**Sturbridge Finance Committee**

**Meeting Minutes of April 21, 2022**

**Sturbridge Town Hall**

**Call to Order**

Finance Committee (FC) Chair Kevin Smith called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m and read the agenda:

1. Call to order
2. Reserve Fund transfer(s)
3. Line Item Budget
4. Annual Town Meeting warrant articles
5. Special Town Meeting warrant articles
6. Report of the Finance Committee
7. Meeting minutes
8. Old Business
9. New Business
10. Public Access
11. Adjournment

*Committee members in person:* Leigh Darrin (LD), Joe Freitas (JF), Michael Hager (MH), Larry Morrison (LM), Kathy Neal (KN), Kevin Smith (KS), Ken Talentino (KT), James Waddick (JW).

*Committee members virtual:* Bruce Boyson (BB), who was disconnected several times from 8:34 to 8:38, 8:40 to 8:45, and at 8:55 until the meeting adjourned at 9:11.

Staff members virtual: Finance Director Barbara Barry (BBa).

**Reserve Fund Transfers**

No Reserve Fund Transfers

**Line Item Budget**

The Board of Selectmen budget reflects no changes, as has been true the past few years.

LD made a motion to recommend that Town Meeting approve the Board of Selectmen budget of $3,600. JW seconded the motion. Motion approved 9-0-0.

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The Town Administrator budget reflects a significant increase in salary aimed at attracting qualified candidates who will stay longer.

LD made a motion that Town Meeting approve the Town Administrator budget of $277,422; LM seconded the motion. Motion approved 9-0-0.

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The Town Accountant budget reflects a slight decrease in purchase of services because the employee receiving tuition reimbursement left. The salaries are competitive and in line with other towns.

KS made a motion that Town Meeting approve the Town Accountant budget of $110,897; LM seconded the motion. Motion approved 9-0-0.

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The Board of Assessors budget has a modest increase related to the department head.

LD made a motion to recommend that Town Meeting approve the Board of Assessors budget of $163,352; LM seconded the motion. Motion approved 9-0-0.

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The Finance Director budget is flat except for $40,000 in salary and benefits for a new 35-hours-a-week Payroll Coordinator position, which is overdue because the Finance Office’s staffing level has not increased in the 30 years since the current Finance Director started; further, payroll has become more and more complicated, especially in times of high employee turnover.

BBa reported that the outsourcing of bill-paying has been very beneficial and has removed the in-house responsibility of bill-printing and the majority of bill-receiving, although there are some taxpayers who still prefer to send or bring their payments directly to Town Hall. BBa noted that billing for all departments goes through the Finance Department.

BB made a motion to recommend that Town Meeting approve the Finance Director budget of $330,742; KT seconded the motion. Motion approved 9-0-0.

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The Information Technology budget was highlighted in the Budget Overview at the FC’s joint meeting with the Board of Selectmen.

BB made a motion to recommend that Town Meeting approve the Information Technology budget of $294,734; JW seconded the motion. Motion approved 9-0-0.

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The Conservation Commission budget has a modest increase for training and for a one-time cost of improvements to the very small Conservation office.

LD made a motion to recommend that Town Meeting approve the Conservation Commission budget of $121,118; LM seconded the motion. Motion approved 9-0-0.

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The Town Planning budget increased by 21.7%, mostly due to the GIS mapping system, which is used by other departments but funded under the Town Planner budget.

LD made a motion to recommend that Town Meeting approve the Town Planning budget of $207,539; JW seconded the motion. Motion approved 9-0-0.

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The Zoning Board of Appeals budget is level.

LD made a motion to recommend that Town Meeting approve the Zoning Board of Appeals budget of $590. Motion approved 9-0-0.

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The $36,567 in the Economic Development budget covers only half of the director’s salary, as the STA budget funds the other half.

The role of the Economic Development Coordinator was discussed. The current Coordinator’s main focus appears to be on attracting people to fill the hotel rooms and restaurants, as opposed to filling vacant pieces of land or obtaining grants, which should be a focus as well. BBa will speak with Terry and report back to the FC.

MH made a motion to recommend that Town Meeting approve the Economic Development budget of $36,567; JW seconded the motion. Motion approved 7-2(KS, LM)-0.

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The Police Department budget is fairly standard, except for funding a new detective, but not an additional officer as requested. Chief Dessert understands budget limits. Supplies costs are up, partially to cover equipping the new detective, sending a new officer to the Police Academy, and funding smaller items. Overtime costs are not expected to be reduced until staffing is at capacity. The department is still accredited.

JF made a motion to recommend that Town Meeting approve the Police Department budget of $3,543,738; LD seconded the motion. Motion approved 9-0-0.

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The Building Inspector budget reflects a small salary increase. The code-book budget is always funded in case the codes are changed; otherwise, the money is returned at the end of the fiscal year.

LD made a motion to recommend that Town Meeting approve the Building Inspector budget of $145,249; JW seconded the motion. Motion approved 9-0-0.

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The Sealers of Weights and Measures budget has stayed the same.

