

Sturbridge Finance Committee
Meeting Minutes
February 19, 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); Mike Serio (MS); Larry Morrison (LM) and Alex Athans (AA); and Eric Perez (EP). Absent: Bob Jepson (BJ); and Arnold Wilson (AW)
Guests: Suzanne Kennedy (SK); Barbara Barry (BB); Becky Plimpton (BP)

Reserve Fund Transfer Request – Barbara Barry

A new account was opened for the remainder of FY15 called “Roof Snow & Ice Removal” necessary to fund the removal (via steam) of heavy snow and ice on the roofs of town properties: the library; senior center; town hall; center office building; public safety complex. A local contractor was hired. It is estimated to take approximately 38 hours and amount requested includes this time plus a \$4,000 contingency in case the lift is required to reach the high peaks of the public safety complex and the senior center.

Understanding that this winter has brought an increase to snow and ice removal costs, KS asked if any long term plans for maintenance is or will be in discussion. SK confirmed that this is a topic for the following week with the department heads. LM brought up the possibility of mold during thawing, and if this was a concern that may be an additional cost. BP explained how the bathroom at the library was the worst hit with the recent ice damming, and confirmed the bathroom had to be completely gutted. However, provided the area dries completely there is no mold issue. BB added that the insurance will apply a 2% credit to their policy once proof of ice dam removals is provided.

LM moved the motion to transfer \$23,000.00 from the Reserve Fund to the Roof Snow & Ice Removal (account 19152-53434); MS seconds. Motion accepted 7-0-0.

Snow & Ice Deficit Spending – Barbara Barry

BB and SK explained how the BOS voted to authorize an undetermined amount to spend on snow & ice going forward without having to confirm deficit spending with the finance committee each time a demand is made. A summary will be provided to the finance committee with updates on the balances after each snowstorm. A vote from the finance committee is required to put this into place. KS recognizes that it’s an easier process but yet still wants to ensure some sort of control on spending, and asked if the process would guarantee these controls are in place. BB noted that the town is required to report back to the DOR on expenditures for snow & ice removal, and her team is diligent in doing the proper and timely accounting. Because it is such a fluid budget and hard to estimate a cost for sand, salt and manpower, the finance committee needs to trust the people doing the bookkeeping. It needs to be funded and it is not always simple to gather the finance committee to approve the deficit spending.

KN was curious to know at what point the spending would be authorized. MS noted that Greg Morse generally determines how much to spend based on the storm. BB commented that the town has not pushed back on spending and it is generally set lower than what is needed so it does not affect the tax base. SK made clear that this vote from the finance committee has to be made annual as it does not extend beyond the fiscal year for which it is approved, and further reiterated BB’s comments on the town’s reporting to the DOR.

MS moved the motion, in accordance with Chapter 44, Section 31D of MGL, to approve deficit spending for Snow and Ice Removal Costs in FY15, provided updates of balances after each snowstorm are provided to the finance committee; LM seconds. Motion accepted 7-0-0.

Old Business

BB confirmed that the CPC will be funding the \$950.00 for the additional conservation meetings required for the recreation department as per Article 40. She further enlightened the committee on the progress of hiring a clerk to attend and take meeting minutes. She had one candidate and was meeting with the prospective clerical worker the following week.

MS noted that perhaps the town could advertise the position as an internship opportunity for a college student interested in political science or other government program.

KS reviewed the current capital planning proposal, and noted that there will be three articles in FY16 to appropriate borrowed funds for the sweeper, the breathing apparatus needed for the fire department, and the last article will be for the remaining capital budget. Further, there is one police cruiser included in this year's capital request unlike last year.

Review of Meeting Minutes:

Minutes of the February 3, 2015 were reviewed and accepted as amended. KN moved the motion; MS seconds. Motion accepted 6-0-1 with EP abstaining.

Motion to adjourn the meeting was moved by JL; LM seconds. Motion accepted 7-0-0. Meeting adjourned at 7.57pm.

/jml