



# TOWN OF SHREWSBURY

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

Monday, February 3, 2020 - 7:00 PM

## WORKSHOP Minutes

**Present:** Mr. Maurice DePalo, Chairman, Ms. Beth Casavant, Vice Chairman, Mr. John Samia, Selectman Mr. John Lebeaux, Clerk,

**Absent:** Mr. James Kane, Selectman

**Also Present:** Mr. Kevin Mizikar, Town Manager, Mr. Davis Snowdon, Management Analyst, Ms. Rosanna Malaver, Business Manager, Ms. Angela Snell, Superintendent of Public Facilities, Mr. Jeffrey Howland, DPW Director, Mr. Andrew Truman, Town Engineer, Mr. Daniel Rowley, Water and Sewer Superintendent, Mr. Nick Repekta, Highway Division Manager, Mr. Keith Baldinger, Public Facilities Division Manager, Mr. Kevin Esposito, Parks and cemetery Division Manager, Mr. Peter Reilly, Sewer Commission

### **1. Call to Order**

Mr. DePalo called the meeting to order at 7:00 pm. Mr. Mizikar welcomed all members to the meeting. Mr. Howland introduced all leadership team members in attendance.

### **2. Hear and discuss a presentation by the Department of Public Works regarding an update on operations of the Department of Public Works**

Mr. Howland and Ms. Snell read the attached report verbatim.

Mr. DePalo suggested that the DPW put a strategic plan together with proposed staffing levels and cost implications. Mr. Howland asked the Board for their input on priorities for the DPW. Mr. DePalo stated that the DPW knows first-hand the challenges and priorities that may be attainable and should produce the first draft for the Board to react to. The population is changing, there is an expectation with sidewalks, and the Board needs a plan from the DPW on recommendations, and then the Board needs to analyze the costs and hold public hearings. The DPW needs to identify needs and create the roadmap. Capital projects, tight budgets, and the recession of 2008 have burdened the budget.

Mr. Samia stated that 3 data points may be helpful- the results of carrying forward current operations, the ability to meet current needs, and the vision of going forward. People learn through data, what we're doing, what we need to do and what we see going forward, there is a lot of explanation through numbers.

Mr. Howland discussed what he has learned through feedback from the community- sidewalks, trails and access to the parks, water quality, and the condition of some roads are the main complaints. Ms. Snell stated that a lot of complaints are due to weather (extreme weather as of lately), cemetery complaints and relying on contractors, and maintenance with fixing parks and recreation facilities. They are also having issues with custodians at schools due to after-hours events.

Mr. DePalo expressed his appreciation and support for the work of the DPW. Mr. Howland stated that he wants to continue this discussion on a more regular basis. Mr. Mizikar stated that putting together a strategic plan across

divisions may be difficult and may not be able to do in-house. With challenges, seeing municipal revenues that may not be viable to keep us going on a status quo basis, contractors providing service under-value, and potential new contracts beyond our resources.

Ms. Casavant commended the DPW on their work despite the growing population and reduced staffing levels and what it takes to inform the growing public on current challenges and that the info presented here tonight needs to be shared with the public to make them understand what is going on behind the scenes. There needs to be some way to reach the broader public so they understand that what they expect comes with a price. Ms. Casavant discussed “thought exchange” that the school department used to develop their thought exchange. Until we know what the community thinks about the municipal operation, it will be difficult to develop a strategic plan. We need to promote things out on social media to get the community to understand.

Mr. Lebeaux asked how are we going to change the status quo in February 2020? Mr. Howland responded that this is not for fy2021 and that this is this is planting the seed for fy22. Mr. Lebeaux would like to see a prioritized list of manpower upgrades sooner than later to understand what the biggest vulnerabilities are in the department.

