

May 3, 2021

**Board of Selectmen
May 3, 2021
Town Hall**

AMENDED

Present:

Mary Blanchard, Chair
Mary Dowling, Vice Chair
Selectman Chase Kaitbenski, Clerk
Selectman Ian Dunnigan
Selectman Jamie Goodwin

Staff:

Jeff Bridges, Town Administrator
Alex McConnon, Executive Assistant

Chair Blanchard called the meeting to order at 6:31 p.m.

The Selectmen led the Pledge of Allegiance.

Selectman Kaitbenski 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

NONE.

Moment of Silence

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

Review of the 2021 Annual Town Meeting Warrants for the Annual Town Meeting on June 7, 2021 and the Special Town Meeting Warrants

Mr. Bridges called the Selectmen's attention to Article #19 "Tax Rate Relief" of the Annual Town Meeting warrants first. Mr. Bridges said that it has been updated and the expectation is by next week, the Town will get the guidance on the Federal American Recovery Plan Act funds and they will be able to make the adjustments before Town Meeting to replace funds lost due to COVID with the Federal dollars and finalize this number.

Motion: To reopen the warrant.

By: Selectman Goodwin

2nd: Selectman Dunnigan

All in favor

Vote: 5-0-0

Motion: To support the new wording (for Article #19).

By: Selectman Goodwin

2nd: Selectman Dunnigan

All in favor

Vote: 5-0-0

Mr. Bridges asked for a vote for Article #43 "Cleanwater (stormwater) Compliance Program Massachusetts Small Municipal Separate Storm Sewer (MS4) General Permit Compliance Program" since the Board of Selectmen did not vote on it yet. Per Mr. Bridges, this is a multi-year program required by the Federal Government to comply with the National Pollution Discharge Elimination permit process for stormwater management.

Motion: To place and support.

By: Selectman Goodwin

2nd: Selectman Dunnigan

All in favor

Vote: 5-0-0

The Board of Selectmen moved onto the Special Town Meeting warrants. Per Ms. Barry, Finance Director, for Article #45 "Free Cash Transfer – Snow and Ice Deficit" a dollar amount of \$63,200.00 was inserted.

Motion: To place and support Article #45.

By: Selectman Kaitbenski

2nd: Selectman Dunnigan

All in favor

Vote: 5-0-0

Ms. Barry asked that the Board of Selectmen make the motion "That the Town vote to transfer ONE THOUSAND TWENTY-FOUR AND THIRTY/100 DOLLARS (\$1,024.30) from Free Cash to pay unpaid

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bills of a previous year.” on Article #46 for “Unpaid Bills of a Previous Fiscal Year (9/10 vote required)”

Motion: To place and support Article #46.

By: Selectman Dunnigan

2nd: Selectman Goodwin

All in favor

Vote: 5-0-0

Motion: To close the warrant articles for the Annual and Special Town Meeting.

By: Selectman Kaitbenski

2nd: Selectman Dunnigan

All in favor

Vote: 5-0-0

Department Reports:

Fire Department

Chief Grasso reported on March and April. Per Chief Grasso, the department resumed live in-person trainings where they used a facility in Connecticut, which helped them properly simulate circumstances for Firefighters. Chief Grasso commended the first responders on the tragic accident that happened on Interstate 84 and said he is proud of his staff, the state troopers, and MassDOT for their help.

Chief Grasso reported the call comparisons for the years of 2021 and 2020. Per Chief Grasso, in March 2021, the department responded to 63 more calls than March of 2020. For January 1, 2021 to March 31, 2021, they responded to 71 more calls this year than last year. Chief Grasso stated that in April 2021 they responded to 85 less calls than last April 2020, and from January 1, 2021 to April 30, 2021, they were 14 calls less this year than last year. Chief Grasso said they are currently trending just about even.

Chief Grasso showed the latest photos of the firetruck as it is being built and said he would be in contact with the factory for an inspection trip. Per Chief Grasso, they hope to have the truck by the second week of June to start equipping/training it and have a public wash-down so members of the public can see what their tax dollars have paid for.

Town Administrator

Mr. Bridges said congress has resumed the earmark process, which is the ability to submit projects to Members of Congress for projects in their local districts. Mr. Bridges gave them Maple Street Water Line project as a potential earmark project for funding and worked with Congressman Neal's office on the request.

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Mr. Bridges also reported that he received notice for Lieutenant John Marinelli's intent to retire on July 24, 2021, which would be on the Board of Selectmen's next meeting agenda for acceptance.

Consideration and possible action on the confirmation of appointment of David Bond as a Mechanic/Operator in the Department of Public Works.

Butch Jackson, DPW Director said they advertised in the newspaper, a municipal website, and social media and they only got two applicants, but is excited to work with Mr. Bond. Mr. Jackson said Mr. Bond is a Seasoned Mechanic and an Equipment Mechanic and he has already dropped off his tools and has good recommendations.

Motion: Confirm the appointment of David Bond as a mechanic in the Department of Public Works with a rate of pay of \$27.09 per hour contingent upon pre-employment screening.

