

September 15, 2014

**BOARD OF SELECTMEN
MINUTES
SEPTEMBER 15, 2014**

Present: Mary Blanchard, Chairman
Priscilla Gimas
Mary Dowling
Mary Redetzke
Craig Moran
Suzanne Kennedy, Interim Town Administrator

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

Public Service Announcements

None

Minutes

There were executive session minutes to be approved, which the Board agreed to hold until the executive session.

Appointment of Permanent Part Time Dispatcher

Police Chief Thomas Ford requested favorable consideration to appoint Mr. Eric McLaughlin to the newly created position of Permanent Part Time Dispatcher. Mr. McLaughlin has been employed as a part time dispatcher with the Town of Sturbridge since 2006. Copies of the Chief's memo together with Mr. McLaughlin's resume were provided to the Board for review.

C. Moran said that part-timers don't receive benefits. Chief Ford explained that this position was not subject to the collective bargaining agreement; he referenced the Personnel Handbook, which addresses part-time employees who work a minimum of 20 hours.

MOTION: That the Board approve the appointment of Mr. Eric McLaughlin as a Permanent Part Time Dispatcher effective 9/16/2014 @\$22.33 per hour, by M. Redetzke.

2nd: P. Gimas

Vote: All in favor.

Blue Wave Update: Net Metering

Following the Board's 9/2/2014 meeting, S. Kennedy felt it necessary to recommend an additional update with respect to this matter. At the Board's request, Blue Wave submitted the Monson agreement, and a copy was submitted to the Board.

S. Kennedy introduced Attorney Rick Holland of Kopelman and Paige, who was present to provide the Board with a project/legal overview and answer any questions regarding these matters.

Although Blue Wave principal, Mr. Eric Lopez, was not available for the 9/15/2014 meeting, he had requested the opportunity to meet with the Board in the near term. S. Kennedy recommended that the Board consider scheduling a workshop meeting with him to more fully discuss the Blue Wave project.

M. Dowling asked whether the former Town Administrator had consulted with R. Holland with respect to the Town of Sturbridge becoming the host customer. R. Holland said that S. Suhoski had not consulted him, and if he had drafted the agreement, it would have been a very different document. M. Dowling expressed concern that the Board had no knowledge of it, and asked about the duties and responsibilities as host customer. She noted that the town's interests in that particular solar deal is miniscule compared to that of the other towns. R. Holland said that the agreement between the town and Sun Edison that was signed by Shaun Suhoski is for a 20 year term, and the Town of Sturbridge serves as host customer. He said that as payment for serving as host customer, Sturbridge will receive net metering credits each year. He noted that Sturbridge is listed on Schedule Z, and before Schedule Z gets filed, the purchaser of credits has a signed agreement. Everybody who is buying credits has an agreement with the developer. He said that the Town will also have signed an agreement directly with the utility, and a power purchase agreement.

S. Kennedy noted that she has the power purchase agreement signed by Shaun Suhoski. She asked whether the agreement between the Town of Sturbridge and the utility would address the issue. R. Holland said that under the regulations the host customer receives all of the electricity and then allocates it to all of the accounts. He said that there are provisions to make sure that these responsibilities of the host customer are absorbed by the developer, not the town.

P. Gimas expressed concern about the Board receiving information in a piecemeal manner, and she noted that the Board still doesn't have the whole story. She suggested that the Board invite the Energy Advisory Committee, Eric Lopez, Beth Greenblatt and Jonathan Villars to meet with the Board to discuss the matter. M. Blanchard said that she and S. Kennedy had talked about setting up a workshop meeting.

R. Holland said that all contracts negotiated by the Town Administrator must be approved and executed by the Board of Selectmen, and if that did not occur, the contract would not be valid. He said that if the Board wanted to remove itself from the Monson document, it should be done in an amicable manner.

S. Kennedy said that she had spoken with the staff person assigned to this project. She noted that Schedule Z can be changed up to a maximum of twice yearly, and there had been a change in capacity.

M. Dowling said that she needed to know more about the duties and obligations of the host customer and what has been included to protect the Town, and what kind of host agreement that Kopelman and Paige would draft for this type of agreement. She said that if there is litigation, everybody will be included as a defendant. She noted that the Board had not signed it, and it is not consistent with the Town Charter.

R. Holland said that the developer has separate agreements with the communities; if one community has a problem, it will go to Sun Edison.

M. Dowling said that if a workshop is held, Town Counsel should be present to represent Sturbridge. It was the consensus of the Board to start the next meeting on October 6th at 5:00 p.m.

Applebee's - Change of Manager on Liquor License

Richard Escott appeared before the Board to request approval of a change of manager from Anthony Quartarone to Richard Escott at Applebee's. All required documentation was received and was in order.

M. Dowling stepped out of the meeting for a few minutes.

MOTION: That the Board approve the change of manager from Mr. Anthony Quartarone to Mr. Richard Escott for Applebee's, by M. Redetzke.

2nd: P. Gimas

Vote: Four in favor; M. Dowling had stepped out.

Department Head Reports

Nelson Burlingame, Building Inspector, reviewed his report with the Board. He said that P & P Contractors had been awarded the Library skylight bid.

