

July 20, 2020

**Board of Selectmen  
July 20, 2020  
Town Hall**

**Present:**

Mary Blanchard, Chairman  
Mary Dowling, Vice Chairman  
Selectman Michael Suprenant  
Selectman Chase Kaitbenski  
Selectman Ian Dunnigan

**Staff:**

Jeff Bridges, Town Administrator  
Andrea Mensen, Administrative Assistant

**Chair Blanchard called the meeting to order at 6:35pm**

**Chair Blanchard read through the agenda**

**The Selectmen led the Pledge of Allegiance**

**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 comprehensive record of the proceedings as soon as possible after the meeting.

**Public Service Announcements**

None

**Moment of Silence**

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The Selectmen held a moment of silence in honor of all those suffering from COVID- 19

**Public Hearing- Logging Permit- 208 Arnold Road- Anthony Grossi – John Clarke**

Tony Grossi, Timber Harvester, explained to the Board that the state forester had already approved the plan. He said he spoke to the Highway Department about the \$5,000.00 bond. He also added that he met with the Conservation Department and walked and looked at all the crossings. Chair Blanchard stated she didn't have a copy of the DCR certificate. Vice Chair Dowling asked if this was the same plan that is on the upcoming Conservation Commission meeting. Mr. Grossi agreed to send the DCR certificate and stated that the Conservation Commission is holding a public hearing for the plan on August 4, 2020.

**Motion: To close the public hearing By: Vice Chair Dowling**

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

**Roll Call Vote: Vice Chair Dowling: YES, Selectman Dunnigan: YES, Selectman Kaitbenski: YES, Chair Blanchard: YES.**

**Vote: 4-0 (Selectman Suprenant Absent)**

**Selectman Suprenant arrived at the meeting**

**Motion: To approve of the forest cutting plan for 208 Arnold Road subject to the terms and conditions of the Town's forest harvesting by-law, and the decision of the Conservation Commission at their August 4, 2020 meeting By: Selectman Kaitbenski**

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

**Roll Call Vote: Vice Chair Dowling: YES, Selectman Dunnigan: YES, Selectman Kaitbenski: YES, Chair Blanchard: YES, Selectman Suprenant: ABSTAINED**

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

**Sawdust Coffee- Outdoor Entertainment License**

**Motion: To approve the outdoor entertainment license for Sawdust Coffee for the hours of 7:00 PM -10:00 PM on Fridays and Saturdays and Sundays 11:00 AM to 2:00 PM. contingent upon Board of Health approval of the Covid- 19 mitigations and with the stipulation that the permit list the premise as the outdoor patio on the application By: Selectman Suprenant**

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

**Roll Call Vote: Vice Chair Dowling: YES, Selectman Suprenant: YES, Selectman Kaitbenski: YES, Chair Blanchard: YES, Selectman Dunnigan: ABSTAINED**

**Vote: 4-0-1 (Selectman Dunnigan Abstained)**

**Department Reports**

**Town Administrator**

Mr. Bridges informed the Board of the Community Development Block Grant Microenterprise Loan Program. He stated that the Town was notified by Senator Gobi's office that the three towns of Southbridge, Charlton, and Sturbridge would be receiving funds for the microenterprise loan program. He said the program would be administered through the Town of Southbridge and that they are preparing for the application process. Mr. Bridges stated that he had reached out to local businesses and those that wish to apply need to meet the requirements and have low to moderate income. The costs that come from this grant are used to cover revenue loss during Covid-19, but there is no word on the amount of funds awarded yet.

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Mr. Bridges mentioned that there was a meeting with the Town Departments and the School Department over a future project for the upgrade to the public safety radio system. He said they are currently in the process of scoping out a new Town wide radio system. Mr. Bridges informed the Board of the Federated Church Annual Pumpkin Patch dates. He also spoke about a wellness grant received by MIIA which was awarded to the Sturbridge Police Department in the amount of \$10,000. He stated that this was through MIIA's "Great Place to Work: Safe and Well" grant program and the funds would be used for new gym equipment at the Public Safety Facility.

Mr. Bridges informed the Board of the Police Chief Search status, and also mentioned he was interviewing potential candidates for the Administrative Assistant to the Board of Selectmen and the Town Administrator. Vice Chair Dowling asked if the interview process would take place in person or virtually. He informed the Board that interviews will be remote but, the potential Police Chief may be at Town hall while the Search Committee members are remote.

**Consideration and possible action on a request from Sallie Greene to utilize the grounds of the Sturbridge Senior Center for Herbfest on October 21, 2021**

Salli Greene, host of Herbfest, came before the Board and requested the use of the grounds at the Senior Center for the 2021 Herbfest. She stated that this year's event has been cancelled due to COVID-19 restrictions and the new date of the event would be October 2, 2021. She mentioned that Director Leslie Wong of the Senior Center supports the request. Ms. Greene asked if there would be cost associated with the event. Mr. Bridges stated that they would discuss that with Leslie Wong.

