

Sturbridge Finance Committee  
Meeting Minutes  
January 13, 2015 ~ Sturbridge Town Hall  
7:00pm

Call to Order:

The chairman called the meeting to order at 7:00pm with the following committee members present: Kevin Smith, Chair (KS); Joni Light (JL); Kathy Neal (KN); Bob Jepson (BJ); Mike Serio (MS); Arnold Wilson (AW); Larry Morrison (LM) and Eric Perez (EP). Absent: Alex Athans (AA)  
Guests: Lynne Girouard (LG), John Clancy (JC)

The chairman called the meeting to order at 7:00pm and welcomed Lynne Girouard, the recreation director, to converse on Article 35 – 8 Brookfield Road.

Article 35 – Feasibility Study for 8 Brookfield Road

KS confirmed that the assessment of the building and design was initially to be covered in the funding request, but that this warrant article only covers the feasibility study. It's necessary to know if the building can be used at all before additional money is spent on designs. The additional space to the town would be advantageous as both the town's Cable Access Committee and the Recreation Committee have both expressed an interest in the space. KS asked LG to comment further on what was discussed when she went on a recent walk through with the DPW director. LG noted that she was looking for very basic space to do exercise classes as she has a hard time finding additional space in the high school. She's currently using space at Burgess but it's not always available. Having additional space would allow the Recreation Department to expand on offerings, and she noted that the library may also have a use for holding community events. KS was curious to know what would happen if it turns out that the building is found to require a lot more money to bring it up to code; and what would happen if those costs were more than what the actual building is assessed for on the open market. It was disclosed recently that the roof will need mending along with weatherproofing which could prove to be costly to the town. LM was curious to know if there were other town facilities that could house the cable access equipment. JC did say he looked into the Senior Center but it wasn't ideal. KS stated that he'd personally prefer to wait for the assessment before spending additional dollars on the building. He'd like to see the TA put forth a warrant for the build out for next year's budget if this article passes and the repairs are found to be within reason. (KS was referring to an email from the TA).

AW moved the motion accept the article as amended; BJ seconds. Further discussion was opened and LM wanted to confirm accuracy in the text boxes, of which KS noted all boxes would be reviewed by the committee. KN asked if the building and fire inspector had put together any details as to how much work is actually needed. KS didn't get adequate specifics sufficient to answer. LM noted that there would be a difference in cost between measuring doorways for handicap access and replacing doors and windows versus plumbing, electrical and structural work that are not always apparent. Motion passed 8-1-0. AW opposed.

Article 36 – Police Department Salaries and Wages Overtime Accounts

Please refer to Appendix A for previously submitted questions from the finance committee. Discussion started on Article 36 "Memorandum of Understanding" for the FY15 Collective Bargaining Agreement. KS noted that this would be retroactive to July 1, 2014. LM was curious to know the purpose of the "longevity" award listed in the MOU as Article 6.11, and if it was a way to recruit and maintain good workers, or if there was another reason. Further discussion on each of the articles brought many questions as the committee went through each one. Moving onto Article 6.2 LM had questions on

whether or not rank would be an issue if by chance an officer was reduced in rank for disciplinary reasons, at what point would the longevity to be granted if at all? With regard to Article 18.4, KS wanted clarity on the certifications that would be rewarded for and why; since the town already fully funds the former Quinn Bill. MS was questioned to know if the Quinn Bill was continuing to be paid by the town and KS confirmed that while it went away by the state, the town continues to fully fund it. KN asked why there was an education incentive if the Quinn Bill was continuing to be funded, and why the certifications, as well. Much of the incentive awards go to these special certifications and education milestones, including the Quinn Bill funding. Further, KN noted the wage increases over the course of the three year contract and was curious to know if this would be “setting the stage” on what to expect for the wage increases from the town departments. BJ wanted to know where Sturbridge fit amongst the “10 Town Survey” town as far as cost for their police force. He further noted that Gardner, for example, has a police payroll budget of \$1M for approximately 20,000 residents, and Sturbridge is double the budget for half the population. Given the differences in the two towns what is Sturbridge getting for this additional amount of money? MS noted that the 10 Town Survey was never used for salaries but merely a comparison of operational expenses and didn’t think it would apply to this discussion. After much discussion around the salaries and pay differences of other towns, LM asked if this \$46K should be split into two articles in case residents wanted to perhaps vote for one amount over the other. KS felt it would limit the voter unless he/she were to put in a substitute motion on the floor at town meeting. With additional commentary around the sick time and personal time granted; both KN and LM made comments to the granting of personal days, for example, staying “healthy” and being awarded for not taking sick time; there were too many unanswered questions around “why” in their view. KS suggested he ask the attendance of the finance director, TA and chief of police at the next Finance Committee meeting to foster a better understanding in order to make a clear and conscientious recommendation to the town. All were in agreement.

KS noted that the next meeting (January 15, 2015) is to discuss the STA article and members of the STA Study Committee would be in attendance.

A motion to adjourn was made by BJ: KN seconds. Meeting adjourned at 8.24pm.

/jml

## Appendix A

### **FINCOM Question on PD MOA**

#### **General Questions**

Assumed that all parties knew when the previous contract expired on 6/30/14 ??

When was the first date for negotiations ? How many other dates ? Approx. when ?

Who attended from the BOS?

Did the BOS rep. attend them all ?

What was the date of the final agreement of the MOA.? And the date it was signed by all parties?

Was there any discussion relative to retroactive ?

#### **Article 6.2**

Does this permit someone who was reduced in rank for disciplinary or quality reasons to nevertheless receive compensation for the time held at the rank for which that person was found unsuited or unqualified?

Does this permit someone with no ambition to rise in rank, and to remain at an entry level to receive compensation for staying power, even at a mediocre performance level?

#### **Article 6.11**

Why is a longevity bonus necessary?

#### **Article 7.1**

What are the families of other Town employees offered? For example, what if a DPW employee was killed in a trench accident?

#### **Article 7.4**

Is the life insurance premium paid for by the Town or the employee?

#### **Article 10.8**

Does “utilize sick leave” mean any sick leave or all sick leave available?

Why should the Town reward someone for being healthy, or, at least, not sick?

What is the reason for giving a personal day for not taking any sick leave? Since the contract doesn't define personal days, it seems it's just another paid day off.

What is the logic behind this request? Does it help save money? Does it help with the scheduling?

### **Article 15.2**

Why is the town continuing to fully fund the provisions of the Quinn bill?

What does “similar percentage” mean?

### **Article 18.1**

What is the rationale for going to a 3% raise in FY17?

### **Article 18.4**

Why is a certification stipend necessary?

What are some examples of certifications eligible under this section?

### **Article 34**

What revisions to the evaluation process are being considered?

Have the parties revised the performance evaluation process? If so, can we get a copy of it?