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By Linda Amerighi at 2:34 pm, May 02, 2023

SHARON BOARD OF FINANCE
Draft until approved at the next regular meeting

A special meeting of the Sharon BOF was held April 28, 2023 immediately following the budget hearing. Present were regular members O'Kelly, Fowler, Bartram. And Robertson; alternates Ensign and Whelan; Mandy Thompson, Marlene Woodman, Jill & Derek Drew, reporters Epstein and Hawken; and the secretary.

Chairman Bartram called the meeting to order at 8:07. Mr. Duncan designated Mr. Ensign to vote in his place at this meeting. With the absence of Ms. Flaton, Ms. Fowler made a motion to designate Mr. Whelan a voting member for this meeting, seconded by Mr. O'Kelly, with all in favor.

The Board discussed the Board of Education's proposed budget first. The only real concern heard during the hearing was the concern/understanding of the Minimum Budget Requirement. The BOE or the Region 1 Central Office has to request the State to reduce the MBR based on efficiency reductions and lower enrollment, but this has never been done. It was noted that ECS receipts from the State have also been reduced. The actual Sharon resident enrollment is 84 students. In the discussion it was noted that the BOF could approve the budget to Town Meeting and then at the Town Meeting, the budget could be reduced. A joint meeting with the BOE Chairman, School Principal, and Region 1 Business Manager was suggested. The BOF is looking for a commitment from the BOE indicating their willingness to pursue a budget reduction. Perhaps a sub-committee should be formed to look further into this. After a lengthy discussion, Mr. O'Kelly made a motion that the BOF gives conditional approval to send the BOE proposed 23-24 budget to Town Meeting providing the BOF receives a Letter of Intent by May 12, 2023 from the BOE indicating their willingness to pursue a budget reduction with the State based on declining enrollment and efficiencies over the last 5 years, seconded by Mrs. Robertson. In the discussion it was noted that the ECS allotments to the Town has also been reduced over the years and also that after the BOE affirms their commitment, the BOF will request the BOE Chair, School Principal and Region 1 Business Manager to meet with the BOF to plan a course of action and if they do not agree to go forward on his subject, BOF reserves the right to withdraw its approval of the proposed budget. Vote taken on motion = carried unanimously.

Next the Board of Selectmen's proposed budget was discussed. The Registrars of Voters will be asked to review their proposed budget to see if any reductions can be made as there will not be early voting. If so, the reduction can be made at the Town Meeting. It was emphasized that there was never talk about removing the Contribution Line Items (Line Item 32) but rather treating them like the Five-Year Capital Plan – not having them as part of the operating budget. In the future, this section can be moved to the end of the budget – after the Total Operating Budget. Members will look into how other towns handle contributions. There was a slight discussion on preparing in the future, a brochure explaining the budgets. Mr. O'Kelly made a motion to approve the BOS proposed 23-24 budget to Town Meeting for approval, seconded by Ms. Fowler, with all in favor.

The BOS has requested the BOF to approve to Town Meeting expenditures of up to \$5,000 for General Maintenance of 67 Main Street, with the funds to come out of that separate account. Mr. O'Kelly made a motion to approve the request, seconded by Mr. Whelan, with all in favor.

With nothing further, Ms. Fowler made a motion to adjourn, seconded by Mrs. Robertson, with all in favor. The meeting was adjourned at 9:26.

Respectfully submitted,

Tina Pitcher, Recording Secretary