**Motion: To approve the request of Salli Greene to host Herbfest at the Sturbridge Senior Center on October 2, 2021 contingent upon arrangements for insurance and a police detail By: Selectman Suprenant**

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

**Roll Call Vote: Vice Chair Dowling: YES, Selectman Dunnigan: YES, Selectman Suprenant: YES, Selectman Kaitbenski: YES, Chair Blanchard: YES**

**Vote: 5-0**

**Consideration and possible action on a request for a water bill abatement for 61 Brookfield Road**

Angie Ellison, 61 Brookfield Road, came before the Board to appeal her most recent water bill totaling \$762.29. She stated that her prior two bills were \$287.26 and \$253.09. She stated that she has always paid her water bill consistently, and never disputed. Ms. Ellison said that she has issues with this particular quarterly bill because the amount reflected what she is used to paying in an entire year. She said this was for water use in the middle of winter, with no leaks, at a time when very little water was being used. She informed the Board that there is likely something wrong with the meter or the reading system because there is no way a family of three can use over 400 cubic feet per day. She stated that she would like to have the meter tested but the cost of having it tested is why she hasn't proceeded. Vice Chair Dowling stated the amount of the bill seems extremely high. Chair Blanchard stated that the Board goes by the process of denying abatements unless it's proved that the Town is liable.

**Motion: In light of Covid- 19, if the resident so wishes, the Town will have the meter tested and wave the testing fee regardless of the outcome By: Vice Chair Dowling**

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

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Discussion: Selectman Suprenant stated the probability of it being a faulty meter is very little because these meters are very accurate, adding that the amount of water in question here could be a very slow toilet leak.

**Roll Call Vote: Vice Chair Dowling: YES, Selectman Dunnigan: NO, Selectman Suprenant: NO, Selectman Kaitbenski: YES, Chair Blanchard: NO**

**Vote: 2-3 (Selectman Suprenant, Selectman Dunnigan, Chair Blanchard Opposed)**

**Motion: To approve the abatement and charge the resident the average of the previous months bills**

**By: Vice Chair Dowling**

**No 2<sup>nd</sup>**

**Motion Fails**

Vice Chair Dowling suggested that they place an agenda item in the future to see if there is any way to warn residents after one use that their bill is much higher than normal, so they don't have to wait to see a very high amount after a quarter.

**Consideration and possible concurrence on the appointment of Corey Giguere as a Police Officer for the Sturbridge Police Department at a starting wage of \$27.23 per hour**

Mr. Bridges stated that he had the opportunity to meet Corey Giguere and he would be an outstanding addition to the Police Department. Interim Chief Dessert stated that Mr. Giguere participated in the selection process and he stood out and became the number one candidate for the position. Mr. Giguere said he cannot wait for this opportunity and he's looking forward to meeting everyone in person. Chair Blanchard asked if Mr. Giguere was planning to move closer to Sturbridge and he said absolutely in the near future.

**Motion: To concur with the appointment of Corey Giguere as a Police Officer for the Town of Sturbridge at a starting wage of \$27.23 per hour effective July 21, 2020 By: Selectman Kaitbenski 2<sup>nd</sup>: Selectman Dunnigan**

**Roll Call Vote: Vice Chair Dowling: YES, Selectman Dunnigan: YES, Selectman Suprenant: YES, Selectman Kaitbenski: YES, Chair Blanchard: YES**

**Vote: 5-0**

**Consideration and possible action on the request for the removal of a tree at the Sturbridge Public Safety Facility**

Chair Blanchard stated that Anthony Crane, Tree Warden, had written the Board a letter stating that he visited the Safety Complex and evaluated the Ash tree located on the right corner of the building. In his opinion the tree is in serious decline and he feels that due to the limited space between the sidewalk and utilities in that location, replanting of anything other than grass or some form would not be advisable.

**Motion: To approve the removal of the ash tree on the right side of the Public Safety Building By: Selectman Suprenant**

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

**Roll Call Vote: Vice Chair Dowling: NO, Selectman Dunnigan: YES, Selectman Suprenant: YES, Selectman Kaitbenski: YES, Chair Blanchard: YES**

**Vote: 4-1 (Vice Chair Dowling Opposed)**

**Consideration and possible action on accepting a donation from William Tetreault in the amount of \$64.00 for Fire Department purposes**

**Motion: To accept the donation of \$64.00 from William Tetreault for the Fire Department with the gratitude of the Board of Selectmen By: Selectman Suprenant**

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

**Roll Call Vote: Vice Chair Dowling: YES, Selectman Dunnigan: YES, Selectman Suprenant: YES, Selectman Kaitbenski: YES, Chair Blanchard: YES**

**Vote: 5-0**

**Consideration and possible action on approving a multi-year electricity purchase agreement**

Mr. Bridges explained that the Town is currently in the final months of electricity contracts for all town buildings including Burgess Elementary, but excluding Tantasqua. He said that they can refresh the rates and lock in as of July 21, 2020 with a goal of a long term (3-year) contract but if the market is unsettled, a short term agreement may be more advantageous until the long term picture settles down. He suggested any pricing on July 21<sup>st</sup> be reviewed with the Board Chair and then locked in. Selectman Suprenant brought up going all green, stating that if his math is correct it would be about \$6,000.00 more per year. He stated Sturbridge is a green community so it would make sense to do so. Mr. Bridges stated that if the Board makes that decision then the pricing would be available. Vice Chair Dowling stated if they are able to compare the two its worth looking into, because she thinks it would be great to go all green. Mr. Bridges stated he could bring the comparison to the next Board meeting. Chair Blanchard said they will reschedule this discussion to the next meeting.

