**Finance Committee Meeting Minutes**

**Town Hall ~ April 22, 2021**

**Sturbridge, MA**

**Call to Order**

The Finance Committee Chair called the Finance Committee meeting to order at 6:31 pm. The following committee members were present: Kevin Smith (KS), James Waddick (JW), Joni Light (JL), Larry Morrison (LM), Kathy Neal (KN), Michael Hager (MH), and Bruce Boyson (BB). Absent: Joe Freitas (JF), and Karen Davis (KD).

Guests: Jeff Bridges (JB), Town Administrator; Barbara Barry (BBa), Finance Director; Jean Bubon (JBu), Town Planner; Barbara Search (BS), Historical Commission; Brandon Goodwin (BG), Trails Committee; Terry Masterson (TM), Economic Development and Tourism Coordinator; and Brian Amedy, Sturbridge Tourist Association.

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 on 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.

KS established that a quorum was present and read the introduction to the virtual meeting. He added that the Finance Committee is using an updated copy of the Town Meeting Warrant Articles.

**No Reserve Fund Transfers**

**Review of Fiscal Year 2022 Town Budgets**

The following line was reviewed for Police Department. The motion was moved to recommend Line 35 for a total of $2,974,701.00 by MH; JW seconds. Motion accepted 7-0-0.

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Line** | **Account** | **Police Department** |  |  |
|  |  | Department Head Salaries | $145,656.00 |  |
|  |  | Salaries/ Wages | $2,365,764.00 |  |
|  |  | Longevity | $7,500.00 |  |
|  |  | Stipend Emergency Mgmt | $6,000.00 |  |
|  |  | Overtime | $449,781.00 |  |
| 35 | 12101 | Personnel Costs | $2,974,701.00 | MH; JW seconds. Motion accepted 7-0-0. |

Roll call vote:

BB, yes MH, yes JL, yes LM, yes KN, yes KS, yes

JW, yes

It was noted that Line 35 does not reflect a new police contract as negotiations are ongoing. JB explained that the Stipend Emergency Management item is for the Police Chief, who is the Emergency Management Manager for the Town. He added that the Emergency Management Coordinator position is a very part time position which involves funding, grants, plans and other details.

The following line was reviewed for Fire Department. The motion was moved to recommend Line 37 for a total of $1,582,257.00 by BB; KN seconds. Motion accepted 7-0-0.

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Line** | **Account** | **Fire Department** |  |  |
|  |  | Department Head Salaries | $116,773.00 |  |
|  |  | Salaries/ Wages | $1,220,960.00 |  |
|  |  | Overtime | $242,274.00 |  |
|  |  | Longevity | $2,250.00 |  |
| 37 | 12201 | Personnel Costs | $1,582,257.00 | BB; KN seconds. Motion accepted 7-0-0. |

Roll call vote:

BB, yes MH, yes JL, yes LM, yes KN, yes KS, yes

JW, yes

JB explained that the Board of Selectmen (BOS) approved the Deputy Fire Chief position; he added that the Deputy Fire Chief is the Second in Command, Fire Prevention Officer, Training Coordinator, and can fill vacancies as needed.

The following line was reviewed for Community Health. The motion was moved to recommend Line 57 for a total of $5,000.00 by JL; KN seconds. Motion accepted 7-0-0.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Line** | **Account** | **Community Health** |  |  |  |
|  | 15152-53850 | Community Health Care Total | $5,000.00 |  |  |
| 57 |  | Total Expenses | $5,000.00 |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |
|  |  | **Community Health Care Total** | $5,000.00 | JL; KN seconds. Motion accepted 7-0-0. |  |

Roll call vote:

BB, yes MH, yes JL, yes LM, yes KN, yes KS, yes

JW, yes

**Review of Annual Town Meeting Warrant Articles**

Article 5 – Community Preservation Community-Wide Historic Preservation Plan – BB moved the motion to recommend Article 5 as written; KN seconds. Motion accepted 7-0-0.

Roll call vote:

BB, yes MH, yes JL, yes LM, yes KN, yes KS, yes

JW, yes

JBu explained that the purpose of the plan is to evaluate the Town’s historical assets, to document them, and to make an action plan to protect them. She added that the $15,000.00 is the Town’s portion of a matching grant. She said that not everything is worth saving; what is significant, unique, and worth preserving will be in the plan, along with actionable goals for these assets. JBu stated that the Massachusetts Historical Commission recommends increasing the Town’s portion to $20,000.00 as the preservation plans are exceeding the $30,000.00 originally intended to fund the plan. JB said that the BOS may reopen the Warrant and adjust the amount of this article if the Community Preservation Committee meets to increase the amount.

Article 8 – Community Preservation Recreational Trails Master Plan – JW moved the motion to recommend Article 8 as written; MH seconds. Motion accepted 7-0-0.

