

March 15, 2021

Board of Selectmen

March 15, 2021

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

Chair Blanchard called the meeting to order at 6:33 p.m.

Jeff Bridges 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.

The Selectmen led the Pledge of Allegiance.

Public Service Announcements

The Board of Selectmen wished everyone a Happy St. Patrick's Day and a Happy Easter.

Moment of Silence

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

Public Hearing – Thai Place Restaurant: liquor license transfer from Thong Inthavongsa to Debby Sundara, an approval of an alteration of its premises, a change in class from Malt/Wine to an All Alcohol license, and to change the liquor license manager to Debby Sundara for the premises located at 371 Main Street, Sturbridge MA 01566

Selectman Suprenant read the legal ad posted in the Southbridge Evening News.

Chair Blanchard asked if an extension of premises and change in category was already submitted before and Mr. Bridges said it is his understanding that it was heard before about a year ago but was delayed at the state. Chair Blanchard said the Board of Selectmen could review this again and resubmit it. Kody Chanthavong represented the Thai Place and said they are applying and resubmitting again and because they do not know what happened with the paperwork last year.

Motion: Close the public hearing.

By: Selectman Kaitbenski

2nd: Selectman Suprenant

Roll Call Vote:

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

Vote: 4-0

Motion: Approve the liquor license and change of process for the Thai Place who are looking for an all alcohol liquor license and also the revisions to the change of premises so that the seating is as shown on the plans and a change of Manager to Debby Sundara.

By: Selectman Suprenant

2nd: Selectman Kaitbenski

Roll Call Vote:

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

Vote: 4-0

Public Hearing – Application for Lucky Mart for an amended license for gas tanks for flammable materials located at 122 Main Street, Sturbridge MA 01566

Selectmen Suprenant read the Legal Ad posted in Southbridge Evening News.

Selectman Suprenant said this application was for a total of 30,000 gallons with 15,000 gallons of regular gas, 7,500 of super gas, and 7,500 of diesel gas. Richard Dasilva of North Gate Contractors represented saying capacity has remained the same and they did a reduction in the quantity of the tanks with an upgrade of the new state requirement for their compliance. Mr. Bridges said he got a request from Conservation Commission about erosion and sediment control of the place and Mr. Dasilva said they were delayed on installing the fence because of the weather and COVID-19 equipment delays but it is scheduled for March 17, 2021 and will have a crew out there installing.

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Mr. Bridges said the Board is asking that this is a must-have by the end of the week and Mr. Dasilva confirmed.

Motion: To close the public hearing.

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

Motion: Approve the license subsequent to the restrictions placed on sediments that the erosion and sediment control requested by the Conservation Commission in accordance with the Wetlands Protection Act be installed this week.

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

Public Hearing – National Grid Installation of one (1) jointly owned pole on Whittemore Road

Connor Reynolds represented National Grid. Mr. Bridges said as part of the Fiske Hill Water pump station project, National Grid needs to get additional power to the site on Whittemore Road. Per Mr. Bridges, at their last meeting, the Board of Selectmen approved the license for one of the poles for the actual power hook up on the site and this is a hearing to install an additional pole to accommodate the power to the site. This project is at the Town's request and the DPW supports it.

Selectmen Suprenant read the Legal Ad posted in Southbridge Evening News.

Motion: To close the public hearing.

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

Motion: Approve the pole location.

By: Selectman Dunnigan

2nd: Selectman Suprenant

Selectman Suprenant said the Director of Public Works usually has a condition that the pole should be 5 feet from the edge of the pavement.

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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

Department Reports:

Police Department

Chief Dessert reported on January and February 2021. Per Chief Dessert, Matthew Wyke is the new Emergency Management Coordinator. In January, the department did Fair and Impartial training and got the whole department through. For February, the department did a drive-by parade for the oldest resident in the community for his birthday.

Chief Dessert said the Police Department took possession of a new signboard out on their street that calculates speed that they can remotely log into and one of the first places they tried was Shattuck Road because of the recent complaints. Per Chief Dessert, he has patrolled Shattuck Road early in the morning and there have been no violations regarding the logging workers working too early or speeding. Selectman Suprenant and Selectman Kaitbenski said they both received positive feedback about the police efforts in that location.