Mr. DePalo stated that the DPW needs to quantify the needs in terms of infrastructure and wrap our heads around what the issues are long term. What do we need to do for ongoing maintenance and what are the capital needs? Mr. Mizikar commented that staffing levels that a lot of divisions need aren't going to solve the biggest problems that face the community. Mr. DePalo suggested that we methodically move through it and identify the need, the solution and try to quantify the costs and then have more focused discussions and communicate with the broader public.

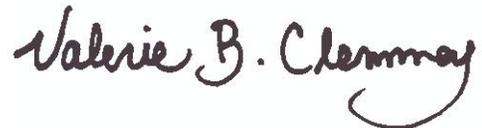
Mr. Samia commented that important drivers going forward are transparency and communication. A plan is important because it will match expectations.

Ms. Malaver commented that maintaining status quo staffing levels is difficult. Effective July 1 2019, the DPW has two new utilities that staff has to maintain, stormwater and trash, with the same amount of admins previously had.

### **3. Adjourn**

On a motion by Mr. Lebeaux, seconded by Mr. Samia, the Board unanimously voted to adjourn at 8:50 pm.

Respectfully Submitted,



Valerie B. Clemmey  
Administrative Assistant to the Board of Selectmen

### **Referenced Materials**

2/3/2020 DPW Report to the Board of Selectmen

State of Public Works presentation to the Board of Selectmen

Town of Shrewsbury

February 3, 2020

Jeffrey W. Howland, PE, Director of Public Works

Angela Snell, CPRP, Superintendent of Public Facilities & Parks

Daniel Rowley, Water & Sewer Superintendent

*Division Managers:*

Keith Baldinger- Public Buildings Division Manager

Kevin Esposito- Parks, Cemetery & Grounds Division Manager

Rossana Malaver- Business Management Division Manager

Nick Repekta- Highway Division Manager

Andrew Truman, PE, Town Engineer

We want to express our appreciation of you taking the time to meet with us outside your normal Board agenda.

The main objective tonight is to have an open dialog between the Board of Selectmen and the Leadership Team of DPW as we move the objectives of DPW into the next decade. We will talk about some of our recent successes, but also outline our challenges moving forward. Unfortunately or fortunately, most DPW functions go unnoticed until there is an emergency such as a major snow storm, water main break, sewer back-up, flooding, leaking roof, etc. that effects the general public's normal routine. Though most of the work that we do is behind the scenes when these "emergencies" do arise, we become front and center. In the recent past, we have started to receive requests from the public for improvements that historically either were not asked or were so few and far apart that the requests were not concerning.

One of my goals moving forward is to create a DPW 5-year Strategic Plan that will bind together our multi-disciplined organization so that we can more effectively serve our residences and businesses now and more importantly in the future. Tonight is the first step towards that creation of the Strategic Plan as we work with the Board of Selectmen creating the goals and which path the Town goes down. The main aspects of the plan will be the Key Issues, Goals, Objectives, Strategies, and Success Indicators that will assist us in making informed decisions where to direct resources both effectively and efficiently.

On June 26, 2018 the Board of Selectman unanimously voted to approve the creation of a Department of Public Works pursuant to Section 11 of the Town Manager Act.

The Department of Public Works (DPW) has oversight over Shrewsbury public infrastructure, including public buildings, roadway, parks, solid waste, stormwater, water and sewer utilities, cemetery, forestry, conservation, and recreation.

In June 2019 Robert Tozeski, Water & Sewer Superintendent, retired from the Town after 30 years as the Water & Sewer Superintendent. With Bob's retirement and moving the solid waste program from the

Town Manager's/Board of Health offices, the entirety of the DPW creation was completed. In September, we welcomed Daniel Rowley as the new Water & Sewer Superintendent, which rounded out the current Leadership Team.

I personally want to state that I feel very fortunate that we were able to assemble an excellent DPW Leadership Team that are all here this evening that will be able to answer any questions that you may have. In addition, I believe that we have excellent dedicated experienced staff that are passionate about their jobs. I am proud of the work they day on a daily basis, during emergency events, and when asked to do so regardless of the day, time, and in some instances family commitments. We also want to give praise to the many local committees, boards and volunteers that we are associated and work very closely with.