By: Selectman Dunnigan

2nd: Selectman Goodwin

All in favor

Vote: 5-0-0

Consideration and possible action on the confirmation of appointment for Tyler Gustafson as a Heavy Equipment Operator in the Department of Public Works.

Mr. Jackson said this is an internal promotion and Mr. Gustafson will be the Landfill/Heavy Equipment Operator.

Motion: Confirm the appointment of Tyler Gustafson as a Heavy Equipment Operator in the Department of Public Works with a wage of \$23.88 per hour effective immediately.

By: Selectman Kaitbenski

2nd: Selectman Dunnigan

All in favor

Vote: 5-0-0

Consideration and possible action on a request for operational modification by Local Roots.

Mr. Bridges said they received a letter from Dean Iandoli, one of the owners of Local Roots requesting the provisions in the Host Community Agreement that require appointment only be waived and to lift the restriction. Per Mr. Bridges, Chief Dessert stated that he has no issue with lifting the restriction at this time.

Mr. Iandoli explained that with 140+ dispensaries open, there is not a crushing wave of customers and it is a slow process. They proposed to Town that they expected there to be about 250 transactions a day, which is what they see in Fitchburg, and in another 12 weeks they will probably cap off there. Per Mr. Iandoli, there are two dispensaries in the area and they wish to operate as the other dispensaries do. Vice Chair Dowling asked if the Board could go back and require

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appointment only again after the restriction is lifted Mr. Bridges said the Board could reserve their right in the motion.

Selectman Kaitbenski said he does not want to see customers in Sturbridge get turned away to go to the Charlton and Southbridge locations and Selectman Goodwin agreed.

Motion: Grant the request of Caregiver-Patient Connection (Local Roots) to lift the restriction for appointments only and to reserve the right to look at in the future if problems arise.

By: Selectman Kaitbenski

2nd: Selectman Goodwin

All in favor

Vote: 5-0-0

Consideration and possible action on a revised Tax Increment Financing Agreement with RLS Coldstorage.

Mr. Bridges said this was submitted to Massachusetts Department of Economic Development who requested a few non-material changes and the changes are identified in the document itself. Per Mr. Bridges, Town Counsel and RLS Complete Coldstorage have reviewed it and find the changes acceptable.

Motion: Approve the agreement with adjustments.

By: Selectman Dunnigan

2nd: Selectman Kaitbenski

All in favor

Vote: 5-0-0

Consideration and possible action on the sending of a letter of support to MassDOT regarding the proposed placement of the Route 20/Route 131 Interchange Project on the Transportation Improvement Program.

Mr. Bridges said they have been following the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) process and they are in the development of year 2026. The Town submitted the first phase (Interchange of 131 and 20) to DOT for consideration in the TIP. Per Mr. Bridges, DOT has chosen to do the project themselves so it is on the TIP which is out for public comment before adoption and now is the time for the Board of Selectmen to express its support of the project.

Motion: Review the draft letter and authorize the Chair to sign on the Board's behalf.

By: Selectman Kaitbenski

2nd: Selectman Dunnigan

All in favor

Vote: 5-0-0

Consideration and possible action on a letter of support for a USDA Rural Redevelopment Grant for the purchase of the firetruck.

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Mr. Bridges said the USDA Rural Redevelopment has unallocated funds in a couple of the grant programs, one of them being Emergencies Disaster Relief Funds that need to be obligated by June 1, 2021. Per Mr. Bridges, they look for projects that need to be submitted for that funding. Mr. Bridges said the Firetruck that the Town agreed to purchase was applicable and according to the demographics, the Town of Sturbridge is eligible for 15% of the total cost, so the Town is preparing that grant request. Mr. Bridges stated that is it about \$98,000.00 off of the purchase of a \$659,00.00 truck if the Town is awarded the grant.

Motion: Approve the submittal of the USDA Grant for the firetruck and authorize the Board Chair to sign the letter of support on behalf of the Board of Selectmen.

By: Selectman Goodwin

2nd: Selectman Kaitbenski

All in favor

Vote: 5-0-0

Old Business:

COVID-19 Update

Mr. Bridges said Center Office Building got a COVID-19 scare and some departments are operating remotely. Vice Chair Dowling suggested closing Center Office Building for now and to resume operations for May 17, 2021. She also suggested all employees there to quarantine and to work remotely, saying that it is short amount of time for employees to work off-site. Chair Blanchard asked if they have been contract traced and Mr. Bridges said the latter case has but he does not know about the first case but everyone knew who was in contact with who and was alerted. Per Mr. Bridges, the opportunity to work remotely has always been an option.

Selectman Goodwin said it is important not to stop essential work but it is important to keep everyone safe. Vice Chair Dowling said as a resident, she would be upset that she was not made aware by the Town that the building was closed because of COVID-19 and Chair Blanchard said if they were making an appointment, she would hope the person they talk to would tell them. Mr. Bridges requested that Town Hall also close temporarily and to appointment only.

Motion: Close Center Office Building to the public through May 17th and we will revisit it at our meeting on that evening.

