

**Board of Selectmen
October 2, 2023
Veteran's Memorial Hall, Town Hall
308 Main Street, Sturbridge**

Board Members present:

Jamie Goodwin, Chair
Chase Kaitbenski, Vice Chair
Mary Dowling, Clerk
Selectman Mary Blanchard

Board Members absent:

Selectman MaryLou Volpe

Staff present:

Robin A. Grimm, Ph.D., Town Administrator
Michelle Garman, Executive Assistant

Guests present: Sturbridge Representatives of the Tantasqua Regional School Committee:

School Committee Vice Chair Bill Haggerty; members Ted Goodwin, Whitney Goodwin, Karen Kowal, and Megan Panek.

Chair Goodwin called meeting to order at 6:30 p.m.

Chair Goodwin read the agenda.

The Selectmen led the Pledge of Allegiance.

Moment of Silence for everyone suffering in the world, and in honor of MaryLou Volpe's mother, Marianna Pauline Amato, who passed away several days ago at age 91.

Public Service Announcements:

The Trick or Treat and Horribles Parade, sponsored by the Fire Department and Lions Club, will be held on the Town Common on Halloween, Tuesday, Oct. 31 at 7 p.m. TA Grimm noted that coincides with Town Hall's late night, and suggested that anyone with Town Hall business do it as early as possible to avoid traffic and parking problems from parade-goers.

Joint Meeting with Tantasqua Regional School Committee:

Mr. Haggerty called the School Committee meeting to order.

TA Grimm noted the procedures for filling vacancies created by resignations of Sturbridge representatives on the Tantasqua School Committee, which is that the appointment is made jointly by the Board of Selectmen and Sturbridge Representatives on the School Committee. Appointments expire on the day of the next Town Election. There was one applicant, Mary Bellezza, with whom the Board of Selectmen is comfortable. She was on the Burgess School Committee and has a background in education and in finance. She stepped down from the Burgess School Committee because her children aged-out of elementary school and she felt that the Burgess Committee should be made up of parents of elementary students.

Selectman Blanchard said she was at many Burgess School Committee meetings with Ms. Bellezza, who always knew her material and did a good job. Vice Chair Kaitbenski said his wife Samantha served on the Burgess School Committee with Ms. Bellezza and said she was smart and hard-working. Chair Goodwin and Clerk Dowling concurred that she was a good choice. Mr. Haggerty worked with Ms. Bellezza when she was the Burgess representative on the Tantasqua School Committee. He said she was diligent and responsible, he was sorry to see her leave the Burgess Committee, and is happy to have her back.

Motion: To approve the appointment of Mary Bellezza to the Tantasqua Regional School Committee for a term to expire at the next Annual Town Election on April 8, 2024.

By: Selectman Blanchard

2nd: Tantasqua School Committee Chairman Haggerty

Vote: 9-0-0

Town Administrator Update:

TA Grimm's update included:

- The number of Sturbridge motel rooms being used by migrant families has remained steady at 59. TA Grimm has been invited to attend Sunday's service at the Federated Church, then speak with the church's coffee group about the migrant families. Ms. Grimm thanked Pastor Dave, who has been a wealth of help and information regarding the families.
- Ms. Grimm attended a Worcester Regional Transit Authority meeting on Sept. 20 then met with the new Executive Director and asked if WRTA could provide state-funded transportation to Walmart and local supermarkets for the migrant families. They also discussed other transportation-related issues in Sturbridge.
- The town is hoping to schedule a Special Town Meeting on Monday Jan. 22 at Burgess for two easements the Trails Committee needs, and, if timing works out, to vote on Community Preservation Act funding for ADA upgrades at 60 Cedar Street. Selectman Blanchard asked to see specific numbers for the ADA upgrades early in the process. TA Grimm will get those to the Board, but said it is about \$500,000, which covers just the ADA upgrades; earlier plans for \$1 million include sidewalks. Vice Chair Kaitbenski said it's important to advertise that the meeting is at Burgess, not the high school. Goodwin agrees that the meeting should be limited to as few items as possible because it is a Special Town Meeting, not an Annual.
- TA Grimm sat in on a National Grid meeting regarding an expected increase in electric use as a result of state mandates that promote electricity, how that will impact the grid, and how it will create an increase electricity costs.
- Planning for the Gateway Signage at the intersection of Routes 20 and 131 is in the final stage. American Rescue Plan Act funds will be used. The plans are being designed so it can be moved and stored if state's long-talked-about plans to put a rotary at that intersection ever come to fruition.
- The town has applied for a Massachusetts Office of Disabilities Grant to for an updated study on all of the town's properties. TA Grimm is still building the Disabilities Commission. Library Director Becky Plimpton has agreed to be the staff liaison, and a young woman in town, who works in disabilities architecture, has agreed to be the point person.

