

January 4, 2016

**BOARD OF SELECTMEN
MINUTES
JANUARY 4, 2016**

Present: Mary Blanchard, Chairman
Priscilla Gimas
Mary Dowling
Craig Moran
Michael Suprenant
Leon Gaumond, Jr., Town Administrator

The Chairman called the meeting to order at 6:15 p.m. following the Pledge of Allegiance.

**MOTION: To convene in executive session under MGL Chapter 30A, §21(a), #3:
To discuss strategy with respect to collective bargaining; to
reconvene in open session, by P. Gimas.**

2nd: C. Moran

**Roll call vote: C. Moran in favor; M. Suprenant in favor; P. Gimas in favor;
M. Blanchard in favor; M. Dowling in favor.**

The Board convened in executive session at 6:15 p.m.

The Board reconvened in open session at 6:24 p.m.

Public Service Announcements

M. Dowling wished a happy, healthy New Year to all residents.

M. Blanchard said that the skating rink at the Town Common is up but is currently closed. When the rink is open, it will be announced on the Town's website.

Minutes

**MOTION: To approve the minutes of November 7, 2015 as amended, by P.
Gimas.**

2nd: M. Suprenant

Vote: All in favor.

Route 20 Resurfacing Project

L. Gaumont said that the Town had received notice from MassDOT asking for public comment on the proposed Route 20 project. He noted that there will be a public hearing on January 12th in Brimfield. He noted that it affects the roadway from New Holland Road and ends around Galileo Drive, and proposes going from four lanes to two lanes, adding left turn areas and bicycle lanes. Greg Morse, DPW Director, provided his comments, expressing concern about the project and how it will affect the daily commute in the center of Sturbridge/Fiskdale. He noted that the corridor is backing up in the two lane section of Route 20 between Cedar Street and Riverview Avenue in Sturbridge during the morning and evening commutes, as other abutting towns grow in size and utilize the road. He stated that other issues related to high traffic are the annual Brimfield Flea Markets, and heavy volume when the Turnpike is backed up during holidays or accidents. He felt that this proposal could be a little less troublesome if Brimfield had its own exit off of the Turnpike to reduce Sturbridge's burden. He suggested maintaining all four lanes while adding the proposed bike lanes to the scope of the existing project.

C. Moran said that the project would impact the flow of traffic during flea market weeks. He said that the traffic situation would become worse, backing up to Auburn. He suggested that people heading to Brimfield take the Palmer exit off the Turnpike.

L. Gaumont noted that there will be more changes proposed in Brimfield. There would be one lane on Route 20 from Galileo to Brimfield, left turn pockets and a bike lane.

P. Gimas said that the overall impact during flea market weeks will be horrendous. M. Blanchard said that the state explained that the existing lanes are too narrow. P. Gimas suggested that L. Gaumont explain to MassDOT the concerns of the Board regarding traffic that is too heavy now, and what would happen during flea market weeks, unless the state wants to build a bypass road.

M. Suprenant said that a woman had died of a heart attack because in the single lane section there was not enough access to get to her in time. He noted that hundreds of thousands of people attend the Brimfield flea markets, with a large volume of traffic. He did not think it was a good idea for the state to cut down the capacity of that roadway. P. Gimas added that it would hurt Sturbridge businesses, and would not be good for the community from an economic standpoint.

C. Moran said that if Route 20 is reduced to one lane, if an accident occurs there would be no room for emergency vehicles to get to the site. He felt it would be a recipe for disaster.

L. Gaumond said that he would prepare a letter to MassDOT indicating the Board's concerns. M. Dowling suggested that L. Gaumond indicate the solidarity of the Selectmen on this issue.

Amy Dunn, 22 Draper Woods Road, informed the Board that she commutes on Route 20 every day, and reducing it to one lane would create a nightmare for commuters. As a cyclist, she would never ride her bike in a bike lane on Route 20, as the fast moving traffic makes it too dangerous. L. Gaumond agreed to include Ms. Dunn's comments in the letter to MassDOT.

Review of the Special Town Meeting Warrant

L. Gaumond submitted to the Board a draft warrant for the February 22, 2016 Special Town Meeting.

Article #31: Senior Center Feasibility Study

MOTION: To place and support Article #31, by P. Gimas.

2nd: C. Moran

Vote: All in favor.

Article #32: Strategic Planting Plan – Town Common

MOTION: To place and support Article #32, by P. Gimas.

2nd: M. Dowling

Vote: Four in favor; C. Moran opposed.

