

December 7, 2020

**Board of Selectmen
December 7, 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 6:29 p.m.

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.

Public Service Announcements

Vice Chair Dowling spoke about the Home of the Brave 5k and thanked the Publick House and Sturbridge Coffee House for their donations to the cause. There was a total of \$2,000 raised and \$1,000 each will go to Project New Hope and Veterans, Inc. Chair Blanchard also announced that

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the Fire Department is sponsoring Santa driving through town and the public can go on the website for the time and route.

Moment of Silence

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

Public Hearing - Brush it Off, LLC – On-Premise Wine & Malt License and a Location Change for the premises located at 559 Main Street, Suite 206-207, Fiskdale, MA 01518 to 559 Main Street, Suite 104, Fiskdale, MA 01518

Selectmen Suprenant read the notice as advertised in the Southbridge Evening News. Denise Morgan from Brush it Off, LLC said that a bigger space in the building became available and that Suite 206-207 makes it difficult during COVID-19 for private parties because it is one large room. She said this new space in Suite 104 has a patio where she can seat customers and be COVID-19 complainant to do outside events. She also plans to pair up with Stone and Sparrow Café to paint during the spring. Per Ms. Morgan, the new space has three sections where people could be separated. Ms. Morgan stated that her option was to either put money into her current space or move downstairs to Suite 104.

Motion: To close the public hearing on the liquor license for Brush it Off, LLC.

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

Motion: To approve the amendment to the liquor license for Brush it Off, LLC that they are seeking to move from their current location at 559 Main Street, Suite 206-207, Fiskdale, MA 01518 to 559 Main Street, Suite 104, Fiskdale, MA 01518.

By: Selectman Suprenant

2nd: Vice Chair Dowling

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

Vote: 4-0-1 (Selectman Dunnigan abstained)

Presentation: Special Recognition by the Sturbridge Historical Commission to Bob Briere.

Barbara Search of the Historical Commission presented the award to Mr. Briere for a lifetime of efforts to share Sturbridge history.

Mr. Briere was presented with a plaque and appreciation for all he has done for Sturbridge over the years. Ms. Search read the plaque to Mr. Briere and the rest of the group and said that they will safely present it in person in front of the Town Hall on December 8, 2020.

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Mr. Briere said that he has lived here for over 80 years and is honored to receive this award and thanked the Historical Commission.

Presentation: Housing Plan Presentation by CMRPC and the Housing Partnership

Jean Bubon of the Planning Department introduced this presentation by asking the Board of Selectmen to adopt this plan so that they can bring it to the Department of Housing and Community Development for comment and approval, saying that the Planning Board has approved it already.

Emily Glaubitz of the Central Massachusetts Regional Planning Commission (CMRPC) gave the presentation and said they have been working on this plan since summer 2019. Selectman Suprenant asked if it was a plan that was achievable with 19 units a year to achieve Safe Harbor status. Ms. Glaubitz said the town would not be penalized if they do not achieve this goal and many of the goals that they recommend have bylaws and other parts that will help them get to the 19 units. Ron Barron of the CMRPC said there are ways that the town can meet this goal that is not 19 condominiums in one year. He stated that with the two-year period, there could be a chunk in one year and a chunk in another year. Vice Chair Dowling expressed her concern and doubt about the town's ability to reach these yearly targets. Vice Chair Dowling asked if there were no penalty if the town does not reach the target goals in the plan and Ms. Glaubitz confirmed. Vice Chair Dowling also asked if the influx of younger people is going up at a decreasing rate and Mr. Barron said confirmed, saying there is an increase in the number of families but not enough to offset the aging population to change the trajectory. Mr. Barron said that although there is no penalty, the town would need to have the plan in place and make a good faith effort towards reaching those goals.

Vice Chair Dowling asked how to convert an existing house and turn it into an affordable house. Ms. Bubon said with a housing trust, it is possible purchase a single family or two family house and deed restrict the property and the best course of action is to work with developers to provide incentives to develop particular types of housing. Mr. Barron said a benefit of the housing trust fund is that it is a good tool for purchasing properties and placing them under a deed restriction.

Motion: For the Board of Selectmen to adopt the 2020 housing production plan.