Roll call vote:

BB, yes MH, yes JL, yes LM, yes KN, yes KS, yes

JW, yes

BG stated that the Trails Master Plan is eight years old and will be updated to make it current with the needs in Town. He expressed the Town’s desire to get people active in open spaces, to connect neighborhoods to the central spine, to allow better access to trails on the town, neighborhood, and local levels; to allow better access to waterways; and to add bike lanes as roads are improved. He reiterated that the plan is to help to get people outdoors and active.

Article 10 – Community Preservation Trail Construction – MH moved the motion to recommend Article 10 as written; KN seconds. Motion accepted 7-0-0.

Roll call vote:

BB, yes MH, yes JL, yes LM, yes KN, yes KS, yes

JW, yes

BG explained that $8,000.00 will provide for five members of the Student Conservation Association to work on the Town’s trail system for 10 days. The work will include building trails and bridges and marking trails and boundary lines. He added that another $8,000.00 will be used on the Seven Ridges Trail to build bridges and for materials to fix areas of the trail that are nonconforming. He said the remaining $8,000.00 will be used for bridge permitting and construction and similar work on the Plimpton, Long Pond, Heins Farm and Riverlands properties. BG added that improvements in marking trails and a larger version of the trail maps are additional improvements planned for this year.

Article 11 – Town Budget – MH moved the motion to recommend Article 11 as written; LM seconds. Motion accepted 7-0-0.

Roll call vote:

BB, yes MH, yes JL, yes LM, yes KN, yes KS, yes

JW, yes

Article 14 – Sturbridge Tourist Association – JL moved the motion to recommend Article 14 as written; KN seconds. Motion accepted 7-0-0.

Roll call vote:

BB, yes MH, yes JL, yes LM, yes KN, yes KS, yes

JW, yes

TM stated that he is eagerly planning marketing and advertising for the fall and is considering a series of events in October. BA added that EarthFest, the Doll House Show, the Harvest Festival and Pintastic are scheduled for this year and an antique show scheduled in January. He said that money was spent on advertising because there were no events in 2020. BA stated that the new Sturbridge Tourist Association website is currently in the works.

Article 19 – Tax Rate Relief – this article is on hold.

Article 20 – Revaluation/Interim Adjustments – JW moved the motion to recommend Article 20 as written; KN seconds. Motion accepted 7-0-0.

Roll call vote:

BB, yes MH, yes JL, yes LM, yes KN, yes KS, yes

JW, yes

Article 21 – Revolving Funds-Spending Limits FY22 – KN moved the motion to recommend Article 21 as written; MH seconds. Motion accepted 7-0-0.

Roll call vote:

BB, yes MH, yes JL, yes LM, yes KN, yes KS, yes

JW, yes

Article 22 – Water Department – this article is on hold.

Article 23 – Sewer Department – this article is on hold.

Article 24 – Sewer Project Debt – JW moved the motion to recommend Article 24 as written; MH seconds. Motion accepted 7-0-0.

Roll call vote:

BB, yes MH, yes JL, yes LM, yes KN, yes KS, yes

JW, yes

Article 25 – Pipe Coatings Maintenance Program – JW moved the motion to recommend Article 25; KN seconds. Motion accepted 7-0-0.

Roll call vote:

BB, yes MH, yes JL, yes LM, yes KN, yes KS, yes

JW, yes

JB stated that this is year one of a three-year program. He added that the BOS wants the wastewater treatment plant to be sustainable and affordable; he added the BOS wants a rate study for water and sewer. The summary box wording was discussed.

Article 26 – Design and Permitting for a New Wastewater Pump Station and Force Main to Service the Fiske Hill Area – this article was placed on hold.

Article 27 – Inflow and Infiltration Study and Repairs – KN moved the motion to recommend Article 27 as written; JW seconds. Motion accepted 7-0-0.

Roll call vote:

BB, yes MH, yes JL, yes LM, yes KN, yes KS, yes

JW, yes

JB explained that this is a 10-year program to study and repair the wastewater collection system.

Article 28 – Tax Increment Financing Agreement and Project Certification: RLS Complete Regional, LLC – KN moved the motion to recommend Article 28 as written; JW seconds. Motion accepted 7-0-0.

Roll call vote:

BB, yes MH, yes JL, yes LM, yes KN, yes KS, yes

JW, yes

JB stated that this is a cold storage facility located at 90 Charlton Road and this business will bring in 19-20 good jobs. He added that personal property is not exempt from taxes.

Article 29 – Emergency Services Radio System Evaluation and Technical Support for Implementation of a New Interoperable Radio System – this article was placed on hold.

Article 36 – Readoption of Zoning Bylaws – JW moved the motion to recommend Article 36 as written; KN seconds. Motion accepted 7-0-0.

Roll call vote:

BB, yes MH, yes JL, yes LM, yes KN, yes KS, yes

JW, yes

JBu explained that Zoning Bylaws, General Bylaws and the Town Charter have been renumbered, have had typographical errors corrected, and the Massachusetts General Laws have been updated. She added that all significant changes have been placed in separate articles.

Article 37 – Amendment to the Zoning Bylaws for Accessory Dwellings (2/3 vote required) – KN moved the motion to recommend Article 37 as written; BB seconds. Motion accepted 7-0-0.

