**Finance Committee Meeting Minutes**

**Town Hall ~ May 1, 2018**

**Sturbridge, MA**

**Call to Order:**

The Finance Committee chair called the Finance Committee meeting to order at 7:00pm. The following committee members were present: Kathy Neal (KN), Michael Serio (MS), Joni Light (JL), James Waddick (JW), Larry Morrison (LM), Jared Burns (JB), Karen Davis (KD), and Bruce Boyson (BB).

Absent: Mike Hager (MH)

Guests: Brian Amedy (BA), Sturbridge Tourist Association, and Kevin Filchak (KF), Economic Development

KN introduced BA and KF to the new committee members and asked for updates on Sturbridge Tourist Association (STA) and Economic Development. KF stated that STA has been incredibly successful over the past year and has been trying different outreach approaches and connections on social media; he said that there were slight changes in the budget compared to FY18. JL asked about the remaining $2,600.00 in the FY18 budget. KF stated that it would be transferred to marketing. BA stated that the STA was taking the initiative and looking at avenues to tell people about Sturbridge. Discussion followed regarding print advertising; KD asked how they decide where to advertise. KF explained that there is an established relationship with the *Hartford Courant*, that they have a decent system in placed to measure success of campaigns, and that travel shows are also included. BA said that the *Current* also has a large network including Fairfield County in Connecticut and New York. The Chamber of Commerce typically does the advertising and the STA cosponsors; other print advertising has been in *Worcester Magazine* and in visitor guides. BA stated that the Chamber is seeing great reports from the Albany market and may focus more on that area than Hartford.

LM stated that Old Sturbridge Village used to tally license plates in the parking lot twice daily, and this information would be useful to determine where visitors are coming from. No one knew if this is still done. BA said that the shift in the hours at OSV has affected tourism. KF stated that there are over thirty miles of trails, over forty restaurants, and three breweries – the focus is on building the Sturbridge experience for visitors and trying to keep them in town. JL asked about the Tour OPACUM event. KF said that it is a bike race cosponsored by Rapscallion Brewery; BA said that there are different loops for different brackets. There was discussion about the Pan Mass Challenge. KF stated that they are trying to create a community spirit around the event. BA said that the goal is more special events with community spirit such as the Farmers’ Market and the Sturbridge ½ Marathon. KN asked for the date of the marathon. KF said that the date is September 9 and runners will get a tee shirt. He also said that volunteers are needed.

MS asked about the three breweries; KF said that they are Altruist, Homefield, and Rapscallion and that a brewery tour or map may be another way to bring visitors to Sturbridge. LM stated that things look more promising and businesslike than 2-3 years ago. KF said that there is always more that can be done to reach out to the business community. He explained that there are approximately 450 registered businesses in town. He encouraged all business owners, leaders and managers to share their needs with him and the STA so that they can know how to help local business. JB asked if there plans to improve access to public wifi on the hiking trails as it is becoming an expectation. KF said that it was an interesting idea but that he had not heard any conversations regarding public wifi. The discussion ended with salary questions which KF deferred the answers to the Finance Director.

JL moved the motion to recommend Article 15 – Sturbridge Tourist Association; JB seconds. Motion accepted 8-0-0.

**Review of Annual Town Meeting Warrant**

JL moved the motion to recommend Article 9 – Water Department; JB seconds. Motion accepted 8-0-0.

JW stated that he had spoken with Greg Morse regarding the high zinc levels at the wastewater treatment plant and was told that the problem has been resolved.

Discussion only on Article 14 due to public information meeting on May 2.

KN stated that there has been no vote on Article 22. JL moved the motion to recommend Article 22 – Tax Rate Relief; MS seconds. BB moved the motion to amend the article to $250,000.00; LM seconds. The vote on the amended motion ($250,000.00) is defeated 3-5-0 (JB, MS, KN, JW, and JL opposed). The original motion for $350,000.00 accepted 5-3-0 (LM, BB, KD opposed).

Discussion was held concerning other uses for the funds including the failed generator and the Town Barn fields. BB asked if there was any purpose other than sharing with the taxpayers. KN stated that there were not any that she is aware of. JW said that the Board of Selectmen increased the amount to $250,000.00 four or five years ago for more relief for taxpayers. KD said that it seemed that it would be more useful somewhere else. JL stated that taxes go up every year; it would be nice to see taxes come down and it was a nice gesture by the Board of Selectmen.

JB moved the motion to recommend Article 24 – Data Center Upgrade; MS seconds. Motion accepted 8-0-0.

Article 25 – Wireless Devices – held until after Tantasqua presentation.

Article 28 – Revolving Funds Spending Limits – hold until May 8.

Article 30 – Prohibition of Recreational Marijuana – JL moved the motion to take no action; KD seconds. Motion accepted 6-1-1 (JW opposed, MS abstained).

Discussion revolved around the potential for a revenue stream, property taxes and jobs. KD stated that this is a big dollar industry and there is money for the town here. JL reminded the committee that the five year forecast has no new revenue streams coming in. MS stated that the fact that the federal law is tougher than the state law is a problem for lots of people.

JW moved the motion to recommend Article 31 – False Alarm Bylaw; LM seconds. Motion accepted 8-0-0.

Article 32 – Stretch Energy Code – after discussion, the decision was made to hold until the presentation on May 15.

JL moved the motion to recommend Article 33 – Rescission of MGL Chapter 90, sec 22B(b-k) – with the spelling correction “Rescission;” LM seconds. Motion accepted 8-0-0.

JW moved the motion to recommend “New Article on Revaluation;” JB seconds. Motion accepted 8-0-0.

**Special Town Meeting Warrant**

KN stated that the committee will be able to make recommendations at Town Meeting when actual dollar amounts will be available.

**No Meeting Minutes for Approval/No Old Business/No New Business/No Public Access**

JL moved the motion to adjourn; JB seconds. Motion accepted 8-0-0 and meeting adjourned at 9:25pm.

/jme