

January 2, 2018

**Board of Selectmen
Minutes
January 2, 2018**

Present: Mary Blanchard, Chairman
Mary Dowling, Clerk
Priscilla Gimas, Vice-Chair
Michael Suprenant
Craig Moran
Leon Gaumond, Jr., Town Administrator
Colleen King, Administrative Assistant

Absent: None

The Chairman M. Blanchard called the meeting to order at 6:02 p.m.

Clerk, M. Dowling read the following:

Motion: To enter Executive Session pursuant to GL c. 30A, s. 21(a)(6) to discuss the HEAL Pilot Agreement for proposed medical marijuana facility at 660 Main Street, Sturbridge and discuss Police Chief, Thomas Ford, non-union personnel negotiations. by M. Dowling.

2nd: by P. Gimas.

Roll Call Vote: C. Moran: YES; P. Gimas: YES; M. Suprenant: YES; M. Dowling: YES; YES; M. Blanchard: YES;

Open Session

The Selectmen reconvened in open session at 7:02 p.m. M. Blanchard noted the meeting was being recorded by the Worcester Telegram & Gazette. M. Blanchard asked that Public Service Announcements be held off until later in the meeting.

Pledge of Allegiance

The Board members stood for the pledge.

Public Hearing: Altruist Brewing Company, LLC, 559 Main Street - Change in Beneficial Interest Partner

M. Dowling read the public hearing notice. Nancy Ferreira-Bixby and Robert Bixby were introduced. Altruist Brewing Company manager Nancy Ferreira-Bixby had submitted an application to ABCC for a change (addition) in beneficial interest partner. The new partner John (Chris) Mancini was not able to attend tonight's meeting as planned.

Motion: To approve the Change of Beneficial Interest for Altruist Brewing Company as presented by M. Dowling

2nd: by M. Suprenant

All in favor. Passed 5-0.

Public Service Announcements

M. Blanchard read invitation to the Annual MIIA Meeting & Luncheon on January 19-20 in Boston. She and M. Suprenant will be attending along with Town Administrator, L. Gaumond.

M. Blanchard informed residents of Sturbridge Ice Races beginning on January 7th and continuing each Sunday through the end of February) at the Hamilton Rod & Gun Club.

M. Blanchard informed residents of The Friends of Sturbridge Trails 5th Annual Meeting on January 16 at 7:00 p.m. to be held at the Publick House.

January 2, 2018

Appointment of Police Officer: Scott Crevier

Police Chief Ford introduced Scott Crevier to the Board members. Scott is a graduate of the CT State Police Academy. He has served as a detective with the State Police Major Crimes Unit and as a member of the CT State Police Tactical Unit. He has a B.A. in Criminal Justice. He is an EMT with Union, CT. A full backgrounds check has been completed.

Motion: To concur with the appointment of Scott Crevier to the Sturbridge Police Department as a Police Officer effective January 9, 018 at a rate of pay of \$30.01/hour. by: M. Suprenant

2nd: by: C. Moran

Vote: All in Favor. Passed 5-0

Escape Estates, Inc., 537 Main Street, Sturbridge – Sewer-Water line discussion

Andre Cormier, representing Escape Estates, appeared before the board members to discuss update information on the sewer extension plans. Mr. Cormier explained that although town water is desirable versus wells, it is much more expensive; three times the expense of proposed wells and cisterns. Mr. Cormier would like the Town to consider an agreement of supplying the materials needs for the water line and hydrants and the developers will provide free labor to including re-paving.

M. Blanchard cited comments from the DPW director of his concern of elevated zinc levels. The subdivision must still meet the permit requirements on this by providing a sample; which has not been done yet. M. Blanchard stated at this time she is not in favor of the proposed agreement based on the DPW Director's comments and concerns and would like to have specific costs and testing results available. Mr. Cormier stated he can provide a sample and any undesirable minerals can be filtered out. M. Suprenant stated that he is aware of a resident of Stallion Hill that has zinc, copper and lead in their well system and further study needs to be done to protect the Town residents. C. Moran asked about the cost for drilling wells. Mr. Cormier responded approximately \$500k for 45 homes which is one third the cost of town water line connection.

Town Administrator's Update

Conflict of Interest Law Certification: Selectmen who received the Town Clerk's communication need to sign the certificate after completing the training and return to the Town Clerk.

Reconsideration for Plowing Acorn Lane: Randy Bercume of Acorn Lane spoke to the Selectmen requesting reconsideration for plowing Acorn Lane in the interim of waiting for Town Meeting approval of the street. He cited a Town Bylaw, Section 6.34 that states a private road in a current subdivision may be plowed provided the road has been prepared by the DPW Director and is awaiting the formality of a Town acceptance. Mr. Bercume also spoke of the listing of public and private roads in Town and of the 91 private roads; 48 of them are plowed.

Motion: To reconsider the previously voted against request to plow Acorn Lane during the interim until Town Meeting approval of street. by: P. Gimas

2nd: by M. Blanchard

All in favor. Passed 5-0.

