

**Sturbridge Finance Committee
Meeting Minutes
April 28, 2016 ~ Town Hall
7:00pm**

Call to Order:

The chairman called the meeting to order at 7:00pm with the following members present: Chair, Kathleen Neal (KN), Kevin Smith (KS), Joni Light (JL), Michael Serio (MS), and Suzanne Smiley (SS). James Waddick (JW) arrived at 7:50pm.

Absent: Laurance Morrison (LM)

Guests: Tom Chamberland (TC), Heather Hart (HH), Barbara Search (BS).

Annual Town Meeting (ATM) Warrant Articles

Article 5 – Community Preservation Committee – Historic Resource Survey

HH explained that there is a money appropriation for the trails, the cemetery program and town records on the agenda for years. This warrant article is to conduct an inventory of town properties that is usually completed every 10-15 years. The cost is \$20,000.00 to survey up to 100 homes or businesses in the town. Research and time may take longer on some homes, yet it is estimated to cost an average of \$200.00 per property inventoried. The inventory has not been done in over 40 years, and the last inventory was marginal at best. The consulting company being proposed to use was recommended through the Historical Commission. The consultant would research the type and manner of use for the structures/properties.

KS asked how they will define what is historic. HH answered that they find people who know what these structures were, perform a records check, review old deeds, etc. They will work on a section of town at a time. KN asked if it was for mill houses specifically. HH answered yes: they will start with mill houses, but eventually an inventory will be done to all properties. There is no value to what is on file currently. The CPA can fund it, as it falls within guidelines.

BS stated that the consultant will look at Fiskdale thoroughly, as it was the old manufacturing section of town. KS asked about the geographic sections and what would be a priority. BS stated they will start in Fiskdale, but would not necessarily limit to Fiskdale. KS asked what the Reserve Fund Transfer amount was for the Exhibition Hall survey. BS answered it was for \$1,000.00. KS asked if they could use the GIS system to determine the age of a structure. BS stated that the most historically valuable building would not necessarily be the oldest; there may be something younger that is just as relevant because of social or historic worth. The older inventories were done by knowledgeable volunteers in the 1970s, but are lacking crucial information. Elizabeth Raren from Pioneer Valley Planning Commission is doing the larger scale inventory. The Exhibition Hall is being done by Jennifer Daury.

KS stated that with \$20,000.00, they may need to go out to bid and advised her to check with Leon Gaumond. HH stated that funds spent on town records were \$20,000.00, but she was not aware if Lorraine went out to bid on that project. KN confirmed that they would need to go out on 3 bids but wouldn't necessarily need an RFP. On the Community Preservation Coalition website, procurement laws apply to CPA funds when the amount is within \$10,000.00 to \$25,000.00. TC added that some professional services may be exempt from procurement laws due to the specialized nature. BS confirmed that Massachusetts Historical Commission advised that \$20,000.00 will allow for 100

buildings to be surveyed. SS asked if the surveyor would have to go inside buildings and, if so, she is concerned that they may run into problems. BS stated they will perform exterior reviews only. KN asked where the inventory would be housed. BS answered that they would be electronic at the Massachusetts Historical Commission website, and copies would be available for the town. KN asked what the purpose of the inventory was as pertaining to the Historical Commission. BS answered they were brought in for planning, economic development, preservation, and education. She went on to explain that one of the main points needed to understand about this Historical Committee was the historical research done for the town. KS asked HH to confirm the balance in the CPA funds. HH stated that undesignated funds for historic appropriation is \$20,000.00. KS stated that as it is coming out of historic resources, the balance moved from \$58,448.72 to \$38,448.72.

KS moved the motion to approve Article 5 – Community Preservation Committee – Historic Survey Resources as written, JL seconds; motion passes 5-0-0.

Article 3 – Community Preservation – Town Records Restoration

HH stated that the town records were restored last year, and the same group is doing it again this year. Lorraine requested that records used most often and in the worst condition be done first. She explained that it was a large project, and she can foresee this going on for several years. Records are organized into binders, dated, restored, preserved in plastic.

KS asked if records are also digitized. HH said the CPA is not specific about restoration, and digitizing does not qualify for funding. However, HH believes it would be less costly and provides easy access.

JL asked how long Lorraine anticipated this restoration project to continue. HH stated that she asked for more money last year but funds were not available. KS stated that this will be coming out of the undesignated fund balance with a 17% match in CPA funds. \$415,000.00 was collected from town surcharges, and interest from the state is \$20,000.00, while anticipated state revenue is \$79,000.00, for a total of \$514,000.00.

