

**Board of Selectmen
September 18, 2023
Town Hall
Veteran's Memorial Hall, Town Hall
308 Main Street, Sturbridge**

This meeting is available online at: <https://sturbridge.vod.castus.tv/vod/?video=9554a89a-172e-425c-8142-305b70e7162e>

Present:

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

Staff:

Robin A. Grimm, Ph.D., Town Administrator

Absent:

Selectman MaryLou Volpe
Michelle Garman, Executive Assistant

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

Chair Goodwin read the agenda.

The Selectmen led the Pledge of Allegiance.

Moment of Silence

Town Administrator Update

Administrator Grimm advised the Board that she spoke with resident Peter Mimeault regarding the water tower at St. Anne's Church. Sprint/T-Mobile has a private agreement with the Church regarding the right-of-way the Town also has right-of-way access. Mr. Mimeault will obtain a letter from the Church indicating that he can represent the Church on local matters. Mr. Mimeault wants to make sure that when the Town goes out to bid that it has indicated the successful bidder must enter into an agreement with the Church separate from the Town. She also advised the company looking into the Dish Booster that the Board would like a presentation on the project.

- Selectman Dowling has had requests that the public be able to speak regarding the antenna? Would they be able to speak after the presentation?
- Chair Goodwin stated we could follow the rules for a public hearing.

- Administrator Grimm indicated that it's not a true public hearing that requires 10 day notices and publication.
- Selectman Dowling was asking the Chair if he would allow the public to speak after the presentation.
- Chair Goodwin stated that within reason because it is a matter of public policy and a little broader than our usual specific issues the Board will at the time allow limited public comments that are proportionate to the matter at hand.

Recommendations for ARPA Expenditures –

- **Recreation – Town Barn Concession Stand Upgrades \$6,500.00**
 - The building is owned by the Town and needs some basic repair/maintenance work including sheetrock, paint prep and painting, and ceilings
- **Recreation – Storage Shed \$5,500.00**
 - Recreation has extremely limited space. The Director's office is stacked three to four bins high with equipment, supplies, programming accessories, etc. A shed (10'x 16') would allow her to free up some room in her office as well as have a neat, organized place to store. The cost includes the shed and grading materials.
- **Electronic Data Storage \$30,000.00**
 - A continuation of the data management project already started (50K already awarded) for a second phase of organization of materials. Currently we have inventoried countless bins/boxes of materials and are working to determine what can be destroyed, what is in duplicate, and what can be stored electronically. The Town staff hopes to continue with this project with a final phase that ultimately would allow for much of the information to be uploaded where the public can access it.
- **Town Clerk – Poll Pads \$9,550.00**
 - Because the Clerk was able to secure the Host Hotel at a reasonable cost, she has more room to increase her number of poll workers who can check in voters, etc. She is requesting six poll pads, a printer, and the shipping costs.

Selectman Dowling would like to see some of these items in the future be included in the department's budgets. She would like to see some of the funding used for items that would make a larger impact. She has continued along with the ARPA Committee to support the beautification of the triangles in Town.

Administrator Grimm advised the Board there will be presentation in a few weeks regarding the triangle beautification.

Motion: To approve the recommendations of the ARPA Sub-Committee to approve as listed on the memorandum for a total of \$51,550.00.

By: Selectman Blanchard

2nd: Vice Chair Kaitbenski

Vote: 4-0-0 (Selectman Volpe absent)

- Immigration Update – Excerpts from the Town Administrators Memorandum
 - According to the Governor's office as of Thursday afternoon, Sturbridge was housing 46 families at the Super 8 and 10 at the Days Inn.
 - Some of the families at the Super 8 are Massachusetts homeless.
 - The Superintendent and Tantasqua Regional is working to enroll school age children.
 - The Department of Public Health has been on site doing some rapid review of health status to ensure no outward signs of illness and trying to determine overall vaccination status. Our own Board of Health is active in trying to ascertain living conditions.
 - On September 14, 2023, the National Guard held a meeting at Town Hall for all agencies involved. The Guard's job, as the members indicated, is to "connect the dots."
 - We spent some time discussing the handling of volunteers and donations. The National Guard has indicated that they are NOT accepting food donations. They are accepting all other types of donations – i.e. clothes, toys, etc. They will work on the distribution of those donations.
 - Our library has offered to provide computer/internet access to families – provided they can get transportation to the Library.
 - I have continued to ask that they notify me of how many room they have contracted so that we can plan for services, educational needs, etc., but have received no answer to this question. I have also emphasized that we have several times during the year that all of our rooms are rented for tourism and events, and need some accountability for the potential revenue loss. This was less of an issue when the number was eight or ten rooms, but we have climbed now to over 50.
 - I visited both hotels and continue to have concerns about the overall safety of the environments. Children are playing in busy parking lots, people are crossing Route 20, and the roadway leading to the Days Inn is no particularly safe for walking if there is any visibility issue for potential drivers on that road – as well as its somewhat desolate nature – particularly for people who are not used to living in areas along highways, etc.

Chair Goodwin asked if there are items of particular need.