In addition, our Leadership Team belongs to many state and national organizations such as APWA, ASCE, NSPE, Massachusetts Highway Association, AWWA/NEWWA/MWWA, MA Cemetery Association, MA Facilities Administrators Assoc., Northeast Organic Farming Association, MA Recreation and Park Association, NE Sports Turf Managers Association, and MA Association for Public Purchasing Officials. These organizations allows staff to continuously learn new ways of conducting business within their respective Divisions. It provides us sounding boards to ask questions, discuss current and future practices, and learn about other options to performing our jobs. We will continue to encourage staff in training opportunities that will benefit both the Town and themselves.

The DPW Divisions has had many accomplishments recently that I would like to emphasis.

1. The Water Department opened the new biological water treatment plant in October 2018 for the removal of manganese, pH control, air stripping for VOC's and corrosion control. Based upon the initial year plus of results from the plant, the finish water leaving the plant has readings of "Non-Detect" for manganese.
2. The Water Department has also successfully completed several large water main replacement projects to address fire protection at some of vulnerable assets (schools), old mains, and chronic water main break locations.
3. The current new Beal School construction is on-going which includes the partial relocation of Lake Street in the vicinity of the school and replacement of an old water main. The Existing Conditions Survey, both boundary and topographic detail was completed by Town Staff.
4. Public Buildings was successful in the removal of abandoned underground fuel tanks at Floral Street School, Oak Middle School, and the High School. The Sewer Department will be removing fuel tanks at Harvey Place and Jordon Pond Pump Stations.
5. The Town was successful in becoming a Designated Green Community and has been successful in obtaining grants for improvements at several buildings for heating and cooling improvements.
6. Engineering Department designed a sub-drain project to address chronic problems at Mountainview Cemetery.
7. The Sewer Department upgraded two wastewater pump station to address confined space issues at the two stations.
8. The Highway Department installed a subdrain on Castle Road to address major icing problems at Castle Road and Camelot Drive.
9. Highway Department with Engineering Department support successfully reconstructed portions of South Street, Lake Street, and Francis Ave.

10. On October 25, 2019 The Town of Shrewsbury Water Department received the Community Award from the Massachusetts Water Works Association at their annual dinner and awards night.
11. The Water Treatment Plant is receiving a 2020 MA Engineering Excellence Bronze Award from the American Consulting Engineers Council at their Annual Awards Night in March for the design and construction of the new water plant.

There are many more examples of successes and accolades I could go on for awhile.

As I look at the challenges on the future of the DPW functions and I prepared for this presentation, it became clear that the underlining issue that far outweighs any other issue is current staffing levels across all Divisions of DPW.

To put into perspective, since 1980, the Town has grown from 22,674 residences per the 1980 Annual Report to 37,387 per the 2018 Annual Report, an increase of almost 65%. This growth has resulted in each Divisions seeing large increases in the infrastructure they are responsible for but in that same time frame have experienced a steady reduction in staff.

In 1980, the Highway Division had 17 staff members which included 2 mechanics and was responsible for 89 miles of accepted roads. In 2018, the Highway Division currently has 11 staff members which includes 2.5 mechanics but now has 153.6 miles of accepted roads. That is a decrease of 35% in staffing, but has seen an increase in the miles of accepted roads by 72.6%. Currently the mechanics maintain approximately 150 Town vehicles which include Highway, Water and Sewer, Engineering, Parks, Public Buildings, and the Police Department.

