

November 1, 2021

Board of Selectmen

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Town Hall

**Veterans Memorial Hall, Sturbridge Town Hall
308 Main Street, Sturbridge, MA 01566**

Present:

Mary Blanchard, Chair
Mary Dowling, Vice Chair
Selectman Chase Kaitbenski, Clerk
Selectman Ian Dunnigan
Selectman Jamie Goodwin

Staff:

Jeff Bridges, Town Administrator
Michelle Garman, Executive Assistant

Chair Blanchard called meeting to order at 6:00p.m.

The Selectmen led the Pledge of Allegiance.

Chair Blanchard read the agenda.

Chair Blanchard, reading the agenda, under Old Business we will not need to address item "B". "Attorneys for negotiation of Equestrian Center Host Community Agreement". The Applicants have formally withdrawn their application with the Mass Gaming Commission

Public Service Announcements

Vice Chair Dowling thanked everyone that participated in the Town Common Halloween festivities and thanked everyone that volunteered.

Moment of Silence

No moment of silence was observed

Joint Meeting – with the Burgess School Committee to interview candidates to fill the vacancy on the Burgess School Committee.

Vice Chair Dowling stated she was going to recuse herself because she is substitute teaching.

Chair Blanchard stated they don't oversee the teachers.

Vice Chair Dowling stated they don't but they kind of help determine policy. Vice Chair Dowling said she is going to air on the side of caution on this one.

Candidate Jackie Chechile of 98 Breakneck Road.

Chair Blanchard welcomed the first candidate, Jackie Chechile.

Candidate Jackie Chechile gave a brief description of her background and her work experience as well as her background within the community. She has lived in Sturbridge for thirteen years. After being in the moms clubs for a few years she took on the role as activities coordinator. Ms. Chechile was on the board at the Sturbridge Co-operative as the treasurer for three years in her time there she met with a lot of the families, learned how to create a budget, balance budget and follow financials. Ms. Chechile stated she is not afraid to put the work in. Once she agrees to do something she is all in from a professional stand point. Her back ground is in physical therapy.

Kristen Tuohey, Burgess School Committee Member asked candidate Chechile what are some of the attributes of a successful School Committee Member.

Candidate Chechile stated in terms of being a successfully School Board Committee Member certainly being able to hear all sides of an argument, being able to actively listen, stay calm and have an engaging discussion as well as always having the best welfare of the students in mind.

Samantha Kaitbenski, Burgess School Committee Member asked candidate Chechile what would be your priorities be for the district this year and why and how would you select these issues?

Candidate Chechile stated that's an interesting question and she is not coming into this with some sort of agenda at this point, she just wants what's best for the school and the students; see what the issues are and to make informed decisions.

Mary Bellezza, Burgess School Committee Member asked candidate Chechile if you're not appointed tonight would you run again in April.

Candidate Chechile stated at this point she is leaning toward yes, but she hasn't made a final decision on that.

Karen Kowal, Burgess School Committee Member asked candidate Chechile what issue made you want to run?

Candidate Chechile stated there is not a particular issue as she has always been interested in being more involved in local government and Burgess Elementary School. Her kids are getting a little bit older now so that's giving her a little more time to being able to dedicate time to some other different places. In addition her husband has transitioned to working from home, now that he's home they have more options for what she can get involved with.

Selectman Dunnigan asked did you intend to run before this or had you thought about this and then this opportunity came up?

Candidate Chechile said yes. She had very recently been thinking about maybe getting involved with the School Committee and has been thinking about it for a period few months and then saw that there was an opening and thought maybe this is the time this opportunity.

Selectman Kaitbenski asked candidate Chechile briefly what is her view of Burgess Elementary School.

Candidate Checile stated that she loves Burgess, she loves the teachers, she thinks they do a great job.

Chair Blanchard asked candidate Chechile looking at the budget at Burgess do you feel it is adequate/inadequate?

Candidate Chechile stated that she has not reviewed the Burgess budget so she did not feel prepared to answer that question at this moment.

Candidate Whitney Goodwin of 109A McGilpin Road.

Candidate Goodwin gave a brief description of her background and her work experience. Candidate Goodwin lives in Sturbridge and has two children that attend Burgess. Ms. Goodwin currently works for the Worcester Public Schools she is the Collage and Career Readiness Liaison for the district, she has been in education for 15 years. Candidate Goodwin, prior to her current job, was a guidance counselor for West Wood High School.