LD made a motion to recommend that Town Meeting approve the Sealers of Weights and Measures budget of $5,350; KT seconded the motion. Motion approved 9-0-0.

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The Inspections budget is level-funded.

LD made a motion to recommend that Town Meeting approve the Inspections budget of $53,278; JW seconded the motion. Motion approved 9-0-0.

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The Tree Warden budget reflects an increase in Purchase and Services to deal with the 100+ trees dying from gypsy-moth damage.

LD made a motion to recommend that Town Meeting approve the Tree Warden budget of $32,692; JW seconded the motion. Motion approved 9-0-0.

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The Council on Aging budget reflects no significant changes.

BB made a motion to recommend that Town Meeting approve the Council on Aging budget of $156,861; KN seconded the motion. Motion approved 9-0-0.

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The Veteran Services budget reflects an increase in the oil line of American Legion budget.

KT made a motion to recommend that Town Meeting approve the Veteran Services budget of $75,364; JW seconded the motion. Motion approved 9-0-0.

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The Joshua Hyde Library Operations budget reflects a minor increase in the materials budget, which is a straight percentage of the operating budget.

BB made a motion to recommend that Town Meeting approve the Joshua Hyde Library Operations budget of $570,341; KT seconded the motion. Motion approved 9-0-0.

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The Recreation Department budget includes a slight increase related to salaries and longevity, and a larger increase in Purchase of Services, including longer rentals on porta pottiesand one-time electrical costs for electricity and cameras at the Cedar Street Recreation Center, and increased treatments for mosquitos and ticks.

LD made a motion to recommend that Town Meeting approve the Recreation budget of $134,913; LM seconded the motion. Motion approved 9-0-0.

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The Trails budget remains at $300.

JF made a motion to recommend that Town Meeting approve the Trails budget of $300; JW seconded the motion. Motion approved 9-0-0.

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The Historical Commission budget is flat.

JF made a motion to recommend that Town Meeting approve the Historical Commission budget of $2,050; JW seconded the motion. Motion approved 9-0-0.

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The Debt Service Principal budget is based on past borrowing.

MH made a motion to recommend that Town Meeting approve the Debt Service Principal budget of $1,076,000; JW seconded the motion. Motion approved 9-0-0.

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The Debt Service Interest budget is based on past borrowing.

MH made a motion to recommend that Town Meeting approve the Debt Service Interest budget of $298,818; JW seconded the motion. Motion approved 9-0-0.

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*BB was disconnected from the meeting at 8:34.*

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The Unclassified budget’s biggest increase is the Worcester Retirement System assessment.

MH made a motion to recommend that Town Meeting approve the Unclassified budget of $4,925,183; KN seconded the motion. Motion approved 8-0-0.

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*BB was reconnected at 8:38*.

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The Central Purchasing budget reflects an increase in the gasoline line.

BB explained the town’s electricity costs are offset by credits, but there is some confusion about exactly how much.

MH made a motion to recommend that Town Meeting approve the Central Purchasing budget of $363,800; KN seconded the motion. Motion approved 9-0-0.

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KS noted the FC has completed its review of the line-item budget.

**Annual Town Meeting Warrant Articles**

The Committee is using “AMT FY 23 Draft 5.”

*BB was disconnected again at 8:40.*

**Article 1: Town Reports**

KS made a motion to recommend that the Town vote to approve Article 1 as written; KN seconded the motion. Motion approved 8-0-0.

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The Committee agreed to hold off on voting on Article 2 and Article 3 pending more detailed information.

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**Article 4: Community Preservation Debt Service**

JW made a motion to recommend that the Town vote to approve Article 4 as written; KT seconded the motion. Motion approved 8-0-0.

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*BB was reconnected at 8:45.*

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**Article 12: Line Item Budget**

This article is for the town budget, which the FC reviewed line by line.

KD made a motion to recommend that the Town vote to approve Article 12 as written; LM seconded the motion. Motion approved 9-0-0.

**Article 13: Road Construction/Repairs**

Chapter 90 funds are still available for road repairs; this Article builds up cash reserves to supplement it. The DPW has a road-maintenance plan that rates all the roads as far as need.

LM made a motion to recommend that the Town vote to approve Article 13 as written; MH seconded the motion. Motion approved 9-0-0.

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*BB was disconnected at 8:55 for the remainder of the meeting*.

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**Article 14: Public Access**

Public Access, which provides local programming on Channels 191 and 192, also receives funding from Spectrum.

MH made a motion to recommend that the Town vote to approve Article 14 as written; JW seconded the motion. Motion approved 8-0-0.

**Article 15: Sturbridge Tourism Association**

This Article, taken from the hotel/motel taxes, funds things like the Harvest Festival, Concerts on the Common, and marketing.

KT made a motion to recommend that the Town vote to approve Article 15 as written; KN seconded the motion. Motion approved 7-1(LM)-0.

**Meeting Minutes**

None

**Old Business**

No old business.

**New Business**

No New business.

**Adjourn**

JF made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 9:11 p.m.; KT seconded. Motion approved 8-0-0.