KN stated that this was a very conservative budget projection. KS asked how the CPC is funding the million dollar project for the proposed Town Barn Field Project. MS answered that they will borrow. HH stated that some expenses are dropping off the CPC ledger this year.

KS asked when they anticipate the debt and interest payment to exceed \$16,534.00. He also stated that there are ongoing expenses this year. HH answered that the town hall expense of \$115,000.00 is coming off the ledger and therefore she did not anticipate being in danger of a negative balance.

MS moved the motion to approve Article 3 – Community Preservation – Town Records Restoration as written, KS seconds; motion passes 5-0-0.

Article 16 – Community Preservation Debt Service

KS stated that \$102,000.00 from the Stallion Hill project expires this year and asked if that will be enough to cover the debt interest from the Article 26 – Town Barn Fields project. MS answered that they can make it work depending on the borrowing schedule. KN stated that the Article 26 – Town Barn Fields would come on the books in FY18. KS stated that Barbara Barry answered via text that the debt is going to be spread over 15 years and should be fine.

Article 4 – Community Preservation – North Cemetery

HH stated that this is the fourth year of the restoration of headstones. JL asked how many stones are being reworked each year. HH answered that it's not as quantitative as much as a qualitative measure of work; some are broken, some have issues with trees roots. Each year they do an inventory on grave markers and based on cost they back it into the \$9,500.00. JL stated that they came back last year and asked for more money because of a stone that was engulfed in roots. She thought they only restored up to ten each year.

MS moved the motion to approve Article 4 – Community Preservation – North Cemetery as written, SS seconds; motion passes 5-0-0.

Article 6 – Community Preservation – Trail Development Work

TC stated that the focus of trail work was on the trails of the Plimpton property. However, the intent is that the funds can be used on any open space property owned by the town. The Trails Committee is asking that the wording be such that they can use it for multiple properties. KS asked where parking is at the Plimpton Property. TC answered that the DPW are in the process of constructing a parking lot, and a kiosk is being built by first year Tantasqua carpentry students.

TC stated they may need to have a Notice of Intent filed with the Conservation Commission, for funding of gravel and sign posts. KS asked if there will be land markers. TC answered yes, and also noted geological and historical features will be included in guides. KN asked why the Trails Committee has not gone before the Community Preservation Commission (CPC) for funds. TC stated that they had not thought of it. He went on to explain that they started dealing with the Sturbridge Tourist Association (STA). KS stated that it can be funded out of Betterment, too. KN stated that the gates are in Conservation Commission budgets. MS noted that there is only so much money available.

KN asked why taxpayers should pay for guidebooks. The funds from STA, CPC, and Betterment are for a specific use, and it would be prudent to check what is eligible from these funds first. KS stated that these issues should fall under the Economic Development Coordinator in the Memorandum of Findings. The funds need to be tracked accordingly. MS stated that trails projects are more volunteer work than dollars spent by the town. TC stated that the funds are used for engineering services, wetland findings, for the DPW building trails, and materials – signs, signposts, paint, and contracting out of other work. Greg Morse (DPW) includes equipment for trail work in his Chapter 90 bids.

MS moved the motion to approve Article 6 – Community Preservation – Trail Development Work as written, KS seconds; motion passes 6-0-0.

Article 7 – Community Preservation – Administration

KN asked to know why the amount went up \$5,000.00 when it has never been fully expended. HH confirmed they historically have not spent the whole amount, however, the funds may be needed for anticipated increases in legal fees and appraisal costs. Funds not used will go back into Undesignated Funds. MS stated that Barbara Barry, Finance Director, monitors the use of this fund. HH stated that the legal cap for this is \$15,000.00.

MS moved the motion to approve Article 7 – Community Preservation – Administration as written, KS seconds; motion passes 6-0-0.

Article 26 – Town Barn Field Project

JW asked if the \$1,000,000.00 for this article will be incurred as debt by the Recreation Department. HH answered yes. KN stated that the Community Preservation Act (CPA) has been amended to include funds for property that is not acquired by CPA funds. SS stated that those involved in support of this article should consider the impact on the community and private properties in close proximity to the blasting of ledge that is involved in this project. She suggested notifying residents beforehand as there was not much notice given previously. HH stated that historically they present information on projects during an open meeting prior to commencement. KS stated that the Town Barn Fields project has gone through town boards, and that once they have funding they will move forward. He stated that there had to have been measures taken to make abutters aware. SS stated that Salisbury Management would have received notification, and she is not aware of this having taken place. JW stated that likely it would have gone through certified mail. The town should have a copy on file as proof of notice.