Kristen Tuohey, Burgess School Committee Member asked Candidate Goodwin what are some attributes she would bring to the position?

Candidate Goodwin stated that some of the attributes of a good School Committee Member is someone who asks lot of questions, knows policy and procedures and is willing to learn about the district. Also, someone willing to have conversations with community members, is very communicative to the principal and to the faculty so they can be familiar with what is going on in the community.

Samantha Kaitbenski, Burgess School Committee Member asked candidate Goodwin what would her priorities be for the district this year and why and how would she select these issues?

Candidate Goodwin stated she thinks the biggest thing for her is just making sure that the kids are catching up to where they should to be socially, emotionally and educationally. She thinks students are not where they should be and they have missed out on things they would have had in a typical year; so it's really important to look at what students may have missed but also how can we grow in those areas and how can we bring in programs and get creative with the teachers and staff that we already have.

Mary Bellezza, Burgess School Committee Member asked candidate Goodwin if she is not appointed tonight would she run again in April?

Ms. Goodwin stated yes that is something she intends to do if not appointed tonight. Being on the School Committee is something that she has been interested in for a while. This is something she is very passionate about. It's something that she's always been interested in.

Karen Kowal, Burgess School Committee Member asked candidate Goodwin what issue made you want to apply for this vacancy?

Candidate Goodwin stated she didn't think there is one particular issue in general. For her education is so important in the community and making sure kids are equipped and prepared to be successful later on in life, it really starts with elementary school.

Chair Blanchard asked candidate Goodwin do you feel the Burgess budget is adequate/inadequate?

Ms. Goodwin stated she never feels like education has an adequate budget. She works in education and she always wants more money, but I also thinks we could get creative with a budget with grants and asking for more money "If it's not an adequate amount then we can always look at other funding as well".

Candidate Jennah Ventetuolo of 11 Draper Woods Road.

Candidate Ventetuolo gave a brief description of her background and her work experiences. Candidate Ventetuolo has lived in Strubridge for six years and has two children that attend Burgess. Candidate Ventetuolo put herself through college twice, she has spent seven years in law enforcement and is currently a nurse in an emergency room. Her entire life has been devoted to public service and public service. She is also on the Tantasqua Lacrosse Board as a player advocate.

Kristen Tuohey, Burgess School Committee Member asked candidate Ventetuolo what are some attributes of a successful committee member?

Candidate Ventetuolo stated that she thinks they need to be reliable, not only making themselves accessible to all meeting, they need to know when tough decisions need to be made. She knows that not all decision are popular in the community but they need to have the best interest of the students, staff and budget in mind. She also thinks being responsive when the community sends you an email, calls or asks your input. She thinks its import for them to respond or even just an acknowledgement at the meeting. "You need to know that your decisions might not be popular at the time but with the work of the committee together you are doing what's best for everybody".

Samantha Kaitbenski, Burgess School Committee Member asked candidate Ventetuolo what would the priorities be for the district this year and why select these certain issues.

Candidate Ventetuolo stated she thinks the top priority would be to catch kids up both academically, socially and emotionally. The kids that were behind before are probably more behind and we really need to focus resources to getting them caught up and I think all kids could benefit from some type of emotional and social support.

Mary Bellezza, Burgess School Committee Member asked candidate Ventetuolo if she is not appointed tonight would she run again in April?

Candidate Ventetuolo stated yes "definitely"!

Karen Kowal, Burgess School Committee Member asked candidate Ventetuolo what issue made her want to run?

Candidate Ventetuolo stated there's probably a whole slew of issues, but she would say her biggest motivation are her kids, their whole world was turned upside down for the past two years and she's hoping to try to help bring back their regular sense of normal again no matter how long it takes to get there and I think we will. "So I'd like to help make some decisions with the team as far as that goes".

Selectman Dunnigan asked candidate Ventetuolo was there any particular catalyst that made her want to run?

Candidate Ventetuolo stated as in the ER she is patient advocate and a huge advocate for her kids. So I think when broad decisions are made without thinking about individual towns and local boards and how it will affect people locally she wanted to make sure she got involved so that so she could help make positive changes.

