**Finance Committee Meeting Minutes**

**Town Hall ~ April 25, 2019**

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

Guests: Doug Vizard (DV), President, Quaboag Quacumquasit (North and South Ponds) Lake Association (QQLA); Bill Seabourne (BS), Vice President, QQLA; Jeff Bridges (JBr), Town Administrator.

**Review of Annual Town Meeting Warrant Articles**

Article 43 – Quacumquasit Lake (South Pond) – Alum Treatment – KS moved the motion to take no action on Article 43. No second. Motion fails. Finance Committee generally agreed that the Petitioners should discuss language of the Warrant Article with JBr and Town Counsel and return with a revised Article for the Board of Selectmen and Finance Committee.

DV said that South Pond is environmentally and recreationally a gem of Sturbridge, Brookfield and East Brookfield. He stated that it is a cold and very deep Great Pond, that 55-60% of the addresses are located in Sturbridge, and that the public beach located in Brookfield is used extensively by Sturbridge residents. Currently the water quality and the recreational appeal are diminishing due to increasing phosphorus levels in the lake causing algae growth. DV stated that the original causes of high phosphorus levels were the Spencer Waste Water Treatment Plant, agriculture and Title V issues – all of which are resolved or will be resolved soon. He explained the water in South Pond was analyzed and stated that the finding was that the main source of phosphorus is now South Pond itself. DV said that twice annually the cold and warmer water layers in the pond flip, causing the phosphorus from the bottom layer to rise to the top layer of the pond and feed the algae. He said that this causes a blue-green algae bloom which creates a public health hazard; currently South Pond experiences severe blue-green algae blooms yearly.

DV explained that the solution to the phosphorus problem is an alum treatment applied to the deepest part of the pond; it will bind to the available phosphorus and turn into sand and coat the deepest part of the pond. He added that the alum treatment will refresh the pond and will last from 10-25 years before retreatment will be necessary. BS said that it is a chemical process which seals the bottom of the pond so the phosphorus cannot rise. He stated that QQLA is asking Sturbridge to act as administrative sponsor and grant applicant for a Section 319 Nonpoint Source Pollution Competitive Grant for treating South Pond. He added that QQLA will be requesting additional funds from Brookfield, East Brookfield, the YMCA camp, and South Pond residents.

DV stated that there is very little risk to the mussels and fish of South Pond as only the big hole (45 feet deep or greater) will be treated, and only anaerobic bacteria is found at that depth. He said that this is a well-known, well-controlled process. BS stated that the muckiness found in the beach area is found all around the lake and is caused by dead algae which turns brownish-black and floats into shore.

Discussion followed regarding the Article itself. BBa texted JBr and said that she had spoken with the Town Moderator and he felt that the intent was clear and would allow it to move forward. DV and BS were advised to work with JBR, BBa, and Town Counsel on the wording; KN added that the Town Moderator will talk with petitioners as well.

Other questions arose from Finance Committee members after DV and BS left. It was agreed that KN or JW would reach out with a list of questions before QQLA came back to the Finance Committee so they could be prepared.

JBr stated that he would talk to Town Counsel about the possibility of creating a petitioner’s template for drafting a properly worded Warrant Article.

KN said that she hoped that the Community Preservation Committee would be available next week to discuss its Warrant Articles.

Article 36 – Proposed Amendment to Zoning Map – KS moved he motion to recommend Article 36 as written; MH seconds. Motion accepted 7-0-0. KN stated that the parking lot behind The Barn at Wight Farm is not large enough and this will allow Table 3 Restaurant Group to utilize land adjacent to the parking lot for additional parking.

Article 37 – 226 Cedar Street – Affordable Housing – KS moved the motion to recommend Article 37 as written; MH seconds. Motion accepted 6-0-1 (KN abstained). The question arose as to how many homes could be built on the available lot; JBr stated that the Request for Proposals was for one home.

Article 38 – Establish Municipal Affordable Housing Trust Fund – KS moved the motion to recommend Article 38 as written; MH seconds. Motion accepted 6-0-1 (BB abstained). The question was raised if Community Preservation Act funds could be transferred into this fund. It was determined that it was a question for the Housing Partnership Committee to answer. Another unanswered question was how the funds are to be used.

Article 41 (formerly Article 44) – Public Marijuana Consumption Bylaw – JBr stated that Article 41 was drafted by Police Chief Ford and Town Counsel and he could not answer any of the Finance Committee’s questions. It was decided to bring Chief Ford back to answer the questions.

**Review of Special Town Meeting Warrant Articles**

Article 54 – Free Cash Transfer – Snow and Ice Deficit – KS moved the motion to recommend Article 54 as written; KD seconds. Motion accepted 7-0-0.

Article 55 – Unpaid Bills of a Previous Fiscal Year –Because no numbers are available, the Finance Committee will recommend at Town Meeting.

Article 56 – Tree Warden Salary Account – KS moved the motion to recommend Article 56 as written; KD seconds. Motion accepted 7-0-0. JBr stated that the regular stipend is miniscule, and the work this past year was grand.

Article 57 – Emergency Action Plan (EAP) – Cedar Pond Dam and Big Alum Pond Dam – KS moved the motion to recommend Article 57 as written; KD seconds. Motion accepted 7-0-0. JBR explained that Massachusetts General Laws require owners of significant hazard dams to have emergency action plans, and Sturbridge is mandated to have the EAP for these dams in place by December 31, 2019.

Article 58 – Funding for Police Union Contract – KS moved the motion to recommend Article 58 as written; KD seconds. Motion withdrawn as it was decided to wait for the actual dollar amount to be available prior to voting the Article.

Article 59 – Software/Hardware Upgrade – Badger Meter System – KS moved the motion to recommend Article 59 as written; KD seconds. Motion accepted 7-0-0.

**Approval of Meeting Minutes**

JW moved the motion to accept the April 16, 2019, meeting minutes as submitted. KS seconds. Motion accepted 5-0-2 (JB and MH abstained).

KS moved the motion to accept the April 18, 2019, meeting minutes as submitted. JW seconds. Motion accepted 5-0-2 (JB and BB abstained).

**New Business**

KS stated that he received an email through the Town’s Website. The outlined concerns were that the line item budget at Town Meeting will identify the salaries in the same way as the Finance Committee Handbook does and will include the percentage increases. Additionally, it was requested that the department head salaries, longevity and salaries would all be clearly identified.

**No Old Business**

**No Public Access**

KS moved the motion to adjourn. KD seconds. Motion accepted 7-0-0 and meeting adjourned at 9:00 pm.

/jme