There was further discussion on the layout of the town warrant articles. KS advised JL that the language in the warrant articles must be factual and objective. Additionally, on zoning articles, the Report of the Finance Committee needs to have the recommendation of the Planning Board. KS and JL discussed consistency of aesthetics.

Review of Amendments to Annual Town Meeting Warrant Articles

Article 31 – Zoning Bylaw Telecommunications

KS and JL discuss the amendments as follows:

- In section 12.02 Definitions, to add the words “(herein after known as “facility”)” to the definition of Wireless Communication Facility;
- In section 12.03 Use Regulations, Section (b)(1) strike the word “new” before the words “wireless communication facility”;
- In section 12.03 Use Regulations, Section (b)(2) strike the word “new” before each instance of the words “wireless communication facility”;
- In section 12.03 Use Regulations, Section (c) strike the word “new” before the words “wireless communication facility”;
- In section 12.03 Use Regulations, Section (h) add the phrase “from grade” after the words “130 ft. in Height”;
- In section 12.05 Procedure, Section (d), strike the words “conduct a publicity noticed” and replace it with the words “publish a legal notice for a”;

and to otherwise approve the article as written.

Article 34 – Amendment to the Zoning Bylaws

- Strike the word “insert” and replace it with the word “inserting” and otherwise approve the article as written.

Article 35 – Amendment to the Zoning Bylaws

- In the Preamble to strike the words “an attractive neighborhood” and replace with “a multi-use residential”
- In the Preamble to strike the words “shopping opportunities” and replace with the word “shops”.
- In Section 8.02 (b), to strike the word “Dramatic” and replace with the words “Live

performance”.

Article 26 – Town Barn Fields Project

The committee discuss their intent to wait on voting this article until LM returns to participate at the next meeting.

Article 28 – Open Space Trail Guide

JL asked about the quantity and cost of the trail guides. KN stated that the estimate is for 7,000 copies for \$10,000.00. \$5,000.00 will be funded through the STA. MS reminded the committee that when funds from STA are utilized, it crowds out the possibility of other projects. He goes on to explain that the trail guides would be distributed at conventions and left at the concierge desk of hotels.

JL believed the recommended amount to be high, and that money would be better off spent on electronic collateral in the form of PDF instead of heavy-grade printed guides. KN added that hikers wouldn't want to bring a bound book with them. SS said that is why there is concern over how they intend to update the guides. JL stated that there are currently maps at trail-head kiosks. MS stated that not everyone will be totally comfortable using only the kiosks. This offers media for people to pick up at trade shows and to perhaps organize tours. JL and KN agree that trail maps that open up would be more practical. KS answered that pamphlets are more expensive than an 8.5X11 inch printout. JW stated that even if it is voted down the Trails Committee can still use the funds from STA. MS offered that the STA is supposed to be knowledgeable about promotion and if they thought it was a good idea in the first place, it was probably due to informed rationale. It could be more of a “leave behind” at a conference and not for the average backpacker. KN asked why CPC isn't funding these guides. MS answered that CPC is more restrictive than warrant funds. KS added that CPC is property tax dollars and Betterment and STA funds are tourism taxes, and not directly paid by the Sturbridge residents.

KS stated that ecotourism promotion and coordination of spending should fall under the responsibility of the proposed economic development coordinator. MS stated that STA promotion of the town could lead to new growth.

JL moved the motion to take no action on Article 28 – Open Space Trail Guide, SS seconds; motion passes 3-2-1.

Article 29 – Public Safety Building Feasibility Study

KS moved the motion to approve Article 29 – Public Safety Building Feasibility Study as written, MS seconds; motion passes 6-0-0.

LG notified JL via text that he increased the study by \$5,000.00 to include HazMat funds. The revised total is \$45,000.00. KN asked what the study entails. KS answered that they will determine if the building meets the needs for a Public Safety Complex; then asked rhetorically, how many times the roof, gas exhaust, windows, or other repairs were made to point out the state of disrepair it's in.