The Water & Sewer Division has also seen a significant growth in their infrastructure and also a reduction in staff. In 1980, the Water & Sewer Division had 21 staff members and was responsible for 126.64 miles of water mains and 69.8 miles of sanitary sewer mains (total of 196.44 miles) and a waste water treatment plant. In 2018, the Water & Sewer Division currently has 16.5 staff responsible 207.93 miles of water mains and a new water treatment plant and 169.97 miles of sanitary sewer mains (total of 377.90 miles). The Division has realized a 21% reduction in staffing but has seen an increase in the miles of water mains by 64% and sanitary sewer mains by 144%. In 1980, the Sewer Department maintained 9 sewer pump stations, in 2018, we maintain 39 sewer pump stations, an increase of 333%. The current water treatment plant, though modern, provides a high level of treatment versus the previous plant that provided minimal treatment and air stripping.

In 1990, Public Facilities was responsible for 428,261 sq. ft. encompassing 6 schools, fire headquarters, 2 fire stations, police station, municipal office building, the brick school, Roy Stone Legion and the Boat House. We had 27 full-time staff and 13 part staff. In 2018, we are responsible for 991,290 sq. ft. encompassing 9 schools, fire headquarters and 2 fire stations, police station, police boathouse, municipal office building, senior center, library, Roy Stone Legion and the Allen Property (which we recently sold at auction). We have 22 full time staff and 2 part time staff. We are also supplemented by utilizing Contract Cleaners in most of the building, which we started utilizing around 2010.

Parks, Cemetery, and Recreation

In 1980, the Engineering Department consisted of 7.5 staff members that performed engineering and conservation support for the Town. Currently the Division has 6.5 staff members that performs engineering, conservation, and oversees the Stormwater program.

We are the victim of our own success. Shrewsbury saw the largest increase in growth during the decade of 1990-2000 in which the population increased by about 31%. As expected, that is when we also saw the largest percentage increase in our infrastructure along with the largest reduction in staff. Our “new infrastructure” is between 20 and 30 years old. In some instances beyond their design life.

One of the by-products of the reduced staffing levels is that each Division has gone from being able to maintain proactive maintenance schedules, general upkeep, and even normal daily tasks to reactive condition where we repair or maintain when we are forced to due to failure. Unfortunately when we wait to maintain our infrastructure, the costs tend to be significantly higher and the repairs are completed usually on an emergency basis that disrupts the both Division schedules, which is what DPW does, but also the general public. Some emergencies are expected and anticipated such as a snow storm, water main break, mechanical failures within a building, etc. However, with routine maintenance some emergency repairs can be minimized or eliminated altogether.

We have become more and more dependent on private contractors to perform tasks that historically had been completed utilizing Town staff. We are seeing a trend in the costs associated with the private contractors rising faster than 2-1/2% per year resulting in less money available to complete these tasks and therefor in some instances not completely. We have been fortunate in the past where we have received contract prices that favorable to the Town that has kept costs down, but over the last several years we have seen the prices creeping upward in all facets of DPW or in some instances not receiving bids.

For example, the cemetery mowing contract nearly tripled from the previous contract to the current contract. The highway division has not been able to receive bids for roadside mowing the past two years or structure (catchbasins, manholes, etc.) last year. We saw an increase in the solid waste collection and disposal yearly costs mainly due to the unknown recycling market. We will be seeing a fairly large increase from the Westboro Wastewater Treatment due to their anticipated EPA permit that allows them to discharge the treated water to the Assabet River.

There are a lot of outside factors that contribute to the higher costs associated with conducting our day to day jobs. For example, our Water Withdrawal Permit from DEP requires us to meet certain obligations such as stream flow monitoring, provide funds for Poor Farm Brook restoration, and conduct yearly leak detection. DEP has also required additional water quality sampling such as lead and copper and hexavalent chromium along with the normal sampling regiment for pH, fluoride levels, chlorine residual levels, nitrates, etc. In our public buildings, inspection requirements associated with life safety concerns adds both additional costs for the proper inspection plus the added staff time to conduct our portion of the inspections or repairs. As we re-pave a road, additional requirements to provide compliant handicapped ramps at intersections and to upgrade the non-compliant catchbasins adds a significant cost to the construction resulting in less roads are able to be completed per year. If the Parks Division wants to repair or upgrade a playground with a park, all access and amenities are required to meet the MA AAB requirements. These additional costs and requirements has resulted in either not replacing the antiquated equipment or removing them entirely.

