

May 4, 2020

**Board of Selectmen**

**May 4, 2020**

**Town Hall**

**AMENDED**

**Present:**

Mary Blanchard, Chairman  
Mary Dowling, Vice Chairman  
Selectman Suprenant  
Priscilla Gimás

**Absent:**

Selectman Kaitbenski

**Staff:**

Jeff Bridges, Town Administrator  
Andrea Mensen, Administrative Assistant

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

**The Selectmen led the Pledge of Allegiance**

**Chair Blanchard read through the agenda.**

**Chair Blanchard read the following statement:** 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 people that may gather in one place, this meeting of the Sturbridge Board of Selectmen will be conducted via remote participation to the greatest extent possible. Specific information and the general guidelines for remote participation can be found on the Town's website at <https://www.sturbridge.gov/town-administrator/pages/how-access-virtual-meeting>. For this meeting, members of the public who wish to listen and or watch the meeting either online via the Town's on demand video broadcast, on cable television on channel 191, or dial into the meeting at 774-304-1455, enter 1428# for the meeting number and 12345 for the access code. (This phone number is only active for the public during public meetings). 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 in real time, via technological means. In the event that we are unable to do so, despite best efforts, we will post of the Town's website an audio or video recording, transcript, or other

**Public Service Announcements**

Chair Blanchard mentioned that it was International Fire Fighters Day, and she extended thanks to the Sturbridge Fire Department for all they do to keep us all safe. Selectman Suprenant thanked all the nurses and doctors who are working so hard to keep people alive during the COVID-19 crisis.

**Public Hearing- Logging Permit- 282 Brookfield Road- Michael Bartlett**

Selectman Suprenant read the legal ad posted in the Southbridge Evening News. Michael Bartlett, plan preparer, joined the meeting remotely and gave the Board a brief overview of the project. Chair Blanchard asked for the DCR certificate. The board discussed the location of the driveway since the landing is on someone else's property. Vice Chair Dowling asked for something in writing from the owner of the property.

**Motion: To close the public hearing By: Selectwoman Gimas**

**2<sup>nd</sup>: Selectman Suprenant**

**Roll Call Vote: Vice Chair Dowling: YES, Selectman Suprenant: YES, Selectwoman Gimas: YES, Chair Blanchard: YES.**

**All in Favor (4-0) (Selectman Kaitbenski Absent)**

**Motion: To approve the forest cutting plan for 282 Brookfield Road subject to the standard conditions plus the conditions of getting approval in writing from the owner of the property, John Kearn, and subject to the Conservation Commission conditions by: Selectman Suprenant**

**2<sup>nd</sup>: Selectwoman Gimas**

**Roll Call Vote: Vice Chair Dowling: YES, Selectman Suprenant: YES, Selectwoman Gimas: YES, Chair Blanchard: YES.**

**All in Favor (4-0) (Selectman Kaitbenski Absent)**

**Public Hearing- Logging Permit- 72 Shattuck Road- Michael Bartlett**

Selectman Suprenant read the legal ad posted in the Southbridge Evening News. Michael Bartlett, plan preparer, gave a brief overview of the project, stating that the primary motivation is the significant decline in hemlocks, and the damage done by gypsy moths. Chair Blanchard stated that the Conservation Commission would like notice prior to the start of the project and they would like it monitored by a third party. Mr. Bridges stated that Rebecca Gendreau, Conservation Agent, said she is comfortable with Mr. Bartlett being the person to monitor the project.

