

**Board of Selectmen
February 5, 2024
Town Hall
Veteran's Memorial Hall, Town Hall
308 Main Street, Sturbridge**

Present:

Jamie Goodwin, Chair
Chase Kaitbenski, Vice Chair
Selectman Mary Blanchard
Selectman MaryLou Volpe

Absent:

Mary Dowling, Clerk

Staff:

Robin A. Grimm, Ph.D., Town Administrator
Michelle Garman, Executive Assistant

Chair Goodwin called the meeting to order at 6:30 p.m.

Chair Goodwin read the agenda.

The Selectmen led the Pledge of Allegiance.

Vice Chair Kaitbenski arrived at 6:35p.m. for meeting.

Moment of Silence Observed for the wars going on abroad.

Public Service Announcements:

Selectman Mary Blanchard reminded residents about the current parking ban. There is no parking allowed overnight on the streets. This makes it easier for the DPW to plow and sand.

Historic Commission Presentation

Present members: Richard Volpe, Wally Hersee, Bill Barnsley, and Jean Bubon, Town Planner.

Mr. Volpe thanked Jean for her help with this historical project. He outlined the scope of the project which included a complete survey of the town and identified short and long-term historic preservation goals, as well as potential issues and challenges. He noted that there is a volunteer shortage and they would like the people in town to get more involved in the project. Jean stated that they received approximately 500 responses to their survey. Mr. Volpe said that Sturbridge residents take pride in the town's history and preservation, so resources associated with the recent past are in need of documentation before they are lost. He also spoke about the National Register and Education/Outreach, they are working with OSV on some programs this year to get more people involved. He said they now have five members on the Historic Commission and will be having regular meetings and assigning goals, so they will occasionally update the

Selectmen going forward as to their progress. Mr. Volpe pointed out that people may choose to spend more time here if they knew the great history of this town. Vice Chair Chase Kaitbenski thanked the members for all they do, and asked if they give plaques to historic houses in town. Mr. Volpe stated that they did so last year. Barbara Search came to the microphone and told the Selectmen that approximately 20 houses had been given historic plaques and the homes had been recommended for the National Historic Register. The Selectmen thanked the members for their presentation.

Department Head Report

Planning Department: Jean Bubon, Town Planner, provided the written Annual Report to the Selectmen and offered to answer any questions. She then gave a description of her department's workload and an overview of the many boards and committees her office provides support to. Some plans they are currently producing or updating include the Historic Preservation Plan and Housing Plan, and they're also working with the Affordable Housing Trust. They are also beginning work to update the Master Plan. A town-wide survey was sent out with the Town Charter update, it was sent to 4,237 households but the response was only 468. She has been fielding calls recently regarding short-term rentals and Airbnb's, so she is looking into some language adjustments in the Bylaws.

Jean noted that she also recently presented at the MMA conference where she discussed the Hurricane of 2011.

Town Administrator Grimm said they will be hearing something soon regarding the Airbnb's, as it should be acted on quickly due to safety reasons, and we are just one of many communities battling this situation. Jean noted that she put an example in the packet from Great Barrington about regulating multiple properties, so they can draw on that as they move forward with making any adjustments.

Jean said that one of the biggest projects for the upcoming year will be work on the Open Space Plan. The Selectmen thanked Jean for her hard work.

Conservation Commission – Dock Discussion

Members in attendance: Rebecca Gendreau, Conservation Agent, Ted Winglass, Conservation Commission, Ed Goodwin, Chair of Conservation Commission, Barbara Search, Conservation Commission.

Ed Goodwin began by saying that they have documentation stating that the BOS are the Harbor Masters, and this has worked fine for a long time and is still valid, but now there is an issue because the State DEP is saying the cantilevered docks do not touch the water. Chair Jamie Goodwin asked if they could please explain what a cantilevered dock is. Mr. Winglass responded that cantilevered docks are structures. The State DEP is stating that we have no authority over them because cantilevered docks do not touch the water.

Mr. Goodwin would like to hear from the BOS regarding their thoughts on the current bylaws and how to proceed. He stated that Conservation has already approved two cantilevered docks that are going to be put in.