Selectman Suprenant asked about checking the ice on Big Allen but Chief Dessert said there are no means to do patrols out there but if they get complaints, they will go patrol the area. Chair Blanchard asked about the school schedule being a hybrid soon with in-person and remote learning and asked how it effects the working hours. Chief Dessert said even with less students, they still deploy their officers the same way that they normally would and he has met with Principal Pelley to develop their traffic plan for their reopening. Selectmen Dunnigan said he attended the Cops and Coffee Event at the Sturbridge Coffee House and congratulated Chief Dessert and the department on a job well done.

Fire Department

Chief Grasso reported on January and February, 2021. For January, he and Chief Dessert accepted a donation from Ocean State Job Lot for personal protective equipment that the Board of Selectmen accepted last month. Chief Grasso said for the month of January, they are above call-wise from last year and the department is between 200-300 calls compared to last year.

For February, Chief Grasso was notified by the Department of Fire Services that they were granted a S.A.F.E. grant award for \$7,000 that goes towards the Safe and Senior Safe Programs. Chief Grasso appointed Firefighters Patrick Normandin and Stephen Joyce to take the reins on this task and they have been reaching out virtually to schools to put the programs together for outreach. Chief Grasso reported working with the Health Department and the Town Administrator to get vaccines distributed to the homebound residents, saying they should finish it up this week in their residence and a paramedic will stay with them for the required observation time in case of symptoms.

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Chief Grasso stated that there have been two structure fires: one was minor with insulation being blown into an attic and the other fire was a mobile home fire at Park Circle. The cause of the fire is under investigation and the family was displaced, but Red Cross is working with them.

Vice Chair Dowling asked about the salary data for proposed Deputy Fire Chief position. Mr. Bridges said they will go to the Personnel Committee to rate the position and it will provide it for their salary scale. Vice Chair Dowling asked if it will be a topic for an April meeting and Mr. Bridges confirmed.

Selectman Suprenant requested that Chief Grasso submit his monthly reports with comparisons to the previous year so the Board of Selectmen can tell if the Fire Department needs additional resources.

Town Administrator

Mr. Bridges said the Champeaux Road Bridge is moving along with the right-of-way plans. Per Mr. Bridges, Old Sturbridge Village is celebrating their 75th Anniversary and the Town is working with them for banners on their poles. Mr. Bridges also stated that June-teenth is now a state holiday.

Presentation by GOVHR USA: Compensation and Classification Plan

Joellen Cademartori, CEO of GOVHR USA and Project Manager for the study presented a PowerPoint presentation to the Board of Selectmen. She gave an overview of the study and spoke on the scope of work, job evaluation, proposed classification plan, salary survey, proposed compensation plan, implementation of Classification and Compensation Plan, future administration of the plan, and asked took questions from the Board of Selectmen.

Vice Chair Dowling discussed positions and longevity and how to handle employees whose salaries need to be brought up to the starting point in the range but have been in their position for years. Ms. Cademartori stated that the plan provides longevity consideration for those employees. The staff were tasked with looking at the longevity adjustments for their employees. There was further conversation regarding the Assistant Town Clerk position. Mr. Bridges stated that he would review the job description with the Town Clerk.

Finally, Vice Chair Dowling had concerns over the salary grade for the Recreation Director and Economic Development Coordinator. After discussion with the Board, it was determined that a multi-year phase into the full grade seven pay grade would be considered.

Consideration and possible action on the Resignation of Robert Archambault.

Motion: Accept the resignation of Robert Archambault as a Full-Time Police Officer in the Sturbridge Police Department effective March 4, 2021.

By: Selectman Kaitbenski

2nd: Selectman Dunnigan

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 Review of the Chapter Five Animal Control Bylaw Draft.

Jean Bubon, Town Planner said she has been working with a citizen group and a common request is for people to raise chickens in their backyard. Ms. Bubon said that currently in the bylaw, it is not normally allowed unless they have enough land to be exempt under the agricultural bylaw. Ms. Bubon worked with other Town Hall staff and submitted a draft bylaw to the Board of Selectmen for review to allow poultry in people's yard saying that it is based on acreage and number of chickens. She stated that if their land is less than half an acre, they could only have it based on special consideration of Animal Control Officer. Ms. Bubon asked the Board of Selectmen to allow the request to go forward at the Annual Town Meeting to see if it could be incorporated into bylaws.

Selectman Suprenant supported it, and asked about the section for illicit discharge within 50-feet away from a well and said she should check with Title 5 and the Health Department to see if it should be 100-feet. Ms. Bubon said she would check and they have also prevented roosters, peacocks, and Guinea fowls to be permitted.