- TA Grimm, who does not typically think serving on state committees or groups is fruitful, applied to fill a vacant position to the Worcester Regional Retirement Board. TA Grimm feels it would be worth her time because all of Sturbridge's employees have a vested interest, and because it requires a significant part of the town's budget. TA Grimm's has sometimes questioned some of the things being done by that board.
- Regarding PFAS Litigation: while the town's numbers of PFAS in its water have been consistently low, TA Grimm would like to the town to at least get its name in the class-action suit in case a zero-tolerance is called for, in which case the town could be eligible for any pay-out. There are various legal channels to take, but TA Grimm recommends, for various reasons going with a firm she has previously worked with. Chair Goodwin would like to know how a payment for this type of action would be paid out, and what kind of fee agreement would be made with the attorney. Ms. Grimm will get more information if the Board would like her to look more deeply into that option.
- TA Grimm distributed an updated report on the Town Administrator's goals. One of the things that is still outstanding is working on TIF agreements with smaller business. Selectman Blanchard noted that it is up to the business to approach the town on TIF matters. TA Grimm agreed, and said that is why she hasn't come to a final conclusion of how to handle them. Clerk Dowling suggested the Board put the matter of TIF agreements on a future agenda, as it seems like lately, every new business expects a TIF, when previously, it was granted in rare circumstances. She believes the TIF's should be reserved for those businesses who need it to be able to open in Sturbridge. Goodwin said it seems more logical to give TIF agreements to businesses that do not otherwise require much from the town. TA Grimm added that they could also be considered for businesses that add value to the town above and beyond operating a business in it. TA Grimm would like to have that be an agenda item so that she has a clearer idea of what the Board would like.
- Tentative ARPA Senior Center Funding: To simplify a complicated matter, the town asked ARPA for \$380,000 for additional contingency for the Senior Center to be spent only if needed, which is the only way the town can in good conscience sign off of the project knowing enough funding is in place.
- TA Grimm's requests to ARPA, all of which were approved, are: \$95,000 to upgrade the generator for the Water Department as part of the Senior Center project; \$380,000 additional contingency for the Senior Center; and \$50,000 for beautification around the Gateway Signage. TA Grimm said the biggest change in the Senior Center plans to help bring it into budget was the lower HVAC bid. Clerk Dowling said she still wishes the town would use Free Cash instead of ARPA money for the Senior Center contingency, but will nonetheless support the ARPA funds.
- Before authorizing TA Grimm to award the Senior Center project to the lowest bidder, the Board would like to have a final presentation of the plans. A special meeting for that will be held on Oct. 10 at 6:30 p.m.

Motion: To approve \$95,000 for the generator for the water department; \$380,000 for the contingency for the Senior Center Project; and \$50,000 for the beautification around the Gateway sign.

By: Selectman Blanchard
2nd: Vice Chair Kaitbenski

Vote: 4-0-0

Department Reports: Facilities

Facilities Manager Robyn Chrabasz gave her department update about a very busy year.

- New alarm systems have been installed throughout town buildings to increase security.
- Dormer repairs were made at the Public Safety Complex.
- A non-profit in Worcester that asked to remain anonymous, were closing and donated 20 full-cubicle work stations, which were put to use at the Public Safety Complex and DPW, where there were no work stations or inadequate/broken work stations. The DPW and IT departments were instrumental in installing the work stations. Rearranging was also done in Center Office Building to make room for the new Pool Clerk.
- Emergency replacement of the above-ground diesel tank at the DPW needs to be done. It is not an environmental leak but still must be addressed. There is a public hearing on Oct. 16 for that project.
- A grant from the Massachusetts Interlocal Insurance Association (MIIA) funded six back-up cameras on the DPW vehicles and a water-roof inspection and report.
- Also completed this year were storm windows and flooring at Town Hall; phase II Environmental Assessment at the DPW; interior improvements at the North Cemetery Building; and, courtesy of Green Communities funding, the patrols project on the HVAC and additional lighting at the Public Safety Complex.
- Underway are the library HVAC; ARPA-funded archiving and scanning records; and moving the Council on Aging into their temporary location in the basement of the Congregational Church.

The Board thanked Ms. Chrabasz for her detailed, complete report.

Action Items:

- A. Consideration and possible action on the appointment of Aaron Berry as a full-time dispatcher with the Sturbridge Police Department effective October 3, 2023 with the hourly rate of \$27.47 and the benefits of a two-year employee minus longevity.