Discussion continued regarding whether a hold harmless letter should be issued. C. Moran stated that the Town does not know the boundaries of the subdivision property. Mr. Bercume stated that markers were put up and DPW Director Greg Morse visited the site several times to view the marked boundary areas of the road. M. Suprenant states that current subdivision rules are that the developer is responsible for plowing a private unaccepted development.

The discussion went to an amended motion on not requiring the hold harmless letter clause.

Amended Motion: To plow Acorn Lane pending Special Town Meeting approval of street and not including a hold harmless letter from the DPW. by: M. Dowling

2nd: by P. Gimas

Vote: M. Suprenant & C. Moran opposed. Passed 3-2 vote

January 2, 2018

Appointment of Senior Center Study Committee Member

L. Gaumond asked for the concurrence of the appointment of Rebecca Mimeault to the Senior Center Study Committee.

Motion: To approve the appointment of Rebecca Mimeault to the Senior Center Study Committee. **by: P. Gimas**

2nd by: M. Suprenant

All in Favor. Passed 5-0

Old Business

Leadmine Mountain Sign(s)

P. Gimas requested our signage be looked at for misspelling of Mountain (spelled incorrectly as "mountian").

Also stated the entrance is not clear for 911 emergency calls/locater. L. Gaumond will look into this.

New Business

Evaluations

L. Gaumond provided to the Selectmen a Self-Evaluation. Requested Board member evaluations are due by January 18.

Capital Committee Member Appointment

L. Gaumond stated that the Capital Committee had our previous Fire Chief's name and he would like to replace it with Chief John Grasso.

Motion: To appoint Fire Chief to the Capital Committee. **by: M. Suprenant.**

2nd by: P. Gimas

All in Favor. Passed 5-0

Correspondence

M. Dowling noted the Town received a letter sent by the DEP to resident on McGilpin Road regarding well water study.

Approval of December 11, 2017 Minutes

Motion: To approve the minutes of December 11, 2017, as amended. **by: P. Gimas**

2nd by: M. Suprenant

Vote: Passed 4-0 1 Abstaining (C. Moran)

Citizen's Forum

There were no comments from the public.

Open Public Session: Recommendation for Termination - Melissa Beauchemin, Senior Center Director

Melissa Beauchemin appeared before the Board and requested to be part of an open public session instead of the Executive Session (pursuant to G.L., ch.30A, s. 21(a)(1) posted on the agenda.

Ms. Beauchemin appeared before the Board along with her husband John to detail her account of the events leading to the Town Administrator's recommendation of her termination as Senior Center Director.

L. Gaumond opened up the discussion by reading from his written statement the details of the entire matter from initial discovery of a missing vintage corner cabinet. On November 6, 2017, a meeting took place with the Town Accountant Chris Geraghty and Finance Director Barbara Barry. During an internal audit of purchases from fiscal year 2017, it was discovered that a vintage corner cabinet, purchased with Senior Center gift funds in September 2016, appeared to be missing. The Town Accountant stated M. Beauchemin was not able to locate a hutch or the vintage corner cabinet. After some time passed, the Town Accountant received a call from M. Beauchemin stating that a computer was found and needed to be put on his updated list. On December 1, 2017, L. Gaumond met with M. Beauchemin about the missing furniture. M. Beauchemin stated she was unsure of the exact titles of furniture but confirmed that the vintage corner cabinet was moved behind the storage of wheelchairs due to recent water damage in the senior center basement. L. Gaumond discussed these statements to the Town Accountant and Finance Director and they stated her responses were inconsistent with what was told to the Town Accountant. On December 12, 2017, L. Gaumond met again with M. Beauchemin regarding the furniture. M. Beauchemin confessed that the furniture was at her house the entire time and stated she did not know why she didn't tell L. Gaumond or the Town Accountant when previously asked. She cited personal difficulties in her life. She then stated that the cabinet has since been moved to the Senior Center. L. Gaumond then asked for M. Beauchemin's keys and placed her on Administrative Leave and stated that he would be recommending her termination to the Board of Selectmen. On December 22, 2017, L. Gaumond sent a certified letter to M. Beauchemin notifying her of his intention to seek termination for the appearance of misappropriating town property and keeping the

January 2, 2018

property at her home for over a year and misrepresenting the situation to the Town Accountant and Town Administrator. M. Beauchemin responded by requesting her appeal, per Charter Section 6-3, to the Board of Selectmen.

M. Beauchemin then addressed the Board with her account of what transpired over this period of time. M. Beauchemin explained that she had purchased many items over time at a local consignment shop close to home for the purpose of furnishing the Senior Center. She then asked her husband John to pick up and deliver the consignment furniture, which included the cabinet, to their home temporarily, with the plan of delivering items to the Senior Center at a later time. She then stated that her husband had become ill and the plan for delivering the furniture did not happen for a long period of time as the family dealt with her husband's cancer diagnosis. M. Blanchard asked why she did not contact the DPW or another department employee to deliver the items to the Senior Center. M. Beauchemin stated she did not know such assistance was available.

M. Beauchemin stated she received a text from the Town Administrator at 5:59 a.m. on the 12th of December saying "*Melissa can you stop by my office this a.m.*" She stated that she realized about the forgotten cabinet in her home when L. Gaumond met with her that morning about the furniture. She stated that L. Gaumond, to her surprise, had given her administrative leave the following day after their meeting.