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

Department Reports:

Building Department

Nelson Burlingame, Building Inspector & Zoning Enforcement Officer reported that the biggest item in September/October was 508 International and listed the number of permits that were done

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for those two months. He also listed the different goals of the businesses in the area and what their plans are.

Vice Chair Dowling asked if there was a follow up from 508 International's attorney about the list of activities contemplated on the property as requested by Mr. Burlingame's letter. Mr. Bridges said that he spoke with them on the phone and they are still reviewing the letter.

Department of Public Works

Butch Jackson, DPW Director reported on October/November. Per Mr. Jackson, the DPW started getting ready for snow and ice in October and they put the voting drop box in. The DPW is planning to do pesticides training to get staff licensed so they can do it themselves. He also said the new Foreman is doing well.

Vice Chair Dowling asked if there would be a crew on Route 20 to do the sidewalks for the snow. Mr. Jackson said they went all the way to Southbridge and they will finish the rest on December 8, 2020.

Town Administrator

Due to Christmas falling on a Friday this year, Mr. Bridges asked the Board of the Selectmen for their approval of the Town Hall being closed on Thursday, December 24th and Friday, December 25th. Mr. Bridges stated that the non-unionized staff could make up the extra hour owed by working until 5:00 p.m. one night or use vacation time. Mr. Bridges also stated that he was looking to close at 1:00 p.m. New Year's Eve, December 31st. Vice Chair Dowling said she does not think it is necessary to have the staff make up the extra hour since everyone has been working hard and it has been a tough year with COVID-19.

Motion: To approve the memorandum by Mr. Bridges indicating what the holiday hours will be with the exception that hour that would need to be made up with the additional hour of vacation will be waived without prejudice.

By: Vice Chair Dowling

2nd: Selectmen Kaitbenski

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

Vote: 5-0

Mr. Bridges also said that Heal, Inc. has made a request that the town provide a letter with the their local impacts by the facility being in town for their license renewal which was reviewed by K-P Law and asked for comments on the letter before it was sent.

Motion: To have Mr. Bridges sign the letter requested by Heal, Inc. and send it.

By: Selectmen Kaitbenski

2nd: Selectman Suprenant

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

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Mr. Bridges talked about the Hotel and Meal Tax Revenue analysis by Economic Development and Tourism Coordinator Terry Masterson, which was an analysis of the Hotel and Meal tax revenues for the Town of Sturbridge and comparisons to others in Massachusetts communities. Vice Chair Dowling said she was pleased that the Town of Sturbridge was only down 15%. Mr. Bridges said the meals tax seemed okay but the lodging tax suffered. Chair Blanchard added that there has been a lot of outdoor dining and take-out.

Mr. Bridges reiterated that the town will have a parking ban and also stated that the town did not get the MassWorks grant for 501 Main Street and that the town will seek construction funding from a different grant source or at the town meeting in June. He also told the Board of Selectmen that he received the budget process information from the school committee for their review.

Mr. Bridges also talked about the new sewer pump station to serve Fiskdale area that is currently served by Southbridge. The design would be \$179,000 and said that the town would not be able to start the process until the town meeting in June.

Consideration and possible acceptance of the resignation of Christopher Kane from the Sturbridge Police Department.

Interim Chief Dessert reported that Mr. Kane, Dispatcher said the cost of his health insurance was more than he was anticipating and that he will be seeking employment elsewhere.

Motion: Acceptance of the letter of resignation of Christopher Kane from the Sturbridge Police Department effective November 16, 2020.

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 acceptance of resignation of Jacqueline Becker from the Sturbridge Fire Department.

Chair Blanchard said that there was a letter from Chief Grasso saying that Ms. Becker stated that she does not have time to commit to the position.

Motion: Acceptance of resignation of Jacqueline Becker from the Sturbridge Fire Department with regrets.

By: Selectman Dunnigan

2nd: Selectman Kaitbenski

Roll Call Vote:

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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 the following donations to the Town of Sturbridge – Council on Aging from Mr. Don Taft of the Quaboag Quacumquasit Lake Association:

- Five (\$40.00) gift cards and four (\$25.00) gift cards to Stop & Shop
- Two (one for \$20.00 and one for \$25.00) to Big Y
- One (\$20.00) gift card to Shaw's
- 25 frozen turkeys

Motion: To accept the donation 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 acceptance of the donation of 36 Thanksgiving meals donated to the Town of Sturbridge – Council on Aging by Steve Small, proprietor of Old Ville Grille and a resident, Craig Moran.