He said that we have some jurisdiction in his opinion, based on the current bylaws, and are looking for guidance from the Board of Selectmen on how to proceed.

Selectman Blanchard said that she thought the bylaws have worked well, there have only been a few issues, but believes that all the other stipulations are reasonable.

Vice Chair Chase Kaitbenski stated he thinks the bylaws work good, but going back to the cantilevered docks, questioned whether this is something that would be grandfathered in or would we be looking to eliminate these docks that are currently there. Mr. Winglass said no, and explained that they are seeking direction because the Bylaw does not address cantilevered docks. We have 5 applications for different docks with different lengths and sizing.

Ed Goodwin said that he would like to have the lake people come to a Conservation Meeting to discuss and draft a document that they would all be comfortable with, and then bring it back to the Selectmen to see if they're comfortable with it. Selectman Blanchard agreed that sounds feasible and that the lake people definitely need to be involved.

Chair Goodwin said from a law enforcement and public safety perspective, the BOS are the harbor master, so if there is an emergency or if this creates a safety issue they will probably be more aggressive.

Mr. Goodwin summarized that he would like to get the lake members and residents of the town involved, and they would like to include the Building Inspector because this is a fixed structure/dock that floats out. The Conservation would bring it back to the Board of Selectmen to okay it, and the only time it could get a variation if they come back to the Selectmen.

Rebecca Gendreau, Conservation Agent, stated that there was a very good example of a bylaw from Lanesborough which is very reasonable and well-written, and if there were a bylaw in place for the permanent structures, because DEP has jurisdiction for the property owner, then they would have to comply with the bylaw when they go to DEP. She said this would seem like a reasonable approach to getting the permitting requirements met.

Chair Goodwin thanked the Conservation members for coming in.

Town Administrator Update:

On January 23, 2024 Terry Masterson brought in a group called Discover Central Massachusetts, who do a lot of marketing for this area and market study analysis of where our tourists and

visitors are coming from. They are trying to get local businesses to join, like a chamber, and they are also looking into whether we may want to do a little bit of funding to get better bang for our buck with our advertising and marketing. TA Grimm met with the head of DCM for coffee and thinks she has some interesting ideas, and she would like to thank Terry for bringing them in.

Funding the Municipal Empowerment Bill – We are currently monitoring this situation, as the Governor recently made some trimming to the budget. We lost about 50% of our Earmark Grant, the Governor is saying that we can add taxes in other areas to make up for these cuts. Some of this could be on the hotel and restaurant tax, but we need to think about what this might do to economic development and small business. Also, to give the public a heads up, this could also potentially effect vehicle excise tax up to 5% which could affect a lot of people. She wants people to be aware that this could be coming and this is something they will need to look at very seriously. Selectman Mary Blanchard and TA Grimm discussed that they would need to be careful about the impacts of this.

TA Grimm is active with STAM (Small Town Administrators Group) and she recently joined their bylaw committee.

She also recently attended the Library Legislative breakfast with Rebecca Plimpton and they discussed the importance of state funding of public libraries.

TA Grimm wanted to give a special thanks to Becky who has provided her with a valuable amount of education of Conservation in this town and the application of Conservation regulation here, as this is a very proactive conservation town, so it's been a very educational experience working with Becky and she will leave with a tremendous legacy here. Selectman Mary Blanchard said that Becky has always been fantastic working with the board and will sorely be missed.

TA Grimm also thanked Robyn Chrabacz for her work in securing the ADA Improvement Grant in the amount of \$ 31,000.

Action Items:

- A. Consideration and possible action to accept the resignation letter of Rebecca Gendreau, Conservation Agent.

Vice Chair Chase Kaitbenski thanked Becky, saying that she has done a great job and has been a pleasure to work with, and that he wishes her the best in the future.

Selectman Mary Blanchard said that she hopes Becky has some free time so we can call her, and Chair Jamie Goodwin agreed.

Motion: To accept the of resignation of Rebecca Gendreau with regret.