P. Gimás stated that she felt the proposed punishment did not fit the crime. She cited the Town utilizing a progressive discipline measure with past employees that did not include termination. P. Gimás further stated that M. Beauchemin has been employed by the Town for six years and has not had any issues in the past. P. Gimás stated she will not support termination as it is an extreme reaction in her opinion and the Board needs to be more compassionate especially in light of M. Beauchemin's husband's cancer diagnosis. M. Blanchard stated that in reference to past progressive discipline matters; the circumstances were different, and none involved a department head.

M. Suprenant announced he had filed a conflict of interest disclosure with the Town Clerk as he felt he has had a friendly relationship with M. Beauchemin over the years. M. Suprenant stated to P. Gimás that he thought she was also a friend to M. Beauchemin and should provide a disclosure. P. Gimás objected and stated she does not have a personal friendship nor does she socialize with M. Beauchemin; she has known M. Beauchemin only in her role as liaison to the Senior Center. M. Suprenant reiterated that he felt P. Gimás could not vote impartially and should reconsider recusing herself.

M. Dowling stated that she too filed a conflict of interest disclosure based on her relationship with M. Beauchemin prior to her appointment as Director. M. Dowling stated that her child and M. Beauchemin's child attended school together in the past and they knew each other and she held her in high regard; although they are not close friends and do not socialize.

M. Dowling asked M. Beauchemin regarding whether she and her husband were the only people who visited the consignment shop in the past and why the delivery of furniture could not have been from the shop to the Senior Center instead of ending up in her home in between. M. Beauchemin responded that there were times a co-worker would be with her and her husband when items were purchased. She also stated that there were occasions when furniture delivery would go from shop to Senior Center depending on the size of the loads and the timing of the pick-ups, etc. M. Beauchemin could not remember exact dates and details regarding purchases and deliveries except that her husband would deliver larger items to the Senior Center with his truck.

Back and forth discussion and questioning proceeded in the meeting. M. Blanchard stated that she felt M. Beauchemin was discrediting the Town Administrator's account of details and that the Board needs to determine the inconsistencies between M. Beauchemin and the Town Administrator on what was said at the first and second meetings. M. Suprenant stated the issue for him is the act of lying and covering up the lie more than the keeping of the cabinet. M. Blanchard stated that L. Gaumond's notes of her response to the question of the whereabouts of the cabinet was that the cabinet was 'always there' [the Senior Center]. C. Moran stated that he initially was unsure about whether he would support M. Beauchemin's termination. He wanted a Plan B type of discipline but has since changed his mind. He stated that M. Beauchemin cannot provide specific dates or details and there is no corroboration between her verbal account and L. Gaumond's written notes. He feels there is no working relationship between her and the Town Administrator anymore.

January 2, 2018

M. Dowling asked if there is a staff member that could help corroborate M. Beauchemin's accounts of pick up and deliveries. M. Dowling also stated that M. Beauchemin seems to be denying L. Gaumond's account of what happened and is not admitting responsibility in using poor judgment in her past responses. M. Dowling stated Town Counsel should perhaps conduct interviews with staff members from the Senior Center as to dates and other information as a follow up to this meeting before coming to a decision but that the issues at hand are serious enough that M. Beauchemin should remain on administrative leave for another two weeks.

L. Gaumond stated that if a motion for further investigation passes; he will initiate an unpaid administrative leave effective 1/3/18. Personnel bylaws do not state whether an employee can remain on paid leave during appeal process.

Motion: To recommend a full investigation by Town Counsel and to keep Melissa Beauchemin on administrative leave during the investigation process; by: C. Moran

P. Gimas 2nd

Motion remained on table

Town Counsel representative Brian Maser from KP Law stood introduced himself to the Board and informed the Board members that Melissa Beauchemin had signed the Employment Settlement Agreement and had recently handed it over to him, indicating her willingness to resign her position. M. Beauchemin stated that she was tired and wanted to get this matter over with and did not wish to proceed any further.

Motion: To withdraw his support for the Town Administrator's recommendation to terminate Melissa Beauchemin as Senior Center Director upon her immediate resignation. by M. Suprenant

2nd by: M. Blanchard

Vote: Passed 5-0

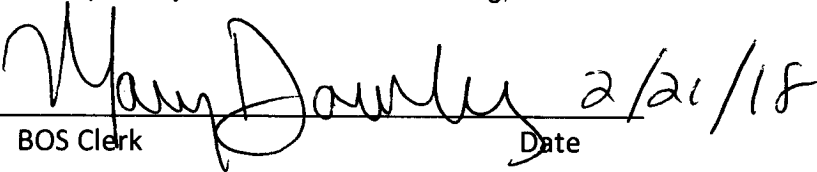
Motion: To adjourn the meeting. by: M. Suprenant

2nd: By: M. Dowling

Vote: All in Favor. Passed 5-0

The Meeting was adjourned at 10:05 p.m.

Respectfully submitted: Colleen J. King, Administrative Assistant

 2/21/18
BOS Clerk Date