**Finance Committee Meeting Minutes**

**Town Hall ~ March 4, 2021**

**Sturbridge, MA**

**Call to Order**

The Finance Committee Chair called the Finance Committee meeting to order at 7:33 pm. The following committee members were present: Kathy Neal (KN), James Waddick (JW), Joni Light (JL), Michael Hager (MH), Larry Morrison (LM), Bruce Boyson (BB), and Kevin Smith (KS). Absent: Karen Davis (KD).

Guests: Jeff Bridges (JB), Town Administrator; Barbara Barry (BBa), Finance Director; Butch Jackson (BJ), DPW Director; Deb Boyd (DB), Tantasqua Regional School District Associate Superintendent.

This meeting was held remotely pursuant to Governor Baker’s March 12, 2020, Order Suspending Certain Provisions of the Open Meeting Law, and the Governor’s March 15, 2020, order imposing strict limitations of the number of people that may gather in one place. The meeting was held via the GoToMeeting application, recorded, and posted on the Town website.

KN read the introduction to the virtual meeting.

**Reorganization of Committee**

The Chair opened nominations for the Finance Committee for Fiscal Year 2022. Vote for committee chair nomination was raised in favor of JW by LM; JL seconds. JW declined the nomination. LM removed nomination; JL removed second. Vote for committee chair nomination was raised in favor of KS by LM; JW seconds. LM moves the motion to close nominations; JW seconds. Motion to close nominations accepted 7-0-0.

Roll call vote:

JL, yes BB, yes JW, yes LM, yes MH, yes KS, yes

KN, yes

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

Roll call vote:

JL, yes BB, yes JW, yes LM, yes MH, yes KS, yes

KN, yes

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

Roll call vote:

JL, yes BB, yes JW, yes LM, yes MH, yes KS, yes

KN, yes

LW moves the motion to accept JW as committee vice-chair; MH seconds. Motion accepted 7-0-0.

Roll call vote:

JL, yes BB, yes JW, yes LM, yes MH, yes KS, yes

KN, yes

Vote for committee secretary nomination was raised in favor of JL by LM; JW seconds. JL explained that this will be her last season with the Finance Committee as she will be moving out of town after the Annual Town Meeting. LM moved the motion to close nominations; JW seconds. Motion to close nominations accepted 7-0-0.

Roll call vote:

JW, yes LM, yes MH, yes KS, yes KN, yes JL, yes

BB, yes

LW moved the motion to accept JL as committee secretary; JW seconds. Motion accepted 7-0-0.

BB, yes JW, yes LM, yes MH, yes KS, yes KN, yes

JL, yes

KS asks KN to continue to chair the meeting as he is not prepared to do so.

**Reserve Fund Transfer – GIS Services Account**

Request for $15,000.00 to create a new MS4 account to pay the Town’s current GIS vendor to correct the data, perform the catchment delineation and ranking and provide a gap analysis to determine the actions the Town must take to come into compliance with the requirements of the 2016 Massachusetts MS4 General Permit. KS moved the motion to transfer $15,000.00 into the new MS4 account; MH seconds. Motion accepted 7-0-0.

Roll call vote:

JL, yes BB, yes JW, yes LM, yes MH, yes KS, yes

KN, yes

BJ explained the MS4 permit is issued jointly by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and the Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection. He said the Town worked with a regional coalition for several years to meet permitting requirements with PeopleGIS performing the necessary GIS work to create and maintain a stormwater system database. He explained GIS support is no longer provided by the coalition through PeopleGIS. BJ added that PeopleGIS is a proprietary software and the current data is not available for the Town to use. He explained this transfer of funds will enable Tighe and Bond (the Town’s current GIS vendor) to transfer the PeopleGIS data to the Town’s GIS system and to meet the additional requirements of the permit including testing catch basins, discharge testing, monitoring ground water and storm water going into the waterways, and public outreach. KS questioned if the Town will have all the data from the original GIS software and whether the Town’s servers have the space for the data. BBa stated the Town recently updated the servers and has increased capacity. She added there will be ongoing expenses for the MS4 account.

Questions were raised regarding the Reserve Fund balance and what happens to the balance on July 1. BBa said that the balance is $163,000.00, and the remaining balance will transfer to Free Cash at the start of Fiscal Year 2022.

**Meeting Minutes**

JW moved the motion to amend the June 29, 2020, meeting minutes; KS seconds. Motion to amend accepted 5-0-2 (LM and KS abstained).

Roll call vote:

JL, yes BB, yes JW, yes LM, abstained MH, yes

KS, abstained KN, yes

JW moved the motion to accept the June 29, 2020, meeting minutes as amended; MH seconds. Motion accepted 5-0-3 (BB, LM, and KS abstained).

JL, yes KN, yes JW, yes LM, abstained MH, yes

KS, abstained BB, abstained

**New Business**

DB shared information regarding Governor Baker’s proposed education budget for Fiscal Year 2022. She explained the Student Opportunity Act funding which will be phased in over the next seven years. DB stated her belief that the proposed budget does not count all of the students who will be entering school in the fall including the current first-time homeschoolers, kindergartners who are currently not attending school, and homeschooling high school students. DB explained because these students are not included in the foundation budget, the budget projections from the State are low. She explained the federal grants for the district and the possibility that Sturbridge can use up to $167,000.00 of the grant money to lower its assessment if the current language remains in the budget. She said the budget process is complicated, and she is looking at the school budget from many angles to provide the best education for all students from kindergarten to twelfth grade.

KN asked if there will be a joint meeting with the Board of Selectmen (BOS) to kick off the budget season. JB stated that the BOS would like a live meeting rather than a remote meeting; he questioned whether Finance Committee members would be comfortable in a room with fifteen other people. The committee’s response was mixed with discussion about the potential meeting places available in Town for the joint session. JB explained that audio is an issue for a hybrid meeting including present and remote attendees; he added he may need an extra week to work through the logistics. The question was raised whether to have the department heads at the meeting. MH stated that the combined meeting should be a big picture meeting and the department heads should explain their budgets in detail at the subsequent Finance Committee meetings. KS agreed, stating the joint meeting is for overall guidance and to learn where the Town can go with the budget.

LM thanked KN for her leadership as committee chair.

JL asked if there will be new liaison assignments for the departments. KS said he will talk to KN and let everyone know.

**No Old Business**

**No Public Access**

KS moved the motion to adjourn; MH seconds. Motion accepted 7-0-0.

Roll call vote:

JL, yes BB, yes LM, yes MH, yes KS, yes JW, yes

KN, yes

Meeting adjourned at 8:55 pm.

/jme