Administrator Grimm stated winter coats and clothing along with toys. She also indicated food would not be accepted. The State is handling the meals.

Selectman Dowling asked was that because of a safety precaution.

Administrator Grimm said it was as a safety precaution.

Selectman Dowling stated she has had a few residents reach out to her with concerns that the Town did not coordinate a food drive or clothing drive. She is now clear on the food drive and why the Town cannot host a food drive. She will forward the residents that would like to volunteer directly to the Town Administrator.

Administrator Grimm indicated that the Town was not made aware of this situation until people were already being placed here so the Town was not able to properly prepare for the situation at hand.

Chair Goodwin stated the reality of the circumstance regardless of varies political views is that the Town is under obligation through the Commonwealth to the individuals placed here and the principal obligation is the education of the children. As the Town obtains more information, we will be better organized through public safety, schools and other service providers. While the situation may have some residents frustrated, this is the Town's current circumstance.

Administrator Grimm indicated the National Guard are at the hotels daily with the families. The National Guard is there as a support system and not as security. She would also like to note that there have been no incidents of violence or other circumstance related to the placed families. She wanted to be clear there was an incident at the Super 8 Motel that was in no way related to the placed families.

Chair Goodwin asked if we have reached out to the WRTA to try to organize a one-day trip to the grocery stores.

Administrator Grimm indicated the National Guard is working on transportation.

Chair Goodwin thanked the Federated Church for everything they do for our community.

Department Reports – Conservation Department

Rebecca Gendreau, Conservation Agent, gave a detailed description of her department report a copy of which is on file in the Town Administrators Office.

- The Conservation Commission currently consists of the following members: Ed Goodwin (Chair), Erik Gaspar (Vice-Chair), Roy Bishop, Ted Winglass and Karsten Stueber. The Commission lost two long time members in one week this past fiscal year.

- Due to an impending move out of town, Steven Chidester resigned from the SCC after 6 years of service. We would like to thank Steven for sharing his knowledge, his time and for his devotion to the protection of our natural resources.
- The Commission lost David Barnicle when he passed away on Oct 26, 2022, after a brief illness. Dave was a dedicated Commissioner who volunteered on the board for 25 years. Dave helped formulate the Sturbridge Wetland Bylaw Regulations, helped create the Friends of Sturbridge Trails and served as the Commission's trails liaison. Dave was devoted to the protection of our natural resources helping to protect land for open space and enhancing wildlife habitat throughout town.
- This past fiscal year, we permitted 3 new commercial projects, 5 projects which included modifications to existing commercial and/or utility sites, 12 new single family house.
- Continue to seek resolutions to historic violation issues. Many of our historic enforcement cases have been resolved or have reached resolutions and will be closed soon. Violations can be a result of working without a permit or be a result of non-compliance with an issued permit. We have had new violations occur this past fiscal year which have resulted in either formal or informal enforcement actions. I am happy to report that resolutions have been reached for most of these.

Selectman Dowling asked about the Plimpton Property and Fiske Hill Property. She wanted to know if either of those properties are an option for a dog park.

Rebecca Gendreau stated Plimpton Property is two parcels, and the one that has the Conservation restriction cannot be used for a dog park. The other parcel was purchased with CPA funds for active recreation could possibly be used depending on environmental concerns. The Fiske Hill property was open for recreation so there is a possibility of some projects on that property.

Selectman Dowling stated many families in Town would like to see a dog park in Town.

Selectman Dowling stated that it seems like Conservation is pleased with the administrative changes that were added.

Rebecca Gendreau stated they are working with the new assistant to get her up and running. Training will take some time but she is very optimistic.

Town Clerk – Lynne Girouard

Agenda Action Item “D “

Lynn Girouard, Town Clerk, stated she has been working with the Sturbridge Host Hotel to hold the Town Elections.

- The new polling location would be located at The Sturbridge Host Hotel 366 Main Street starting with the Presidential Primary on Tuesday March 5, 2024. No such change would have a disparate, adverse impact on access to the polls on the basis of race, national origin, disability, income or age.
- If approved by the Board of Selectmen, Secretary of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts William Francis Galvin. A copy of this report will be placed at the office of the Town Clerk and will be posted on the Town of Sturbridge’s website.
- When the new polling place has been approved, the board of registrars shall post on the municipal website and the Sturbridge Town Hall a description of the polling place and shall notify voters by using the reverse 911 and noted in the census mailing.

Consideration and possible action on the Board of Selectmen’s approval for the new polling location to be at The Sturbridge Host Hotel located at 366 Main Street Sturbridge starting with the Presidential Primary on Tuesday, March 5, 2024.

Motion: To approve the new polling location to be at The Sturbridge Host Hotel located at 366 Main Street Sturbridge starting with the Presidential Primary on Tuesday, March 5, 2024 as presented by the Town Clerk.

By: Selectman Blanchard

2nd: Vice Chair Kaitbenski

Vote: 4-0-0 (Selectman Volpe absent)

Action Items:

- A. Consideration and possible action on a one-day liquor license application for John Samek / Hardwick Vineyard & Winery, LLC for the Sturbridge Harvest Festival on the Town Common on October 14, 2023 from 10:00a.m. to 5:00p.m. and October 15, 2023 from 11:00a.m. to 4:00p.m.