Article 30 – Public Works Building Feasibility Study

KS discussed the need for the restoration of the building and equipment and that the functionality suffered because of disrepair.

KS moved the motion to approve Article 30 – Public Works Building Feasibility Study as written, MS

seconds; motion passes. 5-1-0. (SS opposed)

Article 37 – False Alarms

KS wanted consistency between fees in the bylaw for both the police and the fire departments. MS offered that BB said the fees arose at different times. JL stated that it is common for restaurants to have false alarms due to the nature of the business, and they should not be penalized for “accidents”. KS and KN agreed that the chiefs of each department will determine if the alarm is false.

MS moved the motion to approve Article 37 – False Alarms as written, KS seconds; motion passes 4-1-1. (SS opposed, JL abstaining)

Article 38 – Amendment to the General Bylaws – Sturbridge Tourist Association

Discussion was around language in the article to ensure that existing members may be re-appointed. It was confirmed that the language allows this purpose. BB stated that grammatical changes by the Finance Committee to warrant articles are allowed.

KS moved the motion to approve Article 38 – Amendment to the General Bylaws – Sturbridge Tourist Association as amended “That the town vote to amend the article by striking the words “, and, further, to raise and appropriate, transfer from available funds, and/or borrow” and replace with “to transfer from Free Cash” and to otherwise approve the article as written”, SS seconds; motion passes 6-0-0.

Article 39 – Request for Special Act of the Legislature Concerning the Sturbridge Conservation Commission

The committee discusses the function and logic of the article. MS asked what specific problem this is addressing and how many members are on this committee at present. He continued to ask if there have been cases of absenteeism or conflict of interest preventing a quorum or vote. MS suggested that expanding the committee and making it bigger may resolve it. KN stated that the Conservation Commission law states it cannot be less than 3 or more than 7 law on conservation commission. KN stated that there actually has been conflict of interest issues in the past. There are currently 5 members but she does not believe there are any voting requirements other than majority vote.

SS asked what constitutes the event of a vacancy. KS stated that this may have to do with resignation. He sees this as the “bullpen”; these two “alternates” would be the first ones to come on in the case of the vacancy.

MS asked if the opinion of the current members is known. He also asked if they think this is required or needed, as most changes seem to be grassroots coming from the committee itself. KS stated that he thinks it may come from Town Administrator. JL stated that she thinks the stated use of an alternate is too broad: “absence, inability to act or conflict of interest.” JW asked who determines that something is a conflict of interest. KN stated that the chair does this, or a member can come forward themselves. JL and KN discuss the requirements of non-participation of conflict of interest affected members.

JL corresponded with LG electronically: he indicated to her that a legal representative assisted in writing the article, and that he is moving forward in this fashion because he cannot request a change to the Town Charter; the easiest way to address any conflict of interest issues.

KS moved the motion to approve Article 39 – Request for Special Act of the Legislature Concerning the

Sturbridge Conservation Commission, JL seconds; motion passes 5-1-0. (MS opposed)

Article 40 – Route 148/Brookfield Road Rehabilitation Project

KS moved the motion to reconsider Article 40 – Route 148/Brookfield Road Rehabilitation Project, MS seconds; motion to reconsider passes 6-0-0.

KS moved the motion to approve Article 40 – Route 148/Brookfield Road Rehabilitation Project as amended: “That the town vote to amend the article by striking the words “, and, further, to raise and appropriate, transfer from available funds, and/or borrow” and replace with “to transfer from Free Cash” and to otherwise approve the article as written.” MS seconds; motion passes 5-0-1. (JL abstaining)

Article 43 – Amendment to the Tantasqua Regional School District Agreement

MS moved the motion to approve Article 43 – Amendment to the Tantasqua Regional School District Agreement as written, JW seconds, motion passes 6-1-0. (KS opposed because the agreement is not in the best interest of the town.)

Article 44 – Petitioned Article – Amendment to the General Bylaws – Demolition Delay

KS moved the motion to take no action on Article 44 – Petitioned Article – Amendment to the General Bylaws – Demolition Delay, JW seconds, motion passes, 5-1-0. (MS opposed)

Article 45 – Petitioned Article – Exhibition Hall

KS moved the motion to take no action on Article 45– Petitioned Article – Exhibition Hall, JL seconds, motion passes 3-2-1. (MS and KN opposed)

No old business, no new business, and no public access.

KS moved the motion to adjourn at 10:27 pm, MS seconds; motion accepted 6-0-0.