

July 19, 2021

**Board of Selectmen  
July 19, 2021  
Town Hall  
Veterans Memorial Hall, Sturbridge Town Hall  
308 Main Street, Sturbridge, MA 01566**

**Present:**

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

**Staff:**

Jeff Bridges, Town Administrator  
Alex McConnon, Executive Assistant

**Chair Blanchard called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m.**

**Selectman Kaitbenski read the following statement: Executive Session: Per M.G.L. Chapter 30A, Section 21(3): To discuss strategy with respect to collective bargaining or litigation if an open meeting may have a detrimental effect on the bargaining or litigating position of the public body and the Chair so declares.**

**By: Selectman Kaitbenski**

**2<sup>nd</sup>: Chair Blanchard**

**Roll Call Vote: Chair Blanchard: YES, Vice Chair Dowling: YES, Selectman Kaitbenski: YES, Selectman Dunnigan: YES, Selectman Goodwin: ABSENT**

**Vote: 4-0-0 (Selectman Goodwin ABSENT)**

**The Selectmen went into Executive Session at 6:01 p.m. and returned to Open Session at 6:28 p.m. Selectman Goodwin arrived during Executive Session.**

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

**The Selectmen led the Pledge of Allegiance.**

**Chair Blanchard read the agenda.**

**Public Service Announcements**

NONE.

**Moment of Silence**

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

**Department Reports:**

July 19, 2021

### **Fire Department**

Chief Grasso reported on May and June of 2021. He said the comparative numbers from May were 69 calls more than May of last year and from the period of January 1<sup>st</sup> to May 31<sup>st</sup> were plus 134 calls this year. In June, the department was 73 calls plus from last June and for the period of January 1<sup>st</sup> to June 30<sup>th</sup> were 208 calls ahead of last year. Chief Grasso said his department is doing more call volume on shifts than before but said he attributes it to when COVID hit last year, no one wanted to go out of their house. Per Chief Grasso, the Department has been busy with car accidents and structure fires this year.

Chief Grasso reported that last week there was a hydrogen issue at OFS and due to something in the atmosphere, the pressure rose in the delivery truck, which made a small explosion. Per Chief Grasso, the driver got a small burn to his face, which the paramedics treated and the vehicle was made stable, made the delivery, and was removed. Vice Chair Dowling asked if the hydrogen company is following their own procedures with the amount of humidity in the air. Chief Grasso confirmed saying that they correctly followed protocols before, during, and after the incident.

Chief Grasso also reported that the new firetruck is in Walpole and he is hoping to have it in the next couple of weeks to put equipment on it and to schedule a wash-down for the public to see it.

### **Police Department**

Chief Dessert reported on May and June of 2021. Chief Dessert said in May, the department was up 944 calls compared to the same time from last year and that all calls are going up except the business and house check calls which are going down. Chief Dessert said for operations, during the month of May, the School Resource Officers put together a public safety day at the Junior High. He also reported that Sgt. Murray went to frontline supervisor school for one week and Lt. Lombardi went to a mid-management school.

Chief Dessert reported that June was up to 656 calls from last year. For operations, the department received a letter from the Massachusetts Police Accreditation Commission that certified the Sturbridge Police Department for safe policing for safe communities, which allowed them to get federal funding. Chief Dessert said this year; the department took second place in the community-policing award for 2020 from the New England Association of Chiefs of Police. Chief Dessert also said they started boat patrols and Sgt. Murray did a two-week school for front-line supervision. Selectman Dunnigan asked what the rating was for second place for the safe police award and Chief Dessert said they created a report that they sent with policies/their Facebook page/clippings/etc. and that was what they were graded on. Per Chief Dessert, the department also did another Coffee with a Cop event at Sawdust Coffee House, which was successful. Vice Chair Dowling said she imagines that events like that help with the award and Chief Dessert confirmed and said it also helps them connect to the community.

Selectman Kaitbenski asked about the car theft cases and Chief Dessert said it was down at the moment. Vice Chair Dowling mentioned the Pan-Mass event and Chief Dessert said it would be fully staffed even though it will be non-traditional with no ceremony and all the bicyclists are

July 19, 2021

leaving at staggered times from the hotel they are staying at. Chair Blanchard noticed unlicensed operators on the reports and Chief Dessert said sometimes people forget to renew their licenses and often times; the officers will let people go on their phones to renew them, if possible.

