

November 16, 2020

**Board of Selectmen
November 16, 2020
Town Hall**

Present:

AMENDED

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

Staff:

Jeff Bridges, Town Administrator
Alex McConnon, Administrative Assistant

Chair Blanchard called the meeting to order at 6:32pm.

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 on the Town's website an audio or video recording, transcript, or other comprehensive record of the proceedings as soon as possible after the meeting.

Chair Blanchard read the Agenda.

Moment of Silence

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

Public Service Announcements

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Vice Chair Dowling thanked everyone who participated in the Home of the Brave 5k saying that there was a total of 51 participants and thanked Sturbridge Coffee House and the Publick House for donating to the cause. The Selectmen also wished everyone a safe and Happy Thanksgiving.

Presentation: Historical Commission Preservation Awards

Ms. Barbara Search of the Historical Commission thanked the Town Hall staff for their help with putting the awards together. There was a total of 29 historical preservation awards and 3 special awards.

Ms. Search announced that there were two historical surveys conducted. The first one was by the Pioneer Valley Planning Commission and the second one was by the Public Archeology Laboratory with matching funds from the Massachusetts Historical Commission. Over 200 buildings were surveyed and from those surveys, that is where the Historic Commission is giving their awards from. The recent surveys that have been conducted are available to the public on the Historic Commission page on the town website and at MAGRIS, which is the database at the Massachusetts Historical Commission, under the Secretary of State's website. If any owner or member of the public has additional or conflicting information, please contact the Historic Commission or the Massachusetts Historical Commission who will add that information to the survey.

The Historical Commission presented the awards to all of the attendees.

Department Reports

Police Department

Interim Chief Dessert reported for the months of August, September, and October 2020. Highlights included in August, the Police Department had their annual senior citizen cookout with COVID-19 regulations in place, which was a big success. In September, there was a memorial honoring Officer Richard Dupree and in October, the Police Department installed several car seats at 420 Main Street for families in need.

Building Department

Delayed until the next Board of Selectmen meeting on December 7, 2020.

Town Administrator

Mr. Bridges spoke about the Route 20 Corridor project saying that they received a confirmation letter from MassDOT stating the obligations of DOT and the town. The Town of Sturbridge will work with CMRPC on construction funding through the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) process. Mr. Bridges said the timeframe for TIP funding is in 2026.

Mr. Bridges also reported on the Fiske Hill Sewer service by Southbridge saying that with the new senior housing mobile home park that is proposed for the area, town staff have been looking into the sewer service. The staff found that they are at sewer capacity within the Town of Southbridge

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and per the Town of Southbridge; Sturbridge would have to pay to upgrade the line. Mr. Bridges, Mr. Butch Jackson of the DPW, Mr. Shane Moody of the Water and Sewer Department, and Ms. Barbara Barry of the Finance Department are exploring the possibility of constructing a new pump station to allow Sturbridge to sewer the area. Mr. Jackson and Mr. Moody are currently looking into getting engineering quotes.

Mr. Bridges said The Town of Sturbridge has ordered the new Fire Truck from Allegiance Fire and Rescue with an anticipated delivery date of April 2021. In addition, Allegiant sold the Town of Sturbridge a used truck formerly owned by the Town of Ludlow for use for \$1.00. The Town of Sturbridge can now return their current loaner truck back to Spencer.

Vice Chair Dowling asked why the Route 20 Corridor project was looking at the year 2026. Mr. Bridges said that the TIP program is a 5-year process to get funding in under construction. Vice Chair Dowling also asked if the proposed sewer pump station to service the possible development off Fisk Hill would include the sewer that is currently going to Southbridge. Mr. Bridges confirmed that they want to collect all of the sewage that is going to Southbridge and send to the Sturbridge wastewater plant.

Consideration and Possible action on a water bill abatement request from Burgess Elementary School.

Mr. Paul Guerin, Assistant Principal of Burgess Elementary represented Burgess Elementary School. Mr. Bridges said they are looking for \$17,881.25 of relief. Mr. Guerin said that they found a discrepancy in their billing and that their FY2020 October bill was \$36,501.72. The irrigation system at Burgess Elementary had a water leak, which caused an extremely large water bill. Mr. Guerin also said that COVID-19 restricted the use of their building for those months. Mr. Guerin requested an abatement saying that they were allotted \$48,000 for the year. Their COVID-19 expenses are also escalating and said relief from the town would be appreciated. Mr. Guerin also had a second request to install a second meter at Burgess' expense.