Chair Blanchard asked candidate Ventetuolo how familiar are you with the budget?

Candidate Ventetuolo stated she has looked over some of the budget, where some of the money is going and has been to some of the School Committee meetings and seen where they have recommend allocating some money. "I know there are probably different decisions I would make with some of the extra money we have because to me one of the biggest things I'd like to see is focusing on math and reading and getting those kids caught up and doing some kind of stem work".

Chair Blanchard asked candidate Ventetuolo do you know what the Burgess budget is?

Candidate Ventetuolo stated she was looking more specifically at teachers. She knows its \$4.3 million for teachers.

Chair Blanchard its \$12.3 million.

Candidate Ventetuolo stated so we do spend a good amount of money on teachers.

Chair Blanchard asked do you feel it's adequate/inadequate?

Candidate Ventetuolo stated she just knows that we have received a lot of extra money in the past 18 months 12 months or so. She think it's important to make sure teachers are very happy so that way we have happy kids. "I think we need to work with the teachers and find out exactly what they need and maybe where think some more money could be spent because they are the ones in the school every day".

Motion: To nominate Jennah Ventetuolo to the Burgess School Committee

By: Kristen Tuohey, Vice Chair Burgess School Committee

2nd: Samantha Kaitbenski, Burgess School Committee Member

Vote: 4-4-1 Vice Chair Dowling abstained

Motion: To nominate Whitney Goodwin to the Burgess School Committee

By: Selectman Goodwin

2nd: Mary Bellezza, Burgess School Committee Member

Vote: 2-6-1 Vice Chair Dowling abstained

Motion: To nominate Jackie Chechile to the Burgess School Committee

By: Karen Kowal, Secretary Burgess School Committee

2nd: Chair Mary Blanchard

Vote: 2-6-1 Vice Chair Dowling abstained

Selectman Kaitbenski thanked the candidates and expressed how lucky the community is to have three applicants as qualified as these candidates.

Chair Blanchard instructed Jennah Ventetuolo to see the Town Clerk to be sworn in.

Public Hearing – Fuel Storage License, Noble Energy, 195 & 197 Charlton Road, Sturbridge, MA.

Selectman Kaitbenski read the public notice. Jim Bernadino, with CMG Engineering, Hall Road in Sturbridge. Mr. Bernadino said projects have been approved on Route 20 for a convenience store with gasoline dispensing facilities, multi-use facility, coffee shop, ice cream store, next door will be an electrical vehicle education center. The underground fuel storage license is part of the gas station component. There will be three underground fuel tanks comprising of 40,000 gallons of regular gasoline, 20,000 gallons of diesel gasoline underground, two underground propane tanks totaling 2,500 gallons one 1,000 gallon tank and one 1,500 gallon tank. Additionally there will be approximately 200 gallons portable propane tanks.

Selectman Dunningan asked on the LP storage is that for heat or are you going to be fueling vehicles.

Mr. Bernadino stated no that is just for heat there are two separate tanks one for the building and one for the emergency generator.

Chair Blanchard stated this has been approved by the Fire Chief. Chair Blanchard stated this is a Public Hearing and asked the audience if anyone has any questions or comments. No comments or questions from the audience.

Motion: Motion to close the Public Hearing

By: Selectman Goodwin

2nd: Selectman Kaitbenski

All in Favor

Vote: 5-0

Motion: Motion to approve the license for Noble Energy 40,000 gallons gasoline, 20,000 diesel gasoline and 2 underground propane tanks totaling 2,500

By: Selectman Kaitbenski

2nd: Selectman Dunningan

All in Favor

Vote: 5-0

Department Reports:

Water and Sewer

Mr. Bridges stated Shane Moody, Chief Operator, had some personal issue and could not attend the meeting. Mr. Bridges stated he could forward any questions to Mr. Moody.

The Board of Selectmen had no questions or concerns at this time.

Chair Blanchard said we will see him next time right.

Mr. Bridges next meeting or next scheduled appearance.

Chair Blanchard well if the board has any concerns they can give them to you his next regular one.

Mr. Bridges stated he will add one thing to the water and sewer we are still in the process in designing the new pump station for Main Street so you will start to see information coming back on that project.