Chief Dessert also reported that "Wiffle Ball Wednesday" was scheduled for July 28, 2021 to play wiffle ball against the children in Sturbridge. Per Chief Dessert, this is their first year trying it so they will see how it goes.

**Action Items:**

**Consideration and possible action on allowing a second part-time Police Officer in the Sturbridge Police Department**

Chief Dessert said their demands keep going up and their patrol officers have to come in before or after their shifts so he is hoping to add Jeff Lavallee, a former retired officer from the Sturbridge Police Department, as a part-time officer. Per Chief Dessert, it would not cost anything extra out of their budget. Chief Dessert said he spoke to Officer Lavallee and discussed how his focus would be on responsibilities like boat patrol and in the wintertime, he could help fill shifts when someone is on vacation. Selectman Dunnigan asked if it would be cheaper and Chief Dessert confirmed saying the opportunity is still available for the officers already there but this will give them more options.

**Motion: Authorize the creation of a second part-time police officer.**

**By: Selectman Dunnigan**

**2<sup>nd</sup>: Selectman Kaitbenski**

**All in favor**

**Vote: 5-0-0**

**Motion: Appoint Jeff Lavallee as a part-time police officer in Sturbridge.**

**By: Selectman Kaitbenski**

**2<sup>nd</sup>: Selectman Dunnigan**

**All in favor**

**Vote: 5-0-0**

**Town Administrator**

Mr. Bridges said Lt. John Marinelli's last shift with the Sturbridge Fire Department will be on July 22, 2021 and the Board of Selectmen are invited to attend as the department walks him out. Mr. Bridges reported that MassDOT scheduled the meeting for the Champeaux Road Bridge project on August 2, 2021, which is the same day as their next Board of Selectmen meeting but Butch Jackson, DPW Director would sit in on the public hearing. MassDOT also offered to meet with the Board of Selectmen another time to speak on the project. Mr. Bridges said the bylaw for the Equestrian Center should be available soon for Board of Selectmen consideration. Per Mr. Bridges, the project sponsors will start planning a public information meeting in August and they have been meeting with staff about their process. Mr. Bridges said he expects to see more about this in the late summer/early fall.

July 19, 2021

Mr. Bridges reported that the Senior Center meetings went well and that two more are scheduled for August 11, 2021 and August 26, 2021. He said he is working on getting direction from staff on which location is most preferred. Mr. Bridges said the weather has been wet and there were lightning strikes on the buildings this past weekend so the Town is working on submitting those claims. Per Mr. Bridges, the projects need to be bid to be installed.

Mr. Bridges reported that the questions for the warehouse project in Charlton have been submitted but he has not yet heard back from MassDOT. Per Mr. Bridges, the Charlton Planning Board had public hearings on both of the permits and the Amazon facility public hearing is still happening with the Charlton Planning staff. Chair Blanchard said she wanted to know what the Board can and cannot do and Mr. Bridges said he would reach out to the Attorney on options for both facilities.

**Consideration and possible action on the appointment of Joann Dupre to the Cultural Council**

Mr. Bridges said Ms. Dupre has been involved in the Farmer's Market and does a great job. Mr. Bridges asked the Board of Selectmen to confirm her appointment to the Cultural Council.

**Motion: Approve the appointment of Joann Dupre to the Sturbridge Cultural Council for a 3-year term.**

**By: Vice Chair Dowling  
2<sup>nd</sup>: Selectman Kaitbenski  
All in favor  
Vote: 5-0-0**

**Consideration and possible action on the confirmation of the appointment of James Louyakis as a Laborer/Driver in the Department of Public Works**

Mr. Jackson said Mr. Louyakis is a long-term Sturbridge resident and he has passed all of the requirements and passed his CORI check.

**Motion: Confirm the appointment of James Louyakis as a Driver/Laborer in the Department of Public Works at a starting wage of \$20.53 contingent on pre-employment requirements.**

**By: Selectman Dunnigan  
2<sup>nd</sup>: Selectman Kaitbenski  
All in favor  
Vote: 5-0-0**

**Consideration and possible action on the resignation of Joni Light from the Personnel Committee**

Mr. Bridges said it is unfortunate since Ms. Light did great work but she and her family have relocated to Connecticut.

