**Finance Committee Meeting Minutes**

**Town Hall ~ October 13, 2021**

**Sturbridge, MA**

**Call to Order**

The Finance Committee Chair called the Finance Committee meeting to order at 7:00 pm. The following committee members were present: Kevin Smith (KS), Larry Morrison (LM), Kathy Neal (KN), James Waddick (JW), Bruce Boyson (BB), Michael Hager (MH), and Ken Talentino (KT). Absent: Joe Freitas (JF).

Guests: Jeff Bridges (JB), Town Administrator; Barbara Barry (BBa), Finance Director; Butch Jackson (BJ), Department of Public Works Director; Brandon Goodwin (BG), Trail Committee; and Steve Sexton, Sturbridge Resident.

Pursuant to Chapter 20 of the Acts of 2021, this meeting was conducted in person and via remote means, in accordance with applicable law. This means that members of the Finance Committee as well as members of the public were able to access this meeting in person or via virtual means. The meeting was held via the GoToMeeting application and available for public access via the Town’s on demand video broadcast, on cable television, or by telephone access during the meeting.

KS welcomed KT to the Finance Committee and read the agenda.

**Reserve Fund Transfers**

DPW Director’s request of $8,000.00 to pay for the full installation of a Shade Systems shade structure, including concrete and excavation for footers. JW moved the motion to approve the transfer of $8,000.00 to DPW – Purchase of Services, Account #14102-52000; LM seconds. Motion accepted 7-0-0.

BJ explained that the DPW had planned to install this structure, but the installation is more complex than he had anticipated. He said the company it was purchased from will install the structure now and the fabric cover will be installed in the spring. JB stated that the structure was approved in 2019 with Betterment Funds.

**Review of Special Town Meeting Warrant Articles**

Article 46 – Senior Center Design and Construction Project (2/3 Vote Required) – MH moved the motion to recommend Article 46 as amended to read *“That the Town appropriates ELEVEN MILLION FOUR HUNDRED FIFTY THOUSAND AND 00/100 DOLLARS ($11,450,000.00) to pay costs of designing, engineering, constructing, equipping, and furnishing a renovated and expanded Senior Center to be located at 480 Main Street, and for the payment of any and all incidental and related costs, including, but not limited to, demolition and site preparation, and that to meet this appropriation, the Treasurer, with the approval of the Selectmen, is authorized to borrow said amount under and pursuant to G.L. c.44, §7(1), c. 44B (Community Preservation Act), or any other enabling authority, and to issue bonds or notes of the Town therefor. No amounts shall be borrowed or expended hereunder unless the Town shall have voted to exclude the amounts required to repay any borrowing authorized by this vote from the limitations on total property taxes in accordance with G.L. c. 59, §21C(k) (also known as Proposition 2½). The Board of Selectmen and any other appropriate officials of the Town are authorized to apply for federal, state, and/or private grants, enter into any agreements and execute all documents including contracts for a term in excess of three years as may be necessary to effectuate the purposes of this article, and to accept any gifts or grants provided to the Town for such purposes. Any premium received upon the sale of any bonds or notes, may be applied to the payment of costs approved by this vote in accordance with G.L. c. 44, §20, thereby reducing the amount authorized to be borrowed to pay such costs by a like amount”;* LM seconds. Motion accepted 7-0-0.

JB stated that the Town is allowed in this article to bond up to the full amount and to look for other funding sources. Discussion followed regarding use of Community Preservation Act funds for any portion of the Senior Center that is historically preserved. JB said the Town is looking for a site to relocate the Senior Center during renovation. JB stated that the project has taken seven years to get to this point; he added that three potential sites were studied with similar costs, benefits, and unique challenges. He said that the Board of Selectmen (BOS) chose to renovate the current location. Further discussion centered on the need for a larger building, more parking spaces, and the need for a special ballot within ninety days of a favorable Town Meeting vote. Two grammatical changes were made to the article for clarity.

Article 51 – Community Preservation Outbuilding Removals – MH moved the motion to recommend Article 51 as written; KN seconds. Motion accepted 7-0-0.

JB noted that the cost of the project has increased due to a weather delay and a timing issue for a protected species.

Article 52 – Community Preservation Grand Trunk Trail Construction – JW moved the motion to recommend Article 52 as written; KT seconds. Motion accepted 7-0-0.

JB explained that this project has been ongoing for more than a decade involving multiple grants. He stated that the project has been managed by state and federal authorities, but Sturbridge will now assume management of the project and hire an engineer for construction monitoring. BG stated that there is a $300,000.00 grant that must be used by June 2022 or it will be lost; he added that this section of the trail will connect the trail’s current end at the bridge in Westville to Farquhar Road.

Article 53 – Funding for Police Union Contract – MH moved the motion to recommend Article 53 as written; KN seconds. Motion accepted 7-0-0.

JB stated that the former contract with the Police Union expired more than a year ago. He said that the Article is retroactive wages and the current year’s wages under the new contract; he added that third year’s wages will be addressed at Town Meeting in June.

Article 54 – Funding for the Construction of a Public Parking Lot at 501 Main Street, Sturbridge – MH moved the motion to recommend Article 54 as written; LM seconds. Motion accepted 7-0-0.

JB provided a handout with the design of the proposed parking lot and explained that the parking lot will provide access to the trail network and meet the identified need for parking for the Commercial Tourism District. He added that the true cost is $350,000.00 with an additional $50,000.00 coming from an earmark from Senator Gobi. The question was raised if the parking lot would still be needed once the additional Senior Center parking spaces become available. JB stated that the area is constrained and the Senior Center will still be twenty parking spaces short after the renovation is complete. JB explained that a much larger project is underway for Route 20 from Route 131 to Route 148. The question was raised whether the parking lot would be required to have electric car charging stations. JB said that the parking lot design follows current regulations and electric charging stations are not required.

**Meeting Minutes**

MH moved the motion to accept the May 6, 2021, meeting minutes as submitted; LM seconds. Motion accepted 5-0-2 (BB and KT abstained).

JW moved the motion to accept the May 13, 2021, meeting minutes as submitted; LM seconds. Motion accepted 5-0-2 (BB and KT abstained).

**New Business**

KS said that the liaison assignments will be forthcoming for Fiscal Year 2023. JW noted that the assignments have been the same for three years; KS said the liaisons will rotate this year.

**Old Business**

JW stated that there is a ninth Finance Committee member spot available. KS said it is known that there is a spot open.

**Reorganization of the Finance Committee**

The Chair opened nominations for the Finance Committee for Fiscal Year 2023. Vote for committee chair nomination was raised in favor of KS by LM; JW seconds. LM moved the motion to close nominations; KN seconds. Motion accepted 7-0-0.

LM moved the motion to accept KS as committee chair; JW seconds. Motion accepted 7-0-0.

Vote for committee vice chair nomination was raised in favor of JW by LM; KS seconds. LM moved the motion to close nominations; KN seconds. Motion accepted 7-0-0.

LM moved the motion to accept JW as vice chair; KN seconds. Motion accepted 7-0-0.

Vote for committee secretary nomination was raised in favor of MH by LM; JW seconds. LM moved the motion to close nominations; KN seconds. Motion accepted 7-0-0.

LM moved the motion to accept MH as secretary; KN seconds. Motion accepted 7-0-0.

**Public Access**

Steve Sexton, 51 Seneca Lane, indicated his interest in joining the Finance Committee. KS said he would forward his contact information to the town moderator. KS checked the status of the current members and stated when current appointments expire.

KN moved the motion to adjourn; MH seconds. Motion accepted 7-0-0. Meeting adjourned at 8:20 pm.

/jme