

January 6, 2003

**BOARD OF SELECTMEN
MINUTES
JANUARY 6, 2003**

Present: Arnold Wilson, Chairman
 Charles Blanchard
 Hal White
 Doris Sosik
 James Malloy, Town Administrator

The Chairman called the meeting to order at 6:30 p.m. following the Pledge of Allegiance.

Approval of Minutes

**MOTION: To approve the minutes of December 16, 2002 as
 corrected, by C. Blanchard.**
 2nd: D. Sosik
 Vote: All in favor.

Department Head Quarterly Reports

Jean Joel, Town Accountant, presented her report to the Board (copy on file). She informed the Board that everything was filed with the state on time, and free cash was certified at \$1,325,596. She attended procurement classes, ethics, loss and fair labor standards. The auditors have started the annual audit.

A.Wilson congratulated Jean Joel and the Finance Department for their efforts resulting in the town of Sturbridge being one of the first in the state to be certified.

Barbara Barry, Finance Director, presented her report to the Board (copy on file). She said that the computer software conversion of the Munis system is ongoing. Tax title conversion is scheduled for the end of January, and the water/sewer conversion is scheduled for February. Stefanie Gershowitz was hired to replace Pauline Mathieu in the Finance Department as the Accounts Payable and Ambulance Clerk. She noted that the budget meeting has been scheduled for Saturday, January 25, 2003. J. Malloy added that Word and Excel items will be combined in the budget packet, so all of the information will be on one page for easy reference.

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B Barry informed the Board that the hardware support person will not be available to the town much longer, and she suggested hiring a part-time computer IT person to do hardware maintenance, troubleshooting and repairs to the system. The software updates are becoming more time consuming and difficult, and the hardware system must be updated on a yearly basis. She said that the town pays Vision \$3,400 per year for software support, \$17,000 for support for Munis, and \$5,000 is budgeted for hardware support. A.Wilson asked whether it could be a shared expense with other communities or the school system. B. Barry noted that there are two different operating systems.

Bev Poirier, Assistant Assessor, presented her report to the Board (copy on file). The Fiscal 2003 tax rate was approved at \$17.61, an increase of \$1.17 over Fiscal 2002. Tax bills were mailed on October 18, 2002. The abatement and exemption period was completed with very few applications for abatement. At the Annual Town Meeting, they hope to receive funding to put their database on a web server to provide full Internet access to the public. There is a new local option, which Sturbridge has adopted, that allows cities and towns that have accepted M.G.L. Ch. 59, §5 (41C) to adjust the age, income and asset requirements that seniors must meet to qualify for the exemption and the amount of the exemption that the community may grant to eligible seniors. They are examining the impact that these changes may have on the overlay account, since the town will not receive any additional state reimbursement. They have asked for feedback from department heads, boards and committees.

Larry Adams, Town Planner, presented his report to the Board (copy on file). He provided a matrix of eight new subdivisions in the town, with a total of 260 lots. Half of the subdivisions are under construction at the present time, and the remainder will be developed over the next few years. He thanked Greg Morse, DPW Director, the Planning Board and Zoning Board of Appeals for their time and efforts. L. Adams and Nancy Campbell will attend a GIS training course at U.Conn. in January in order to be able to do mapping for the town. L. Adams provided the Board with a comparison of 1990 and 2000 figures of general demographic characteristics for the town of Sturbridge (copy on file).

C. Blanchard noted that the paving is poor at the Center at Hobbs Brook. L. Adams said that he will contact the owners to find out why the paving is failing.

A.Wilson announced that the Quinebaug-Shetucket Heritage Corridor has offered to bring a workshop on development alternatives to the town.

MOTION: That the Board endorse the plan to have a development alternatives workshop by Quinebaug-Shetucket Heritage Corridor, by C. Blanchard.

2nd: D. Sosik

Vote: All in favor.

Barbara Search presented her report to the Board (copy on file). She thanked the people who attended the Special Town Meeting for approving the position of Community Resources Coordinator for 15 hours/week. She noted that one of the most valuable recent programs was the Brown Bag Pharmacy, sponsored by Fallon. Programs that have been added to the regular schedule include Conversational Spanish and TOPS weight loss support group. The Council on Aging will generate a survey to find out what issues concern seniors. A spelling bee fundraiser will be held to raise money for new carpeting, and moderators are needed. A. Wilson suggested asking Bob Briere to be a moderator.