Roll call vote:

BB, yes MH, yes JL, yes LM, yes KN, yes KS, yes

JW, yes

JBu explained that, in previous surveys and public forums, residents have expressed the desire for better opportunities to create accessory dwelling units. She added that this bylaw amendment will allow for a single dwelling unit, either attached or detached, on the same lot as the principal dwelling. JBu stated that accessory dwelling units will be permitted only by special permit from the Zoning Board of Appeals.

Article 38 – Amendment to the Sturbridge Zoning Bylaws Adding Fast Food Establishments to the Village Gateway District (2/3 Vote Required) – KN moved the motion to accept Article 38 as written; MH seconds. Motion accepted 7-0-0.

Roll call vote:

BB, yes MH, yes JL, yes LM, yes KN, yes KS, yes

JW, yes

Article 39 – An Article Amending the Zoning Bylaws of the Town of Sturbridge to Amend the Definition of Fast Casual Dining (2/3 Vote Required) – KN moved the motion to recommend Article 39 as written; MH seconds. Motion accepted 7-0-0.

Roll call vote:

BB, yes MH, yes JL, yes LM, yes KN, yes KS, yes

JW, yes

Articles 38 and 39 were discussed together. JBu explained that the property owner in the Village Gateway District is having difficulty leasing the vacant space and the pad site. She said that the rental space doesn’t meet the square footage requirement for fast casual dining and fast food is not allowed in the Gateway District. JBu stated that smaller footprints for restaurants are now normal; she added that drive thru is essential and curbside pickup parking is also necessary. She said that all architectural and landscaping regulations will remain in place. JBu explained the differences between fast casual and fast food. MH summarized Article 38 as expanding availability while creating no additional limitations and Article 39 as removing the minimum square footage requirement and creating additional opportunities.

Article 40 – An Article Amending the Zoning Bylaws of the Town as They Regulate the Floodplain – JW moved the motion to recommend Article 40 as written; KN seconds. Motion accepted 7-0-0.

Roll call vote:

BB, yes MH, yes JL, yes LM, yes KN, yes KS, yes

JW, yes

JBu stated that Massachusetts has been working with all communities with flood insurance to be sure that the bylaws are current. She said these changes have been recommended to bring this bylaw up to date. She added this language will keep the Town in compliance with National Flood Plain Insurance and not jeopardize property owners’ ability to obtain flood insurance.

Article 41 – Amending the General Bylaws of the Town of Sturbridge Limiting the Exemptions to the Earth Removal Bylaw – MH moved the motion to recommend Article 41 as written; KN seconds. Motion accepted 7-0-0.

Roll call vote:

BB, yes MH, yes JL, yes LM, yes KN, yes KS, yes

JW, yes

JBU explained that the BOS wants a cap on the amount of earth removed from a property. She said this amendment will require a permit from the BOS to remove more than 5,000 square yards of earth. JBu said she would pare down the text to make the changes more obvious.

Article 42 – An Article Amending the General Bylaws of the Town Providing for the Keeping of Poultry and Other Fowl in the Town – KS moved the motion to amend Article 42 to read:

“Poultry and other fowl – for the purpose of this bylaw shall be limited to chicken, hen, turkey, goose, duck, Rock Cornish hens, and game birds such as pheasant, and squab.”

JL seconds. Motion accepted 7-0-0.

Roll call vote:

BB, yes MH, yes JL, yes LM, yes KN, yes KS, yes

JW, yes

JL moved the motion to recommend Article 42 as amended; JW seconds. Motion accepted 7-0-0.

Roll call vote:

BB, yes MH, yes JL, yes LM, yes KN, yes KS, yes

JW, yes

JBu stated that many residents have expressed the desire to have chickens on their land but currently must have more than five acres to do so. She said this amendment will allow chickens by permit and by meeting specific requirements.

**Meeting Minutes**

JW moved the motion to accept the April 8, 2021, meeting minutes as presented; JL seconds. Motion accepted 7-0-0.

Roll call vote:

BB, yes MH, yes JL, yes LM, yes KN, yes KS, yes

JW, yes

JW moved the motion to accept the April 15, 2021, meeting minutes as presented; JL seconds. Motion accepted 6-0-1.

Roll call vote:

BB, yes MH, yes JL, yes LM, abstained KN, yes

KS, yes JW, yes

**No New Business**

**Old Business**

The issue of the Town’s right of first refusal on the Fiske Hill and Old Farm Road property was brought up. Discussion centered on the votes of Town boards and committees. JB stated that the Conservation Commission and Open Space Committee have voted for the Town to act on the right of first refusal. He added that the BOS in is favor of Town Meeting voters making the decision whether or not to purchase the land.

**No Public Access**

JL moved the motion to adjourn; KN seconds. Motion accepted 7-0-0 and meeting adjourned at 9:38 pm.

Roll call vote:

BB, yes MH, yes JL, yes LM, yes KN, yes KS, yes

JW, yes

/jme

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