Motion: To approve one-day liquor license application for John Samek / Hardwick Vineyard & Winery, LLC for the Sturbridge Harvest Festival on the Town Common on October 14, 2023 from 10:00a.m. to 5:00p.m. and October 15, 2023 from 11:00a.m. to 4:00p.m.

By: Selectman Blanchard

2nd: Vice Chair Kaitbenski

Vote: 4-0-0 (Selectman Volpe absent)

- B. Consideration and possible action on a Transient Vendor License for Wendy Collins on October 1, 2023 from 10:00a.m. to 3:00p.m. at the Doll, Bear and Miniature show at the Sturbridge Host Hotel.

Motion: To approve the Transient Vendor License for Wendy Collins on October 1, 2023 from 10:00a.m. to 3:00p.m. at the Doll, Bear and Miniature show at the Sturbridge Host Hotel.

By: Vice Chair Kaitbenski

2nd: Chair Goodwin

Vote: 4-0-0 (Selectman Volpe absent)

- C. Consideration and possible action on the appointment of Eli Garrett, Mike Dobos and Nate Lane as Associate Members to the Trails Committee.

Motion: To approve the appointment of Eli Garrett, Mike Dobos and Nate Lane as Associate Members to the Trails Committee

By: Selectman Blanchard

2nd: Chair Goodwin

Vote: 4-0-0 (Selectman Volpe absent)

Old Business:

17 Old Hamilton Road E1 pump repair charges in the amount of \$111.78.

- Chair Goodwin had an issue with the resident being billed a year later.
- Administrator Grimm stated this was not billed a year later the work was performed on April 26, 2023 and billed on June 28, 2023.
- Selectman Dowling understands this was an emergency but the resident should have been told upfront that if the work is done after hours that he was going to be charged overtime, or he should have been given the option to have the area cleaned up and have the workers come back during regular business hours at no additional charge.
- Vice Chair Kaitbenski wanted to know what the work was did they have to clear out the E1 Pump or fix the pump.
- Administrator Grimm stated the work was to fix the pump that the resident had to clear the area to make the pump accessible to the workers.
- Selectman Dowling said if the resident had the area cleared out during regular business hours he would not have been charged. She wants to know was this resident told upfront that he was going to be charged overtime to do the work after hours. Was the resident given the option of not using the pump and having the work done the next business day? She feels the resident should be reimbursed for the overtime charges.
- Vice Chair Kaitbenski stated that if you have an E1 Pump you are required to keep it clear and accessible.
- Selectman Blanchard stated Mr. Marr notified the Town during working hours.

- Administrator Grimm said the Town went out after they were notified to do the repair, the area was not cleared for them to access the pump. Mr. Marr was advised he had to clear the area in order for the work to be done. Once Mr. Marr cleared the area he notified the Town which was after normal business hours which is why he was charged the over-time charge.

Motion: To refund the overtime charges at 17 Old Hamilton Road

By: Selectman Dowling

2nd: Jamie Goodwin

Vote: 2-2-0 (tie vote motion fails) (Selectman Volpe absent)

Administrator Grimm wanted to make residents aware that if they have an E1 Pump it is to be clear and accessible. She will notify Shane Moody, Veolia and make sure they are advising residents that they may be charged for overtime if the Town has to come back for repairs due to the pump not being cleared.

Chair Goodwin suggested that when the next round of bills are sent out that we place a gentle reminder with the billing statements indicating the E1 pump areas are to always remain clear and accessible.

Selectman Blanchard asked how the new Center Office Building Pool Clerk Receptionists position is working out.

Administrator Grimm stated that she is receiving positive feedback from staff and residents.

Administrator Grimm indicated she would update the special projects spreadsheet on the Town web site to keep residents up to date on the status of ongoing projects.

Selectman Dowling requested that Administrator Grimm when posting regarding donations for the homeless families in Sturbridge to please indicate to contact the Town Administrator regarding donations.

New Business:

No New Business

Correspondence

- Public Notice Department of Environmental Protection Waterways Regulation Program- Permittee, Virginia Rice Roscioli at 274 Big Alum.
- Email from Susan F. Holdner commending the Town on the Town Wide Yard Sale list.

- Selectman Dowling received an email from residents on Old Farm Road on when they can provide input on the proposed antenna.

Approval of Minutes

Citizen's Forum

Adjourn:

Motion: To adjourn

By: Selectman Blanchard

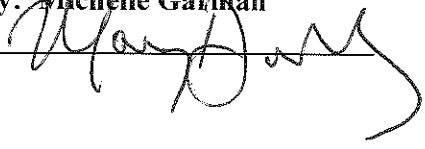
2nd: Chair Goodwin

Vote: 4-0-0 (Selectman Volpe absent)

The meeting adjourned at 7:31 p.m.

Minutes prepared by: Michelle Garman

Clerk of the Board:



Date signed:

Oct 2 '23