Chair Blanchard said she would not be in favor of the second request because many people in town also have irrigation systems and would want to also have meters installed as well but said that the Board of Selectmen could look at Mr. Guerin's first request. Vice Chair Dowling agreed with Chair Blanchard on his request for a second meter. She is in favor of an abatement, however. Vice Chair Dowling suggested that the Board of Selectmen look at this topic as a whole for a policy decision instead of individually on a case-by-case basis in the future.

Selectman Suprenant asked how many irrigation meters are in existence. Mr. Moody said he believes the condominiums are the only ones with the irrigation meters where they have numerous meters on different places there. Mr. Guerin said they plan to install a meter anyways. Selectmen Kaitbenski agreed with Vice Chair Dowling saying that if they give it to Burgess then every resident will want to put one on but this is a different situation since this is our school and they are already over budget. Selectman Dunnigan agreed as well, saying he does not want to set a precedent that these will be granted for everyone but is in favor of granting it for Burgess Elementary.

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Vice Chair Dowling asked about the process in terms of warning users if their bill is getting higher than their typical average. Mr. Bridges said he is working on a process of meter readings and software integration without producing a bill to get the numbers produced in the system. Per Mr. Bridges, they will bring this information to the Board of Selectmen by the end of December.

Motion: For the Board of Selectmen to grant the abatement to Burgess Elementary School on their water bill in the amount of \$17,881.25.

By: Vice Chair Dowling

2nd: Selectman Kaitbenski

Roll Call Vote:

Chair Blanchard: NO, Vice Chair Dowling: YES, Selectman Suprenant: NO, Selectman Kaitbenski: YES, Selectman Dunnigan: YES

Vote: 3-2

Consideration and possible action on the acceptance of a donation of personal protective equipment for the Sturbridge Police and Fire Departments from the Sturbridge Rotary Club.

Motion: To accept the donation of 1,000 face masks from the Sturbridge Rotary Club with gratitude.

By: Selectman Suprenant

2nd: Selectman Dunnigan

Roll Call Vote:

Chair Blanchard: YES, Vice Chair Dowling: YES, Selectman Suprenant: YES, Selectman Kaitbenski: YES, Selectman Dunnigan: YES

Vote: 5-0

Consideration and possible action on the acceptance of an \$100 donation from CMG Environmental to the Sturbridge Fire Department.

Motion: To accept the donation of \$100 from CMG Environmental with gratitude.

By: Selectman Suprenant

2nd: Selectman Kaitbenski

Roll Call Vote:

Chair Blanchard: YES, Vice Chair Dowling: YES, Selectman Suprenant: YES, Selectman Kaitbenski: YES, Selectman Dunnigan: YES

Vote: 5-0

Consideration and possible action on the First Amendment to Host Community Agreement for Caregiver Patient Connection, LLC changing name to Local Roots NE, Inc.

Mr. Bridges said Caregiver Patient Connection, LLC went through name change and change of management structure for tax purposes, which required the Host Community Agreement to be amended. KP Law wrote the amendment and Caregiver Patient Connection, LLC submitted the necessary paperwork to change their name to Local Roots NE, Inc.

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Motion: To approve the First Amendment to Host Community Agreement for Caregiver Patient Connection, LLC.

By: Selectman Dunnigan

2nd: Selectman Kaitbenski

Roll Call Vote:

Chair Blanchard: YES, Vice Chair Dowling: YES, Selectman Suprenant: YES, Selectman Kaitbenski: YES, Selectman Dunnigan: YES

Vote: 5-0

Consideration and possible action on the contracting for snow plow services for winter of 2020 – 2021.

Motion: To approve the list of snowplow contractors for winter 2020-2021.

By: Selectman Kaitbenski

2nd: Selectman Dunnigan

Roll Call Vote:

Chair Blanchard: YES, Vice Chair Dowling: YES, Selectman Suprenant: YES, Selectman Kaitbenski: YES, Selectman Dunnigan: YES

Vote: 5-0

Consideration and possible action on the confirmation of the appointment of David Lamontagne as Foreman for the Department of Public Works.

Mr. Jackson said Mr. Lamontagne is well versed in a lot of construction and water work. Mr. Lamontagne also does private work with his own equipment and Mr. Jackson is looking forward to Mr. Lamontagne in this new role. Mr. Lamontagne thanked everyone and said he is looking forward to making a positive impact in the DPW department and the community.

Motion: Confirmation of the appointment of David Lamontagne as Foreman for the Department of Public Works effective November 17, 2020 at a pay rate of \$31.08.

By: Selectman Suprenant

2nd: Selectman Kaitbenski

Roll Call Vote:

Chair Blanchard: YES, Vice Chair Dowling: YES, Selectman Suprenant: YES, Selectman Kaitbenski: YES, Selectman Dunnigan: YES

Vote: 5-0

Consideration and possible action on the Massachusetts Interlocal Insurance Associations proposal for a two-year rate renewal.