Lieutenant Bateman is a two-year veteran with the town of Southbridge who has a bachelor in Criminal Justice from Worcester State University. The board congratulated Mr. Berry on the job as well as his upcoming wedding next week.

Motion: To confirm the appointment of Aaron Berry as a full-time dispatcher with the Sturbridge Police Department effective October 3, 2023 with the hourly rate of \$27.47 and the benefits of a two-year employee minus longevity.

By: Vice Chair Kaitbenski

2nd: Selectman Blanchard

Vote: 4-0-0

- B. Consideration and possible action to confirm the appointment of Kathy Peterson to the Historical Commission for a term to expire on November 17, 2025.

Ms. Peterson and her husband, who moved here from Alaska a year ago, had stopped by at TA Grimm's office, seeking a way to get involved in the town. TA Grimm thought Ms. Peterson, who has a background with historical roots, would be a good fit for the Historical Commission. The Petersons have always volunteered, including with the Iditarod sled race, and with various Trails Committees, including now, the Sturbridge Trails Committee. Ms. Peterson said that as sad as she was to leave Alaska and its beauty, she loves so many things about Sturbridge, especially its trails.

Motion: To confirm the appointment of Kathy Peterson to the Historical Commission for a term to expire on Nov. 17, 2025.

By: Selectman Blanchard

2nd: Vice Chair Kaitbenski

Vote: 4-0-0

- C. Consideration and possible action on an application for a one-day liquor license for Alice Rainka/Alice's Fitness and Dance for a Burlesque Dance Show at 179 Main Street, Sturbridge on December 1st and 2nd, 2023 and January 27th, March 23rd, and May 18th, 2024 from 7 p.m. to 11 p.m.

Ms. Rainka said last year every single show was sold out. She confirmed the pourer is TIP certified.

Motion: To approve the application for a one-day liquor license for Alice Rainka/Alice's Fitness and Dance for a Burlesque Dance Show at 179 Main Street, Sturbridge on December 1st and 2nd, 2023 and January 27th, March 23rd, and May 18th, 2024 from 7 p.m. to 11 p.m.

By: Selectman Blanchard

2nd: Vice Chair Kaitbenski

Vote: 4-0-0

- D. Consideration and possible action to authorize the Chair to execute the contract with Fraticelli Oil for the \$3.449 per gallon for oil for Town buildings.

TA Grimm explained that Fraticelli's bid was the lowest.

Motion: To authorize the Chair to execute the contract with Fraticelli Oil for the \$3.449 per gallon for oil for Town buildings.

By: Selectman Blanchard

2nd: Vice Chair Kaitbenski

Vote: 4-0-0

- E. Consideration and possible action to authorize the Chair to execute the agreement between the Town of Sturbridge and the Federated Church of Sturbridge and Fiskdale for the use of real property located at 8 Maple Street, Sturbridge.

This is the contract to move the Council on Aging/Senior Center to the church during the renovations of the Senior Center building. The town searched many options, and after many hours logistical planning by Senior Center Director Leslie Wong, this was deemed the best and most reasonable. The expenses have been included in the Senior Center project costs.

Selectman Dowling thanked the Federated Church for being such good partners of the community, as always.

Motion: To authorize the Chair to execute the agreement between the Town of Sturbridge and the Federated Church of Sturbridge and Fiskdale for the use of real property located at 8 Maple Street, Sturbridge.

By: Vice Chair Kaitbenksi

2nd: Selectwoman Blanchard

Vote: 4-0-0

- F. Consideration and possible action to expand the number of seats on the Special Events Committee to add an additional three vacancies.

The Special Events Committee has had some success, like the Farmers Market and the Road Race, but according to one member who approached TA Grimm, with existing Committee members having limited time, activity has become somewhat stagnant and expanding the 5-member Committee may help bring energy back.

Clerk Dowling, who serves on the Committee, asked that the matter be deferred to a later meeting as she would like to have a meeting with the Special Events Committee to formally discuss the matter first. She noted that when the Committee was created, it was intended to have a member of the Recreation Committee, a member of the Cultural Council, a member of the Board of Selectmen, and two employees at large — and even filling those spots were difficult. She also noted that adding seats makes it difficult to get a quorum. She suggested that more event volunteers, not more Committee members, might be an alternate solution.

No action taken

- G. Consideration and possible action to accept the resignation letter from Kerry-Ann Warren effective Sept. 26, 2023.

Motion: To accept the resignation letter from Kerry-Ann Warren effective September 26, 2023.