Each Division has operating budgets that historically we have been able to stay within, but we are one major emergency away from making that Division over budget. Some examples are:

We own four traffic signals in Town (Main and Old Mill, Grafton Street and Lake Street, S. Quinsigamond at White City, and Grafton Street at Grafton Circle along with all the opticom systems with the Town including Route 9 and Route 20. Currently we do not have a line item for repairs of these vital pieces of equipment and costs to repair, maintain, or replace will be costly.

A major issue at one of the schools such as losing the heating system in the winter resulting in school closures, procuring equipment, hiring contractors, ect. would severely put a dent into the operating budget resulting in the Public Facilities to maybe not being able to conduct other services that are requested.

Based upon the current size of the town and complexities of our infrastructure, we should be treating DPW as a "city" Department versus a small town. We are no longer a small town. The demands on our staff due to the increase in the population, changing environment, and what we as a society expect have changed how we need to operate on a daily basis. We are receiving requests, comments, complaints, etc. on issues had rarely received in the past. The number of calls for sidewalk repairs, improvement, and extensions has increased significantly. As the demands for the use of the schools as resulted in the schools to be open basically all year round, and that is all of them for various activities. As the infrastructure ages, staff spends additional time responding to complaints about pot holes, dead or dying trees, etc. Unfortunately most of the issues associated with this aging infrastructure is not visible to the general public as they are either underground or behind "closed doors".

I have become more and more concerned moving forward on the "burn-out" both the Management Team and the staff. The Management Team, though it appeared to have worked in the past, now is resulting in Management to carry out routine tasks and not being able to focus on their primary obligation which is to move their Divisions forward. Where will they be 5 years from now, what improvement can we make, etc.

For the staff, we have maintained an extremely lean organization that when 1 or 2 staff members go down for any number of reasons, there is a ripple effect across the Division. For example:

In Public Buildings, we had two custodian staff out at the same time resulting in moving one custodian from one school to another school resulting in both school being understaffed and a maintenance craftsman covering the other custodian being out resulting in t repairs that maintenance craftsman typically would have done not being completed. In addition, as the schools have basically gone being open all-year round and the days being extended beyond the historic school day and the need to have someone in the building at all times, staff is very limited to when they can have days off. I applaud the staff that they usually do not take any time off when school is in session, which limits when they can take time off.

We currently have several members of the water and sewer out due to injuries. This has resulting the on-call rotation for the sewer department be down to 2 people who need to be onsite every other week-end along with the daily requirements. Each pump station is required to be visually visited every day to log the daily flows. Therefore, each on-call person currently works 12 out of every 14 days. That is not

sustainable. Not only am I concerned about Burn-out, I am concerned about morale. Though I have not currently heard of morale issues, I am still concerned long term.

Each Division continues to look at cost savings and time saving measures to help in the Department meet both today's requirements but also the future needs. My philosophy which I have expressed to the Management Team is that everything needs to be on the table. We need to look at long standing practices and if changes need to be made, let's try the changes.

For example, Public Buildings is looking to see if the use of Contract cleaners is a long term viable option or should we consider going back to staff custodians. Is the use of brine for winter storm pre-treatment to assist in snow and ice operation an appropriate option?

In closing, we want to again thank you for taking the time to hear the state of Shrewsbury DPW as we move into this next decade. We encourage you to ask questions, provide commentary, express concerns etc. We are here to answer as best we can your questions tonight, but if we do not have the information, we will get back to you. Our goal is to determine which direction DPW should be going over the next several years. One of my goals is to prepare a 5 year Shrewsbury DPW Strategic Plan, but before I start preparing the Plan, I need to be assured that we are heading in the direction that mirrors the Board's direction.