

**Board of Selectmen
December 6, 2021
Town Hall
Veterans Memorial Hall, Sturbridge Town Hall
308 Main Street, Sturbridge, MA 01566**

Present:

Mary Blanchard, Chair
Selectman Chase Kaitbenski, Clerk
Selectman Ian Dunnigan
Selectman Jamie Goodwin

Absent

Mary Dowling, Vice Chair

Staff:

Jeff Bridges, Town Administrator

Chair Blanchard called meeting to order at 6:00p.m.

Chair Blanchard read the agenda.

Begin Public Session

The Selectmen led the Pledge of Allegiance.

Public Service Announcements

Chair Blanchard announced the Winter Tree Scavenger Hunt at Heins Farm starts December 1, 2021 through January 20, 2022. For additional information visit Conservation website.

Moment of Silence

For those affected by Covid-19

Department Reports:

Water and Sewer

Mr. Bridges stated Shane Moody, Chief Operator, was unable to attend the Board of Selectmen meeting. If the Board has any questions Butch Jackson, Director would be able to answer any questions.

Chair Blanchard asked how the Tank Project was coming along.

Mr. Jackson stated they suspended that project until spring 2022.

Town Administrator

Mr. Bridges stated VHB was hired by MassDOT to start the preliminary engineering on Rt. 20/Rt. 131 they have reached out regarding utility information in the corridor. Mr. Bridges stated there would be a public comment section and public sessions during the process that this is the preliminary phase to gather information.

Mr. Bridges stated the representative of ACD Telecom were in town. They met with the Fire Department, Police Department, Public Works and Schools to get some background information on the existing system.

Mr. Bridges stated there was additional item to the agenda for a Hawker and Peddler License.

Mr. Bridges advised the Board that one of the cars, a Ford Escape, is no longer operational.

Chair Blanchard requested to review the application for Hawker and Peddler License

Mr. Bridges advised the applicant was not at the meeting

Chair Blanchard advised we would put the application aside if the applicant arrives.

Old Business:

Mediation with Teamsters Local #170 (Sturbridge Firefighters)

Mr. Bridges advised that Chief Grasso and Jim Marks were able to come to a resolution on a mutually agreeable job description for the Deputy Chief position.

Chief Grasso thanked Mr. Bridges and Mr. Marks for their participation. Chief Grasso stated they were able to come to an agreement on some changes to the job description that were suggested by the Union. Once the description is approved Chief Grasso will draft a policy for the process similar to the one currently being used to promote a lieutenant.

Chair Blanchard stated she believed the Board had already approved a process.

Chief Grasso stated once they have the job description and applicants applying the applicants will then go through the assessment center to determine the applicant's qualifications. The function of the assessment center would be to rank the candidates and the top candidates will then be given to Chief Grasso without a numerical ranking from that a decision will be made as to whom the best fit for the department will be.

Chief Grasso respectfully asked the Board if there was a way to expedite the adoption of the job description there will be a thirty-day posting period for the position. Chief Grasso is hoping to have someone hired by February 2022.

Chair Blanchard stated she understands Chief Grasso and Mr. Bridges would like to expedite this process. However, she has never seen where employees have had input into a job description of their superiors. Chair Blanchard stated we have procedures and she expects the procedures to be followed. The Town Administrator presents a job description then it goes to Personnel Committee for review and finally to the Board of Selectmen for review and a vote. Chair Blanchard stated she is not going to vote in favor of the job description.

Selectman Goodwin stated he does not understand why this job description is not following standard procedures. Mr. Goodwin asked what has changed in the job description that was presented to the Board prior.

Mr. Bridges stated under certifications and licenses the description requires certain qualifications upfront and then a twenty-four (24) month period to complete certain qualifications.

Chair Blanchard stated this has to go to the Personal Committee and expedited before the next Board of Selectmen meeting.

Chair Blanchard asked if the Charter Review Committee has met yet.