**Motion: To close the public hearing By: Selectwoman Gimas**

**2<sup>nd</sup>: Selectman Suprenant**

**Roll Call Vote: Vice Chair Dowling: YES, Selectman Suprenant: YES, Selectwoman Gimas: YES, Chair Blanchard: YES.**

**All in Favor (4-0) (Selectman Kaitbenski Absent)**

**Motion: To approve the logging permit for 72 Shattuck Road subject to all the conditions being met plus the Conservation Commission conditions By: Selectwoman Gimas**

**2<sup>nd</sup>: Selectman Suprenant**

**Vote: Vice Chair Dowling: YES, Selectman Suprenant: YES, Selectwoman Gimas: YES, Chair Blanchard: YES.**

**All in Favor (4-0) (Selectman Kaitbenski Absent)**

**Department Reports**

**Town Administrator**

Mr. Bridges mentioned that he had emailed the Board the weekly department reports which include information on what the offices are working on with the current remote work circumstances. He

May 4, 2020

stated that boards and committees have all been meeting remotely. Vice Chair Dowling stated she appreciated getting the reports, and said they are very detailed and informative.

### **Water and Sewer**

Shane Moody, Veolia Water, came before the Board, remotely, with reports from February and March. Selectman Suprenant stated that it looked like the Town was doing pretty good as far as amount of septic we were taking in as long as the permit requirements were being met.

Mr. Moody stated he submitted a summary of the camera work, also adding that out of the three cameras that weren't operating correctly, two can be fixed in house, and the other one will be repaired by a subcontractor. He stated they have been flushing hydrants and they will be finishing this week. Mr. Moody mentioned that in March they pumped 100,000 gallons less of water due to restaurants and stores being closed due to COVID-19. Vice Chair Dowling asked when the water would be getting tested again for lead and copper. Mr. Moody stated it will take place in the fall. Selectwoman Gimas asked, with schools closed, will water be tested before the children go back. Mr. Moody stated that the Department of Environmental Protection sent out recommendations this week which he had shared with Butch Jackson, Robyn Chrabasz, and Jeff Bridges. He stated they will be flushing the hydrants near the high school once or twice a month and what happens inside the school is the schools responsibility. Selectwoman Gimas stated she believes it is the Town's responsibility that children get water that's safe to drink. Selectman Suprenant asked if we have had any problems maintaining residual chlorine. Mr. Moody stated they are taking care of that.

### **Consideration and possible action on the termination of the existing Little League Lighting Contract with Energy Electric, Co.**

Mr. Bridges informed the Board of the background on the project. Selectwoman Gimas asked if in 2018 anyone asked how long the bid or quote was good for. Mr. Bridges stated that the quote was based upon what poles and lights would cost and not all of the engineering. He said now that they have a different opportunity, it will be a better result. Selectwoman Gimas asked if Mr. Bridges would oversee it. Mr. Bridges stated that he and Robyn Chrabasz, Facilities Coordinator, will oversee all the projects going forward, and they will have a different scoping approach. Ms. Chrabasz joined remotely and added that one of the difficulties was that this quote did not include electric. She stated that in the original quote they didn't have wiggle room because in the Warrant Article it listed a specific number, so they didn't have an option. Ms. Chrabasz informed the Board that the remaining \$800.00 would cover the rest of the contract and cover the cost to terminate.

**Motion: To terminate the contract with Energy Electric, Inc. for the installation of lighting at the little league ball field By: Selectwoman Gimas**

**2<sup>nd</sup>: Vice Chair Dowling**

**Roll Call Vote: Vice Chair Dowling: YES, Selectman Suprenant: YES, Selectwoman Gimas: YES, Chair Blanchard: YES.**

**All in Favor (4-0) (Selectman Kaitbenski Absent)**

### **Consideration and possible acceptance of donations to the Sturbridge Senior Center**

**Motion: To accept the donations to the Sturbridge Council on Aging, with the appreciation of the Board of Selectmen, from Craig Moran, Susan Grandone, Phyllis Breitenfeld, and Laurance Morrison By: Selectman Suprenant**

May 4, 2020

**2<sup>nd</sup>: Selectwoman Gimas**

**Roll Call Vote: Vice Chair Dowling: YES, Selectman Suprenant: YES, Selectwoman Gimas: YES, Chair Blanchard: YES.**

**All in Favor (4-0) (Selectman Kaitbenski Absent)**

Mr. Bridges stated that a donation came in from OFS for Personal Protective Equipment for the Sturbridge Fire Department.

