

Sturbridge Finance Committee
Meeting Minutes
March 29, 2011
Town Hall
7:00 pm

Amended 4/7/11—motion to approve with amendments made by MR, AW seconded. Vote 7-0-0.

Meeting was called to order at 7:01 pm with the following members present: Kevin Smith (KS); Larry Morrison (LM), Mary Redetzke (MR), Arnold Wilson (AW), Prescott (Scott) Arndt (SA), and Richard Volpe (RV) and Mike Serio (MS).

Members absent: Patricia Affenito and Rob Williams.

Minutes from March 22 and March 24 were approved with amendments.

Line item budget:

Senior Center: motion made by LM to reconsider line item 60, seconded by AW. Vote 7-0-0. The sum of \$1388 will be added for carpet on the second floor of the senior center. The new total for line 60 will be \$28,608. Motion to approve \$28,608 made by LM, seconded by AW. Vote 7-0-0.

Assessor's budget outlined by MS:

ATB cases monies decreased because residential appeals are being handled in house; commercial appeals are still handled by outside consultants due to complexity of the cases. Motion to approve line items 19-24 made by MS, seconded by MR. Vote 6-0-0.

Town Clerk: line item 31 approved for \$62,328. Motion made by KS, seconded by AW. Vote 7-0-0.; line item 32 approved for \$30,475. Motion made by LM, seconded by AW. Vote 6-1(MR)-0. This amount is the salary for an administrative assistant.

ATM Warrant (version 3/25):

Article 14, page 9: motion to approve made by AW, seconded by MS. Vote 7-0-0.

Article 15, page 11: general discussion regarding language of the article:

SA-language should be made more specific.

KS-maybe instead of \$20,000, the amount should be \$5,000.

RV-board cannot spend more than they take in.

KS-language should reflect \$8,000 for the cost of the bags.

MS-\$8,000 was a grant to purchase the bags to initiate the program.

KS-language should reflect actual costs-for example, hiring people that may be eligible for benefits but town is not aware.

MR-implementing costs should be stricken. Also asked whether other boards have the authority to spend their revolving funds.

SA-I can see how promotional costs could run up top \$12,000 a year.

KS-language came from T.A., not the Board of Health.

LM-T.A. should explain why language was expanded.

RV-the phrase in the summary, 'revenues are primarily intended', should be reviewed and explained.

Article 16, page 12: STA will go over budget on April 5th.

Article 17, page 12: general discussion regarding language of the article:

KS-What is the need for concrete slabs under picnic tables? MR answers-mowing is easier since tables need not be moved.

KS-Why is the trails cmte asking for so much money? MR answers-trail maintenance, tool upkeep.

KS-Will the existing work that trails is completing fall under the Trails Master Plan?

MR-yes, it will.

KS-spending needs to be done in an organized and transparent fashion.

MR-believes that the trails cmte is using the monies that they have efficiently.

AW-senior center window inserts are being researched by the T.A.

MR-should the maint. fee for fingerprinting fall under the SPD budget?

KS-is the maint. yearly or on a different schedule?

MR-thinks it is yearly.

MR-what are the funds for Turner's Field paying for?

AW-the \$1500 is for CME to determine if the field can be rotated and parking increased; if not then, the \$4600 will be used for the infield and pitcher's mound.

MR-why does the senior ctr only get \$500 for planting and the library get \$2500?

AW-the senior ctr asks for \$500.

MR-what is the 'hands-free' radio equipment?

AW-allows officers to use their radios through their helmets, and these funds would purchase three (one for each helmet).

MR-who gets the monies for the gazebo plantings?

KS-who owns the town common?

LM-Cons. Comm.

MR-asks about event overtime and does the fire dept. ever request this money?

KS-no, maybe not aware that it is possible.

MR-asks if more money can be made available for sidewalk maintenance and AW states he would support this if MR will vote to allocate \$1300 from concrete slabs to DPW.

Article 18, page 14: language should be amended to Fleet 4WD Vehicle. Motion made by LM to approve as amended, seconded by AW. Vote 7-0-0.

Article 20, page 15: motion to approve made by SA, seconded by RV. Vote 7-0-0.

Article 21, page 16: motion to approve made by SA, seconded by RV. Vote 7-0-0.

Article 23, page 17: motion to approve made by MR, seconded by AW. Vote 7-0-0.

Article 24, page 17: motion to approve made by MR, seconded by RV. Vote 7-0-0. A suggestion was made to amend language to 'engineering and construction', and to strike 'if needed' at the end of the summary.

Article 35, page 24: motion to approve made by LM, seconded by SA. Vote 7-0-0. LM suggests, as a courtesy, notifying the town moderator because he appoints Fin comm. Members.

Article 36, page 25: motion to approve made by MR, seconded by SA. Vote 7-0-0.

Article 37, page 25: general discussion regarding the article:

KS-T.A. thinks Fin. Comm. is overstepping its advisory role; and states that the system of checks and balances is coming under fire. KS also amended the language from Town employee to dept. head.

LM-the cmte does this so there is transparency in the process.

RV-Finance Director stated she had supplied all requested information, and so did not feel it necessary to appear before the Fin Comm. RV also states that he feels this has been brewing for some time.

KS-these requests are just for information, so the board can make informed decisions about the budget.

LM-suggests taking no action on this article for the time being; the board can consider the language with no pressure. LM also states the BOS is seeing this as a reaction to the Charter Review Articles.

MS-since the language is already in print, opinions are being formed.

AW-makes a motion to remove the article as written, seconded by KS.

Discussion:

KS-this was only to codify what the board has already been doing; there is no overstepping of authority.

MS-agrees, saying that subtle pressure can be applied to achieve the same result.

AW made a motion to remove Article 37 from the town warrant, KS seconded. Vote 6-1(LM)-0.

Article 42, page 28: motion to approve made by MR, seconded by SA. Vote 7-0-0.

Article 45, page 29: general discussion regarding the article:

KS-this is a checks and balances issue; appointments may be made without any public oversight.

Motion to recommend no action made by KS, seconded by MR. Vote 7-0-0.

RV left the meeting at 9:35 pm.

Motion to approve as written the Fire Department and Safety Complex Study 2010 made by AW, seconded by LM. Included in this motion was the provision to forward this report to the Town Administrator, Fire Chief, Police Chief, BOS, Finance Director.

Discussion:

MS-commends MR and PA for their work on this report; suggests writing an Executive Summary and publishing it in the Finance Committee report to the Town.

Vote 6-0-0.

Meeting adjourned at 9:41 pm.

Thursday meeting for March 31—cancelled.