

Sturbridge Finance Committee  
Meeting Minutes  
November 26, 2013 ~ Town Hall  
7:00pm

Call to Order:

The chairman called the meeting to order at 7:00pm with the following members present: Mike Serio (MS), Larry Morrison (LM), Kathie Neal (KN), Prescott (Scott) Arndt (SA), Joni Light (JL), and Kevin Smith, Chairman (KS). Patti Affenito (PA) arrived at 7:15pm.

Absent: Arnold Wilson (AW), Bob Jepson (BJ)

Guest: Shaun Suhoski, (SS)

Minutes:

Minutes of July 11 submitted and reviewed but the vote was delayed at the request of JL pending confirmation of certain details.

New Business

Reserve Fund Transfer – Finance Director:

A reserve fund transfer request (RFT) to the Recreation account (16302-52236) was made by Barbara Barry for \$13,318.41. This represents the remaining balance from June 30, 2013 that should have been encumbered, but was instead closed out to Free Cash in error. The town has an obligation with Waterfield Design Group for this amount.

SA makes a motion to approve the transfer of \$13,318.41, KN seconds to approve.

Accepted 6-0-0.

Reserve Fund Transfer – Town Administrator:

A reserve fund transfer request (RFT) to the Town Administrator Purchase of Services account (11232-52000) was made by Shaun Suhoski (SS) for \$5,800 to cover advertisement costs for open positions with the town, as well as reimbursements for travel costs to the candidate for the fire chief position. The amount represents \$5,058.04 in advertising charges and \$740.00 for flight charges.

MS makes motion to approve the transfer of \$5,800.00, SA seconds to approve.

Accepted 6-0-0.

Special Town Meeting Topics:

Items of discussion included the front end loader needed for the DPW as the current equipment has failed. There are funds owed to Veolia for their contracted work. Free Cash has been confirmed at \$2,905,905.00. SS was present for this discussion and shared his view on a “three-pronged approach” in using the fund to benefit the town that he will present and discuss with the Board of Selectman in January. Recommendations include increasing the Stabilization Fund to provide a cushion and protect the town’s borrowing position; satisfy current needs of a front end loader for the DPW, repair of the safety complex floor and set aside appropriate funds for the DPW contract wages and fund a vacancy. There may still be substantial funds for potential tax relief to the town residents.

Additionally, town budgets are due to the finance director by December 9 and SS indicated that he was looking to be conservative. KS discussed end of year budget “turn backs” and how they vary

from year to year, often with reason. SS assured the committee that the finance director was reviewing the budgets to be sure they remain as accurate as possible.

The Betterment Assessment is scheduled for the Special Town Meeting, and a list of specific proposals is being prepared for discussion at the next BOS meeting.

Stipend Committee:

KN is the on the Stipend Committee and provided an update. The Stipend Committee has developed criteria for reimbursements paid to town committees. A sponsored warrant article was discussed and the committee felt that the town should vote on stipends either way. However, the criteria regarding specific amounts and allocations are yet to be determined. LM confirmed that in the past the finance committee was eligible to accept stipends.

Sturbridge Tourist Association:

KS reported that the STA has not convened regularly, and that the meetings were not quorate, and that he himself has not been able to attend many STA meetings as the finance committee representative. SS has appointed a Conservation Committee member to the STA for this fiscal year. With one STA seat now being shared between various town departments, LM brought up how the finance committee members can only vote once on budgets. His concern was whether or not the finance committee member on STA should be recused from voting on STA appropriations, or whether the finance committee representative should hold a non-voting position.

Old Business:

SS wrote to the finance committee in response to the letter of findings and apologized to the committee for not being forthcoming with his mileage stipend for inspectors resulting in a delayed RFT request.

Efforts to find candidates for vacancies within the town include the finance committee clerk, town accountant and fire chief, although a candidate has been identified for the latter position. Two police promotions were also confirmed.

KS mentioned the school resource officer and how he thought both schools needed to be in agreement in order to staff the position. SS informed the committee that the intent was to have the SRO for Burgess only, contingent on approval by the Burgess School committee.

Motion to adjourn made by MS; seconded by LM. Meeting adjourned at 7:50pm.

Next meeting to be determined.

/jml