**Motion: To accept, with gratitude, the donation of Personal Protective Equipment to the Sturbridge Fire Department By: Vice Chair Dowling**

**2<sup>nd</sup>: Selectwoman Gimas**

**Roll Call Vote: Vice Chair Dowling: YES, Selectman Suprenant: YES, Selectwoman Gimas: YES, Chair Blanchard: YES.**

**All in Favor (4-0) (Selectman Kaitbenski Absent)**

**Request for concurrence with the appointment of Robert Archambault as a fulltime police officer for the Sturbridge Police Department**

Tom Ford, Police Chief, joined the meeting remotely and informed the Board that he had recently completed the interview process for a full time police officer. He said Mr. Archambault was the best candidate and they selected to hire him. Chief Ford went over Mr. Archambault's certifications, education, and experience and stated he recommends him for the position. Mr. Archambault came before the Board remotely and stated that he looks forward to serving the town of Sturbridge and its population. Selectman Suprenant stated it looks like he is certainly well qualified for the job.

**Motion: To concur with the appointment of Robert Archambault as a full time police officer effective May 5, 2020 with a salary of \$31.04 per hour By: Selectman Suprenant**

**2<sup>nd</sup>: Selectwoman Gimas**

**Roll Call Vote: Vice Chair Dowling: YES, Selectman Suprenant: YES, Selectwoman Gimas: YES, Chair Blanchard: YES.**

**All in Favor (4-0) (Selectman Kaitbenski Absent)**

**Request for concurrence on the appointment of Acting Chief Earl Dessert as the Emergency Management Director effective May 13, 2020.**

Mr. Bridges stated that Mr. Dessert has a degree in emergency management and he has played an active role at the police station with it already. He said he recommends this be a part of his duties as acting Chief of Police.

**Motion: To concur with the appointment of Lt. Earl Dessert (Acting Chief) as Emergency Management Director effective May 4, 2020. By: Selectwoman Gimas**

**2<sup>nd</sup>: Chair Blanchard**

**Roll Call Vote: Vice Chair Dowling: YES, Selectman Suprenant: YES, Selectwoman Gimas: YES, Chair Blanchard: YES.**

**All in Favor (4-0) (Selectman Kaitbenski Absent)**

**Consideration and possible action on the Massachusetts Interlocal Insurance Association renewal for Property Casualty, Professional Liability, and Worker's Compensation Coverage for FY 21.**

Mr. Bridges went over the renewal paper work. He informed the Board that the Town has been very well served by MIIA and he requests the continuation of their services. Selectman Suprenant stated the rate of less than \$321,113.00 seems very reasonable.

May 4, 2020

**Motion: To renew the Town's property casualty, professional liability, and worker's compensation insurance with the Massachusetts Interlocal Insurance Association for FY 21 By: Selectwoman Gimas**

**2<sup>nd</sup>: Selectman Suprenant**

**Roll Call Vote: Vice Chair Dowling: YES, Selectman Suprenant: YES, Selectwoman Gimas: YES, Chair Blanchard: YES.**

**All in Favor (4-0) (Selectman Kaitbenski Absent)**

**Consideration and possible action on the setting of the Annual Town Meeting date for Monday, June 29, 2020 at 7:00 p.m. to be held at the Tantasqua Regional High School.**

Selectwoman Gimas asked if they would be taking all distancing precautions into account if the Town Meeting is being held at the high school. Mr. Bridges mentioned that they have some work to do, but the guidelines will be followed to keep everyone safe.