July 19, 2021

**Motion: Accept Joni Light's resignation from the Personnel Committee with regret.**

**By: Selectman Dunnigan**

**2<sup>nd</sup>: Selectman Kaitbenski**

**All in favor**

**Vote: 5-0-0**

**Consideration and possible action on Auction items for the Department of Public Works**

Mr. Jackson said there is some old equipment from the 1970's and a plow with rust. Per Mr. Jackson, he can get parts off them but they cannot be fixed.

**Motion: Approve the disposal of the items by auction.**

**By: Selectman Kaitbenski**

**2<sup>nd</sup>: Selectman Dunnigan**

**All in favor**

**Vote: 5-0-0**

**Consideration and possible action on a Hawker & Peddler license for Aleah Karimi of Southwestern Advantage**

Aleah Karimi said she is selling educational resources, websites, and Apps for courses like SAT/ACT prep but she is not affiliated with the school system.

**Motion: Approve an application for a Hawker & Peddler license to Aleah Karimi for a period of time from July 19<sup>th</sup> to on or about August 14<sup>th</sup> with unannounced visits from 8:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. and by appointment after 6:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m. while wearing a mask the entire time and contingent on paying the license fee and getting photos and fingerprints done.**

**By: Vice Chair Dowling**

**2<sup>nd</sup>: Selectman Kaitbenski**

**All in favor**

**Vote: 5-0-0**

**Old Business:**

**COVID-19 Update**

Mr. Bridges said the Town is in a holding pattern on any non-revenue replacement type programs and the Town is in the process of developing a list of potential items. Mr. Bridges also reported that the Town is allowed to do its own vaccination lottery under the treasury guidelines.

**Other Old Business:**

Selectman Kaitbenski said he and the Town Administrator met with a group of Town employees and the Principal of the Burgess school about the Burgess field conditions. He said it was a productive meeting and they will continue to have more meetings.

July 19, 2021

**New Business:**

**Offer of the right of first refusal for 355 Leadmine Road**

Mr. Bridges said the Board of Selectmen got comments back from the Planning Board, the Conservation Department met, and so did the Board of Assessors. Per Mr. Bridges, the Town will be able to go forward with wrapping this up and schedule a public hearing.

**Correspondence**

Selectman Kaitbenski read the correspondence.

**Approval of Minutes**

**Motion: To approve the Minutes of July 6, 2021 as written.**

**By: Vice Chair Dowling**

**2<sup>nd</sup>: Selectman Kaitbenski**

**Vote: 4-0-1 (Selectman Dunnigan ABSTAINED)**

**Citizen's Forum**

Christina Reed of 14 Caron Road spoke about the Senior Center project. She said formally, her address was considered Lot 8. Ms. Reed said 70 Cedar Street was considered as Lot 9 and one of the discussions was about the developments going in around them. Ms. Reed said the land across the street was to be donated and asked at the meeting last week if they looked into the land. Mr. Bridges said the day after the meeting, Robyn Chrabasz, Facilities Coordinator researched the deeds and found that there are no deed restrictions for that property in the Town.

**Selectman Kaitbenski read the Executive Session statement: Executive Session: Per M.G.L. Chapter 30A, Section 21(3): To discuss strategy with respect to collective bargaining or litigation if an open meeting may have a detrimental effect on the bargaining or litigating position of the public body and the Chair so declares.**

**By: Selectman Kaitbenski**

**2<sup>nd</sup>: Vice Chair Dowling**

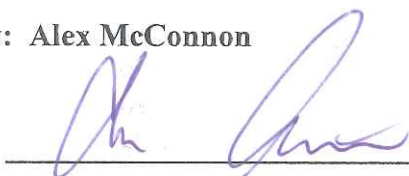
**Roll Call Vote: Chair Blanchard: YES, Vice Chair Dowling: YES, Selectman Kaitbenski: YES, Selectman Dunnigan: YES, Selectman Goodwin: YES**

**Vote: 5-0-0**

Chair Blanchard stated that the Board of Selectmen would go into Executive Session not to return to open session at 7:21 p.m.

**Minutes prepared by: Alex McConnon**

**Clerk of the Board:**



**Date signed:**

9/7/21