:00. The big increases are: Sharon Ambulance is seeking to hire

paid personnel to supplement the volunteers and have asked the Town for some funding towards this; Dead Tree Removal – this line item reflects essentially what the Town has been paying annually but from other funds; Recreation – replacement of the tennis courts and saving for future projects; Beach – open longer hours; and Youth Services – busing for trips. The bottom line is higher than what they hoped expected to request, but all the line items requests are necessary. There are some items that could be funded from the Undesignated Fund. The proposed budget was reviewed page by page with questions asked from the BOF. The budget contains a 4% wage increase across the board except for the Road Crew and Road Foreman to be determined. For the following budget cycle (25-26), the Board will be working with the Human Resource Consultant on wage adjustments for all other positions. Mr. Duncan requested an up-to-date Equipment Plan. The Parks & Recreation Committee's request for the fund balance to replace the tennis courts was discussed – leave in budget or request the funds out of the Undesignated Fund. The Little Rascal's summer program at the Beach will operate this summer with a new director and assistant director. It will be evaluated at the end of the season to determine if it should continue. The amount in the budget for Dead Tree Removal reflects what the Town has been paying each year over the last few years.

The Board discussed having the BOE taking their capital projects out of their budget to be transferred to the Town General Budget. The State is looking for this final decision in order to determine if the MBR can be reduced. Mr. Hecht made a motion that the BOE move their capital projects out of their budget to the Town General Budget, seconded by Ms. Flaton, with all in favor. Mr. Cahill stated that he had sent four years of historical budgets to the State. Mr. Bartram stated that if the State wants something different, please let the BOF know. After some discussion, Mr. Hecht made a motion that, while it was historically never the intention of the Board of Finance to have capital expenses included in the Board of Education budget, and inadvertently increase the town's MBR, it was the specific intention of the Board of Finance to explicitly remove all capital expenses out of the Board of Education budget in the 2022-2023 fiscal year and subsequent budgets, transferring these expenses to the Town general budget, seconded by Ms. Flaton, with all in favor.

Ms. Flaton made a motion to approve the request of the BOS and the Green Committee that Line Item #25b – New Equipment of \$4,000 be placed in the Town Equipment Replacement Account, earmarked for Green Equipment, for the anticipated purchase of a new John Deere Tractor in the 24-25 fiscal year, seconded by Mr. Duncan. After some discussion, vote was taken on motion = carried unanimously.

Mr. Duncan made a motion to approve the request of the BOS and the Green Committee to allocate \$42,000 out of the Undesignated Fund for the replacement of their 24-year-old John Deere Tractor and attachments, with the anticipation of auctioning the old equipment, seconded by Mr. Hecht. Marlene Woodman, a member of the Green Committee, spoke to this request. After some discussion, vote was taken on motion = carried unanimously.

Mr. Bartram stated that the Board heard Mr. Levinson's comments and request at the beginning of the meeting and offered that the Board/Town is not structured to do what he was asking. Ms. Flaton stressed that the Town should be aware of: any additional costs that the Town would have to pay for, even with the Grant application if costs are not part of the PPA; the costs in the PPA spread over 20 years may affect the rate the BOE would pay. When asked where any additional funds would come from, Mr. Flanagan stated the Undesignated Fund. She also commented that different parts of the contract need to be looked at to determine savings over the years of the contract – cost savings minus additional costs. As Ms. Flaton had various questions concerning the contract, Mrs. Robertson made a motion the BOF

authorizes Ms. Flaton and Mr. Bartram to meet with the First Selectman and a representative from the CT Green Bank to get Ms. Flaton's questions answered, seconded by Mr. Hecht, with all in favor.

After briefly discussing what is still needed for the BOS proposed budget, Mr. Hecht made a motion that the Board holds a **special meeting Tuesday, March 26, 2024 at 7PM** to discuss/take action on both proposed budgets, seconded by Mrs. Pastre, with all in favor.

With nothing further, Mr. Duncan made a motion to adjourn, seconded by Mrs. Pastre, with all in favor. The meeting was adjourned at 10:14.

Respectfully submitted,

Tina Pitcher, Recording Secretary