Motion: To accept the donation with gratitude.

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 an amendment to the contract with Veolia to include repairs and improvements for ground water inflow and infiltration.

Mr. Jackson said that they have a mandate by DEP to do an inflow and infiltration (I&I) of the system and DPW put in a proposal in for a 10-year program. Mr. Jackson said there are two proposals from Veolia and Weston & Sampson. Mr. Jackson recommended staying with Veolia because they know the town's system, and the money was already appropriated for 2020. Mr. Jackson explained what I&I was, saying that when there are cracks in pipes, or manholes that are leaking, all the ground water goes into the sewer system and that this is a program to stop that infiltration. Selectman Suprenant asked if the program would investigate sump pumps. Mr. Jackson confirmed. Mr. Bridges said the first year cost is \$75,000 but the subsequent years is \$70,000. Mr. Bridges said instead of a 10-year plan, they are working with Veolia to spend \$75,000 with \$70,000 subsequent years after. Mr. Bridges said the most that the town is spending in one year is \$75,000.

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Motion: To amend the contract with Veolia to approve the first amendment to the agreement for service between the town and Veolia for inclusion of the I&I study and mitigation improvements on the towns waste water collection system.

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 a right-of-first refusal for 44 Allen Road – Notice of Intent to Sell Pursuant to G.L. c.61A – Consideration of the Notice received by the Town to sell for residential use and remove from classification approximately ¼ acre of the property. Votes may be taken.

Mr. Bridges explained that the Planning Board/Conservation Commission is not recommending acquiring the property and asked the Board of Selectmen to release the property and to pursue not purchasing it.

Motion: For the town to waive the right-of-first refusal on 44 Allen Road.

By: Selectman Kaitbenski

2nd: Selectman Suprenant

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 a Chaplain program with the Sturbridge Police/Fire Departments.

Interim Chief Dessert said there would be local clergy who volunteer to be part of this program. He explained that if families or an officer needs someone to talk to for privacy, they would be able to participate in this program. Interim Chief Dessert has been working with three pastors in town, and they are all excited to get this program up and running and it will be the first time Sturbridge has had this program.

Selectman Suprenant asked about the number of chaplains in the program and if anyone who wanted to join as a chaplain who went through the program, if they could and Interim Chief Dessert said that if anyone from the community wanted to be part of the program, they will be welcome. Selectman Suprenant stated that the program is open to all religions per the policy and wanted the public to know that. Selectman Suprenant also asked if the three initial chaplains that have been proposed went through the police academy training program. Interim Chief Dessert said one of them has, one is an active duty chaplain in the U.S. Air force, and one is currently in the process of getting into the program.

Motion: To adopt the policy and the three proposed initial chaplains to adopt the recommendation of the Police Chief and Town Administrator.

By: Selectman Suprenant

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2nd: Vice Chair Dowling

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

Per Mr. Bridges, Robyn Chrabasz, Facilities coordinator explored possibilities for ionizers in each building and the factors on the heating systems. Mr. Bridges said that it does not look hopeful to do broadly across all of the town buildings. Vice Chair Dowling asked if there are any air purifiers in the Senior Center and Mr. Bridges said that he was not sure if they are integral through the systems. Vice Chair Dowling suggested using COVID-19 money for air purifiers for the community room and where the seniors eat.

Mr. Bridges also announced that the Board of Health would utilize the flu vaccine protocols on the vaccine when it becomes largely available and more information will come out next year.

Septage

Shane Moody, Water and Sewer recommended increasing the rates to 7 cents a gallon. Mr. Moody said that Spencer and North Brookfield are going up to 7 cents starting January 1, 2021 and thinks Sturbridge should have the same price as them for in town and out of town septage. Selectman Suprenant said he visited the septage water facility at the wastewater treatment plant and he concurs with what Mr. Moody is recommending, saying it will add revenue to the town. He also suggested that the sewer rates are something that the Board of Selectmen should keep an eye on in the future.