Article #33: Fleet Vehicle Purchase

M. Blanchard said that this should go through the process of review by the Capital Planning Committee, and noted that there are other vehicles available. L. Gaumond said that this was more of an immediate need basis, and said that the Capital Planning Committee only deals with requests on an annual basis. He noted that needs come up during the year that deserve to be looked at with fresh eyes. C. Moran said that the Fire Department needs a vehicle. M. Dowling agreed with L. Gaumond that certain things should not be limited to going through the Capital Planning Committee process. She noted that there are only a few months before the Annual Town Meeting.

M. Blanchard said that it does not need to go to the Finance Committee before it comes to the Board of Selectmen. She said that the Capital Planning Committee prioritizes the requests. M. Dowling said that Special Town Meetings are to address immediate

needs, so the Board should keep that flexibility in mind, and things should be looked at on a case by case basis.

MOTION: To not place Article #33 on the warrant, by P. Gimas.

2nd: C. Moran

Vote: All in favor.

Article #34: Transfer of Funds to Capital Projects Fund

MOTION: To place and support Article #34, by M. Suprenant.

2nd: P. Gimas

Vote: All in favor.

Article #35: Hazmat Testing – 8 Brookfield Road

MOTION: To place and support Article #35, by M. Suprenant.

2nd: P. Gimas

Vote: All in favor.

Article #36: Costs Associated with Southbridge Landfill Project

M. Blanchard felt that \$50,000 is a lot of money, and said that she would not support this. She noted that well testings are mandated by DEP.

M. Suprenant asked how much the Board of Health anticipated spending on engineering consulting services. L. Gaumond said that he had requested a breakdown of costs from the Board of Health, and the basic breakdown was approximately \$10,000 for consulting services to review data and \$20,000 for potential litigation on each of the sites (one for Southbridge, one for Charlton). M. Suprenant said that the Town needs to review the data and have it analyzed so that the Board of Selectmen and Board of Health would have the information necessary to evaluate the landfill.

M. Dowling said that a lot of Sturbridge residents have expressed concern about the landfill expansion. She suggested that the Board of Health Agent and the Chairman of the Board of Health meet with the Board of Selectmen to explain their reasons and the breakdown of costs.

C. Moran expressed concern about the cost of possible litigation; if an incident occurs, the Town would need to come up with the money.

It was the consensus of the Board to hold action on this article pending further information.

Article #37: Permitting Software Migration to Accela Civic Platform

L. Gaumond explained that this request is for \$46,000 from free cash for updating permitting software to the Accela Civic Platform to be able to share information with all Town departments. A few years ago the Town acquired GeoTMS permitting software through a statewide procurement process. This company had some difficulties, and was bought out by Accela. He noted that the Town would not be buying a new system, but updating the current system.

C. Moran suggested looking around for another system that would tie in to the existing system for less money. He asked what software other towns are using.

MOTION: To place and support Article #37, by M. Dowling.

2nd: P. Gimás

Vote: Four in favor; C. Moran opposed.

Article #38: Shelving for Center Office Building

MOTION: To place and support Article #38, by P. Gimás.

2nd: M. Suprenant

Vote: All in favor.

Article #39: Unpaid Bills of a Previous Fiscal Year

MOTION: To place and support Article #39, by P. Gimás.

2nd: C. Moran

Vote: All in favor.

Article #40: Feasibility Study – Expansion of Sewer Service

MOTION: To place and support Article #40, by P. Gimás.

2nd: M. Suprenant

Vote: All in favor.

Article #41: Transfer of Funds – Chemicals and Testing

MOTION: To place and support Article #41, by P. Gimás.

2nd: M. Suprenant

Vote: All in favor.

Article #42: Funds Transfer – Burgess Elementary School Project

MOTION: To place and support Article #42, by P. Gimás.

2nd: C. Moran

Vote: All in favor.

Article #43: Transfer of Funds – Water Miscellaneous Expenses

MOTION: To place and support Article #43, by P. Gimas.

2nd: M. Suprenant

Vote: All in favor.

Article #44: Transfer of Funds – Sewer Miscellaneous Expenses

MOTION: To place and support Article #44, by P. Gimas.

2nd: M. Suprenant

Vote: All in favor.

Artificial Turf Project at Tantasqua Regional High School

L. Gaumond had received notification from Tantasqua to install artificial turf on some fields at the High School. They intend to issue debt to cover some of the cost of the project. Under Mass. General Law they cannot issue debt until 60 days after the School Committee vote so that any town could hold a Town Meeting to express disapproval of the project.

L. Gaumond said that funds from the School Choice Revolving Fund and their Summer Camps Revolving Fund will be used.

P. Gimas expressed concern about artificial turf reaching 140 degrees on hot days, causing dehydration and heat stroke for players on the field. She noted that irrigation would only cool it down for about 20 minutes. She asked what would happen when Sturbridge has a water ban in effect. She added that the turf would last about eight years. She asked what turf protection measures and maintenance practices the school district would have in place, and whether chemical disinfectants would be used. She stressed the need for more information.