**Motion: To set the time date and place for the Annual Town Meeting for Monday, June 29, 2020 at 7:00 p.m. at Tantasqua Regional High School By: Selectwoman Gimas**

**2<sup>nd</sup>: Selectman Suprenant**

**Roll Call Vote: Vice Chair Dowling: YES, Selectman Suprenant: YES, Selectwoman Gimas: YES, Chair Blanchard: YES.**

**All in Favor (4-0) (Selectman Kaitbenski Absent)**

**Consideration and possible setting of the date for the Annual Election for June 8, 2020.**

Lynne Girouard, Town Clerk, stated that she had talked with the Board of Health and went over the safety protocol. She informed the Board that they will allow a certain amount of people into Old Sturbridge Village at one time, the ballot boxes six foot distance away, entrance and exits will be separate, plexi glass shields will be at the check in and check out tables, masks will be provided for all of the workers, sanitation will be at all of the stations, fresh pens will be given to each voter. Mrs. Girouard stated she wants to cut down on the amount of poll workers because she feels there will be a lot of people who participate in early voting and absentee, so there will likely be less people attending the election. She also mentioned that she is asking a police officer to be outside to make sure people are at a distance and to make sure people are wearing masks to enter the building.

Selectwoman Gimas asked if they have proceeded with early voting and absentee ballots in the same way they typically do. Mrs. Girouard stated that it's a different form and right now the absentee ballots are available at both post offices, they can be downloaded from the website, at the senior center, or anyone can call the town clerk's office and Mrs. Girouard will mail a ballot. Selectwoman Gimas asked if the ballots would be counted the night of the election. Mrs. Girouard stated that they will be processing absentee ballots and early voting ballots as they come in and since there will likely be more people voting that way than in person, the count would likely be performed that night. Selectman Suprenant asked if there was a way to do a robocall stating the new date of the election. Mrs. Girouard stated she will ask the police to perform a robocall and there will also be signs up around all around town.

**Motion: To set the date for the Town Election for Monday, June 8, 2020 from 6:30am to 8:00 pm at Old Sturbridge Village By: Selectman Suprenant**

**2<sup>nd</sup>: Vice Chair Dowling**

**Roll Call Vote: Vice Chair Dowling: YES, Selectman Suprenant: YES, Selectwoman Gimas: YES, Chair Blanchard: YES.**

**All in Favor (4-0) (Selectman Kaitbenski Absent)**

May 4, 2020

**Consideration and possible action on a request of the Special Events Committee to use the Town Common for the Farmer's Market starting June 7, 2020.**

Caitlin Tomko, Farmers Market Manager, joined the meeting remotely and informed the Board that the Farmers Market volunteers are looking to get approval to use the Town Common. She said they understand the common is currently closed due to COVID-19, however the Farmers Market is considered essential for many reasons. Chair Blanchard asked about the layout. Mrs. Tomko stated they do have a layout and she plans to send it to the Board of Health. Vice Chair Dowling asked if a small window of time could be blocked off for people at higher risk and seniors, stating that it would be a nice gesture, and she likes that the supermarkets are doing it. Mrs. Tomko stated that would eliminate time from the market, which only runs for four hours to begin with and the first half hour of the market wouldn't be beneficial for seniors because many will be attending virtual church service. Selectman Suprenant asked how they are going to manage the entire Town Common so that there are no more than 10 people. Mrs. Tomko informed him that the Department of Public Works will be setting up a perimeter.

**Motion: To approve the use of the Town Common for the Farmer's Market for the hours of 9am-1pm on Sundays, subject to adhering to all guidelines in their memo and conditions given from the local Board of Health and the Department of Public Health and any guidelines released in the future By: Vice Chair Dowling**

**2<sup>nd</sup>: Selectwoman Gimas**

**Roll Call Vote: Vice Chair Dowling: YES, Selectman Suprenant: YES, Selectwoman Gimas: YES, Chair Blanchard: YES.**

**All in Favor (4-0) (Selectman Kaitbenski Absent)**

**Old Business**

**COVID-19 Update**

Mr. Bridges stated the biggest update he could provide was that they will be extending the current means of operations for the next two weeks. He stated that they have been talking about reopening plans for the Senior Center, Library, Town Hall, and Center Office Building, stating the Robyn Chrabascz, Facilities Coordinator, has been working on installing sneeze guards, and planning for employees to have gloves and masks. He said it would probably be a slow opening, beginning with the first week opened would be with just employees, and then the second week opening to public. Mr. Bridges mentioned that one of the biggest issues will be conducting public meetings, going into June, stating that some people may not feel comfortable, so there may be a period of time that both virtual meetings and live meetings take place. Mr. Bridges stated that every town is having the same conversation. Vice Chair Dowling stated she's glad to hear the staff is brainstorming, and in terms of sneeze guards she is thinking the Town Clerk's office in particular who have a lot of residents coming in on an everyday basis would be most important. She also asked how the first responders were doing with Personal Protective Equipment. Mr. Bridges stated they are still well equipped.