Mr. Bridges stated their first meeting is December 7, 2021.

COVID-19 Update

Mr. Bridges stated the booster clinic was held at the Senior Center for forty-two people.

Mr. Bridges stated the Board approved the ARPA premium pay. Ashley Griffin was a full time dispatcher but changed to part time after the state of emergency \$3,000.00, Matthew Cole worked 841.5 hours the prorated amount is \$682.00, Michele Rosano worked 859 hours the prorated amount is \$696.00 and Marc Widing worked 683 hours the prorated amount is \$553.00.

Motion: To approve the ARPA premium pay for Ashley Griffin \$3,000.00, Matthew Cole \$682.00, Michele Rosano \$696.00 and Marc Widing \$553.00

By: Selectman Dunnigan

2nd: Selectman Kaitbenski

All in favor

Vote: 4-0-0 (Vice Chair Dowling absent)

Action Items:

Consideration and possible action on a memorandum of Agreement among the Massachusetts Department of Transportation and the Town of Sturbridge and the U.S.

Department of Transportation Federal Highway Administration Eastern Federal Lands Highway Division for the Design and Engineering services for the Grand Trunk Trail Project (revised).

Mr. Bridges stated we currently have an agreement with Eastern Federal Lands to administer the Grand Trunk Trail Project their overhead for engineering and administrative support is very expensive. In the discussion with Eastern Federal Lands, the Town of Sturbridge can take over the project, take the funds that have been allocated and save several thousands of dollars. What this agreement does is it turns the project over to the Town and the funds over to the Town. Mr. Bridges stated we would still have to engage an engineer to handle the bidding, inspections and all the necessary reporting.

Motion: To approve the agreement among the Massachusetts Department of Transportation and the Town of Sturbridge and the U.S. Department of Transportation Federal Highway Administration Eastern Federal Lands Highway Division for the Design and Engineering services for the Grand Trunk Trail Project (revised)

By: Selectman Goodwin

2nd: Selectman Kaitbenski

All in favor

Vote: 4-0-0 (Vice Chair Dowling absent)

Consideration and possible action on the rejection of bid(s) for the Riverlands Trail Project.

Mr. Bridges stated this project was previously bid on twice both bids were over budget. The Trails Committee has revised the scope of the project and is going to re-bid.

Motion: To reject the bid from H.M. Nunes & Sons Construction, Inc. for the Riverlands Trail Project

By: Selectman Kaitbenski

2nd: Selectman Goodwin

All in favor

4-0-0 (Vice Chair Dowling absent)

Consideration and possible action on a Second Amendment to an Agreement for Service Water and Wastewater Operations and Maintenance (snowplowing services)

Butch Jackson, DPW Director, stated the Town has a need for snowplow drivers the Town owns the trucks driven by the Water and Sewer department so it would make sense to have them plow for the Town.

Mr. Bridges stated the Town's attorney and Veolia attorney are still working on details of the arrangement. If the Board approves the Motion, it would be subject to the Town attorney's approval.

Motion: To approve the plow drivers at the rate of \$55.00 an hour subject to attorneys approval

By: Selectman Dunnigan

2nd: Selectman Goodwin

All in favor

4-0-0 (Vice Chair Dowling absent)

Consideration and possible action on the confirmation and appointment of Douglas Cutler as a full-time Firefighter/Paramedic with the Sturbridge Fire Department.

Chief Grasso stated Douglas Cutler is a Brookfield resident. He has been in public since 1994. Mr. Cutler previously worked in Law Enforcement, Fire Service and EMS. Mr. Cutler will receive training through Harrington Hospital and through the Fire House so that he will be able to work as a paramedic.

Motion: To confirm and appoint Douglas Cutler as a full-time Firefighter/Paramedic with the Sturbridge Fire Department starting salary at \$24.76 per hour.