Mr. Bridges said MIIA is proposing a 2-year rate agreement. The first year would be a zero increase except for changes in coverage, but current rates would stay the same. The second year would be no more than a 2.5% increase depending upon adding or removing property or payroll limitations, etc. Mr. Bridges recommended accepting the 2-year agreement.

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Selectman Suprenant asked if the town takes advantage of the credits that the MIIA rewards program offers. Ms. Robyn Chrabascz, Facilities Coordinator, said that last year the rewards equaled a dollar value of \$4,652 and that they are looking at for submitting to use for a grant. Options with that money could be purchasing security cameras at the recreation facilities, hazardous materials removal, or the town could also use it towards their premium if they did not want to purchase anything from it. Ms. Chrabascz said that she also submitted to a Risk Management grant for up to \$10,000. Ms. Chrabascz said that last year, the town received about \$8,000 for purchase of water-loss irrigation equipment for the facilities department and got shop vacuums and dehumidifiers. The DPW received confined entry space equipment to enter manholes. Ms. Chrabascz said she submitted to another grant for \$9,000 for a manhole lift cover and more security cameras in the public safety complex request.

Motion: To accept Massachusetts Interlocal Insurance Associations proposal for a two-year rate renewal.

By: Selectman Suprenant

2nd: Selectman Kaitbenski

Roll Call Vote:

Chair Blanchard: YES, Vice Chair Dowling: YES, Selectman Suprenant: YES, Selectman Kaitbenski: YES, Selectman Dunnigan: YES

Vote:5-0

Old Business

COVID-19 Update

Mr. Bridges said that Burgess Elementary put in for funding for the enhanced air duct cleaning and ionizers for the HVAC system. It is a Municipal Building and the Department of Revenue said it is an applicable use. Mr. Bridges is hoping to pay for this with COVID-19 funds. Mr. Bridges said the ionizers are \$21,144 and the duct cleaning is \$85,800. Mr. Guerin said they had the opportunity to get their ducts cleaned and the building has been operational for 8 to 9 years. Per Mr. Guerin, after it is cleaned, they will install the ionizers. Per Mr. Guerin, they are looking into four air changes per hour and they are hoping to lower it to lower their utility cost. Vice Chair Dowling supported both uses of COVID-19 money for these two items and said that even once COVID-19 is under control, these ionizers could possibly help with reducing cold and flu season which could mean less sick days for students and staff. Selectman Kaitbenski asked if this was a step in the schools goal to get the students back to attending full-time. Mr. Guerin confirmed, saying that Phase 1 is the hybrid model and is hoping that will happen in Phase 2. Per Mr. Guerin, they will be discussing it internally and with the school board at an upcoming meeting.

Motion: To authorize the use of COVID-19 care money to Burgess Elementary school to have the ducts cleaned in amount of \$85,800 and to purchase and install the ionizers in the amount of \$21,144.

By: Vice Chair Dowling

2nd: Selectman Kaitbenski

Chair Blanchard: YES, Vice Chair Dowling: YES, Selectman Suprenant: YES, Selectman Kaitbenski: YES, Selectman Dunnigan: YES

5-0

Mr. Bridges said in the last week, he heard good news about potential vaccines that require two shots, 28 days apart. Mr. Bridges asked the Board of Selectmen to consider allowing vaccine days where town employees could use these days as a paid day off so they would not have to spend a weekend or sick time to get the vaccine and also encourage staff to go get vaccinated.

Mr. Bridges visited with the Board of Health about COVID-19 testing at the schools and there was a program that the state sponsored, but the schools did not pick it up. There is still more research to do. He also announced that the Town Hall is open to visitors by appointment only starting November 16, 2020.

Vice Chair Dowling wanted to pursue getting ionizers for the Senior Center and Town Hall saying it would especially be good for the seniors to get purified air and said it would be appropriate use COVID-19 money. Ms. Chrabascz said that they can spend up to \$150,000 on Capital Improvement projects and the town has not met that threshold yet. Ms. Chrabascz said because of oil burning furnaces in most of the buildings, it becomes complicated. Ms. Chrabascz is looking into individual air purifiers for the buildings. Mr. Bridges said they will keep looking for ways to improve the buildings.

Septage

Mr. Moody said that the town is covering its general cost by what the town is charging. Mr. Moody did research to see the outcome for if the town raised the price by a penny and found that the town would lose business since another plant 8 miles away is charging the 6 cents a gallon. After his research, Mr. Moody recommended not changing the price.