The Board discussed tax rates and how they do not want the taxes to rise and rather would like to see tax relief after all of this.

**Consideration and possible extension of the current operating procedures due to the COVID-19 pandemic until May 19, 2020.**

**Motion: To extend current working remotely operations, as per Governor Bakers order, to May 19, 2020 By: Vice Chair Dowling**

**2<sup>nd</sup>: Selectwoman Gimas**

May 4, 2020

**Roll Call Vote: Vice Chair Dowling: YES, Selectman Suprenant: YES, Selectwoman Gimas: YES, Chair Blanchard: YES.  
All in Favor (4-0) (Selectman Kaitbenski Absent)**

### **New Business**

#### **Town Administrators Review**

The Board discussed the evaluation of Jeff Bridges, Town Administrator. Mr. Bridges received an overall score of 3.97 out of a possible 5.

Vice Chair Dowling suggested that they move the evaluation to May in the future, to give a better view of how the Town Administrator does with the budget process. She also said it would be better that the categories on the evaluation form read "improvement needed" and "unacceptable" because the current categories, "poor" and "unacceptable", merge and seem to mean the same thing.

Vice Chair Dowling suggested that they submit individual reviews to the Chair for the purpose of gathering an overall score, but that the Board eliminates joint comments. Rather, each selectman may provide their own written comments into the record if they so desire. Selectwoman Gimas stated she agrees because there have been past evaluations that have been more comprehensive.

The Board discussed these being future action items at a different meeting.

Mr. Bridges extended his thanks to the Town of Sturbridge and stated he has enjoyed working for the community.

### **Correspondence**

Selectman Suprenant read the correspondence.

### **Approval of Minutes**

April 6, 2020

**Motion: To approve the minutes of April 21, 2020 budget as amended By: Selectwoman Gimas  
2<sup>nd</sup>: Chair Blanchard**

**Roll Call Vote: Vice Chair Dowling: YES, Selectman Suprenant: ABSTAINED, Selectwoman Gimas: YES, Chair Blanchard: YES.**

**Vote: 4-0-1 (Selectman Suprenant Abstained) (Selectman Kaitbenski Absent)**

**Motion: To approve the minutes of the regular April 21, 2020 meeting By: Vice Chair Dowling  
2<sup>nd</sup>: Selectwoman Gimas**

**Roll Call Vote: Vice Chair Dowling: YES, Selectman Suprenant: YES, Selectwoman Gimas: YES, Chair Blanchard: YES.**

**All in Favor (4-0) (Selectman Kaitbenski Absent)**

### **Citizen's forum**

NONE

May 4, 2020

Selectman Suprenant read the statement for the executive session.

**Motion: To move into executive session and not reconvene in regular session By: Selectman Suprenant**

**2<sup>nd</sup>: Vice Chair Dowling**

**Roll Call Vote: Vice Chair Dowling: YES, Selectman Suprenant: YES, Selectwoman Gimas: YES, Chair Blanchard: YES.**

**All in Favor (4-0) (Selectman Kaitbenski Absent)**

### **Adjourn**

**Motion: To adjourn at 8:59pm By: Selectwoman Gimas**

**2<sup>nd</sup>: Selectman Suprenant**

**Roll Call Vote: Vice Chair Dowling: YES, Selectman Suprenant: YES, Selectwoman Gimas: YES, Chair Blanchard: YES.**

**All in Favor (4-0) (Selectman Kaitbenski Absent)**

**Adjourned at 8:59pm**

**Minutes prepared by: Andrea Mensen**

**Clerk of the Board:**  **Date signed:** 06-29-2020