By: Selectman Goodwin

2nd: Selectman Dunnigan

All in favor

4-0-0 (Vice Chair Dowling absent)

Consideration and possible action on the confirmation and appointment of Anthony Gianfriddo as a Call Firefighter with the Sturbridge Fire Department.

Chief Grasso stated Anthony Gianfriddo was not able to attend the meeting due to a work obligation. Mr. Gianfriddo is a Spencer resident and currently works part-time for the Spencer Fire Department and Pharmacy Technician at a local Hospital. Mr. Gianfriddo is a certified Firefighter I/II and EMT.

Motion: To confirm and appoint Anthony Gianfriddo as a Call Firefighter with the Sturbridge Fire Department starting salary at \$20.84 per hour.

By: Selectman Kaitbenski

2nd: Selectman Dunnigan

All in favor

4-0-0 (Vice Chair Dowling absent)

Consideration and possible action the acceptance of donations to the Sturbridge Senior Center.

Chair Blanchard stated the Senior Center received donations of five \$25.00 gift cards from Don Taft and the Quaboag and Quacumquasit Lake Association and twenty full turkey meals from Mary Lawless

Motion: To accept donations with thanks from Don Taft and the Quaboag and Quacumquasit Lake Association and Mary Lawless

By: Selectman Kaitbenski

2nd: Selectman Goodwin

All in favor

4-0-0 (Vice Chair Dowling absent)

Consideration and possible action on the confirmation and appointment of Andy Szumilas to equipment operator in the Sturbridge Department of Public Works.

Butch Jackson, DPW Director, stated Andy Szumilas has been with the Department of Public Works for four years and he is a long time Sturbridge resident. He has obtained a Class B, CDL and 2A Hoisting Engineer's license.

Motion: To confirm the appointment of Andy Szumilas to equipment operator in the Sturbridge Department of Public Works starting salary at \$25.97 per hour.

By: Selectman Goodwin

2nd: Selectman Dunnigan

All in favor

4-0-0 (Vice Chair Dowling absent)

Consideration and possible action on the hiring of temporary snow plow operators

Butch Jackson, DPW Director, stated we have three Town employees and if the need arose, he would like to be able to place an advertisement and hire temporary winter employees.

Motion: To approve Russel Chamberland as snowplow operator at the rate of \$20.03 per hour, Tony Crane as snowplow operator at the rate of \$20.03 per hour and Brian McRoy as snow plow operator at the rate of \$34.18

By: Selectman Kaitbenski

2nd: Selectman Dunnigan

All in favor

4-0-0 (Vice Chair Dowling absent)

Consideration and possible action on an additional allocation of \$1,000.00 of matching grant funds from the Town Administrator's budget to match a MIIA Grant for the purchase of Facilities Management Software.

Robyn Chrabascz, Facilities Manager, stated MIIA granted the Town \$9,000.00 not the full grant about of \$10,000.00. The Board previously authorized \$1,316.96 from the Town Administrator's matching grant funds budget. Ms. Chrabascz is requesting the Board to authorize an additional \$1,000.00 from the Town Administrator's matching grant funds budget.

Motion: To approve an additional allocation of \$1,000.00 of matching grant funds from the Town Administrator's budget to match a MIA Grant for the purchase of Facilities Management Software

By: Selectman Goodwin

2nd: Selectman Kaitbenski

All in favor

4-0-0 (Vice Chair Dowling absent)

New Business

Town Clerk – Polling Locations: 308 Main Street

Lynn Girouard, Town Clerk, stated the State of Massachusetts has denied the Sturbridge Worship Center as a polling location due to ADA compliance issues. Ms. Girouard stated the next Special Town Election on Monday, January 24, 2022 would be held at The Sturbridge Town Hall she is asking the Board to approve this as a temporary location until an adequate location is found for future elections

Motion: To approve The Sturbridge Town Hall located at 308 Main Street for the Special Election

By: Selectman Kaitbenski

2nd: Selectman Goodwin

All in favor

4-0-0 (Vice Chair Dowling absent)

Selectman Dunnigan stated he had a resident ask for an update on the Route 49 NBTA stock project that was proposed years ago. The resident wanted to know if there was an update to that project as it pertains to the new infrastructure monies.

