

Sturbridge Finance Committee
Meeting Minutes
May 28, 2015 ~ Sturbridge Town Hall
7:07pm

Call to Order:

The chairman called the meeting to order at 7:07pm with the following committee members present: Kevin Smith, Chair (KS); Joni Light (JL); Kathy Neal (KN); Mike Serio (MS); Larry Morrison (LM). Absent: Eric Perez (EP); Bob Jepson (BJ); Arnold Wilson (AW); and Alex Athans (AA).

Guests: Barbara Barry (BB); Tom Chamberland (TC)

KS recognized the town's finance director who came in to clarify some last minute changes to the language in Article 8. BB said the change was recommended by town counsel as they determined there was no need for the town to keep the words take by "eminent domain" in the article, and a majority vote would suffice to pass the article at town meeting.

BB continued to explain that there was a calculation error to the Community Preservation Debt Service, Article 13, and that it showed a deficit of approximately \$36K. A handout would be included with the budget books for town meeting. BB further explained how FY16 was calculated using a conservative estimate and also using \$72K in revenue from the state from Round 1. Towns are allowed to bank on local receipts to date, plus Round 1 revenue of the subsequent fiscal year's tax receipts. Reimbursements are calculated three times (rounds) each year and FY15 includes all three rounds. She also noted that the town would be getting back \$400K of the \$1M for the property from the state grant.

MS asked if we are to credit the \$400K then what would be the reason for not using the full FY16 money. BB answered that it was a timing issue. BB further explained that, based on anticipation, the town has all the money to cover the cost of the property in undesignated funds. KN asked about the article and said she looked up the MGL, (Chapter 40, Section 14) for buying land says a 2/3 vote, yet town counsel noted it was a DOR decision for just a majority vote. She could not find that wording in the MGL. The CPA Act doesn't say it, so perhaps it was assumed? BB said that borrowing money always makes it a 2/3 vote, eminent domain. The simple majority merely denies the use of eminent domain as per counsel. KN said she would like to research further.

A motion would be needed to reconsider the article with the new words. LM moved the motion to reconsider Article 13; MS seconds. Motion to reconsider was accepted 5-0-0.

KS opened the meeting up to the public for their comments. Resident Ed Goodwin stood up to voice his opinion on the good this property would bring to the town. Mike Suprenant stated that he felt the deficit might be better remedied by authorizing the finance director to borrow in anticipation of CPA reimbursements, which would require a 2/3 vote. He had been advised by the previous town administrator that the CPA debt service should not exceed the local surcharge receipts. BB stated that the town can absolutely use anticipated reimbursements for FY16 to fund a FY16 purchase.

LM moved the motion to "approve that the Town vote to approve the acquisition of the property described in the article, delete therefrom the words "and/or eminent domain," and appropriate \$1,511,950 for said acquisition, with \$1,057,000 being transferred from the Community Preservation Fund Balance, \$36,000 being appropriated from the Community Preservation Act FY 2016 estimated annual revenues, and the remaining \$418,950 appropriated from the gift and grant funds received by the Town for such purposes, as set forth in said article"; MS seconds. Motion accepted 4-1-0 (KN is opposition).

Reserve Fund Transfer – Fire Chief

An RFT was submitted by David Zinther for the replacement of emergency back-up batteries for the five repeater sites for the town's safety radio communications. The batteries were beyond their useful life after a routine check at one of the sites uncovered the oversight. These are back-up batteries and the life expectancy is dependent upon usage. KS wanted to ensure that a replacement schedule would be put in place under the fire chief's jurisdiction going forward, as there did not appear to be any such schedule currently. KS asked why the maintenance company for the repeaters did not know about these replacement batteries previously. Somebody had to put them in place and why didn't anyone know they existed? BB answered as best she could and indicated that there was no contract in place so they were overlooked. TC spoke up and said they were always under the jurisdiction of the police chief in years past. BB said she spoke to Chief Ford who said they were installed prior to his becoming police chief and he was unaware of them under his responsibility. KN wanted to know what the maintenance company was doing on the repeater sites to notice; were they working on a particular issue or was it a scheduled check? BB said the repeater site had an issue and the company was called to check it out when they noted the condition of the batteries. KS again wanted to ensure the batteries were on a schedule and that it would be captured in the next budget review. JL asked that if this was for FY15 and, if so, wanted to know if it was anticipated in FY16 to require funding, since this maintenance was not identified and captured during the line item budget review. BB said if any cost was required in FY16 it would be absorbed from the existing FY16 budget.

MS moved the motion to transfer \$1,958.00 from the Reserve Fund to the Public Safety Purchase of Sales account (11972-5200); KN seconds. Motion accepted 5-0-0.

KN moved the motion to transfer \$1,215.00 from the Reserve Fund to the Public Safety Supplies account (11972-5400); MS seconds. Motion accepted 5-0-0.

BB and KS stated that a candidate had been identified for the clerk position, and that the name was going before the BOS at their June 15 meeting.

Reserve Fund Transfer – Tree Warden

An RFT was requested by Tom Chamberland who came before the committee to discuss. It was for tree removal costs for three trees at the senior center building and two trees at the nursery school. TC explained how the trees were old and rotting, and a vehicle was damaged recently at the nursery school by one of the trees. TC had been in contact with Melissa Beauchemin, Director of Council on Aging, and she confirmed the trees on the property of the senior center are at risk. JL confirmed that she had a similar conversation with Melissa during budget discussions. JL further asked if there was any funds available to cover this cost in the FY15 budget. TC said no because the budget for FY15 is already specific to other trees in town that need attention. This was above his FY15 budget. MS asked what the \$1,650.00 would cover. TC said it would be a two man crew, a truck, a chipper, and also the cost to haul away the trees which is paid on a cost per pound. A police detail may also be needed.

LM moved the motion to transfer \$9,600.00 from the Reserve Fund to the Tree Warden Purchase of Services account (12942-5200); MS seconds. Motion accepted 5-0-0.

Meeting Minutes

The meeting minutes of April 30, 2015 were reviewed. MS moved the motion to accept the meeting minutes as amended; KN seconds. Motion approved 5-0-0.

The meeting minutes of May 5, 2015 were reviewed. MS moved the motion to accept the meeting minutes as amended; KN seconds. Motion approved 5-0-0.

The meeting minutes of May 7, 2015 were reviewed. LM moved the motion to accept the meeting minutes as amended; KN seconds. Motion approved 5-0-0.

KS reminded everyone that the annual town meeting is June 1, 2015 at 7:00pm. Business attire is recommended.

Motion to adjourn the meeting was moved by LM; KN seconds. Motion accepted 5-0-0. Meeting adjourned at 8:20pm.

/jml