Town Administrator

Mr. Bridges stated that the grant for the alum treatment of South Pond was approved and the South Pond folks were very excited about the grant.

Selectman Goodwin asked did Brookfield give any money toward the grant.

Mr. Bridges yes it was a part of the grant that they were going to give some money. Mr. Bridges will find out the amount.

Chair Blanchard stated the first time it went through they didn't.

Action Items:

Consideration and possible action on the authorization to submit a staffing for Adequate Fire and Emergency Response Grant (SAFER) for the Sturbridge Fire Department.

Chief Grasso stated that FEMA is preparing to open up the SAFER grant in the near future.

This year unlike the previous grant we received there will be no requirement for matching funds by the town. The federal government will pay 100% of the salaries and benefits for the full three year agreement period. "This approval tonight will allow me to file the application the Board of Selectmen will still have an opportunity to accept or deny the grant".

Motion: Move to authorize the submission of the SAFER grant as requested.

By: Selectman Goodwin

2nd: Selectman Kaitbenski

All in Favor

Vote: 5-0

Consideration and possible action on a Hawker and Peddler License for Matthew Angel Soto with Trinity Solar.

The applicant, Matthew Angel Soto, was not present, the Board decided to postpone this consideration item until the Board of Selectmen's meeting of November 15, 2021.

Old Business:

COVID-19 Update

Mr. Bridges stated we are still working on the COVID 19 ARPA Funds, community survey and anticipate having that up online by the end of the week. We are waiting on possible Booster clinics in the community. The Senior Center is working with eligible seniors to get registered for available boosters.

Chair Blanchard stated the Senior Center Director, Leslie Wong did put out a call online.

Vice Chair Dowling asked is Leslie Wong, Senior Center Director hoping to have one at the Senior Center like they did for the vaccine or are they just going to do the scheduling?

Chair Blanchard said Leslie Wong was talking about doing the scheduling.

Mr. Bridges said if an opportunity at the Senior Center arose they would probably take it.

Vice Chair Dowling stated Walgreens seems wide open in Sturbridge. She made an appointment for someone and it was available the next morning. "For those of you watching Walgreen's has openings all over the place they have Moderna and Pfizer I don't know about J&J".

Town of Charlton warehouse projects

Mr. Bridge stated that on the dais this evening are two letters from the traffic engineer for the project at 241 Sturbridge Road and a separate one for 53 Sturbridge Road. Also attached to each letter are the traffic analysis contained in either the final environmental impact statement or the draft environmental statement. Both traffic analysis state there's not a lot of mitigation for the un-signalized intersection in Sturbridge and there levels of service will be reduced in the event both these projects come on line. In speaking with Art Kreiger, the Towns outside counsel, today he and his staff are reviewing these memos and will prepare comments for the Board to submit by the November 8, 2021 deadline. In the next few days you will see a draft letter from Mr. Bridges office requesting the Chair to sign but you will get a chance to review it before its signed and sent off. Art Kreiger is going to focus on a couple of things in the letter the traffic of course and the issue of the greenhouse gases and the climate issues that are contained in the EIS's. We have a deadline of November 8th to get the comments in.

Chair Blanchard then brought up the additional agenda items.

Mr. Bridges said there are two additional agenda items. The first outbuilding removal for the Conservation Department a change order for the project on the town properties. A change order roughly \$5,000.00. \$10,000.00 was approved at the most recent Special Town Meeting. The

total original contact amount was roughly \$165,000.00. The project was delayed by several months due to weather and environmental conditions.

Chair Blanchard any questions from the Board? There were no questions from the Board.

Motion: Motion to accept the change order for the \$4,979.04 for the out removal project Leadmine paints property.

By: Selectman Dunnigan

2nd: Selectman Kaitbenski

All in Favor

Vote: 5-0

Mr. Bridges asked for the acceptance of resignation for Darcy Foley from the Trails Committee.

Motion: Motion to accept the resignation of Darcy Foley from the Trails Committee.

By: Selectman Goodwin

2nd: Selectman Dunnigan

All in Favor

Vote: 5-0

In other Old Business.

Selectman Kaitbenski stated he was hoping that we could put discussion about the parking lot on Main Street on the next agenda. He stated that we fully respect that outcome of the Special Town Meeting, but the fact of the matter is there's a vacant lot now in the business district and we have to figure out moving forward what we're going to do.

