

**Board of Selectmen
May 1, 2023
Veteran's Memorial Hall, Town Hall
308 Main Street, Sturbridge**

This meeting is available online at:

<https://sturbridge.vod.castus.tv/vod/?video=4744f257-290f-49cb-91ec-50e12c91bf3a>

Present:

Chase Kaitbenski, Vice Chair

Selectman MaryLou Volpe

Selectman Jamie Goodwin

*Clerk Dowling arrived at 7:22 p.m.

Absent:

Mary Blanchard, Chair

Staff:

Robin A. Grimm, Ph.D , Town Administrator

Michelle Garman, Executive Assistant

Water and Sewer Director Shane Moody

DPW Director Heather Blakeley

**Vice Chair Kaitbenski called meeting to order at 6:30 p.m. and read the agenda.
The Selectmen led the Pledge of Allegiance.**

Vice Chair Kaitbenski asked for a Moment of Silence for all the senseless violence going on in the world.

Public Service Announcements:

Vice Chair Kaitbenski congratulated Selectman MaryLou Volpe on being elected and wished her luck.

Reorganization of the Board:

Vice Chair Kaitbenski suggested that the board reorganization be held off until the full Board is in attendance.

Department Reports: Water and Sewer

- Shane Moody, Project Manager Veolia, reported that 20 pumps froze in one weekend in February due to the record-breaking extreme cold spell, the worst in Moody's memory. Staff members were able to thaw most of the pumps using heaters. Vice Chair Kaitbenski asked if there is anything homeowners can do to avoid having their pumps freeze during extreme cold. Mr. Moody said that while running water can help, there's not much that can help when

temperatures are exceptionally cold for exceptionally long. He reported that the department lost a pump station during the night, and by the time the generator got there, it was frozen solid.

- The water ban will work a little differently this year. As usual, when water goes down to a certain level, there will be the normal water ban; but in addition, starting this year, if the state declares drought status, there will no lawn-watering permitted whatsoever. The levels right now are very high — Westville Dam is at 6,000 cubic feet per second, well below the 89 cubic feet per second to necessitate a ban; still, things can dry up fast.

- The water main job is going very well, progress is almost to the cemetery. Paving and hookups will be next week, and everyone is expected to be connected by the end of the month. Hydrant flushing is complete on the east side of town, and will now begin on the west side.

- As reported, the town was not happy with the state's paving job on Route 131. The state is correcting the problem and will fix the manholes and boxes.

Department reports: DPW

DPW Director Heather Blakeley reported:

- The Maple Street waterline work is going well. For now, the road is being patched. Paving will be in the fall or next spring.

- Bids for the parking lot at 501 Main Street are due next week. Ms. Blakeley said some potential bidders said they are having trouble finding granite curbing. Bids for the replacement for the media at the Water Treatment Facility have also gone out, and are due by the middle of May. The next bid out is for annual paving operations.

- Ms. Blakeley will begin the search for an Operation Manager. Additionally, she has interviewed several candidates for a heavy-equipment operator, and has one schedule to meet with the Board later in May.

- The department has been doing catch-basin cleaning as well as street sweeping. The town's older street sweeper failed a few days into being used, which has slowed progress. TA Grimm noted that a request for a new street sweeper is being added to the Annual Town Meeting Warrant to be discussed later in the meeting. Vice Chair Kaitbenski asked about outsourcing street-sweeping; Ms. Blakeley said it is difficult to find, and renting costs \$12,000 a month. She noted that the town has the labor available, just not enough reliable equipment. Ms. Blakeley said she will revisit the idea of outsourcing street-sweepers, which are used twice a year.

Town Administrator's Report

TA Grimm reported that she is being asked by the developers of the Amazon plant in Charlton to sign off on related adjustments to stoplights on Route 20 in Sturbridge. TA Grimm has no problem doing that, but she said it begs the question of why Amazon is being permitted to adjust area stoplights and put up a stoplight at the new plant, when Sturbridge is not permitted to put up

a stoplight at the new Noble Energy EV project because, as the state repeatedly tells Sturbridge, the DOT is against stoplights and is allowing only roundabouts.

Further, Noble Energy's roundabout will require taking property from neighbors, which the state will not do, meaning Sturbridge has to take the property through Town Meeting vote.

In fact, once the corridor is completely redone because of the Amazon traffic, the \$4 million roundabout and property-taking for Noble Energy may be proven unnecessary, which is why TA Grimm is asking to be allowed to put up a stoplight short-term.

Selectman Goodwin said he agrees, and thinks the Amazon-plant problems are even bigger than Ms. Grimm is reporting, and that the town should call on Rep. Todd Smola and Sen. Ryan Fattman, and even the governor to help.

Action Items:

- A. Consideration and possible action on new septage rate for septage haulers and increasing the septage-receiving rate at the Waste Water Treatment Plant to 9¢/gallon starting June 1, 2023.

DPW Director Heather Blakeley joined Mr. Moody to discuss the new septage rate. The goal for taking in septage is to cover cost of hauling sludge to the plant in Cranston. Sturbridge is charging 7¢ a gallon now, which left the town \$22,000 short. The recommendation is to go to 9¢, which is what area towns are charging and a reasonable increase considering tolls, gas, etc. TA Grimm stressed that this does not impact Sturbridge residents. Board members agreed the increase makes sense.

Motion: To increase the septage-receiving rate at the Waste Water Treatment Plant to 9¢/gallon starting June 1, 2023.

By: Selectman Volpe

2nd: Selectman Goodwin

Vote: 3-0-0

- B. Consideration and possible action to set the rate for Landfill Leachate at 3¢/gallon starting July 1, 2023; only leachate from Sturbridge Landfill will be accepted.

Mr. Moody explained that he, Ms. Blakeley and TA Grimm discussed the rate of the Landfill Leachate, and recommending setting the disposal fee at 3¢/gallon. The cost is a town-wide one, but was previously billed only to sewer customers. That cost is now in the town's budget.

Motion: To set the rate for Landfill Leachate at 3¢/gallon starting July 1, 2023; only leachate from Sturbridge Landfill will be accepted.

By: Selectman Volpe

2nd: Selectman Goodwin

Vote: 3-0-0

- C. Consideration and possible action on an application for Taxicab/Livery License for Elba Santiago for Charles River Service, Inc., d/b/a Sturbridge Car Service.

The police chief signed off on the application, which makes the board more comfortable signing it as well.

Motion: To approve the application for Taxicab/Livery License for Elba Santiago for Charles River Service, Inc., d/b/a Sturbridge Car Service.

By: Selectman Goodwin

2nd: Selectman Volpe

Vote: 3-0-0

- D. Consideration and possible action to authorize the Chair to sign the Commonwealth of Massachusetts Building Official Certification Form for Nelson Burlingame, Building Commissioner.

Motion: To authorize the Chair to sign the Commonwealth of Massachusetts Building Official Certification Form for Nelson Burlingame, Building Commissioner.

By: Selectman Goodwin

2nd: Selectman Volpe

Vote: 3-0-0

- E. Consideration and possible action to authorize the Chair to sign the Commonwealth of Massachusetts Building Official Certification Form for Ronald DeSantis, Temporary Building Commissioner.

This and the next several motions are to allow Mr. DeSantis to cover for Mr. Burlingame in Mr. Burlingame's absence.

Motion: To authorize the Chair to sign the Commonwealth of Massachusetts Building Official Certification Form for Ronald DeSantis, Temporary Building Commissioner.

By: Selectman Goodwin

2nd: Selectman Volpe

Vote: 3-0-0

- F. Consideration and possible action to ratify the action on the appointment of Ronald DeSantis, Building Commissioner for the Town of Sturbridge from April 24, 2023 to April 28, 2023 at an hourly rate of \$50 and the use of a Town vehicle.

Motion: To ratify the action on the appointment of Ronald DeSantis, Building Commissioner for the Town of Sturbridge from April 24, 2023 to April 28, 2023 at an hourly rate of \$50 and the use of a Town vehicle.

By: Selectman Volpe

2nd: Selectman Goodwin

Vote: 3-0-0

- G. Consideration and possible action on the appointment of Ronald DeSantis, Temporary Building Commissioner for the Town of Sturbridge from May 3, 2023 to May 5, 2023 and May 11, 2023 to May 19, 2023 at an hourly rate of \$50 and the use of a Town vehicle.

Motion: To appointment of Ronald DeSantis, Temporary Building Commissioner for the Town of Sturbridge from May 3, 2023 to May 5, 2023 and May 11, 2023 to May 19, 2023 at an hourly rate of \$50 and the use of a Town vehicle.

By: Selectman Goodwin

2nd: Selectman Volpe

Vote: 3-0-0

- H. Consideration and possible action on the Lieutenant of Fire Inspections job description.

The Lieutenant has been on duty but despite remembering discussion on this action, Ms. Grimm cannot find the record of a formal vote on it.

Motion: To approve the Lieutenant of Fire Inspections job description.

By: Selectman Volpe

2nd: Selectman Goodwin

Vote: 3-0-0

- I. Consideration and possible action to accept a donation from Harbor Freight Tools, 26677 Agoura Road, Calabasas, CA in the amount of \$300 to the Sturbridge Fire Department.

Motion: To accept a donation from Harbor Freight Tools, 26677 Agoura Road, Calabasas, CA in the amount of \$300 to the Sturbridge Fire Department with gratitude.

By: Selectman Goodwin

2nd: Selectman Volpe

Vote: 3-0-0

- J. Consideration and possible action on a Transient Vendor License Application for New England Antique Arms Society at the Sturbridge Host Hotel and Conference Center on June 9, 2023 from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. and June 20, 2023 from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m.

Motion: To approve the Transient Vendor License Application for New England Antique Arms Society at the Sturbridge Host Hotel and Conference Center on June 9, 2023 from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. and June 20, 2023 from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m.

By: Selectman Volpe

2nd: Selectman Goodwin

Vote: 3-0-0

K. Consideration and possible action to authorize the Chair to execute the contract for the Quacumquasit Pond Alum Treatment with SOLitude Lake Management in the amount of \$398,432.

Each of the towns on Quacumquasit Pond (South Pond) as well as the state, Southbridge YMCA and Quacumquasit and Quaboag Lake Association are contributing as well.

Motion: To authorize the Chair to execute the contract for the Quacumquasit Pond Alum Treatment with SOLitude Lake Management in the amount of \$398,432.

By: Selectman Goodwin

2nd: Selectman Volpe

Vote: 3-0-0

L. Consideration and possible action on previously approved one-day liquor license applications for Greater Good Imperial and Brimfield Winery for the Town Common's Bonfire, rain date of May 7, 2023 or TBD weather permitting.

Motion: To the previously approved one-day liquor license applications for Greater Good Imperial and Brimfield Winery for the Town Common's Bonfire, rain date of May 7, 2023 or TBD weather permitting.

By: Selectman Goodwin

2nd: Selectman Volpe

Vote: 3-0-0

M. Consideration and possible action to open the Annual Town Meeting Warrant Articles.

Motion: To open the Annual Town Meeting Warrant Articles.

By: Selectman Volpe

2nd: Selectman Goodwin

Vote: 3-0-0

TA Grimm reported that on Article 30, the final Water Department budget is \$1,561,749. After cutting and trimming everywhere possible, this is as low as it can go. Selectman Goodwin said the town needs a plan, and because it is outsourced, it is even more important that this department have a plan. TA Grimm agreed, adding that each department has its own capital-needs plans, but the town needs to consolidate it, and consider it when calculating how much

Free Cash to keep. If everything that can be funded by Free Cash is funded, Free Cash would be down to \$4 million.

