

Sturbridge Finance Committee  
Meeting Minutes  
April 17, 2012  
Town Hall  
7:00 pm

Meeting was called to order at 7:07 pm with the following members present: Kevin Smith (KS), Mike Serio (MS), Joni Light (JL), Prescott Arndt (SA) and Patti Affenito (PA).  
Members absent: Arnold Wilson (AW) and Larry Morrison (LM).

Invited Guests: Penny Dumas (PD), Heather Hart (HH), and Randy Ellithorpe (RE), all from the Community Preservation Committee.

**Community Preservation Committee:** KS begins asking PD why there is a discrepancy between the ATM and her hand-out. PD responds that it is a placeholder until the new version of the warrant comes out. The change comes from dues paid to the Community Preservation Coalition (\$1,500). KS asks PD if the CP coalition is a governmental organization; PD answers that she is not sure but will try to find out. PD goes on to outline the details of her budget: \$3,000 for closing costs for the Habitat for Humanity home; \$5,000 for a brochure that will highlight the Riverlands property and four other properties; this will include the Riverlands if the clean-up is complete. Additionally, it is hoped that the report regarding the clean-up will be ready by the end of the month. This pamphlet will be distributed locally; and lastly, \$5,000 will be put aside for property appraisals. KS asks about prior appraisals; PD says she has seen some as high as \$4,500. PD adds that any remaining funds will be returned to CPA general funds. KS asks PD if this CPC money can be used for maintenance, such as on the Town Hall. PD answers no, and also makes clear that land maintenance is not funded. PD says she has left the language broad for now, KS would like to make sure the language is broad but clear to the voters. MS makes a motion to approve Article 4 Community Preservation – Administration as amended to \$14,500, JL seconds. Vote 5-0-0.

PD offers some statements regarding the importance of the CPA projects that have been completed to date. Also, she notes the committee has made a commitment to stay within the local receipts. She breaks down the formula and rebuts false information that has been circulating about the debt that the committee is carrying. KS asks if any large proposals are being considered now, PD answers no.

**Minutes:**

SA makes a motion to approve the March 22 minutes as written, JL seconds. Vote 4-0-1.

JL makes a motion to approve the April 3 minutes as amended, SA seconds. Vote 4-0-1.

JL makes a motion to approve the April 5 minutes as amended, SA seconds. Vote 4-0-1.

KS makes some general statements about the budget total of \$27,522,752 and the levy limit. The Finance Committee number is the highest because of adding the Conservation position, the hours to the Planning Dept. and approving \$8,500 for the RFP. KS states that the Finance Director would like the Reserve Fund balance approximately \$125,000. He goes to say that perhaps some money can be channeled to the roads program; he also would like to see the new version of the warrant.

### **Annual Town Meeting Warrant:**

**Article 2 Community Preservation Committee Report:** MS makes a motion to approve this article as written, SA seconds. Vote 5-0-0.

**Article 30 Citizen Petition – Time of Town Meetings; General Bylaw Amendment – Day of ATM:** MS makes a motion to take no action, SA seconds. Vote 5-0-0. There is some discussion about the difficulty of scheduling this event at the High School Auditorium.

**Article 17 Stabilization Fund:** KS points out that this is the Town's savings account and there is considerable effort to keep the balance at about seven percent of the total budget in combination with the Free Cash balance. This money is used only in extreme situations. KS goes on to say that the seven percent threshold is \$1,929,278. There is some discussion about the possibility of reconsidering Article 3 depending upon which articles are passed at the ATM. SA feels it is better to tax to the limit allowed; PA questions the idea that if the voters are not taxed to the full limit, the Town will forfeit that amount in future years. She goes on that this amount can be recovered by an over-ride vote. SA makes a motion to approve Article 17 as amended, MS seconds. Vote 4-0-1.

KS explains to PA MS's idea of a hardship fund that would be funded by the Town, rather than through a voluntary taxpayer donation.

JL asks if the residents work for the Town? KS answers yes, and JL asks what they get? There is general discussion about the increases in personnel for this fiscal year and also a brief exchange about accountability differences between appointed positions and elected positions in Town government.

**Article 18 Tax Rate Relief:** MS makes a motion to approve as written, SA seconds. Vote 5-0-0.

Motion to adjourn at 9:15 pm.