Motion: Instruct the staff to prepare and review the necessary warrant article for inclusion in the Annual Town Meeting.

By: Selectman Suprenant

2nd: Selectman Kaitbenski:

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 reappointment of Susan G. Murphy to the Board of Registrars.

Lynne Girouard, Town Clerk said the expiration date is in April for the Board of Registrars, and they need to be reappointed by April 1. Chair Blanchard said if this is a new appointment, both Democratic and Republican town committees would need to be notified but since this is a reappointment, it is okay to go forward with the request.

Motion: Accept the reappointment of Susan G. Murphy as on the Board of Registrars per a three-year term.

By: Selectman Kaitbenski

2nd: Selectman Dunnigan

Selectman Suprenant asked if the appointment was for three years for June 30, 2024 or April 30, 2024. Ms. Girouard said she could alter the date to June 30, 2024 to make it consistent.

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

Vote: 5-0

Consideration and possible action on the Request for Approval of the use of Poll Pads and vote taken on poll pads.

Motion: Approve the use of electronic Poll Pads for elections and this would also include Town Meeting and for early voting.

By: Selectman Suprenant

2nd: Selectman Kaibenski

Roll Call Vote:

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

Vote: 5-0

Consideration and possible action on Caregiver Patient Connection's (Local Roots) request for clarification of the language in their host community agreement.

Mr. Bridges explained that Mike Staiti from Local Roots is asking for clarification on who can determine when Police details are or are not necessary for their operation. Mr. Staiti said they have a soft opening planned for March 29, 2021 and the grand opening on April 3, 2021. Per Mr. Staiti, they want to get clarification for police detail and stated that the agreement describes written consent from the Selectboard. Mr. Staiti said he does not expect more than 50-100 customers the first week they open and said with the two stores open in Charlton and Southbridge and the 100 stores open in the state right now, there are no issues with lines and crowds. Mr. Staiti said there could be times where traffic could peak but there is no process to put police detail in place and that they are looking for modification that Chief Dessert could make the call on police detail when they do and do not need it.

Chair Blanchard read Chief Dessert's letter saying they have reviewed request and that it is appropriate to have the Police Detail go through his office.

Selectman Suprenant said as a Board, they have authority over the details but the agreement says Local Roots has to coordinate with the Police Chief and as long as it is coordinated, he supports it. Mr. Bridges asked about section 3 of the agreement, lifting said requirement. Vice Chair Dowling said she agrees with amending the agreement to say that Chief Dessert is monitoring and wants to add the language that the authority is with the Board of Selectmen. Mr. Bridges suggested the last sentence be amended to say "the company agrees that onsite traffic control personnel shall be determined with the coordination of the Chief of Police with ultimate discretion being with the Board of Selectmen" and the Board of Selectmen agreed.

Motion: Local Roots has to coordinate with the Police Chief for the first two weeks using the language that the Town Administrator just used.

By: Selectman Suprenant

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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 Amendment to the proposed Article XII of the General Bylaws: Removal of Sand and Gravel, limiting the exceptions to the Bylaw.

Chair Blanchard asked if Earth Removal is in the Zoning bylaws and Ms. Bubon said it is in the general bylaws as well.

Motion: Request the staff to prepare the warrant article for consideration at Town Meeting.

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 a right-of-first-refusal for 49 Bushell Road.

Motion: To forego the Town's right-of-first refusal for the property at 49 Bushell Road.

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 a right-of-first-refusal for 133 Fiske Hill Road, 137 Fiske Hill Road, 139 Fiske Hill Road, 48 Old Farm Road.

Mr. Bridges said the documents are now acceptable to Town Counsel and the state forester has been notified as well. Mr. Bridges said since the Board has last met, he has received many comments from the public for recreational uses. Per Mr. Bridges, the Open Space Committee was interested in trail use on the property and asked if the Board of Selectmen wanted to investigate the possibility of a public hearing. Chair Blanchard asked if Mr. Bridges asked Town Counsel for the possibility for easements with trails and Mr. Bridges confirmed, saying it is an option or doing a public hearing is an option for obtaining parcels. Chair Blanchard said there are many obstacles in the way but the Board could negotiate possibilities of easements instead.

Vice Chair Dowling stated that she thinks it is a great opportunity would like to exercise the right-of-first-refusal and would like to have a public hearing on it. She also wondered how the Town would feel about putting two affordable houses on it.

