

SFF Meeting
Tue, Jul 8, 2025

Summary:

The discussion focused on various initiatives and community engagement efforts led by the Sharon Forward Foundation. Sharon provided an update on the library's Request for Proposals (RFP) process, highlighting a shift from a long-term lease to a more flexible short-term lease option. She expressed concerns about the project's financial viability and emphasized the need for community fundraising to secure the library's future. Additionally, she raised issues regarding the town's development strategies and the Historic Commission's influence, while proposing an arts and music festival as a means to foster community collaboration.

Plans for the Arts and Music Festival were a significant topic, with potential venues including Everwood day camp and the First Congregational Church. Sharon stressed the urgency of finalizing arrangements due to a grant application deadline. Anastasia supported the choice of Everwood for its suitability for outdoor events, and the group discussed logistics such as food trucks and artist applications.

Sharon also outlined plans for using a church's reception hall for indoor exhibits and suggested hosting music in the parking lot, while considering the scheduling conflicts with other local events. The importance of collaborating with other organizations to enhance credibility was also emphasized.

Sharon introduced a project aimed at transforming an underutilized area near Memorial Beach Park into an educational park focused on environmental issues. This initiative seeks to address stormwater pollution and enhance local ecosystems through features like rain gardens, with support from the Sustainable Sharon Coalition. The conversation highlighted the need for community involvement, particularly from youth, in executing the project.

The group also discussed the foundation's credibility and the importance of securing funding and grants to support future initiatives, with concerns raised about the implications of a rushed festival on the organization's reputation. Overall, the attendees expressed a commitment to ensuring high-quality events that would positively impact the community.

Chapters & Topics:

Social Catch-Up and Event Planning

Sharon Forward Foundation welcomed attendees and engaged in light conversation about recent events. Anastasia Aranovich mentioned

scouting a wedding venue and shared her experience watching fireworks, while Robert Mercer inquired about their plans. The group expressed enjoyment of the fireworks and reminisced about a recent gathering.

Library RFP Update and Community Engagement Initiatives

Sharon detailed the library's RFP process, noting that they are now considering short-term lease options instead of a 65-year lease. She expressed concerns about the financial viability of the building and suggested fundraising efforts to maintain community ownership. Additionally, she mentioned the importance of being cautious about the town's potential tactics regarding the library's future.

- * Library RFP and proposal updates
- * Community engagement and collaboration

Planning the Arts and Music Festival

Sharon outlined plans for an Arts and Music Festival aimed at fostering community engagement. She is in discussions with Everwood day camp and the First Congregational Church for venue options, noting the challenges of timing and logistics. Anastasia expressed enthusiasm for the Everwood space, which has previously hosted events, and offered to connect with the Historical Society for additional support.

Planning for Upcoming Arts and Music Events

Sharon proposed utilizing a church's reception hall for indoor arts exhibits and suggested hosting music in the parking lot. Anastasia expressed interest in fun cover bands and mentioned the Somerville Porch Fest as a resource for musicians. Imran asked for clarification on whether the lists from Belforge included individual artists or bands, while Sharon noted that some artists might be pricey.

Discussion on Environmental Issues and Park Development

Sharon outlined a proposal to develop a park adjacent to Memorial Beach Park that would feature science exhibits on environmental issues. She highlighted the significant problem of stormwater pollution impacting the lake, which is currently treated with a controversial alum solution. The long-term strategy involves creating rain gardens and modifying culverts to prevent further pollution.

Park Project Collaboration and Funding Strategies

Sharon outlined the vision for a park project that would educate the community on environmental issues while improving local ecosystems. She mentioned the involvement of her niece and the Sustainable Sharon Coalition, highlighting their willingness to support the initiative. Funding opportunities through grants and local real estate transactions were also discussed as potential financial sources for the project.

- * Grant opportunities for funding initiatives

Building Credibility for the Sharon Forward Foundation

Robert Mercer highlighted the necessity for the Sharon Forward

Foundation to build credibility quickly, suggesting that securing funding and grants could be effective strategies. Sharon acknowledged the challenges they faced in controlling the narrative and mentioned the potential for submitting another proposal to the town to demonstrate their commitment. Anastasia supported the idea of submitting another offer if Sharon felt comfortable.

Discussion on Community Arts Initiatives and Library Proposal
Sharon highlighted the need for venues to support the diverse arts community in town, suggesting that the library could serve as a gathering place. Anastasia agreed with the vision for the arts festival but raised concerns about the timing and quality of the event. Robert expressed worries about the potential negative impact of a poorly attended festival on the organization's credibility.
* Arts and Music Festival planning

Action Items:

- * Sharon Forward Foundation will meet with First Congregational Church to discuss the venue for the Arts and Music Festival.
- * Sharon Forward Foundation will update the website to reflect the current discussions and remove outdated library proposal information.
- * Ella will reach out to her colleagues at Sustainable Sharon Coalition to present the park project idea to the Lake Management Advisory Committee.
- * Sharon Forward Foundation will explore grant opportunities to fund the park project and the Arts and Music Festival.
- * Sharon Forward Foundation will evaluate the feasibility of applying for the library RFP again to maintain credibility.

Key Questions:

- * What is the timeline for the responses to the library RFP?
- * What are the next steps for the Arts and Music Festival?
- * How can the community get involved in the park project?

Notepad:

- * No notes