By: Vice Chair Dowling

2nd: Selectman Kaitbenski

All in favor

Vote: 5-0-0

Motion: Revert Town Hall back to the previous rule-set that we were using before we opened up, by appointment only.

By: Selectman Dunnigan

2nd: Selectman Kaitbenski

Vote: 4-1-0 (Vice Chair Dowling NO)

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Vice Chair Dowling stated that her no vote was because she does not support in-person appointments at all during this two-week time period. Mr. Bridges said the buildings are cleaned every night and the Facilities Coordinator will do a deep clean on the building, including fogging. Vice Chair Dowling said the regulations for restaurants require them to close 24 hours before cleaning and Selectman Dunnigan confirmed that it is no faster than 24 hours for restaurants. Mr. Bridges said they followed procedures for office buildings and Selectman Dunnigan confirmed that there is a difference with restaurants and office buildings. Mr. Bridges stated that the Town would order a closing of Center Office Building/staff working there, and as a last resort, there could be an in-person meeting in the conference room of Town Hall. Vice Chair Dowling requested that the Board of Health update their website.

Chair Blanchard asked about the Johnson and Johnson Clinic that was going to be held at the Senior Center and Mr. Bridges said that Leslie Wong, Senior Center Director is working at another Clinic for May 14, 2021 using the Pfizer vaccine.

Old Business

Selectman Kaitbenski expressed concern for the backlog of building permits in the Town and had two ideas. His first idea was that the Building Department's Administrative Assistant could sign non-structural permits like what some other towns do. His second idea was hiring a Part-Time Interim Building Inspector to help the current Part-Time Interim Building Inspector. Selectman Kaitbenski also suggested doing a photo-based inspection. Mr. Bridges said he could reach out to the State Inspector to supplement and asked if it would be possible to authorize the Town Planner to temporarily sign zoning permits. Chair Blanchard said in order for the Administrative Assistant of the Building Department to sign the permits, it would require editing her job description and bringing it to the Personnel Committee, so that would not be ideal but suggested finding another Part-Time Interim Building Inspector or a State Building Inspector.

Motion: Authorize Jean Bubon (Town Planner) to, until June 30th, sign the Zoning permits.

By: Selectman Kaitbenski

2nd: Selectman Dunnigan

All in favor

Vote: 5-0-0

Vice Chair Dowling asked to add the amount of acreage in the summary box on Article #49 "Community Preservation Committee – Purchase of 48 Old Farm Road and 133, 137 and 139 Fiske Hill Road" of the Special Town Meeting warrants and Mr. Bridges confirmed. She also asked about the Community Preservation Committee vote on it and Mr. Bridges said he would check. Chair Blanchard said in the Annual Town Meeting Warrants, there were two votes on Article #6 and Mr. Bridges said he would check on that as well.

New Business:

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Vice Chair Dowling asked if the Board of Selectmen would be going into Executive Session for any letters that they may have received. Chair Blanchard said they eventually would but there have not been any letters.

Discussion: Observance of Juneteenth (June 19th)

Mr. Bridges said the Commonwealth has determined that June 19th is a state holiday requiring State offices to be closed. Per Mr. Bridges, under the agreement, the Town authorizes eleven holidays and asked if the Town should allow employees a twelfth day-off with compensation. Chair Blanchard said it would need to be updated in the Personnel Book and Mr. Bridges said he notified Collective Bargaining that this was an issue that needed to be addressed.

Motion: That Juneteenth be a paid holiday for the employees of the Town of Sturbridge in the personnel policies and collective bargaining agreements be amended to include the holiday.

By: Selectman Goodwin

2nd: Vice Chair Dowling

All in favor

Vote: 5-0-0

Correspondence

Selectman Kaitbenski read the correspondence. Among the correspondence was a letter of resignation from Sophia Lengyel Rogers from the Board of Assessors.

Motion: To accept the resignation letter of Sophia Lengyel Rogers with regrets and to wish her well.

By: Selectman Dunnigan

2nd: Selectman Goodwin

All in favor

Vote: 5-0-0

Mr. Bridges said the Community Preservation Committee voted 4-1-0 for Article #49.

Approval of Minutes

Motion: To approve the Minutes of April 20, 2021 as amended.

By: Vice Chair Dowling

2nd: Selectman Dunnigan

All in favor

Vote: 5-0-0

Motion: To approve the Minutes of April 26, 2021 as written.

By: Selectman Goodwin

2nd: Selectman Kaitbenski

Vote: 3-0-2

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(Selectman Dunnigan and Vice Chair Dowling ABSTAINED)

Citizen's Forum

NONE.

Adjourn

Motion: To adjourn at 7:40 p.m.

By: Selectman Dunnigan

2nd: Selectman Kaitbenski

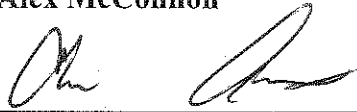
All in favor

Vote: 5-0-0

Adjourned at 7:40 p.m.

Minutes prepared by: Alex McConnon

Clerk of the Board:



Date signed:

