

December 21, 2020

**Board of Selectmen
December 21, 2020
Town Hall**

Present:

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

Absent:

Chair Blanchard called the meeting to order at 6:30 p.m.

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.

The Selectmen led the Pledge of Allegiance.

Chair Blanchard read the Agenda.

Public Service Announcements

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The selectmen wished everyone happy holidays and for a happy and healthy New Year. Selectman Suprenant also announced that information about donations to the American Legion can be found on the Town website under the Veteran Services page.

Moment of Silence

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

Department Reports:

Water/Sewer

Delayed until the next Board of Selectmen meeting on January 4, 2021.

Economic Development

Terry Masterson, Economic Development and Tourism Coordinator, reviewed his activities with the Board on the businesses in town, about the annual license renewals, and how business outreach will be a continuous effort throughout the months ahead.

Mr. Masterson informed the Board that he has met with the Sturbridge Host Hotel & Conference Center to assist them in the months ahead with renovating and recruiting hotel guests, trade shows, and seminars for the conference center. Mr. Masterson said the Host Hotel is an important part of the Town's quality of life and it is a good feeder of commerce for local businesses and hotels in the town.

Mr. Masterson spoke about the facility of Complete Cold Storage and how they are working with the Planning Department and the Town Administrator to construct their facility on Route 20. Per Mr. Masterson, they have an interest in applying for consideration for a TIF and this would be a good addition to the Town's tax base. Mr. Masterson also said that Noble Energy is in the business of constructing a truck service facility and committed to promoting green sustainable uses energy and they are in the process of talking to the town in building a facility on Route 20 and would also be a good addition to the Town's tax base.

Mr. Masterson talked about the JC Penny store that will be closing this spring, saying that he has been in touch with the property manager and the owners regarding access for job training and unemployment based upon their plans for future use of the facility. Per Mr. Masterson, the owners are interested in another use for the facility.

Mr. Masterson stated that he spoke with Monique Messier, Director of Discover Central Massachusetts who is interested in helping Mr. Masterson and Mr. Yogi Patel of the Sturbridge Host Hotel & Conference Center with the marketing for the business for trade shows and conferences. Per Mr. Masterson, many events do not fit for the Worcester DCU Center as the Host Hotel would.

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Mr. Masterson also spoke with the Manager of the Pan Mass Challenge event who has contacted hotels and town officials for the August 2021 event with reduced participation and safety limitations. Per Mr. Masterson, opening events will be virtual and the bicyclists will start the race from where they are. Mr. Masterson is planning to work with the Manager of the Pan Mass Challenge to make sure that Sturbridge is a positive experience and place for the challenge.

Mr. Masterson said he finished the grant application for the state called "Local Recovery Planning". Per Mr. Masterson, it is a chance to bring in outside consultants to bring together the small business people to discuss the impact of COVID-19 and solutions for the future. Mr. Masterson explained how the grant will pay for the consultants and from that report; the Town will have something to build on for the goals in the year ahead.

For the Sturbridge Tourism website, Mr. Masterson and Jeremy Jalbert from IT will start the process of calling consultants to make a presentation and see if they have interest in taking on the assignment to come up with a positive website.

Vice Chair Dowling asked about the Host Hotel and what kind of renovation efforts are being done. Mr. Masterson said they have renovated the main entrance lobby, they are working on renovating/upgrading the individual hotel rooms, and they came before Design Review Committee with ideas for the exterior of the building, which was approved by the Design Committee. The Host Hotel has also indicated that they received some bookings for fall 2021.

Vice Chair Dowling also asked about the statistics in Mr. Masterson's report, asking about Boston.com and what a CTR is. Mr. Masterson explained that CTR stands for "click-through rate" which is the point of where the user did not just see the ad on the screen, but they clicked on to it and went to the website for that particular venue.

Mr. Masterson concluded his report by saying that social media is a way of bringing people together and he had an idea to take various events in Sturbridge put them into one calendar to see how they all relate. Per Mr. Masterson, it will let the business community know about what is going on in town to give them a chance to get their business ready to attract shoppers. Mr. Masterson also talked about another idea of creating a platform to include school, regional, and local events to create a sense of community and grow shopping and spending as well and a way to for everyone to work together.

Town Administrator

Mr. Bridges clarified a question from the last meeting about calendar year/fiscal year on the Hotel Tax Power Point. He also informed the Board that he got permission from the property owner to take down the "Welcome to Sturbridge" sign. Mr. Bridges stated that there is a formal release that needs signatures that will be returned in a few weeks.

Mr. Bridges said that CMRPC produced list of potential Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) projects and the Route 20 project is on the list. Per Mr. Bridges, in January, the Town will be invited to do a presentation on the project with DOT for inclusion on the TIP. Selectman Suprenant said he is an alternate on the MPO and the district project engineer explained to the

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MPO about the project and it looks good. Per Selectmen Suprenant, having MassDOT pick up the cost of the design is positive for Sturbridge.

Consideration and possible action on the confirmation of the appointment of Earl Dessert as Chief of Police.

Chair Blanchard recused herself based on State Ethics advice.

Mr. Bridges said the selection committee reviewed many applicants and Chief Dessert rose to the top for his knowledge of the community, his education, his experience, and his interactions with the public and asked for confirmation from the Board of Selectmen on his appointment.

Motion: Confirm the appointment of Earl Dessert as Chief of Sturbridge Police Department, effective immediately.

By: Selectman Kaitbenski

2nd: Selectman Suprenant

Roll Call Vote:

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

Vote: 4-0 (Chair Blanchard recused)

After the motion, Retired Chief Ford pinned the Chief's badge on Chief Dessert. Chief Dessert thanked Chief Ford, the search committee, the Town Administrator and Board of Selectmen, his family, and the men and women of the Sturbridge Police Department.

Consideration and possible action on the appointment of Trisha Towns as a Dispatcher.

Chief Dessert introduced Trisha Towns saying she stood out amongst all the interviewees with 15 years of experience as a paramedic, does background investigations, and has a bachelor's degree in Criminal Justice. Ms. Towns thanked everyone for the opportunity.

Motion: Confirm of the appointment of Trisha Towns as full time Dispatcher in the Sturbridge Police Department, effective December 22, 2020 at a salary of \$20.80 per hour.

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 resignation of Andrew Houle as a part-time Firefighter with the Sturbridge Fire Department.

Chair Blanchard read the memorandum from Chief Grasso with the requested action of the resignation of Andrew Houle.

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Motion: Accept the resignation of Andrew Houle as a part-time Firefighter/EMT effective November 30, 2020.

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 the Seasonal Population form Vote.

Chair Blanchard said the number looked low and suggested rounding it up to 20,000 to take into account the seasonal licenses and other factors like that.

Motion: Approve the 2021 Seasonal Population Increase Estimate form at 20,000.

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 a gift of \$500.00 from the Friends of Sturbridge Trails (FrOST) from David Barnicle, Chairman of the FrOST Board of Directors.

Motion: Accept the donation with thanks and authorize the use of the funds for the purpose of the donation.

By: Selectman Dunnigan

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 donation of \$1,450.00 from the Donald Wicher Memorial to local food support.

Motion: Accept the donation with thanks and authorize the use of the funds for the purpose of the donation.

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 resignation of Tina Peterson from the Council on Aging.

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Motion: Accept the resignation of Tina Peterson from the Council on Aging with regret.

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

Old Business:

COVID-19 Update

Mr. Bridges said that Harrington Hospital has reached out to the Town's emergency services department to coordinate vaccine days for first responders sometime in the next couple of weeks after they understand how much vaccine they have and that there is a regional effort with reaching out to emergency services in the area.

Per Mr. Bridges, the Federal Government authorized a relief package but state and local governments were left out of it. Mr. Bridges said the Town of Sturbridge still has over \$300,000 available in funds that they have not yet spent. Towns are waiting to see if there is any information about the reuse of remaining funds.

Vice Chair Dowling spoke about employee vaccine days that Mr. Bridges suggested at a previous meeting and said that she is in support of it because it encourages them to get vaccinated. Mr. Bridges asked for Board of Selectmen authorization but Chair Blanchard suggested waiting on the decision. Chair Blanchard stated that she would not be in favor of giving employees the days off to get the vaccine unless they were experiencing side effects. Vice Chair Dowling asked if there could be some sort of compromise where an employee would be expected to work if they were okay but if they were experiencing side effects, then they could stay home without the fear of losing sick time.

Vice Chair Dowling asked Mr. Bridges if he got more information on air purifiers for the town buildings and Mr. Bridges confirmed, saying they purchased them for the Senior Center, Town Hall, and the Center Office Building.

Selectman Kaitbenski thanked all responders and the Department of Public Works for doing the Santa Run. Chair Blanchard also talked about the budget hearing for the school department and asked the Board to think about if they are interested in participating.

New Business:

Sidewalk from Heritage Green

Mr. Bridges said that a resident contacted him about the road and how there is not a safe way to walk the street near the Heritage Green Apartments to get to the grocery down the street. Butch Jackson, DPW Director looked into it and the staff decided that a sidewalk on the side streets to

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get to Route 20 could be made to safely cross the road. Mr. Bridges asked the Board of Selectmen about using Chapter 90 funds and to reach out to engineers for that. Selectman Dunnigan said the Board of Selectmen owes it to the residents to look into how much it will cost.

Selectman Suprenant requested that this project be included in the Complete Streets Plan. Selectman Suprenant said he is concerned because some of the side streets may be too steep to have a sidewalk approved that would be compatible with Architectural Access Board standards. Selectman Suprenant agreed that there needs to be something there since there has been more than one accident at the intersection and said to make sure it is compliant with state regulations. Chair Blanchard said the area is unsafe and the Town needs an engineer to look at it and is in favor of moving ahead. Mr. Bridges said he will reach out and get some pricing to bring back to the Board of Selectmen for consideration.

Referral of the Cul-De-Sac on Hillside Drive to the Planning Board for a report on its possible acceptance as a Town way.

Motion: Accept the petition and refer to the Planning for review.

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

Proposed amendment to the Village Gateway Zoning District Referral to the Planning Board.

Motion: To receive the proposed amendments and refer to the Planning Board for consideration and public hearing.

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

Proposed amendment to Chapter 18 Accessory Dwelling unit of the Zoning By-Laws: Referral to Planning Board.

Selectman Suprenant was concerned with the amendment saying if it is allowing accessory dwellings by special permit, they should be set up so they count affordable housing inventory and the amendment does not address it. Selectman Suprenant stated that if the units are not part of the affordable housing inventory, then he would not be in favor. Chair Blanchard said the Board of Selectmen already allows accessory dwelling units in the bylaw and that this is just the amendment. Selectman Suprenant said this item needs more study and it not ready yet. Chair Blanchard said the Planning Board plans on it and they will have public hearings as well.

Motion: To receive the proposed amendments and refer to the Planning Board for

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consideration and public hearing.

By: Selectman Kaitbenski

2nd: Vice Chair Dowling

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

Vote: 4-1

Correspondence

Selectman Suprenant read the correspondence.

Approval of Minutes

December 7, 2020.

Motion: To approve minutes of December 7, 2020, as amended.

By: Selectman Suprenant

2nd: Selectman Kaitbenski

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

As one last topic, Mr. Bridges said the Conservation Commission approved the design for the parking lot at 501 Main Street and there will be a cost-estimate by Town meeting.

Motion: To adjourn at 7:54 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 7:54 p.m.

Minutes prepared by: Alex McConnon

Clerk of the Board:



Date signed:

01-06-2021