**Finance Committee Meeting Minutes**

**Town Hall ~ January 9, 2020**

**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: Kathy Neal (KN), Larry Morrison (LM), Joni Light (JL), Jared Burns (JB), James Waddick (JW), Karen Davis (KD), and Kevin Smith (KS). Absent: Michael Hager (MH), and Bruce Boyson (BB).

Guests: Jeff Bridges (JBr), Town Administrator; Jean Bubon (JBu), Town Planner; Charlie Blanchard (CB), Historical Commission and Planning Board Chair; Mary Blanchard (MB), Board of Selectmen Chair; Ed Neal (EN), Housing Partnership; Debbie Marucahoak (DM), Habitat for Humanity; and Hank Rauch (HR), Habitat for Humanity.

**Review of Special Town Meeting Warrant Articles**

Article 45 – Purchase of 501 Main Street for the Development of a Public Parking Lot – KS moved the motion to reconsider the article as amended; JB seconds. Motion accepted 6-0-1 (KD abstained). JB moved the motion to recommend Article 45 as written; JL seconds. Motion accepted 5-1-1 (JW opposed; KD abstained).

Article 47 – Construction of an Affordable Single Family Home on Cedar Street with Community Preservation Act Housing Funds – JB moved the motion to recommend Article 47 as written; KD seconds. Motion accepted 5-0-2 (KN and JW abstained*).* There was discussion regarding improving the Town’s percentage of affordable housing as required by the Massachusetts affordable housing law. JBu explained that it is very difficult for a small town to achieve the 10% affordable housing requirement. She added that the Housing Needs Assessment Plan currently underway needs approval by the Massachusetts Department of Housing and Community Development; this will provide a roadmap towards improving the percentage of affordable housing in Sturbridge. When asked why multi-family units were not being pursued, EN stated the Town does not own any land with the area necessary for such a project. JBu explained the Town has been only looking at land that it already owns and is not considering purchasing land for affordable housing. DM explained Habitat for Humanity’s budget for the specific site in question; she stated that there are increased costs due to site clearing, a slow perc test, and the anticipated need for a deep well. She answered questions regarding income qualifications for the homeowner, resale pricing of the home, property taxes, and Habitat’s corporate fundraising sources. When asked if this project would take away available funds for future projects, EN stated that this project’s price is reasonable compared with the last Habitat for Humanity home built in 2007. KN stated the Community Preservation Act funds may be used for rehabilitation also – that not all funds must be used to try to reach the affordable housing percentage.

KS asked if Article 50 was still a place holder. JBr indicated that it is in hopes that the appraisal will come in before the Special Town Meeting.

Article 51 – Replacement of a Roof Top Airconditioning Unit at the Public Safety Complex – KD moved the motion to recommend article 51 as amended to read “Repair or Replace Roof Top HVAC Unit at the Public Safety Complex”; JB seconds. Motion accepted 5-2-0 (KS and JL opposed). JBr explained that the sum requested is for the worst-case scenario if the unit must be replaced. He added that the Safety Complex needs to be air conditioned before summer for the employees and the equipment in the building and there will be time to assess the situation thoroughly before spending the money. KS suggested asking for a reserve fund transfer once it is determined if the unit can be repaired or must be replaced. JBr explained that it would not be an unexpected expense because he knows that it is broken now.

KS asked if the cost per parcel numbers for Article 44 are available. JBr stated that they would be available at Town Meeting. JBr explained the process of removing the conservation restriction on 80 Route 15.

Article 52 – An Article to Amend the Zoning Bylaw for Changes in Definitions – JL moved the motion to recommend Article 52 as written; JW seconds. Motion accepted 7-0-0. KS asked what percentage can make up accessory uses. JBu stated that the primary use is the primary portion of use; she added that the potential is for 49% accessory use.

Article 53 – Amending Chapters 14 and 15 of the Zoning Bylaws – KS moved the motion to recommend Article 53 as written; KD seconds. Motion accepted 7-0-0. JBu explained that the lot area will stay at one acre, but the front setback will be reduced to 50 feet. She stated the height of buildings is increasing due to changes in firefighting capabilities. She added that there are potentially 50-60 developable acres. There was discussion regarding the terms “Craft Beverage Business with Tasting Room” and “Microbrewery.” JBu stated that they are the same but explained, that at this time, it is necessary to keep the duplication intact to keep consistent language throughout the Zoning Bylaws.

Article 54 – Proposed Amendments to Chapter Nineteen of the Zoning Bylaw – KS moved the motion to recommend Article 54 as written; KD seconds. Motion accepted 7-0-0.

JL asked if the amount of the bills is available so it may be added to the summary box of Article 57. JBr stated that he will get the information. He added that the Warrant will be posted tomorrow.

**No Meeting Minutes**

**No Old Business**

**No New Business**

**No Public Access**

KD moved the motion to adjourn; KS seconds. Motion accepted 7-0-0 and meeting adjourned at 8:24 pm.

/jme