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Selectman Suprenant requested the Trails Committee could create a sketch of what the proposed trails might look like and wanted to know if the existing owner would be amenable to granting easements. Chair Blanchard suggested setting up a public hearing and Mr. Bridges confirmed saying it would have to be virtual.

Brandon Goodwin, Trails Committee said he would put a presentation together and would present it at the public hearing. Chair Blanchard told Mr. Bridges to plan for a public hearing and to get an opinion from Town Counsel for the easement issue. Mr. Bridges also said he would contact the property owner to see if there is interest.

Consideration and possible action on contract for GIS stormwater mapping service with Tighe & Bond.

Ms. Bubon said for the stormwater collation, not enough communities are using the services so it is no longer cost effective. Per Ms. Bubon, the DPW Operations Manager reached out to her and asked if there was enough funding in her budget but her funds need to be used for other projects. Ms. Bubon said this proposal is for \$15,000, which would allow her to get mapping for the current year completed and asked the Board of Selectmen to sign the agreement and allow the project to go forward.

Motion: Approve agreement with Tighe & Bond for Stormwater GIS Services in the amount of \$15,000 and authorize the Chair to sign on behalf of the Board of Selectmen.

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 appointment of Dan Gervasi as a Senior Equipment Operator in the Department of Public Works.

Motion: Confirm the appointment of Dan Gervasi as Heavy Equipment Operator effective immediately at a starting wage of \$28.77 per hour.

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

COVID-19 Update:

Mr. Bridges said there is programming being put into place to vaccinate the homebound residents. Vice Chair Dowling asked what the delay was in coming up with the program and Mr. Bridges said there was an issue with transference of the vaccine from Harrington Hospital and the Town

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had to wait for Harrington to release the vaccination from the clinic so they came up with a Pilot program to do this.

Review of Senior/Veterans Workers Program:

Mr. Bridges said the benefit for each individual for both the Senior Program and the Veterans Program is \$500 in their taxes and once the individual has worked enough hours. Vice Chair Dowling said she did not realize that the workers cannot earn more than the minimum wage by state law. She also suggested that the Board of Selectmen consider increasing the amount that they work if they would like to work more. Mr. Bridges agreed to review this more to check that there are enough jobs so that they would not take away work from someone else.

Selectman Suprenant suggested the December cutoff date was too early and to change the policy for applications from December to March. Mr. Bridges said he would will reevaluate the jobs and look at the cut-off date for the application moving forward.

Selectman Kaitbenski left the meeting.

Goals of the Board of Selectmen

The Selectmen decided to take their list and prioritize it for their next meeting on April 5, 2021.

Discussion: Budget Meeting with the Finance Committee:

Chair Blanchard said it is important to get input from the Departments, although it does not have to be everyone. Chair Blanchard stated that the Police Chief and Fire Chief need to defend their budgets and Selectman Suprenant said the only other big budget is the Department of Public Works. The Board of Selectmen discussed the possibility of meeting on an evening with the Finance Committee and Mr. Bridges said he would follow up.

Correspondence:

Selectman Suprenant read the correspondence.

Old Business:

NONE.

New Business:

Chair Blanchard said that last year, the state said the decision of who could have outside dining at restaurants could be left to the Local Licensing Board. Mr. Bridges said the state executive order is still valid which makes the approvals valid and read the letter from Jean Bubon, Town Planner stating that the certificates say "this certification for temporary outdoor dining will stay in effect the duration of the Massachusetts executive order COVID-19 order #35 or as further amended by the Governor." Chair Blanchard said the restaurants need to notify the Board of Selectmen if they are planning on this again this year.

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Approval of Minutes:

March 1, 2021.

Motion: To approve minutes of March 1, 2021, as written.

By: Selectman Dunnigan

2nd: Selectman Suprenant

Roll Call Vote:

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

Kaitbenski: ABSENT, Selectman Dunnigan: YES

Vote: 4-0

Citizen's forum:

Peter Zeh from 42 Old Farm Road thanked the Board of Selectmen for wanting to issue a public hearing for the land behind the road and said it is an important issue.

Adjourn

Motion: To adjourn at 9:57 p.m.

By: Chair Blanchard

2nd: Vice Chair Dowling

Roll Call Vote:

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

Kaitbenski: ABSENT, Selectman Dunnigan: YES

Vote: 4-0

Adjourned at 9:57 p.m.

Minutes prepared by: Alex McConnon

Clerk of the Board:  **Date signed:** 4/26/21