Chair Blanchard said it was the East West Rail Plan and there will not be a stop near Route 49.

Correspondence

Selectman Kaitbenski read the correspondence

Approval of Minutes: October 28, 2021

No changes made to the minutes

Motion: To approve minutes as written

By: Selectman Kaitbenski

2nd: Selectman Goodwin

All in favor

4-0-0 (Vice Chair Dowling absent)

Approval of Minutes: November 15, 2021

Chair Blanchard had one correction on the first page after the Motion to recess the Public Session and move to Executive Session add Public Session

Motion: To approve as amended

By: Selectman Dunnigan

2nd: Selectman Goodwin

All in favor

4-0-0 (Vice Chair Dowling absent)

Citizen's Forum

Steve Zoto Walker Pond resident stated for the past couple of years the residents have been trying to get their water tested which appears to be contaminated arsenic. There is a program the residents could apply for to have town water run to their homes. In order for the residents to qualify for the program, they would first have to remove the contaminant from their water for a year. They are looking for three petitions to be signed one for the sewer and noise barriers. Mr. Soto is looking for the Boards support

Chair Blanchard stated for Mr. Soto to contact Mr. Bridges to set up a meeting to discuss the sound barrier issue.

Taylor Nelson 174 Lake Road and Susan Shea 170 Lake Road asked that Jim Marks be able to speak prior to them asking their questions. Jim Marks attended the meeting virtually. Mr. Marks stated that this all started with the no confidence vote from the Firefighters. The changes that the Firefighters are asking for in the job description are qualification changes.

Chair Blanchard stated she does not disagree that there are problems within the Fire Department and the Board is trying to work together to improve them in the proper way and they will get moving on the personal in the proper way.

Ms. Nelson asked the Board if they were in acknowledgement that there are major problems within the Fire Department.

Chair Blanchard stated she would say there are major problems that there are problems in any department.

Ms. Nelson stated that as a citizen she would call a vote of no confidence a major problem. When Firefighters are working eighty to ninety hour per week and forced overtime. Ms. Nelson asked the Board you would not consider that a major issue.

Chair Blanchard stated she is also a citizen of the Town of Sturbridge and she also signs the payroll warrants and she has not observed those hours being reported. She would have to go back and check as to who is working eighty to ninety hours per week.

Mr. Bridges stated the issue on the agenda was regarding the job description, which was resolved. Mr. Bridges stated currently we have two open position the Deputy Chief and Lieutenant position we also currently have two other Firefighters out on non-job related disability. Therefore, that leaves four positions that currently not utilized.

Ms. Shea asked how the Fire Departments response times are Ms. Shea stated there was a fire alarm at the Senior Center and the response time was slow.

Ms. Nelson asked does the Town have a polling as to why the Firefighters are leaving Sturbridge

Mr. Bridges stated some are leaving for more money some for location and convenience.

Mr. Bridges advised the Board that he applicant for the Hawker and Peddler license did not show up that he would contact him.

Adjourn:

Motion to adjourn Public Session and enter Executive Session

By: Chair Blanchard

2nd: Selectmen Goodwin

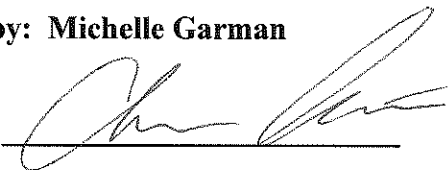
Chair Blanchard: Yes; Selectman Kaithenski: Yes; Selectman Dunnigan: Yes; Selectman Goodwin: Yes

Vote: 4-0-0

The meeting adjourned at 7:43 p.m.

Minutes prepared by: Michelle Garman

Clerk of the Board:



Date signed:

