

April 6, 2020

**Board of Selectmen
April 6, 2020
Town Hall**

AMENDED

Present via Go to Meeting, Virtually:

Mary Blanchard, Chairman
Mary Dowling, Vice Chairman
Michael Suprenant, Clerk
Priscilla Gimás
Chase Kaitbenski

Staff:

Jeff Bridges, Town Administrator
Andrea Mensen, Administrative Assistant

Chair Blanchard called the meeting to order at 6:30 pm

Chair Blanchard read the following statement on virtual meetings: "Pursuant to Governor Baker's March 12, 2020 Order Suspending Certain Provisions of the Open Meeting Law, G.L. c. 30A, Section 18, and the Governor's March 15, 2020 Order imposing strict limitations on the number of people that may gather in one place, this meeting of the Town of Sturbridge Board of Selectmen is being conducted via remote participation. No in-person attendance of members of the public will be permitted, but every effort will be made to ensure that the public can adequately access the proceedings as provided for in the Order. A reminder that persons who would like to listen or view this meeting while in progress can do so. Instructions on remote access are available on the Town's website and if, despite our best efforts, we are not able to provide for real-time access, we will post a record of this meeting on the Town's website as soon as we are able."

The Selectmen led the Pledge of Allegiance.

Chair Blanchard read through the agenda.

Public Service Announcements

Vice Chair Dowling wished everyone a blessed Easter and Passover. She mentioned that the Board of Health will be posting the amount of positive COVID-19 cases on the website. She also stated that the Board of Health said that the COVID-19 pandemic has cancelled all blood drives, support is needed and donating is a necessity. The Board of Health requests that people who are healthy are urged to donate and make an appointment by using the Red Cross application.

Selectman Kaitbenski wished all residents and fellow board members well during this trying time.

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236 Haynes Street, Route 15, Amend License

Motion: To approve the amended license for 236 Haynes Street, Route 15 By: Selectwoman Gimas

2nd: Selectman Suprenant

Vote: All in Favor (5-0)

One Day Liquor License, Concerts on the Common, Bay State Brewing

Motion: To approve the one day liquor license for concerts on the common for Bay State Brewing By: Selectman Kaithenski

2nd: Selectman Suprenant

Vote: (4-1) (Vice Chair Dowling abstained)

Department Head Updates:

Town Administrator

Mr. Bridges mentioned he had sent the Board a weekly progress report of each department and how they are operating during the closure of Town Hall, and Center Office Building. He stated that the Federal Government has a family first act, which the Town will plan to follow, and one he has more information on that he will relay it to the Board. Mr. Bridges followed up on the discussion of traffic counts from their last meeting, and stated that he doesn't know how effective traffic counts will be at this time so it is something they will look into at a later date. He mentioned that he had talked with Kathy Neal, chairman of the Finance Committee, about how the Town would like to proceed with the budget process. Mr. Bridges informed the Board that the Town is working with local hotels to implement housing for first responders who test positive for COVID-19 and have to isolate from their families.

Approval of town water for the Community Food Collaborative

Chair Blanchard read the letter written from Jim Waddick.

Motion: To approve the Town providing the water for the community garden without cost to the Community Food Collaborative By: Vice Chair Dowling

2nd: Selectwoman Gimas

Vote: All in Favor (5-0)

Accept the resignation of Kevin Filchak as the Emergency Management Coordinator and the Economic Development and Tourism Coordinator

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Selectman Suprenant stated Mr. Filchak had done an excellent job, and it will be hard to find someone as qualified as him to fill the position. Vice Chair Dowling thanked Mr. Filchak and stated he always had such a positive attitude.

Motion: To accept the resignation of Kevin Filchak as Emergency Management Coordinator and Economic Development and Tourism Coordinator effective March Friday March 27, 2020 with regret By: Selectman Kaitbenski
2nd: Selectman Suprenant
Vote: All in Favor (5-0)

Authorize increasing the hours for the Economic Development and Tourism Coordinator from 28 to 37.5 on a salary basis.

Selectwoman Gimas stated she thinks it's a good idea to increase the hours of the Economic and Tourism Coordinator position, especially now when so many businesses are impacted because of COVID-19. She stated business will need support once this is all over with and it will be important for the Economic and Tourism Coordinator to have the time to give the businesses. Vice Chair Dowling stated that now that it's becoming a full time position, she is hoping the person who is hired will provide an active role in planning events for the town, and have experience with event planning.

Motion: To approve the increase in hours per week for the Economic Development and Tourism Coordinator from 28 to 37.5 per week By: Selectwoman Gimas
2nd: Selectman Suprenant
Vote: All in Favor (5-0)

Concur with appointment of David DeMings as Interim Emergency Management Coordinator

Motion: To concur the appointment of David DeMings as Interim Emergency Management Coordinator effective March 30, 2020 with a salary of \$20.13 per hour for twelve hours per week By: Selectwoman Gimas
2nd: Selectman Kaitbenski
Vote: All in Favor (5-0)

Accept donation from Paragon Power Washing for washing and sanitation services to the Cedar Recreation Area Playground and Courts

Vice Chair Dowling thanked Paragon Power for such a generous donation.

Motion: To accept the donation of power washing the playgrounds and courts from Paragon Power Washing By: Selectwoman Gimas
2nd: Selectman Kaitbenski
Vote: All in Favor (5-0)

Acceptance of Deed for 501 Main Street

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**Motion: To accept the deed for the purchase of 501 Main Street By: Selectman Kaitbenski
2nd: Vice Chair Dowling
Vote: All in Favor (5-0)**

Discussion and possible action on the delaying of due dates for certain taxes, interest, penalties, and fees.

Selectwoman Gimas asked if there was something further they could do as a community that could help people who are out of work because of this pandemic. She stated that stimulus checks may not arrive until late August, and extending the due date of property tax bills until June 1st may not help people. Mr. Bridges stated that the extension dates are set by the state and that's the only thing they can go by at this point. Vice Chair Dowling stated she agreed with Selectwoman Gimas, but she also understands that the extension dates are determined by the state. She stated that the Board does have the discretion in the event someone is not able to pay.

**Motion: To extend the due date for property tax bills to June 1, 2020 By: Vice Chair Dowling
2nd: Selectman Kaitbenski
Vote: All in Favor (5-0)**

**Motion: That the Town will notify all of the residents by mail of the extension of property tax bills By: Vice Chair Dowling
2nd: Selectwoman Gimas
Vote: All in Favor (5-0)**

**Motion: To extend the due date under G.L. c. 59, Section 59 for applications for exemptions from April 1, 2020 to June 1, 2020, automatically applying to deferrals under G.L. c. 59, Section 5[18A] and [41A], residential exemptions under G.L. c. 59, Section 5C and small commercial exemptions under G.L. c. 59, Section 51 By: Selectman Suprenant
2nd: Selectman Kaitbenski
Vote: All in Favor (5-0)**

**Motion: To waive interest and other penalties for late payment of any excise, tax, betterment assessment or any apportionment thereof, water rate or annual sewer use or other charge added to a tax for any payments with a due date on or after March 10, 2020 where payment is made after its respective due date but before June 30, 2020 By: Vice Chair Dowling
2nd: Selectwoman Gimas
Vote: All in Favor (5-0)**

Approval of Contract with Ricciardi Bros. Inc. for the construction of the Fiske Hill Water Pump Station.

**Motion: To award the contract for the Fiske Hill Water Pump Station to Ricciardi Bros. Inc., for the price of \$693,994.40 By: Selectman Suprenant
2nd: Selectman Kaitbenski**

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Vote: All in Favor (5-0)

Removal of a tree at the Joshua Hyde Library

Motion: To authorize the removal of the large evergreen tree at the Joshua Hyde Public Library By: Selectman Kaitbenski

2nd: Selectman Suprenant

Vote: All in Favor (5-0)

Approve purchase of an Aeroclave Decontamination System

Vice Chair Dowling asked what the fire department had been doing up until now to decontaminate. Mr. Bridges explained that right now they are contracting out a cleaning company and this would provide an in house solution that would be very specialized.

Motion: To authorize the purchase of an Aeroclave Decontamination System By: Selectwoman Gimas

2nd: Selectman Suprenant

Vote: All in Favor (5-0)

Accept donation of G & F Industries for the public safety complex

Motion: To accept the donation of 20 safety goggles by G&F Industries By: Selectman Suprenant

2nd: Selectwoman Gimas

Vote: All in Favor (5-0)

Vote for the postponement of the April town election

Lynne Girouard, Town Clerk, had logged in via remote meeting to address any questions the Board may have about postponing the April town election. Selectwoman Gimas asked Mrs. Girouard about a rescheduled date. Mrs. Girouard responded stating that they will have to discuss at a later date, once they start seeing a decline in COVID-19 cases.

Motion: Pursuant to Section 1 of Chapter 45 of the Acts of 2020 and because of the state of emergency declared by the governor pursuant to Executive Order 591, Declaration of a State of Emergency to Respond to COVID-19, the municipal town election scheduled for April 13, 2020 is hereby postponed By: Vice Chair Dowling

2nd: Selectman Kaitbenski

Vote: All in Favor (5-0)

Approve the extension of Town Hall, Center Office Building, and Library closure and the work from home status until May 5, 2020

Motion: To approve the extension of the current closures, emergency declaration, and emergency operations directives to at least May 5, 2020. By: Vice Chair Dowling

2nd: Selectwoman Gimas

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Vote: All in Favor (5-0)

Accept a donation from a community member to go into the Fire Department Gift Fund

Motion: To accept the donation from a community member to go into the Fire Department Gift Fund By: Selectwoman Gimas

2nd: Selectman Kaitbenski

Vote: All in Favor (5-0)

Request authorization to employ temporary, part time personnel for the Sturbridge Fire Department to serve in the capacity of firefighter, firefighter / EMT and Firefighter / Paramedic if necessary for staffing needs.

Mr. Bridges stated that Chief Grasso is asking to hire part time personnel for the Sturbridge Fire Department in the event that their current staff becomes infected with the virus and the department is short-handed.

Motion: To approve the hiring of temporary, part time personnel to serve in the capacity of firefighter, firefighter / EMT and firefighter / paramedic on an as needed basis in light of the pandemic By: Selectwoman Gimas

2nd: Vice Chair Dowling

Discussion: Selectman Suprenant stated that the Town has contracts with mutual aid and the union. The Board discussed that these are trying times and if the Fire Department was in need of temporary, part time employees they should be able to do so in anyway.

Vote: (4-1) (Selectman Suprenant opposed)

Old Business

Selectwoman Gimas asked about the Town Administrators evaluation, and Chair Blanchard stated that they would do it at the next meeting, as she was still waiting on one Board member's evaluation form. Selectwoman Gimas asked about the status on the budget process. Mr. Bridges stated they could set up virtual meetings and get the ball rolling, or if they had any other ideas to move forward with it, they are free to do what they think is best.

Vice Chair Dowling stated she would like a standing bullet under "old business" that provides a standard COVID- 19 update from the Town Administrator at each Board meeting. She also stated that she requested Mr. Bridges to reach out to Town Counsel to see if they were able to require the Board of Health to disclose the information on the number of COVID-19 positive cases and request that the Town Administrator share the opinion with other Board members. She then stated the Board of Health is now posting the amount of positive cases on the Town's website. Vice Chair Dowling asked if the first responders are equipped for the next month with personal protective equipment. Mr. Bridges stated that they have enough for right now, and he also stated that more personal protective equipment is becoming available, depending upon the source.

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Vice Chair Dowling asked about the housing the Town was going to offer to the first responders that need to be isolated due to COVID-19. Mr. Bridges stated he is working with the fire department on this, and they are looking into hotels that have external entrances.

Vice Chair Dowling wondered if the police could work with the Board of Health to monitor the parking lots of hotels to ensure the Governor's orders are being enforced. Mr. Bridges would have to get back to the Board about this after discussing with Chief Ford.

New business

NONE

Correspondence

Selectman Suprenant read through the correspondence.

Approval of Minutes

March 16, 2020

Motion: To approve the minutes of March 16, 2020 as amended By: Selectwoman Gimas

2nd: Selectman Suprenant

Vote: (4-1) (Chair Blanchard abstained)

March 19, 2020

Motion: To approve the minutes of March 19, 2020 as amended By: Selectwoman Gimas

2nd: Vice Chair Dowling

Vote: (4-1) (Selectman Kaitbenski abstained)

Citizen's forum

NONE

Adjourn

Motion: To adjourn at 8:14p.m. By: Selectwoman Gimas

2nd: Selectman Kaitbenski

Vote: All in Favor (5-0)

Adjourned at 8:14 p.m.

Minutes prepared by: Andrea Mensen

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Clerk of the Board: Michael J. Suprenant Date signed: 06-29-2020