Vice Chair Dowling stated that she totally agrees it's going to be a real eye sore unless we come up with something. Maybe a cheaper alternative to the parking lot.

Chair Blanchard stated that she mentioned to Mr. Bridges that there was not enough information out on the project and the costs. One of the people that spoke against it was comparing it to a driveway and it isn't; and then another person that spoke against it was talking about gravel which can't go there. She thinks if we get the correct information we can put it on the Annual Town Meeting.

Mr. Bridges said we have to pay the prevailing wage and the conservation requirements were extensive due to its proximity to the river.

Chair Blanchard asked Mr. Bridges if he had found out if Deep Roots Distillery needs a public hearing.

Mr. Bridges stated yes they will need a public hearing and we are setting that up for next Board of Selectmen Meeting.

New Business

There was no new business.

Correspondence

Selectman Kaitbenski read the correspondence.

Vice Chair Dowling spoke about correspondence she received from a resident on Seneca lane. The resident asked her to share the letter with the board. Vice Chair Dowling has since called her because inadvertently she believes she deleted it she is going to ask the resident to send the letter again so that she can share it with the board.

Approval of Minutes: October 18, 2021

On page 129 when we are talking about comments about the draft host agreement.

Vice Chair Dowling asked that the third paragraph on page 129 state the initial payment of \$300,000 is also very low. Vice Chair Dowling would like to add she also indicated that there were no terms about commencement date for construction.

Motion: To approve the minutes of the October 18, 2021 meeting as amended.

By: Selectman Dunnigan

2nd: Selectman Kaitbenski

All in favor

Vote: 5-0-0

Citizen's Forum

Joanne Shapiro of 50 Westwood Drive, wanted to come up and explain why there was a lot of buzz in the community about concern over Wednesday's hearing in front of the Mass Gaming Commission for the Equestrian Center and wanted to clarify while the motion at the Board of Selectmen hearing was very clear and the approval of the location for the race track was conditional on the zoning by law change. That somehow didn't make it into the application to the Gaming Commission that really left the town open to a major loop hole that the applicant could have taken advantage of and the Board of Selectmen's letter that went with the application again wasn't specified. So the State law as she understands it once the locations approved that's it and if it's not clear to the Gaming Commission that there's conditions that they may not recognize those so it's just concerning. "I'm elated to hear they have withdrawn their application so there's not cause for concern anymore". She was hoping rather than it coming off the agenda that there might be some kind of clarification for the record if there was any doubt that site location the conditions of that approval weren't met it didn't achieve the zoning change so therefore not only did they withdraw their application but the Board of Selectmen's approval of the location is null and void at this point.

Chair Blanchard stated it's null and void because the overlay district did not pass so they can't go there and there is no other land in town zoned to allow horse racing. Therefore we cannot have horse racing in the town. The particular piece of property is still rural residential and by

right and by special permit there are several things that can go there. She would advise people to read the zoning by laws.

Vice Chair Dowling said thank you that was a very good point. She had intended to bring it up as well. "I believe that Selectman Kaitbenski made the motion and I think Chair Blanchard said don't forget the two conditions". She stated the application letter did not indicate it was split nor did it state that the approval had two conditions. The first condition was approval of the overlay district being and second was an executed host agreement. That it should have gone to our attorney, he indicated he hadn't seen it until after it was filed.

Joanne Shapiro stated that was just my concern going forward it seems like an important thing and she knows the Board had wanted to review that application and hadn't had that opportunity. And about that parking lot she was shocked that it didn't pass but she does think that a lot of the concerns were about where funding was coming from and maybe if someone from Trails and Conservation would come up and explain.

Mr. Bridges stated it does have approval for the Conservation which was mentioned at the meeting.

Joanne Shapiro stated she meant if maybe Trails could speak to the value of it and Conservation could speak that they required those special storm water best management practices to protect that water course and all that.

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.

Vice Chair Mary Dowling recused herself from the Executive Session.

Motion to adjourn and go into Executive Session.

By: Selectman Kaitbenski

2nd: Selectman Dunnigan

Vote: 4-0-1

The meeting adjourned at 7:04 p.m.

Minutes prepared by: Michelle Garman

Clerk of the Board:



Date signed:

12/6/21