**Old Business**

**Consideration and possible action on salary adjustments for the Sergeants of the Sturbridge Police Department during the Interim Chief period**

Chair Blanchard stated that she appreciated the report but she was looking for more detail. Selectman Dunnigan asked how long this would be taking place. Interim Chief Dessert said it has to do with the Police Chief selection process, but as soon as they can get administration back in place, the rates will go back to what they were.

**Motion: To approve the agreement between the sergeants of the Sturbridge Police Department, the Sturbridge Police Association, and the Town for the temporary increase in the rate of pay for the department sergeants and to do so retroactive to May 14, 2020 and to end with resumption of one fulltime lieutenant By: Vice Chair Dowling**

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

**Roll Call Vote: Vice Chair Dowling: YES, Selectman Dunnigan: YES, Selectman Suprenant: YES, Selectman Kaitbenski: YES, Chair Blanchard: YES**

**Vote: 5-0**

**Old Mill Pond Dam update**

Mr. Bridges informed the Board that on October 21, 2019 the Department of Conservation and Recreation accepted the Dam Registration form which determined that the Old Mill Pond Dam was owned by the Town of Sturbridge and Sturbridge Market Realty, LLC. He said that on February 3, 2020 the Town received a Certificate of Non-Compliance and Dam Safety Order which determined, that the dam was Structurally Deficient and in Poor condition. Mr. Bridges stated that on March 3, 2020 he sent a request to Ms. Emily Caruso of the Department of Conservation and Recreation requesting an extension of time to address the items in the February 3, 2020 Certificate of Non-Compliance and Dam Safety Order and on March 10, 2020 he received an email back from Ms. Caruso granting a six-month delay in the requirements outlined in the February 3, 2020 Certificate of Non-Compliance and Dam Safety Order. He stated that this means the Phase

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I inspection report is due in September and the Phase II report is due in February of 2021. Mr. Bridges informed the Board that Butch Jackson, Department of Public Works Director, is seeking engineering quotes to conduct the Phase I Study. He said the long term goal would be to breach the dam and eliminate the hazard, but given the conversations they have had with engineers, this may be an expensive and extensive task. He said that the Phase II inspection may give insight on the scope of such a project.

Selectman Suprenant stated that when you breach a dam you have to consider who might have control of the water rights.

#### **COVID-19 Update**

Mr. Bridges mentioned that Town Hall and Center Office Building are still not ready to open to the public for full time hours, and the hang up is the cleaning of the buildings. He stated that Robyn Chrabasz, Facilities Coordinator, is proposing that the Town custodians be pulled from the library and replace the library with a professional cleaning service. He said the Ms. Chrabasz would like to use Cosmic Kleaning of Southbridge and he asks for the Board to authorize this company for funds up to \$1,530.00 per week. He stated that these would be Covid-19 funds. Vice Chair Dowling stated she fully supports it because this is exactly what the Covid-19 money is supposed to be used for.

**Motion: To support the Town Administrators request to spend \$1,530.00 per week for cleaning services paid for from the Covid- 19 Government reimbursement funds By: Vice Chair Dowling**

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

**Roll Call Vote: Vice Chair Dowling: YES, Selectman Dunnigan: YES, Selectman Suprenant: YES, Selectman Kaitbenski: YES, Chair Blanchard: YES**

**Vote: 5-0**

Vice Chair Dowling asked if there was any update on the Department of Environmental Protection's additional testing to the water on McGilpin Road. Mr. Bridges stated he reached out to the State in February of 2020 and they said they were working with Department of Environmental Protection to assess, but he will follow up again.

#### **New Business**

None

#### **Correspondence**

Selectman Suprenant read through the correspondence.

#### **Approval of Minutes**

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**Motion: To approve the minutes of July 6, 2020 as amended By: Vice Chair Dowling**

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

**Roll Call Vote: Vice Chair Dowling: YES, Selectman Dunnigan: ABSTAINED, Selectman Suprenant: YES, Selectman Kaitbenski: YES, Chair Blanchard: YES**

**Vote: 4-0-1 (Selectman Dunnigan Abstained)**

#### **Citizen's forum**

NONE

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**Adjourn**

**Motion: To adjourn at 8:17 By: Selectman Kaitbenski**

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

**Roll Call Vote: Vice Chair Dowling: YES, Selectman Dunnigan: YES, Selectman Suprenant: YES,  
Selectman Kaitbenski: YES, Chair Blanchard: YES**

**Vote: 5-0**

**Adjourned at 8:17 pm**

**Minutes prepared by: Andrea Mensen**

**Clerk of the Board:**

 Date signed: 07-18-2020