

STURBRIDGE FINANCE COMMITTEE

Meeting Minutes

March 14, 2013

Town Hall – 7:00 p.m.

MEMBERS PRESENT: Kevin Smith (Chairman), Michael Serio (Vice Chairman), Prescott Arndt; Arnold Wilson; Joni Light, Patricia Affenito, Laurance Morrison

MEMBERS ABSENT: None

OTHERS PRESENT: Lynn Girouard

RECORDER: Melanie Rich

The meeting was called to order at 7:01 p.m.

Line Item Budget

RECREATION (page 12): Lynn Girouard, Recreation Coordinator, was in attendance. She came before the committee regarding the line item of the Recreation Coordinator/Director's salary. She presented the members with the ten-town survey she conducted. In the proposed budget for that line item, the Recreation Committee decided to go with a full-time position, but through the Town Administrator's recommendation, it was taken off. She presented data that included the ten-town survey, with Sturbridge figures on page one, the MRPA (Mass Recreation and Parks Association) salary survey on page two, with the last page being the Town Administrator's recommendation for the Recreation Director. Ms. Girouard said she is still drastically underneath the minimum rate according to the survey and the MRPA. She would like to ask that the board to recommend an increase on that line item above and beyond with the Town Administrator has proposed. The Town Administrator proposed \$22.80/hour; she would recommend at least \$24.00/hour. She said she would still be at the low end, but relatively close in range. She said she is rated at Grade 9. Mr. Smith checked to make sure the position grade falls within that range. He said the mid-point is listed. Ms. Girouard contacted the MRPA and they are in the process of conducting their salary survey which is done every three years. She will submit the information to the Town Administrator and relevant committees when received.

Mr. Smith asked if her job responsibilities have changed in the last year. She said with the new committee, more ideas/requests are brought to the meeting. She gave some examples (dog park, instructional volleyball) and that she does the best she can at 25 hours/week. Ms. Light asked if those duties are above the job description and Ms. Girouard said yes. She has certain things that have to get done (summer concert series, summer rec programs, leagues) that are above and beyond, along with additional programs and funds. Mr. Smith said it is not new work outside of the description, which she said was in a way. He explained that she is given a list of assigned priorities and it needs to be figured out what is a real priority given the amount of time there is and that would be what she needs to focus on. Mr. Smith said a group could need assistance

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from her, but feels it falls under her purview. Mr. Wilson asked if the Recreation Committee has voted to go to the Board of Selectmen requesting \$24.00/hour. She said they didn't actually vote, they voted saying they approved her request for additional funds, but there was no number. It was not sure if the Town Administrator used blended data in the ten-town survey. Possibly generic data. Her data did not agree with that of the Town Administrator. It is out of the range of the ten-town survey but not out the range of Sturbridge rates. Ms. Light said the ten-town range should not dictate the Sturbridge rate. The Personnel Committee determines what the job description is, what the range is, but the actual amount is set by the Town Administrator. Mr. Serio the position was regarded three years ago from Grade 7 to Grade 9. The increase in pay is based on the survey not based on the workload. She has eleven people under her, CORI checks, and attends department head meetings. Ms. Girouard said in February she officially become a department head, but has nothing yet in writing. Mr. Smith said that is an actual change in responsibilities and up until then there really has been no change. She should be included in the merit base program because being goaled is part of the program. Mr. Suhoski joined the meeting and was asked about the salary range for the position because it seemed different than what he established. He was asked was it based on actual recreation positions or in the Grade 9 positions. Mr. Suhoski said Grade 9 positions and the survey data for the hourly paid positions is from hourly positions. He said the figure is blended in the survey from similar positions in the grades. For the exempt employees it is position by position and the hourly positions, because there are so many in a range, are grouped into wages. There is a variance. Salaried employees are specific to the position. The Fair Labors Act has certain definitions about exempt and non-exempt. Mr. Suhoski said he would need to go to the Personnel Committee with the FLA definition, the job description should go from non-exempt to exempt because of these reasons, and the Board of Selectmen would vote. The merit pay program was budgeted for the position. He said there were some select positions on the survey that were on the low end of the range, with most positions being in the lower half. The intent is not to give dramatic ranges, but to nudge those positions into the bottom of that, and then when economic times are better have to look at the range and see if the entire grid needs to move forward. Ms. Light asked what the rationale to do that. Mr. Suhoski said not all job descriptions are the same. She asked if he was comparing apples to apples. He said he was for department heads. The hourly positions are general descriptions for the grades involved so that's why his survey might read lower. He believes it is still an effective tool. He also said that Ms. Girouard's position, the Board of Health Agent position, and the Fire Chief are below the survey and believes it was for an internal equity adjustment.