By: Selectman Blanchard

2nd: Chair Goodwin

Vote: 4-0-0

H. Consideration and possible action to accept the resignation letter from Margaret Neves from the Design Review Committee effective September 18, 2023.

Motion: To accept the resignation of Margaret Neves from the Design Review Committee effective Sept. 18, 2023 with thanks.

By: Chair Goodwin

2nd: Selectman Dowling.

Vote: 4-0-0

I. Consideration and possible action to accept the resignation of David Zonia from the Zoning Board of Appeals effective Sept. 12, 2023.

Because the ZBA is an elected board, the vacancy created by Mr. Zonia's resignation will be posted, and a replacement appointed at a joint meeting between the ZBA and Board of Selectmen.

Motion: To accept accept the resignation of David Zonia from the Zoning Board of Appeals effective Sept. 12, 2023, with hopes his health is doing well and on the mend.

By: Chair Goodwin

2nd: Selectman Blanchard

Vote: 4-0-0

J. Consideration and possible action to sign the proclamation between the Rotary Clubs of Sturbridge, Massachusetts and Stourbridge, England.

This is part of the annual visit from Rotary members from "across the pond." Chair Goodwin plans to attend the formal gathering.

Motion: To sign the proclamation between the Rotary Clubs of Sturbridge, Massachusetts and Stourbridge, England.

By: Selectman Blanchard

2nd: Vice Chair Kaitbenski

Vote: 4-0-0

K. Consideration and possible action to authorize the Chair to execute the contract with Massachusetts Broken Stone Company for the fiscal year 2024 road-paving and reclaim project in the amount of \$817,261.40, including the monthly asphalt-price-amount allowance and line-stripping items.

TA Grimm noted that several competitive bids were submitted, and this one was significantly lower. This company has adequate materials and is ready to go.

Motion: To authorize the Chair to execute the contract with the Massachusetts Broken Stone Company for the fiscal year 2024 road-paving and reclaim project in the amount of \$817,261.40, including the monthly asphalt-price-amount allowance and line-stripping items.

By: Selectwoman Blanchard

2nd: Vice Chair Kaitbenski

Vote: 4-0-0

- L. Consideration and possible action to authorize the Chair to execute the contract with Morton Salt, Inc., for the delivery of road salt for a price of \$65.86 per ton.

Motion: To authorize the Chair to execute the contract with Morton Salt, Inc., for the delivery of road salt for a price of \$65.86 per ton.

By: Selectman Blanchard

2nd: Vice Chair Kaitbenski

Vote: 4-0-0

Old Business:

- Vice Chair Kaitbenski asked about the status of the Noble gas station/EV station on Route 20. TA Grimm explained that finally, the state has agreed to allow the developer to install a stoplight instead of a roundabout.
- Chair Goodwin asked about the status of Starbucks. TA Grimm said traffic and state requirement issues appear to have caused Starbucks to halt their plans. Chair Goodwin said he's sorry to hear that, but happier with people using local coffee shops.
- Clerk Dowling asked if there was any update on the organization of donations for the refugee families. TA Grimm said there is still a lack of coordination, but the National Guard is in charge, and the Federated Church has become a coordination location. There is also a person that the state has unofficially put in charge of donations. TA Grimm will update the town webpage to reflect the latest points of contacts.
- Clerk Dowling said she is aware that the state is in charge of maintenance of Route 20, but that the excessive amount of weeds reflects poorly on the town. TA Grimm said the DPW cleaned up Route 131, and the state promises to clean up Route 20. If it is not done in a timely manner, the DPW will clean up Route 20 as well.

New Business:

No new business.

Correspondence:

No correspondence.

Approval of Minutes:

Motion: To approve the November 7, 2022 minutes as written.

By: Selectman Blanchard

2nd: Vice Chair Kaitbenski

Vote: 4-0-0

On the minutes of Sept. 18, 2023, Selectman Blanchard and Clerk Dowling made minor corrections.

Motion: To approve the Sept. 7, 2022 minutes as amended.

By: Selectman Blanchard

2nd: Vice Chair Kaitbenski

Vote: 4-0-0

Citizen's Forum

No Citizens wished to speak.

Adjourn:

Motion: To adjourn

By: Vice Chair Kaitbenski

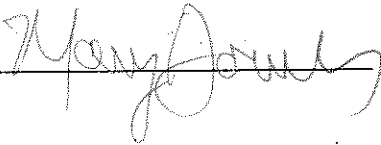
2nd: Selectman Blanchard

Vote: 4-0-0

The meeting adjourned at 7:55 p.m.

Minutes prepared by: Michelle Garman and Elisa Krochmalnycky

Clerk of the Board:



Date signed:

8/1/24