By: Selectman Mary Blanchard

2nd: Vice Chair Chase Kaitbenski

Vote: 3-1-0 (Chair Goodwin opposed) (Selectmen Dowling absent)

- B. Consideration and possible action to appoint Meghan Boucher at the Assistant Treasurer/Collector at the hourly rate of \$28.26, effective February 6, 2024.

Motion: To accept the to appoint Meghan Boucher at the Assistant Treasurer/Collector at the hourly rate of \$28.26, effective February 6, 2024.

By: Selectman MaryLou Volpe

2nd: Selectman Mary Blanchard

Vote: 4-0-0 (Selectmen Dowling absent)

- C. Consideration and possible action to opt out of early voting for local election.

Lynne Girouard, Town Clerk, advised the Board this is required by the State that we have to opt out.

Motion: To opt out of early voting for local election.

By: Selectman Mary Blanchard

2nd: Selectman MaryLou Volpe

Vote: 4-0-0 (Selectmen Dowling absent)

- D. Consideration and possible action to re-appoint Susan G. Murphy to the Sturbridge Board of Registrars.

Motion: To re-appoint Susan G. Murphy to the Sturbridge Board of Registrars.

By: Selectman Mary Blanchard

2nd: Vice Chair Chase Kaitbenski

Vote: 4-0-0 (Selectmen Dowling absent)

- E. Consideration and possible action to extend the agreement for audit services with Auditor Robert E. Brown for fiscal years 2024, 2025, and 2026.

Motion: To extend the agreement for audit services with Auditor Robert E. Brown for fiscal years 2024, 2025, and 2026.

By: Selectman MaryLou Volpe

2nd: Vice Chair Chase Kaitbenski

Vote: 4-0-0 (Selectmen Dowling absent)

- F. Consideration and possible action to approve the revised job for Food Service Coordinator with the Council on Aging.

Motion: To approve the revised job for Food Service Coordinator with the Council on Aging.

By: Selectman Mary Blanchard

2nd: Selectman MaryLou Volpe

Vote: 4-0-0 (Selectmen Dowling absent)

- G. Consideration and possible action to accept the resignation of John Calcagni from the Sturbridge Police Department effective January 18, 2024.

Motion: To accept the resignation of John Calcagni from the Sturbridge Police Department, effective January 18, 2024.

By: Selectman Mary Blanchard

2nd: Vice Chair Chase Kaitbenski

Vote: 4-0-0 (Selectmen Dowling absent)

Old Business:

Retreat –Selectman Mary Blanchard asked if we are having the Retreat this year. TA Grimm, Chair Jamie Goodwin and Selectman Blanchard discussed the need to do reviews. Selectman Mary Blanchard asked for a new copy of Town Administrator goals.

The Board discussed the retreat and a date will be selected for it to be held in March.

Selectman MaryLou Volpe and Chair Jamie Goodwin did a site visit of the water treatment plant this weekend which he thinks was helpful. Selectman Goodwin indicate the condition of the water building was shocking, it needs some attention and it is unsafe.

TA Grimm said they have been working on trying to get a temporary location since last Fall, until they can figure out on a larger scale of what to do.

New Business:

The Board requested to be notified when the Budget Meeting would be held with the Finance Committee.

Correspondence

Approval of Minutes:

Citizen's Forum

Executive Session - Per M.G.L.c.30A, Sec. 21; (1) To discuss the reputation, character, physical condition or mental health, rather than professional competence, of an individual, or discuss the discipline or dismissal of, or complaints or charges against, a public officer, employee, staff member or individual.

Adjourn:

Motion: To adjourn into executive session and not to reconvene in open session,

By: Vice Chair Kaitbenski

2nd: Selectman Mary Blanchard

Vote: Vice Chair Kaitbenski – Yes, Selectman MaryLou Volpe – Yes, Selectman Mary Blanchard – Yes, Chair Goodwin – Yes, Selectman Dowling – Absent

The meeting adjourned at 7:27 p.m.

Minutes prepared by: Krystal Kowalski and Michelle Garman

Clerk of the Board: Mary Dowling

Date signed: Feb 20 '24