Mr. Smith said we are not acting on salaries because we still need the debate on the COLA. The remainder of the budget was reviewed. Dues went up slightly.

Mr. Serio made a motion to approve the Purchase of Services (Line Item 153) in the Recreation budget at \$8,915; Mr. Arndt seconded. **Voted 7-0-0**

Mr. Serio made a motion to approve the Supplies (Line Item 154) in the Recreation budget at \$2,050; Mr. Arndt seconded. **Voted 7-0-0**

Mr. Serio made a motion to approve the Team Sports (Line Item 155) in the Recreation budget at \$7,500; Mr. Arndt seconded. **Voted 7-0-0**

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Mr. Serio made a motion to approve the Other Charges (Line Item 156) in the Recreation budget at \$210; Mr. Arndt seconded. **Voted 7-0-0**

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Mr. Serio made a motion to approve the Meeting Minutes of March 5, 2013 as amended; Mr. Arndt seconded. **Voted 6-0-1**

Mr. Serio made a motion to approve the Meeting Minutes of March 9, 2013 as amended; Mr. Arndt seconded. **Voted 7-0-0**

Mr. Serio made a motion to approve the Meeting Minutes of March 12, 2013 as amended; Mr. Arndt seconded. **Voted 5-0-2**

COUNCIL ON AGING (page 11): Mr. Serio said we not acting on salaries but noted it is a 2.5% increase. He said there are two people who work (one for 19 hours; one for 20 hours). The Director did say there are times when the coverage is not there because one of the employees is off site. Based on the conversation with her, there could be the need for additional hours in the future. Hours could be adjusted. The survey is based on a compilation of questions and answers. Purchase of Services is level funded. Computer maintenance she said is because they got new computers. She was also told about the centralization of the computers going to IT. My Senior Center Software Support is where she keeps all the statistical data. Supplies she said there was a company that supplied first aid items but found them to be overpriced and now buys items herself. Other Charges is for attending Mass Membership Council on Aging meetings. Medical Transportation – we pay half the cost for the Elderbus. It is for those who can walk. The other part is Transportation for Seniors, where volunteers take people who can't get on the bus to appointments. They are reimbursed for mileage. Mr. Serio felt this is an area where there could be an adjustment made, possibly with betterment. The new elevator contract was discussed and Mr. Serio said she is paying a monthly bill. Mr. Smith said that all buildings are included together. This could be prior to the new contract. Ms. Serio said the new provider is cheaper (\$100/month), but she has a monthly bill for it. He said if that cost could be reduced by \$500, Medical Transportation could be increased to \$2,000. The elevator cost needs to be checked with the Finance Director.

Mr. Serio made a motion to approve the Purchase of Services (Line Item 135) in the Council on Aging budget at \$1,870; Mr. Arndt seconded. **Voted 7-0-0**

Mr. Serio made a motion to approve the Supplies (Line Item 136) in the Council on Aging budget at \$1,350; Mr. Arndt seconded. **Voted 7-0-0**

Mr. Serio made a motion to approve Other Charges (Line Item 137) in the Council on Aging budget at \$1,400; Mr. Arndt seconded. **Voted 7-0-0**

SENIOR CENTER BUILDING (page 5): The elevator maintenance contract was discussed and that they are getting a different provider, but she is still paying the bill. More clarification is needed regarding the elevator maintenance contract.

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Mr. Serio made a motion to approve the Purchase of Services (Line Item 66) in the Senior Center budget at \$45,270; Mr. Arndt seconded. **Voted 7-0-0**

Mr. Serio made a motion to approve the Supplies (Line Item 67) in the Senior Center budget at \$1,200; Mr. Arndt seconded. **Voted 7-0-0**

INSPECTORS - Electric and Plumbing (page 8): Previously they received 80% of the fees; now they receive \$35 per inspection. Mr. Smith asked why there is a \$2,400 mileage line item this year. Mr. Serio will check.

Mr. Serio made a motion to approve Salaries/Wages (Line Item 93) in the Inspectors Electric and Plumbing budget at \$40,000; Mr. Arndt seconded. Ms. Light said that at looking at the numbers, for the residents, it is a pretty big number and asked if that was because it is contractual and went up from \$35 to \$40 per inspection? She also asked if we anticipate the inspections going up. Mr. Smith said it is budgeted at 500 inspections per year at an inspection rate of \$40. The Board of Selectmen have voted to pay the inspectors \$100 per month in fuel vehicle costs. The use of vehicles used for the mileage was discussed. **Voted 7-0-0**

Other Charges – No action until follow-up with the Board of Selectmen.