M. Dowling said that her son has played baseball on artificial turf, and there has never been a situation where the team has been unable to play because the turf was too hot. She said that there is less maintenance cost with artificial turf. She said that because the turf is made from tires, there is some concern about carcinogens, so her only concern would be about health. M. Suprenant said that there is documentation about increased injuries on turf fields. C. Moran asked about Sturbridge's share of the debt. M. Blanchard said that there would be no debt, as the School District will use funds from their School Choice Fund and the District's summer sports fund, and it would not affect assessments to the district towns.

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A concerned mother informed the Board that her children play sports, and expressed concern about carcinogens in artificial turf. She suggested asking the towns of Auburn and Grafton about their experience with the turf.

L. Gaumond said that the School Superintendent would be willing to come in for a special meeting with the Board of Selectmen to answer any questions or concerns. It was the consensus of the Board to meet with the School Department on Wednesday, January 13th at 6:00 p.m. to discuss the proposed artificial turf.

Board of Health – Southbridge Landfill Project

Linda Cocalis, Chairman of the Board of Health, appeared before the Board. She informed the Board that every town in the district will have their own attorney present during the hearings. She has been monitoring the Southbridge and Charlton Board of Health meetings. She said that the cost (\$50,000) is based on what it had cost the Town the last time they went through this process in 2008. She added that the process won't be as long or extensive this time, but she is planning for a worst case scenario. L. Gaumond had suggested that it be on the Special Town Meeting warrant.

L. Cocalis said that the Board of Health is not allowed to represent itself at the hearings for the two sites. She estimates it will cost \$20,000 for legal representation at each hearing, and \$10,000 to hire a consulting firm to help determine the impacts on the Town of Sturbridge.

C. Moran asked whether any baseline testing had been done to determine if any contaminants have been migrating into Sturbridge. L. Cocalis said that no testing has been done. C. Moran suggested building a baseline of testing. L. Cocalis said that the property is owned by Casela, so Sturbridge would need their permission to do testing at the site. She noted that \$50,000 has been set aside in an escrow account to pay for it; also, DEP could include it as part of their testing program.

M. Suprenant stressed the need for more data to ensure that the Town of Sturbridge is protected. He felt that it would be an appropriate use of funds to hire a consulting firm to act on the Town's behalf.

C. Moran suggested that a substantial bond be provided to protect the Town of Sturbridge.

M. Dowling said that she would support the article and not depend upon what is budgeted for legal services. She suggested that the Board earmark money now for legal representation at the hearings.

MOTION: To place and support Article #36 in the amount of \$30,000, by M. Dowling.

2nd: P. Gimás

Vote: Four in favor; M. Blanchard opposed.

M. Dowling suggested adding the wording: "Including, but not limited to, representation at site assignment hearings."

L. Cocalis said that she would work with L. Gaumond to find an engineering consulting firm.

Updates to the Personnel Classification Plan

L. Gaumond has been working with the Personnel Committee to piece together the personnel processes and their recent actions. He brought forward to the Board the job descriptions and grades for the Conservation Agent (Grade 10), Public Health Agent (Grade 10), Public Access Scheduler Clerk (Grade 2), Production Coordinator (Grade 8) and Public Access Coordinator (Grade 6).

MOTION: To accept and approve the job descriptions and grades as presented by the Town Administrator, by P. Gimás.

2nd: C. Moran

Vote: All in favor.

Town Administrator's Update

- **Designation of Voting Member for the Worcester County Selectmen's Association**

MOTION: To nominate Craig Moran as the voting member, by M. Dowling.

2nd: P. Gimás

Vote: All in favor.

MOTION: To nominate Mary Dowling as the alternate, by M. Suprenant.

2nd: C. Moran

Vote: All in favor.

- **Acceptance of Gifts to Timeless Treasures Gift Account**

L. Gaumond asked the Board to accept the gift of \$500 to the Timeless Treasures Sales Gift Account on behalf of the Senior Center.

MOTION: So moved, by M. Dowling.

2nd: P. Gimas

Vote: All in favor.

- **Announcement of Bond Rating**

L. Gaumond informed the Board that a successful bond sale had been held. The final amount for the Burgess Elementary School Project was bonded (\$1,954,000), and outstanding bonds were refunded from a 2006 Bond Issue. The two projects that were refunded were the Acquisition of the Old Sturbridge Village Land and the Acquisition of the Heins Property.