Selectman Suprenant did some research of his own at different large plants in the area and found that Sturbridge cannot treat septage for 6 cents a gallon. Selectman Suprenant said if the town takes in the capital cost of the plant and the operating cost, it would be around 9 to 10 cents a gallon to treat septage. Selectman Suprenant asked where the sludge goes and Mr. Moody said it goes to Cranston, which is cheaper to go to the Veolia plant. Mr. Moody said all plants are different saying that water from the septage goes through the plant but does not have a big effect on the loading. Mr. Moody said the Board of Selectmen could decide but said that if they raise the price, the town will lose business and it will incur the cost to haul the sludge from the plant. Chair Blanchard agreed with Mr. Moody's expertise and recommendation and the Board of Selectmen will make a decision once they receive more information.

508 International

Mr. Bridges researched the survey cost for 205A Podunk Pike and reached out to KP Law to see if they would use CPC funds for that survey. Per Mr. Bridges, because the parcel is not an open space parcel, it would not be a good candidate for CPC funds. The court hearing on the 27 Ladd Road parcel cease and desist filing is on hold until the owners finish their application with the Conservation Commission. Mr. Bridges said the owners have not had motorized events on the property since the town informed them that that type of use was not allowed.

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Old Business

Vice Chair Dowling asked about appointment for the Police Chief and asked if they will decide at the upcoming meeting. Mr. Bridges said that the goal at the next meeting is to hear back from each member of the committee individually on whom they think will be the best fit for the position. Following that, there be a background check on the finalist. Mr. Bridges said he hopes there will be a decision made before the end of the year.

New Business

Mr. Bridges said that regarding the right of first refusal letter for 44 Allen Road, KP law found two deficiencies in the letter, which have been resolved. Mr. Bridges asked KP Law if there needs to be a public hearing if there is no interest about acquiring the property and is waiting to hear back from them.

Mr. Bridges also said he heard from the Senior Center that they got 100 mini pies donated by Table Talk of Worcester and asked the Board of Selectmen to accept the donation.

Motion: To accept the donation with gratitude.

By: Selectman Kaitbenski

2nd: Vice Chair Dowling

Chair Blanchard: YES, Vice Chair Dowling: YES, Selectman Suprenant: YES, Selectman Kaitbenski: YES, Selectman Dunnigan: YES

Vote: 5-0

Mr. Bridges said RLS Logistics submitted letter of intent for tax abatements for TIF for the cold storage facility. Per Mr. Bridges, part of the process is picking someone from the Board of Selectmen to be member to serve. Selectman Kaitbenski offered to represent the Board of Selectmen.

Motion: Designating Selectman Kaitbenski to represent on TIPS review Board.

By: Vice Chair Dowling

2nd: Selectman Suprenant

Chair Blanchard: YES, Vice Chair Dowling: YES, Selectman Suprenant: YES, Selectman Kaitbenski: YES, Selectman Dunnigan: YES

Vote: 5-0

Mr. Bridges said on Thursday, November 19, Friday, November 20, and Monday, November 23, he is taking vacation days as long as there is no objection. The Board did not object.

Correspondence

Selectman Suprenant read the correspondence.

Mr. Bridges said that he received a fee relief letter from Champeau-Vilandre American Legion Post 109 for their yearly renewal, which is \$720. Chair Blanchard said she is hesitant on granting

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this because then everyone would request it. Selectman Kaitbenski agreed with Chair Blanchard but suggested that the Board of Selectmen could look into another way to help them, whether it be a fundraiser or some sort of form of advertising. Vice Chair Dowling agreed with Selectman Kaitbenski and said that Champeau-Vilandre American Legion is the only ones asking for help right now. Selectman Kaitbenski said instead of offering financial help, maybe they could provide some sort of exposure help.

Approval of Minutes

November 2, 2020.

Motion: To approve minutes of November 2, 2020, as amended.

By: Selectman Kaitbenski

2nd: Selectman Dunnigan

Roll Call Vote:

Vice Chair Dowling: YES, Selectman Dunnigan: YES, Selectman Suprenant: YES, Chair Blanchard: YES, Selectman Kaitbenski: YES

Vote: 5-0

Citizen's forum

NONE

Adjourn

Motion: To adjourn at 8:27 p.m.

By: Selectman Kaitbenski

2nd: Chair Blanchard

Roll Call Vote:

Vice Chair Dowling: YES, Selectman Dunnigan: YES, Selectman Kaitbenski: YES, Selectman Suprenant: YES, Chair Blanchard: YES

Vote: 5-0

Adjourned at 8:27 p.m.

Minutes prepared by: Alex McConnon

Clerk of the Board:



Date signed: 12-21-2020