Michael Loin, Spaho Corp. – Sewer Connection for a New Development

C. Blanchard recused himself from the Board. Michael Loin and Michael Lussier appeared before the Board. They provided more detailed plans of the pump station. G. Morse reviewed the new plans, and still has a few concerns about grading on the edge of the roadway. Regarding the curb cut application, it was submitted to the state last week and is under their review.

A. Wilson asked whether they had plans showing the subdivision without town water and sewer. M. Loin said that they did not. A. Wilson asked about the flow capacity and the status of Hobbs Brook pumping to Southbridge, and said that he would like to have that information before voting on the sewer extension permit. J. Malloy said that the flow limit is 750,000 gallons/day, and the only times when there have been problems with the Wastewater Treatment Plant have been due to heavy rainstorms and other such events. C. Blanchard noted that the Board had received a letter from Tighe & Bond in August recommending improvements to the plant, and suggested that the Board take it up during a work session.

M. Loin said that they are working with Greg Morse regarding his concerns with the project. A. Wilson said that another intersection on Route 131 is not a safe way of entrance and egress for this development. He said that he would oppose the curb cuts on Route 131. It would dramatically

change the complexion of the development in the eyes of the Planning Board.

H. White made the point that town water and sewer is a limited resource, and more units will be added to it with this subdivision. M. Loin said that 17 septic systems would be alleviated by including the subdivision in the town sewer system.

D. Sosik and H. White indicated that they would like to review plans of the subdivision without town water and sewer, and if they were to vote without seeing the plans, they would vote against the project.

C. Blanchard, speaking as a citizen, said that usually subdivision projects are better served with town sewer, but in this case nothing has been presented to show what the project would look like using wells and septic systems. In response to Mr. Loin's statement that there would only be two fewer lots with wells and septic systems, he noted that every part of the buildable area of this land is laid out in half acre lots. Three quarter acre lots are required if Town water and sewer are not available, so of the 17 lots, the most they could get with wells and septic systems is 11 lots, plus the four on Farquhar Road. He stressed the importance of reviewing the topography and geometrics of the land itself, and noted that it is a very sensitive area. He was disturbed by the fact that M. Loin has not gone before the Conservation Commission for their approval, since there is an access road within one foot of another property with wetlands on the other side. The project has been going back and forth. The subdivision will have a big impact on the wetland area, and there are traffic issues on Route 131 and Blueberry Lane. He suggested that the project be reviewed in its entirety, and also with septic system and wells.

J. Malloy noted that regarding the curb cut, the Board should keep in mind that there is a divider island placed in the middle of the driveway with a telephone pole in the middle of it. The divider should not be located there. He suggested that the pole be moved to one side or the other.

It was the consensus of the Board to take the matter up again in two weeks.

C. Blanchard rejoined the Board at 8:05 p.m.

A. Wilson asked whether the repaving is on schedule. J. Malloy said that he would look into it.

Hamilton Rod and Gun Club

MOTION: To approve the request to have ice racing at the Hamilton Rod & Gun Club on Sundays in January and February 2003 between 12:00 p.m. and 5:00 p.m., by D. Sosik.

2nd: C. Blanchard

Vote: All in favor.

LeBoeuf Request

William and Alice LeBoeuf requested an abatement of the betterment assessment for their properties at 53 and 32 Beach Avenue. On paper the properties are two separate properties, but the road cuts diagonally through #32. They were assessed for two ERUs for their properties. J. Malloy informed the Board that if they were to grant an abatement, it is beyond the six-month appeal period, and the property owners have no right to appeal to the Selectmen. Town Counsel indicated that the only option that the Town would have at this time would be to seek special legislation. The property owners have contacted Rep. Reed Hillman, and he would be willing to sponsor the legislation.