The Town received seven bids, with the low bidder being Fidelity Capital Markets with TIC (True Interest Cost) of 1.9766.36%. Thanks to the work of the Finance Department and the approval of the Board of Selectmen, the Town received a premium on these bonds in the amount of \$255,531.85. On the advanced refunding, the savings to the Town for the CPA Project debt is \$135,923 over the next 11 years.

L. Gaumond said that the Town received a very good rating from Standard and Poor's of AA+. Standard and Poor's said that the Town of Sturbridge:

- 1) Has a very strong economy
- 2) Has very strong management highlighted by strong financial policies recently reaffirmed and voted by the Selectmen, including the new investment policies
- 3) Has strong budgetary performance resulting in positive operating results
- 4) Has very strong budgetary flexibility due in part to the available fund balance
- 5) Has very strong liquidity with available cash at nearly 24% of governmental fund expenditures.

- **Vote to authorize the Chairman to Sign the District Local Assistance Grant**

L. Gaumond asked the Board to authorize the Chairman to sign the District Local Technical Assistance Grant to assist the Town in amending the Multiple Dwelling and Open Space Residential Development bylaws.

MOTION: To authorize the Chairman to sign the District Local Technical Assistance Grant, by P. Gimas.

2nd: M. Suprenant

Vote: All in favor.

- **Request from the Board of Assessors that the Board of Selectmen vote to accept the Real and Personal Property Valuation Program agreements**

MOTION: To approve the agreement with Bishop and Associates, by P. Gimas.
2nd: C. Moran
Vote: All in favor.

MOTION: To approve the agreement with Real Estate Research Consultants, Inc., by P. Gimas.
2nd: C. Moran
Vote: All in favor.

Correspondence

M. Dowling read the correspondence list into the record.

Old Business

C. Moran asked about the status of the safety concern at the Highway Department. L. Gaumond said that he had spoken with Chief Ford, and they are working with DPW on that.

C. Moran asked about the status of ice damage precautions on the roof. L. Gaumond said that the Building Inspector will come to the next meeting, and could discuss it with the Board at that time.

P. Gimas asked about the status of the new roof at the Senior Center. L. Gaumond said that he would look into it.

P. Gimas asked about the status of Blue Wave. L. Gaumond said that he was supposed to have a conference call with them last week. Blue Wave will meet with the Board to discuss the matter at the next meeting. P. Gimas noted that Blue Wave had been vetted, but now Sun Edison is involved. She said that the primary reason that Blue Wave had been chosen was that they were the only one that did not have financial issues. She felt that the Town had been deceived. L. Gaumond did not think that Sun Edison would be part of it.

M. Suprenant said that it was the consensus of the Board to hold a public hearing on the recommended changes suggested by the Town Common Study Committee. He

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asked about the status of that. L. Gaumond said that a meeting had been scheduled for January 19th at 5:00 p.m. (before the Selectmen's meeting). Letters notifying the residents of the Town Common area of the meeting were mailed on January 4th.

M. Blanchard asked if there was any feedback regarding the ten town comparison list. M. Suprenant said that some concerns had been voiced at the meeting. He noted that a lot of towns near Boston were being used for comparison to Sturbridge. He suggested including Wilbraham and Belchertown, towns to the west of Sturbridge, for comparison. L. Gaumond said that he had looked at it from an EQV point of view, not a geographical point of view. He said that rural towns from the western part of the state did not compare from an economic standpoint. He assured the Board that the chosen towns are comparable to the Town of Sturbridge. C. Moran asked whether the bonds ratings of the towns had been considered. L. Gaumond said that a town's bond rating was one of the factors for comparison.

- **Vote to Approve Fire Contract**

MOTION: So moved, by P. Gimas.

2nd: C. Moran

Vote: All in favor.

New Business

M. Dowling reminded the Board of the Retreat on Saturday at the Publick House.

M. Blanchard asked the Selectmen to fill out the Town Administrator's evaluation form and submit it to her by January 15th. P. Gimas suggested sending it electronically. M. Blanchard asked L. Gaumond to submit a self-evaluation.

MOTION: To adjourn, by P. Gimas

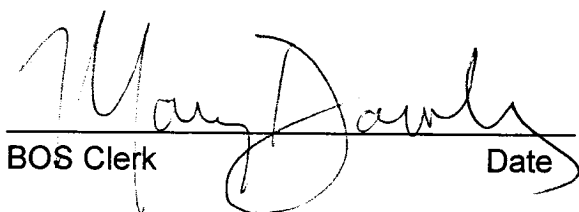
2nd: C. Moran

Vote: All in favor.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:08 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Judy Knowles


BOS Clerk _____ Date _____

3/7/16