Motion: To increase the septage charge to 7 cents per gallon starting January 1, 2021.

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

American Legion request

Per Mr. Bridges, American Legion asked for fee relief for their licenses. Chair Blanchard stated that if the Board of Selectmen starts supporting this for one business, then everyone will ask this and said she is not in favor of waving the fee. Vice Chair Dowling said that because this is Sturbridge's Veterans organization, it is different and would like to do something to help them. Chair Blanchard said that she believes that the policy should be more consistent. Selectman Suprenant said people have asked him where they can donate and asked Mr. Bridges said he will look into putting a fundraiser on website.

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Motion: Without prejudice for future years, in light of the economic impact from the current pandemic, the Board of Selectmen cuts by 50% the license to the building department in the amount of \$20.00, the common victualler license in the amount of \$20.00, the amusement device license in the amount of \$25.00 and live entertainment license in the amount of \$20.00 in the amount of \$85.00 which represents a 50% reduction in those license fees.

By: Mary Dowling

2nd: Selectman Suprenant

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

Vote: 3-2

Sewer and water rate study

Mr. Bridges explained that the June 2019 Town Meeting appropriated \$13,000 for a water and sewer rate study and the town wants to go ahead and authorize that RFP and get proposals to do the rate study and bring it back to the Board for review. Mr. Bridges said this was sent to the Board of Selectmen before it was sent to the other companies and that it has not been solicited yet.

Motion: To ask the Town Administrator to release the request for written quotes for the 2020 water and sewer rate study.

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

New Business

Mr. Bridges said that Care Giver (Local Roots) curbside service is proposing to offer curbside service when they open up in the spring and is consistent with the Cannabis Control Commission regulations and provided a detailed plan with the Planning Board and Interim Chief Dessert. Dean Iandoli and Mike Staiti represented Care Giver (Local Roots). K-P Law said the curbside service is consistent with the Host Community Agreement. Selectman Kaitbenski thought it was a great idea especially during COVID-19. Selectman Suprenant concurred with what Selectman Kaitbenski said and asked if K-P Law said that the town could do this without an amendment to the agreement, saying that the agreement seemed very specific and asked if there should be written consent by the Board of Selectmen. Mr. Bridges said the Cannabis Control Commission regulations require that this is consistent with the Host Community Agreement and the Board of Selectmen.

Motion: Approval of the amended administrative order allowing curbside operation at Local Roots.

By: Selectman Kaitbenski

2nd: Selectman Suprenant

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**Roll Call Vote: Chair Blanchard: YES, Vice Chair Dowling: YES, Selectman Suprenant: YES, Selectman Kaitbenski: YES, Selectman Dunnigan: YES
Vote: 5-0**

Mr. Bridges said that for the Right of First Refusal for 27 Ladd Road, the parcel is leased to 508 International for some of their events and is in chapter land because of its uses for commercial purposes. Mr. Bridges sent the letter to K-P Law and notified the landowners that their notice is not consistent with the statute and is sufficient. Mr. Bridges requested a new letter from the landowners and is waiting for a response.

Vice Chair Dowling asked if the town could put a new "Welcome to Sturbridge" sign and contact the landowners about it since it is an eye sore. Chair Blanchard asked if Mr. Bridges could find out whose land it is.

Selectman Kaitbenski asked if the Police Department could be involved with the Santa run this weekend and Interim Chief Dessert said they would be involved as long as their staff was available.

Chair Blanchard also reminded the Board of Selectmen of the annual license renewals and encouraged them to sign the licenses.

Mr. Bridges also stated that in the future, there will be the ability to have a hybrid of in-person and GoTo Meetings with the Board of Selectmen in person and the public virtual.

Correspondence

Selectman Suprenant read through the correspondence.

Approval of Minutes

November 16, 2020.

Motion: To approve minutes of November 16, 2020, as amended.

By: Selectman Dunnigan

2nd: Selectman Suprenant

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

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Motion: To adjourn at 9:16 p.m.

By: Chair Blanchard

2nd: Selectman Dunnigan

Roll Call Vote:

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

Vote: 5-0

Adjourned at 9:16 p.m.

Minutes prepared by: Alex McConnon

Clerk of the Board:



Date signed:

12-29-2020