Motion: To place and support Article 30.

By: Selectman Goodwin

2nd: Selectman Volpe

Vote: 3-0-0

Vice Chair Kaitbenski read Article 31, the Sewer Department budget of \$2,862,128. TA Grimm explained this is a 3.6% increase. The town worked hard to keep this increase as low as possible in light of last year's significant sewer-rate increase and this year's significant water-rate increase.

Motion: To place and support Article 31.

By: Selectman Goodwin

2nd: Selectman Volpe

Vote: 3-0-0

Articles 41 and 42 are related to questions about whether Free Cash can and should be used for these sewer projects. It is agreed that the Route 131 line should come from Sewer funds, not Free Cash; while the Route 20 line can arguably be considered for Free Cash because the whole town, not just sewer-users, benefits from the businesses there. TA Grimm was told that the Finance Committee has never in the past supported using Free Cash for a Sewer project. An alternative would be a 50-50 split, although she cautioned that even without this, the Free Cash is down to about \$4 million. TA Grimm said the question comes down to whether the businesses in that stretch of lines between OSV and Route 131 generate enough business to warrant having some or all of the amount paid by town-wide taxes, not sewer taxes.

Selectman Goodwin said that this is not a good time to cover any extra costs from Free Cash; Vice Chair Kaitbenski agreed.

Motion: To place and support Article 41 as written.

By: Selectman Goodwin

2nd: Selectman Volpe

Vote: 3-0-0

Motion: To place and support Article 42.

By: Selectman Goodwin

2nd: Selectman Volpe

Vote: 3-0-0

Clerk Mary Dowling arrived at 7:22 p.m.

Article 47 allocates \$280,000 for a new Street Sweeper, as discussed earlier in the meeting. TA Grimm noted that it would cost \$100,000 to get the old one repaired.

Motion: To place and support Article 47.

By: Selectman Goodwin

2nd: Selectman Volpe

Vote: 4-0-0.

N. Consideration and possible action to close the Annual Town Meeting Warrant Articles.

Motion: To close the Annual Town Meeting Warrant.

By: Selectman Goodwin

2nd: Selectman Volpe

Vote: 4-0-0.

O. Consideration and possible action on Special Town Meeting Warrant Articles.

Motion: To open the Special Town Meeting Warrant

By: Selectman Goodwin

2nd: Selectman Volpe

Vote: 4-0-0.

This rennumbers the Articles, and asks for \$31,868 for the snow-deficit budget. Selectman Kaitbenski noted the snow-removal amount low.

Motion: To place and support Article 48.

By: Selectman Goodwin

2nd: Selectman Volpe

Vote: 4-0-0.

Motion: To close the Special Town Meeting Warrant

By: Selectman Goodwin

2nd: Selectman Volpe

Vote: 4-0-0.

Old Business:

No old business

New Business:

TA Grimm announced that Sen. Fattman will be attending a ceremony at the Public Safety Complex on Thursday, May 11 at 11 a.m. to honor firefighters who received awards.

Correspondence:

No correspondence

Approval of Minutes:

No minutes for approval.

Citizen's Forum:

No citizens wished to speak.

Adjourn:

Motion: To adjourn.

By: Selectman Goodwin

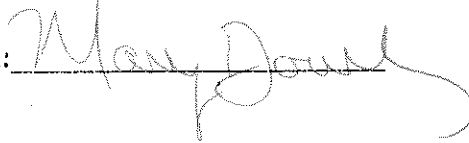
2nd: Selectman Volpe

Vote: 4-0-0.

The meeting adjourned at 7:27 p.m.

Minutes prepared by: Michelle Garman and Elisa Krochmalnyckyj

Clerk of the Board:



Date signed:

