

August 22, 2011

**BOARD OF SELECTMEN
MINUTES
AUGUST 22, 2011**

Present: Thomas Creamer, Chairman
Mary Dowling
Mary Blanchard
Priscilla Gimas
Angeline Ellison
Shaun Suhoski, Town Administrator

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

Veterans “Honor Roll” Memorial Discussion

Bob Briere and a group of veterans appeared before the Board to discuss the reconstruction of the monument on the front lawn of Town Hall. The group presented a sketch rendering of the proposed monument.

S. Suhoski said that he would work to explore funding opportunities (both local and grants) to assist in this project. He said that consistent with Section 5-3(G) of the Town Charter, which provides “full jurisdiction over the . . . use of all town property” (except school or conservation) to the Town Administrator, he offered his further opinion to the Board. He said that the Board of Selectmen, and the community in general, should pause to reflect upon and consider where an outdoor Veterans “Honor Roll” would best serve the entire community including veterans, local citizens and the families or other visitors to Town who may wish to view the monument.

In S. Suhoski’s view, the location would be prominent and visible, but also sufficient to: (1) provide safe access and parking, (2) ensure equal accessibility and ADA compliance, and (3) be designed in a manner to fully accommodate formal remembrance services such as Memorial Day or Veterans Day. Accordingly, he recommended that a five-member advisory committee be established to recommend to the Board of Selectmen the best location for a deserved and respectful outdoor veterans’ monument. He said that the committee could include a representative of the veterans group advocating for the monument, a selectman, a member of the historic commission and perhaps two members of the general public.

It was the consensus of the Board that its prior vote to retain and reclaim the monument to the front of Town Hall stands.

MOTION: That the Board adopt and approve the sketch plan of the monument as presented by Bob Briere at an approximate cost of \$48,000 to be gifted to the Town, by A. Ellison.

2nd: P. Gimas

Vote: Four in favor; M. Blanchard in favor of the design, not the location.

Principal Assessor – Pre-Tax Classification Hearing Discussion

Bill Mitchell and Carol Childress appeared before the Board to discuss the various exemptions and process related to the formal Tax Classification Hearing which will likely be scheduled for the Board’s September 12 or September 19 meeting. Bill Mitchell provided packets of information for the Board’s review in advance of the meeting.

Town Meeting Attendance (request by Don Miller)

Don Miller, Leadmine Road, appeared before the Board to discuss ways of improving Town Meeting attendance. He had provided the Board with an email containing a comprehensive list of items for consideration. He noted that the most important decision making process belongs to the people who live in Sturbridge, especially those who participate in the Town Meetings, provide input and cast their votes. He said that the decisions are being made by a few people, but they affect everyone.

D. Miller put together a summary of reasons why people do not attend Town Meetings and some suggestions to increase attendance.

T. Creamer said that he had asked the Town Clerk to run a query and provide the percentages and numbers of people who had attended Town Meetings for the last six years. He noted that in 2006 there were 402 attendees at the Annual Town Meeting, representing 7% of the registered voters; by comparison, in that same year 1,338 residents went to the polls at the Town Election.

	<u>Town Meeting</u>	<u>Town Election</u>
2007	5%	22%
2008	8%	29%
2009	5%	26%
2010	2%	28%
2011	3%	22%

T. Creamer said that as the legislative branch, the citizens of Sturbridge determine what is ultimately paid in taxes because of the projects that they approve at Town Meeting.

D. Miller reviewed the list of reasons for lack of attendance at Town Meeting. He noted that there is some confusion as to the role of the Board of Selectmen, as many people believe that the Board makes all of the decisions. He said that there is also a degree of apathy among residents. A number of seniors indicated that they don’t go out after dark. He said that the turnout at Town Meeting is low and is not commensurate with the importance of Town Meeting.

D. Miller suggested that Town Meeting be publicized to promote it, with banners on Route 20 and Route 131 (and other heavily traveled roads) at least a month before the

meeting. Also, attention-grabbing notices should be posted at Town buildings and local businesses. He also suggested robo-calls, as were done during the time of the tornado, and holding the meetings on Saturdays instead of a weekday, but not during school vacation week.

Marilyn Desy said that she had a petition that was signed by 114 people, and she thanked Carol Childress for having played a big part in getting the signatures. She said that the petition will be turned over to the Town Clerk on August 23rd.

D. Miller said that a suggestion had been made to continue with the pre-Town Meeting meetings. M. Blanchard said that it had been televised, which was helpful. D. Miller said that another suggestion was to send notices home with school children one or two weeks in advance of the meeting. He suggested that a front page announcement of Town Meeting be published by local newspapers, along with information on the upcoming articles, giving residents an opportunity to review them. He said that the cost of the items should be made known to the public. He said that people have suggested that the tone of Town Meeting should be softer and less intimidating by the structure of it. He requested that the Board consider his suggestions, and he offered to help to implement them.

M. Blanchard expressed appreciation for D. Miller's suggestions, and said that she has heard many of the same excuses for many years, and some will not change. She said that the school sends a monthly calendar home with the children, and the Town Meeting is always listed on it. She said that the Finance Committee's booklet was late this year because the budget process had taken a longer time. She noted that it is usually available at Town Election time, which gives people time to review it and ask questions. She added that the Information Center on Route 20 always has a Town Meeting sign posted on the sign stand out front. She said that she was not sure that it would be possible to have banners across Route 20 and Route 131, as they are state roads; and the robo-calls are strictly for emergencies. T. Creamer said that the reverse 911 calls are run by the Sheriff's department.

A. Ellison said that she liked the banner idea, and thought that some of the suggestions were easily put into place, while others would take more effort. P. Gimas commended D. Miller for taking the time to prepare the list of suggestions. She noted that at the last Town Meeting, most of the people had left after voting on the article they were interested in, leaving about 60 people to vote on the rest of the articles. She said that if there had been a remaining article which would have affected everyone's tax rate, then only 60 people would have made that decision. She said that regarding the pre-Town Meeting informational meeting, she suggested visiting senior housing areas and making presentations there.

Robert Lebow, Fiske Hill Road, said that he would like to see the use of electronic communications in notifying the public, and suggested having people submit their cell phone numbers and email addresses to the Town, then sending text messages and/or emailing them. He noted that signage is not good at the high school, and people don't

know where to go when they get there. He liked the idea of limiting the time that people can speak at Town Meetings, as the speakers are verbose and the meetings are too long. T. Creamer said that Town Meetings should be as user friendly as possible.

M. Dowling asked S. Suhoski if techniques were used in the Town of Ayer that are not being used in Sturbridge. S. Suhoski said that the Ayer community eliminated the quorum requirement, and it moved from being held on Monday night to being held on Saturday. He said that they had tried using a banner, but it kept blowing down.

Randy Greene, Ridge Way, admitted that he does not attend Town Meetings as he is very busy; however, what would get him to attend is if he heard about an article that would affect his tax rate. He suggested that a dollar amount be indicated on the articles on the warrant, which would motivate people to attend.

T. Creamer said that the Town currently has five projects going on now that another town might see only one of over a ten-year span: the Wastewater Treatment Plant, Route 131 water line, new Well #4, Burgess Elementary School renovation, Town Hall and Center Office Building renovations. He noted that projects always come to the legislative branch at Town Meeting to make the final decisions.

Barbara Search said that on behalf of the seniors, Saturday meetings would be very beneficial to them. P. Gimas agreed. T. Creamer said that one of the most committed and dependable voting blocks in Town are the seniors, as they view voting as a responsibility, and that the current timing of town meetings creates difficulties for attendance, due to night-time driving, and as such, seniors are being disenfranchised.

Peter Mimeault, 76 South Shore Drive, asked what percentage of residents own property or are registered to vote. T. Creamer said that there are approximately 6,000 registered voters in the Town of Sturbridge, out of a population of about 9,000.

A. Ellison said that it is a complex process, and everyone has a responsibility, and the Board has the responsibility to educate and inform the public.

Carol Childress said that she had spent some time at the Recycling Center collecting signatures for the petition, and noted that the majority of people who were enthusiastic about it were commuters, people who work long hours and travel; the ones who didn't want to sign the petition were either self-employed or had games to attend on Saturdays. When she told them that the Annual Town Meeting is held once a year, they signed the petition. She noted that there is a lot of education that needs to be done.

Michelle Bourget suggested that the high school seniors be informed about Town Meetings and the government process. T. Creamer presented Michelle with a gift certificate and card from the Board for her services in the cable access department, as she was leaving to go to college. He congratulated her for receiving the Patrick Donnelly Foundation scholarship.

Allen Butts said that even political analysts cannot tell anyone how to increase attendance at Town Meetings. He suggested having representatives canvas the neighborhoods and inform people about the upcoming issues. He said that he would be willing to do that. T. Creamer said that anything that residents can do to spur interest or provide education would be a good idea.

P. Gimas said that in some schools the student council does a register to vote day, with a table set up in the cafeteria where the students can register to vote. M. Blanchard said that at one time Tantasqua did encourage voter registration. A student from Tantasqua who was videotaping the meeting (and who serves on the student council) offered to bring these ideas to the student council.

T. Creamer said that the Board will draft something and have another discussion well before the next Town Meeting. He invited D. Miller to follow up.

NOTE: Site Visit: 78 South Shore Drive @ 5:30 p.m.

The Board conducted a site visit at 5:30 p.m. at this location to view the area subject to the "special circumstance" dock permit application. The Board had indicated, by acclamation, an initial intent to defer actual discussion and decision until September 6.

IOD Claims

MOTION: To approve the Injured on Duty Claim for Daniel Hemingway, by M. Blanchard.

2nd: P. Gimas

Vote: All in favor.

MOTION: To approve the Injured on Duty Claim for David Diogo, by M. Blanchard.

2nd: P. Gimas

Vote: All in favor.

Senior Municipal Service Program Appointment

MOTION: That the Board of Selectmen appoint Thomas Freeland, Jr. to participate in the Senior Municipal Service Program for FY12 and to be assigned to the Dept. of Public Works, by M. Blanchard.

2nd: P. Gimas

Vote: All in favor.

Sturbridge Tourist Association Appointment

MOTION: That the Board of Selectmen ratify the Town Administrator's appointment of James W. Leaming to the Tourist Related Business

seat on the Sturbridge Tourist Association for a term expiring in 2014, by M. Blanchard.

2nd: P. Gimas

Vote: All in favor.

S. Suhoski noted that the STA roster was nearly filled. Thus far, several efforts to solicit a designee from the Recreation Committee have not proved successful. If no response is forthcoming, he plans to query the Planning Board for a designee.

<u>Name</u>	<u>Position</u>	<u>Term Expires</u>
Tom Creamer	BOS Appointee (annual)	2012
Brian Amedy	Hotel / Motel / B&B (2-yr)	2013
Kevin MacConnell	Hotel / Motel / B&B (1-yr)	2012
Jessica MacDonald-Dymon	Resident at Large (3-yr)	2014
Jennifer Lundwall	Resident at Large (2-yr)	2013
Jim Leaming	Tourist Related Business (3-yr)	2014
(Vacant)	Recreation, Planning or FinCom (ann.)	2012

Route 131 Update / Group Mailbox Locations Finalized

S. Suhoski noted that at the August 8 meeting he had initiated discussion concerning a potential change to the project plans that would have placed individual mailboxes at the curbside of the new sidewalks. This would have been in contradiction to the Town-funded design plans and maintenance agreement that contemplated no obstructions in the new sidewalks.

At a meeting between MassDOT, the Sturbridge Postmaster, the DPW Director and the Town Administrator, it was agreed that a group mailbox would be installed in both the southerly and northerly areas of the state's right-of-way along Route 131. The southerly location is at a new curb cut near Fiske Hill Road, and the northerly location is within the substantially reclaimed intersection area at Willard Road. Both locations were amenable to all three parties from a safety and traffic perspective. Also, the structures have been raised within the roadway in anticipation of final pavement in the next two weeks.

Board and Committee Handbook

S. Suhoski said that upon printing the revised handbook, the Town Accountant caught a need to update Sections 5.4 and 5.6 due to changes in the state's procurement laws. The updated pages have been inserted in the hard copy for signature. S. Suhoski recommended that the Board adopt the updated language retroactive to the June 20, 2011 revision to minimize confusion.

MOTION: That the Board of Selectmen adopt the amended language in Sections 5.4 and 5.6 of the Board and Committee Handbook as outlined on the document noted "to BOS 8/22/11" with ratification

effective retroactively to the June 20, 2011 revision adopted by the Board, by M. Blanchard.

2nd: P. Gimás

Vote: All in favor.

Miscellaneous

Following is a summary of other ongoing items. Suhoski noted that, due to his vacation, these will likely remain static until the next subsequent meeting.

- **Debris:** Awaiting state contract information to initiate removal of the Route 20 and Route 15 debris stockpiles. Received final comment from Tree Warden and DPW Director with respect to bid packet and scope of work proposed for other public land debris removal.
- **COA Director:** Completed interview with sixth preliminary candidate for Council on Aging Director; Reduced pool to four semi-finalists and forwarded to COA for their input; Received COA input on August 12 and concurred with preferred candidate of the COA; Next, will contact preferred candidate for final interview and discussion over terms and conditions and availability (names of four semi-finalists are in a folder near BOS mailboxes – finalist to be disclosed following S. Suhoski's notification to her).
- **FEMA:** Convened discussion between FEMA, DPW, Police, Fire and Finance to advance completion and filing of Town's "Part B" reimbursement project requests; Various departments met individually to begin preparation of FEMA paperwork; Anticipated that initial reimbursement requests will be sent to FEMA by end of August.
- **Land Lease for Solar Power:** Further refinements to Request for Qualifications for lease of municipal land (landfill area) to facilitate a Solar Power Purchase Agreement; Release date is August 17 and deadline date for responses is September 19.
- **Walker Pond Road Drainage Study:** Tighe & Bond working on report; remains on schedule for draft report in August and presentment of final draft report and recommendations to BOS in early to mid-September
- **Walker Road Drainage:** CME engineers retained by DPW Director to review and recommend options (DPW Director indicates he is now moving to advance this work).
- **Road Program:** In process
- **Water / Sewer Rates:** Town Administrator still responding to many calls / complaints about water and sewer invoices.

- **Personnel Committee:** Next meeting scheduled for August 24.
- **Burgess School Project:** Good progress reported at last Building Committee meeting with all indications that project will be ready for school to commence on September 6.
- **Charter Complaints:** No further complaints received, but, S. Suhoski had not yet been able to ensure that the prior complaints were resolved. Invited Charter representative to September 12 or September 19 BOS meeting.
- **2012 Polling Locations:** Emailed second request to Superintendent and Burgess Principal for use of north gymnasium; Requested availability and pricing options from Host Hotel.
- **Abandoned Motor Vehicles:** The Police Chief, Finance Director and S. Suhoski met to discuss the “pros” and “cons” of the Town’s process of disposing of abandoned motor vehicles (these primarily result from towing operations by Sturbridge Service Center and, to a lesser extent, Sturbridge Auto Body); Good progress was made at the meeting and Chief Ford is developing some enhancements that should make the processing more consistent and less labor intensive for the Hearings Officer (Finance Director by virtue of role as Parking Clerk).

MORE JOBS – Additional Grant Funds and Project Scope

S. Suhoski said that the Town completed installation of a waterline into the Technology Park through a MORE Jobs grant that was overseen by Jean Bubon and Greg Morse. During project close-out, it was learned that there remained \$24,837.47 within the Town’s grant account.

Rather than simply return the unspent funds, S. Suhoski requested and received approval from the Executive Office of Housing and Economic Development for full-width resurfacing of Picker Road to be added to the scope of work for completion by December 2011. The total grant funds – inclusive of the Picker Road addition – will be \$637,167.67.

MOTION: That the Board of Selectmen authorize the Town Administrator to execute the Commonwealth of Mass. Standard Contract Form amendment (ID# MORE0911) to reflect the final grant amount of \$637,167.67 and to include the revised scope of services in Exhibit 1, by M. Blanchard.

2nd: P. Gimas

Vote: All in favor.

FY12 #2 Heating Fuel Bid Award

S. Suhoski submitted to the Board a memorandum from the DPW Director advising of the result of the fuel oil cooperative bid with the Town of Southbridge and others reflecting a fixed fuel oil price of \$3.40 per gallon for the period of September 1, 2011 through June 30, 2012. He had previously redirected the Public Safety Complex back into the school cooperative (French River) which is currently at \$3.09 per gallon (this is only available for large tanks).

MOTION: That the Board of Selectmen accept the bid of Peterson Oil Services, Inc. for fuel oil #2 for the period of September 1, 2011 through June 30, 2012 at the fixed price of \$3.40 per gallon, by M. Blanchard.

2nd: P. Gimas

Vote: All in favor.

Correspondence

M. Blanchard read the list of correspondence into the record.

Old Business

M. Blanchard asked about the status of the Town Administrator's self-evaluation. S. Suhoski said that it would be completed by the end of the week. T. Creamer said that the Board is scheduled to conduct the Town Administrator's evaluation during the first meeting in September.

M. Blanchard asked about the status of the Route 131 paving project. T. Creamer said that the paving would be done at night. S. Suhoski said that the paving would be initiated within the next two weeks.

P. Gimas asked about the status of the work to be done at Farquhar Road/Route 131. S. Suhoski said that the road will be striped as part of the contract.

P. Gimas asked whether Thomas Cohan of Charter Communications was going to meet with the Board of Selectmen in September. S. Suhoski said that Mr. Cohan will meet with the Board either the last week in September or the first week in October.

New Business

M. Blanchard noted that only two Selectmen had signed the warrant the previous week, so some payments could not be sent out. She stressed the importance of having all of the Selectmen strive to sign the warrants each week.

M. Dowling thanked T. Creamer and the Sturbridge Tourist Association for the Feast and Fire event. T. Creamer read a list of names of people who had been involved in organizing the Feast and Fire event, and thanked them all.

Ask the Selectmen/Citizens' Forum

August 22, 2011

A. Ellison received a call from a resident who requested that the schools not schedule any events or games on the same date as Town Meeting.

A. Ellison received a call from Anthony Celuzza, who said that there are other people like himself who own two properties in Sturbridge, and one of them is lakefront property. M. Dowling said that she had asked Bill Mitchell, Principal Assessor, what percentage of lakefront properties were second homes for people whose primary residence is not in Sturbridge. She said that she was not taking a position at this point in time, and said that she would like to know what percentage of lakefront homes are vacation homes.

T. Creamer received a call from a resident who said that the Senior Newsletter would be a good mechanism to provide detailed information to the seniors, as most of them receive it. T. Creamer encouraged all residents to subscribe to the Town public notices.

Peter Mimeault asked the Board how he would get closure on his dock issue. T. Creamer said that he has had discussions with members of the Sturbridge Lakes Advisory Committee, and had requested that they take a look at it. He said that he had erred in the vote taken to issue the dock permit, as it clearly states in the regulation that the Board of Selectmen should not issue a dock permit if the individual's dock or abutter's dock is in front of another property without that property owner's permission. He said that when the issue comes up and all parties are present, he will ask the Board to reconsider its vote regarding that dock permit to ensure that the permit is in line with the regulations.

MOTION: To adjourn, by M. Blanchard.
2nd: P. Gimás
Vote: All in favor.

The meeting was adjourned at 10:55 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Judy Knowles

BOS Clerk

Date