

Sturbridge Finance Committee  
Meeting Minutes  
May 8, 2012  
Town Hall  
7:00 pm

Meeting was called to order at 7:00 pm with the following members present: Kevin Smith (KS), Mike Serio (MS), Larry Morrison (LM), Prescott Arndt (SA), Patti Affenito (PA), Joni Light (JL), Virginia Stallone (VS) and Arnold Wilson (AW).

Audience: Don Miller (DM), resident.

A Reserve Fund Transfer is requested for one veteran in the amount of \$ 5000. The motion to approve this transfer is made by MS, AW seconds. JL asks the purpose; KS answers that this will cover the termination of unemployment benefits and the Town will be reimbursed 75% of this amount next year. PA will find out if these benefits will continue for this individual. Vote 7-0-0.

**Line Item Budget:**

VS arrives at 7:04 pm.

**Conservation Commission (pg. 4, Salaries/Wages):** KS makes a motion to reconsider line 42, JL seconds. KS restates earlier concerns about the lack of clear vision and supporting data for the additional position in this department. JL wonders if better organization would help the situation. LM asks whether data other than volume of work is available to demonstrate the need; KS again says that the Agent did not clearly justify the additional personnel. VS asks how many active projects there are currently; LM points out that there is not always an intersection of projects and that there are certain statutory requirements that must be met and there were/are open space activities that required monitoring. Vote 6-2-0.

KS makes a motion to decrease line 42 by \$14,699, JL seconds. JL thinks the Agent wanted a more technically capable assistant. Vote 2-5-0. Motion dies because it failed to pass.

**Education (pg. 9):** KS makes a motion to reconsider line 93, AW seconds. KS notes that there has been a reduction in this budget of \$100,000. Vote 8-0-0. KS makes a motion to approve line 93 for \$9,095,756, AW seconds. Vote 8-0-0.

Unclassified (p. 14): KS says the full amount of the budget is \$26,650,919. He goes on to say that there is no under-ride; the Town does not need to spend to the full levy limit. He would like to see the Town save a prudent amount to protect against extreme events. Since the turn-back figure is not known, but is expected to be about \$492,000, KS suggests that the savings from the Burgess budget be put in the reserve fund. AW makes a motion to reconsider line 176, SA seconds. Vote 8-0-0. AW attempted to calculate the relief to taxpayers based on \$300,000

rather than \$200,000, but will agree to transferring it to the reserve fund. SA asks what percentage of the total budget will the reserve fund represent when increased by \$100,000? KS answers approximately six percent (6.31%), and points out that this is actually a combination of Reserve Funds and Stabilization Funds. PA asks if recalculation of the tax rate is possible, answer no. VS asks does this automatically go to tax rate relief, answer no. KS says that the tax rate will be \$18.73 per \$1000, with the savings from the Burgess budget. Vote 8-0-0.

#### **ATM:**

**Article 16 Ambulance Stabilization Fund:** The text box will change to reflect the reason why the balance is \$1162.03 and to explain the \$30,000 set aside.

**Article 13 Commercial Tourism District Plan:** The language will be clarified to explain the steps necessary to move forward.

**Article 27 Acceptance of Regap Lane:** AW makes a motion to reconsider, JL seconds. KS recommends no action but will defer to Town Planner and DPW Director. Vote 8-0-0.

**Article 28 Acceptance of Public Ways – Hunter Lane and Evergreen Lane:** AW makes a motion to take no action but will defer to Town Planner and DPW Director, PA seconds. Vote 8-0-0.

**Article 29 Acceptance of Public Ways – Highland Lane and Meadow Lane:** AW makes a motion to take no action but will defer to Town Planner and DPW Director, PA seconds. Vote 8-0-0.

**Article 31 Citizen Petition – Purchase 310 Main St.:** JL asks what is the long-term importance of this property to the Town, KS answers parking, possible expansion of town buildings.

**Finance Committee Report:** There is discussion about language and format of the report. LM suggests adding language that asks residents to consider future budgets since Article 4 is only addressing FY 13; PA does not agree.

PA has a few updates that will be sent to the board (Nursery School, wastewater plant).

KS points out two new lines in the report that highlight the impact of the tax rate.

DM reiterates KS's statements about the Proposition 2 ½ levy capacity, and asks when the electronic version of the report will be ready; KS answers on May 14. KS asks DM if an Article similar to Article 4 will be forthcoming in future years, DM answers yes, this is a process and he hopes this will stimulate conversations about Proposition 2 ½.

Motion to adjourn at 9:14 pm.