Mr. Serio made a motion to approve Supplies (Line Item 95) in the Inspectors (Electric and Plumbing) budget at zero; Mr. Arndt seconded. **Voted 7-0-0**

Old Business

Mr. Smith asked the members there was any discussions/input on previously discussed line items (education, betterment, assessors, DPW, capital expenses, etc.).

Ms. Affenito said she received information from the Finance Director and the seven additional hours for the Data Collector will be the actual hours (\$6,702), but he is also eligible for insurance. The cost for a single plan is \$5,040; a family plan is \$13,461. Mr. Smith said we would have to budget for that.

She still is waiting for information regarding the propane.

The slate roof for the Nursery School is included in the slate roofs. There is \$1,000 in repairs this year and the question was where was this money going. Ms. Affenito thought we had done a reserve fund transfer for that, but Ms. Barry said it was coming. That was Mr. Smith's understanding also. He thought the committee discussed and voted on it, but there is no record of it.

COLA – Mr. Smith said the Town Administrator has proposed the 2.5% cost of living adjustment for all non-union employees. The rationale talks about how the union employees over the last three years have gone up about 5.5% and he is trying to get the non-union employees level of increase over the same time period. Ms. Light said she understands his rationale, but given the current state of the economy, 2.5% is high. She doesn't disagree with

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what he is trying to do, but doesn't think that the 2.5% warrants it. She said for example her company is using 1.7%. She looked at the labor Social Security website at there were two figures; 1.7% and 1.4%. The CPI index for wages is 1.38% and the congressional budget office is using 1.4% for wages. She said gasoline is part of the increase. Mr. Serio said we use a Boston area number. There was much more discussion on the subject. DOR numbers show the average income for households was up \$1,940. That is down from two years ago, but up from last year. Different factors were discussed; regional CPI, West Coast costs, Northeast costs. Mr. Morrison discussed the possibly of a unionized town and that the union controls issues such as this. He said you need to look at the facts of the situation, not the person. Mr. Smith said if the percent is changed we need to get new numbers from the Finance Director. He said it would only affect non-union employees. Ms. Light feels there are so many out there that haven't had raises and now the sewer rates going up. She said it is so difficult to put a number on it and doesn't want to penalize the town employees. She is only thinking of the residents of Sturbridge because this is what they contribute to live here. Mr. Smith agreed and said it is their money and we are slated to say how we feel their money is best spent. People also need to realize that the employer has the responsibility to their employees to make sure it is a safe working condition, and getting peer pay. Mr. Wilson made a motion that we authorize 2.2% across the board for non-union employees; no second; motion defeated. After further discussion, Mr. Wilson made a motion to approve the 2.5% COLA increase for all non-union town employees; Mr. Serio seconded. **Voted 7-0-0**

Liaisons – Mr. Morrison agreed to be the liaison for BOH (Community Health, Health Care, Landfill/Recycling and Inspections). Ms. Light will pursue speaking with the moderator regarding the conflict of interest.

Police Department Cruisers – There are three in the capital budget. The Town Administrator said the plan to fund the three cruisers is as follows: one will be funded out of Capital; one from Betterment; and one from the Police Department Operating budget. Mr. Wilson said the Betterment Committee put that on hold for further discussion as to what Capital was going to do and felt it should be in the Police Department Operating budget.

Mr. Smith said there is also the need for a four-wheel loader (\$156,000) and a possible expense for a Library roof (\$200,000) leaving the skylights in. The Town Administrator will follow up.

In the capital budget, the town is trying to correct communication issues among emergency vehicles across town. Part of what was recommended is in-vehicle repeaters for the police and fire vehicles so that they can use their handheld radios. This should be used on all vehicles including DPW vehicles and buses. The Town Administrator will look into the additional cost to include the DPW vehicles and buses.

Fleet Vehicles – There are four fleet vehicles; 2 Escapes, 1 pick-up truck, and 1 2005 Crown Victoria. It was discussed to possibly take \$2,000 to make the police cruiser into a non-police car and add that to the fleet vehicle pool and get rid of the 2001 pick-up truck. They are also looking to add a small dollar value to pay for cleaning, maintenance and inspection costs for the fleet, which is not included in any budget.

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The Tantasqua Regional School District Public Hearing is scheduled for Tuesday at 6:00 p.m. We will reconvene in the cafeteria after the hearing for our meeting. Ms. Light will contact the Town Clerk to see if she will be attending.

Mr. Serio made a motion to adjourn; Mr. Wilson seconded. The meeting was adjourned at 9:29 p.m.