C. Blanchard had received a phone call from Rep. Hillman. When Mr. and Mrs. LeBoeuf were in the process of selling the property, they were told that there were two liens on it for sewer betterment in the amount of \$16,000; both liens have been partially paid down. The property was sold as one lot. Mark Lev, Building Inspector, received a letter from the attorney for the buyers, for consolidation of the property as one lot. Rep. Hillman would sponsor the legislation to allow action. A. Wilson suggested finding out if the deed was recorded as one lot. He said that since it is a private road, the property owners own it to the center of the right of way. He suggested that someone in the neighborhood spearhead a group to get the road on a map. C. Blanchard said that the question is whether or not there is a legal description of the old ice road. J. Malloy said that it would require resurveying for the legal description.

MOTION: To authorize J. Malloy to request that Rep. Reed Hillman sponsor special legislation to allow the town to refund the betterment assessment to 53 Beach Avenue, subject to confirmation that lots 32 and 53 have been combined into one lot, by C. Blanchard.

2nd: H. White

Vote: Three in favor; A. Wilson opposed.

Miscellaneous

Stallion Hill Comprehensive Permit – With 60 additional units on Stallion Hill Road, there would be an additional 12,000 gpd at the wastewater treatment plant, and the amount that would be remaining to be allocated would be 33,186 or 166 homes. G. Morse addressed the matter in great detail in his memo dated January 6, 2003. C. Blanchard noted that the ZBA has not voted on it.

MOTION: That the Board send a letter to the ZBA, stating that the Board could not approve the water and sewer tie in, based on concerns raised by Greg Morse at this time, by C. Blanchard.

2nd: H. White

Vote: All in favor.

A. Wilson said that he would like to see calculations regarding wastewater flow, and was against granting approval until the Board has a better understanding of the situation. C. Blanchard suggested putting it in the form of a moratorium to study and review. He said that if it does proceed, significant upgrades will be necessary. Information should be conveyed to the ZBA about issues to be addressed. J. Malloy said that he would review G. Morse's letter and recap the water and sewer issues.

Snow & Ice Deficit –

MOTION: To approve deficit spending for the snow accounts: \$30,000 for snow services plowing costs; \$10,000 for snow supplies; and \$10,000 for snow overtime, by C. Blanchard.

2nd: D. Sosik

Vote: All in favor.

A petition had been submitted to the Board requesting that the 20+ acres owned by Spaho Corp. be considered the highest priority for acquisition as open space. C. Blanchard, speaking as a citizen, asked why this parcel did not appear either on the high priority or priority lists for open space in September 2002, when it had been listed as a high priority in 2001.

Big Alum Sewer Project – J. Malloy announced that he had received the approval letter from DEP for the Big Alum sewer project.

Old Business

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H. White said that the Board of Health will address the grease problem at their meeting on January 6, 2003. He suggested that they contact Paul Donahue.

A. Wilson asked about the status of the curb cut for the Boardwalk. J. Malloy said that he had not seen it. A. Wilson suggested that he ask Larry Adams if he has a copy.

A. Wilson noted that J. Malloy had sent letters to the legislators for support of a statewide referendum on the casino issue. Gov. Mitt Romney might have his own study group.

New Business

C. Blanchard had received a call from a resident who requested a landfill sticker from the Town Clerk, and was referred to the Board of Health. A. Wilson noted that the Board of Health had requested extra help to manage the permits. J. Malloy said that Bernie Lorkiewicz is not in the Board of Health office all of the time.

D. Sosik said that First Night Sturbridge was very successful and well organized, and was well attended at Burgess.

A. Wilson questioned the necessity of holding a Budget Meeting on Saturday, January 25th, to discuss budgets with department heads. He said that the Board could ask J. Malloy to find out answers to any questions they might have. C. Blanchard agreed, and said that most of the budget is routine. J. Malloy said that he would send a memo to the department heads requesting that they discuss any unique situations they might have and skip over routine items.

Ask the Selectmen

D. Sosik took a call from Ray Simpson, who asked why the Town uses a large grader to clean sidewalks, instead of a snow blower. J. Malloy said that the way the state plows the roads pushes a large amount of snow onto the sidewalks, so the road grader is the most effective way to remove the snow.

MOTION: To enter into executive session under MGL Chapter 39, §23B, Paragraph #3: To discuss strategy with respect to

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**collective bargaining or litigation, not to reconvene in
open session, by H. White.**

2nd: D. Sosik

Roll call vote: All were in favor.

Respectfully submitted,

Judy Knowles

BOS Clerk

Date