P. Gimas said that she has been receiving complaints about sign violations on Rt. 131 and Rt. 20. N. Burlingame said that there were some signs that needed to be taken down.

M. Dowling rejoined the Board.

C. Moran asked about the status of 33 Main Street. N. Burlingame said that he had been there last week and talked to the owner. He noted that the owner had corrected most of the safety issues inside the building, but had surpassed the limit of 10 cars at the site. M. Blanchard suggested that the property owner be given a written warning.

N. Burlingame said that 33 Main Street is being cleaned up. M. Redetzke said that there is a license on the property, but the owner has more cars than allowed, and suggested that it be addressed. N. Burlingame said that he would express the Board's concerns to the owner in writing.

M. Redetzke asked whether a time limit is stated on building permits for renovation projects. N. Burlingame said that they are given 180 days to work on the project constantly. M. Redetzke said that she has received complaints regarding buildings that have not been worked on for some time. N. Burlingame said that he could rescind the building permit.

M. Blanchard said that yard sale permits issued should be listed on the Building Inspector's report. She noticed that a lot of yard sale signs are being posted on Town property on weekends, and suggested that N. Burlingame drive through Sturbridge on weekends and pull the illegal signs. P. Gimaz suggested that he take one Saturday per month to check on this.

N. Burlingame informed the Board that there is nothing in the bylaws that prohibits business owners from putting their merchandise outside of their shops. M. Blanchard stated that it is a safety issue, particularly on Route 20.

S. Kennedy said that she had recently met with Jean Bubon, Town Planner and Nelson Burlingame, and she had asked both of them to prepare a bylaw to address this issue for the next Special Town Meeting or Annual Town Meeting.

Police Chief Thomas Ford reviewed his report with the Board. He said that there had been one boat patrol in May, none in June. He has addressed the issue with his staff.

Chief Ford noted that the event at Old Sturbridge Village on the 4th of July had been successful. In August there was the Pan Mass Challenge. The Senior Lunch at the Public Safety Complex was well attended, with police officers, firefighters and dispatcher Barbara Boiteau serving food to the crowd.

C. Moran commended Chief Ford and the Police Department for their swift response to the recent bank robbery. Chief Ford commended the dispatchers Toniah Maloney and Christine Brunelle, who had gotten the information out to the patrols, including Southbridge and the State Police. He noted that the person had been apprehended in Auburn 13 minutes after the crime was committed. He said that there had been good citizen participation providing descriptions. All of that information had come to the dispatch center.

M. Blanchard asked if another Citizen Police Academy had been scheduled. Chief Ford said that a class had been held for seniors and another for students.

Joshua Hyde Sky Light Contract

S. Kennedy informed the Board that one bid was received from P&P Contractors, Inc. in the amount of \$67,880. Work will commence 9/16/2014 and, weather permitting, will be completed 12/12/2014. She thanked Nelson Burlingame for his help on the project.

C. Moran said that the bid bond on the project was set up at 5% of the bid price. S. Kennedy said that the bid bond guarantees that the bidder will not bail out of the project. She noted that the performance bond is \$100,000, and a bid bond is all that is legally required.

M. Dowling suggested that the documents be available for the Board's review in the Board of Selectmen's office.

MOTION: That the Board approve the contract by and between the Town and P&P Contractors, Inc. in the amount of \$67,880, by M. Dowling.

2nd: P. Gimás

Vote: Four in favor; C. Moran opposed.

Railroad Update

M. Redetzke provided the Board with a presentation about the history of the Southern New England railroad.

M. Redetzke quoted the Massachusetts Dept. of Transportation's Massachusetts Rail Program, in that Massachusetts and Vermont are using Federal Railroad Administration Program grants to develop High Speed and Intercity Passenger service along two routes from Boston to New Haven via Springfield, and from Boston to Montreal. This study would identify a set of improvements necessary to operate high-speed passenger rail service along the route. The preferred improvements would be determined based on identified corridor constraints, economic development opportunities and estimated ridership. Completing this plan will then allow the identified improvement projects to compete for future rounds of federal funding. She noted that the Green line is an existing rail line used by CSX. While the plan talks about High Speed rail, it is important to realize that this is a comprehensive plan and one that can be expanded.

M. Redetzke stated the benefits of having a regional rail depot, including the reduction of traffic, pollution, tolls, accidents, parking and stress on commuters. She asked the Board to support an initiative supporting a localized regional rail commuter depot option between Worcester and Palmer on the CSX rail line. She asked the Board to direct the Town Administrator to draft a letter to our representatives on behalf of the Board to support future investigation into this. She requested that this be an ongoing background goal for the Town Administrator to keep apprised of funding and changes.

M. Dowling considered this to be a fabulous idea, and noted that property values would increase, if Sturbridge were to have easy accessibility to Boston.

It was the consensus of the Board that it would be worthwhile to pursue the matter.

Town Administrator Update

- **Bond Rating Upgrade**

S. Kennedy congratulated Barbara Barry, Finance Director for the Town's rating upgrade from Standard & Poor's from "AA" to "AA+". Sturbridge is now only one step away from "AAA", which is S& P's top rating.

S. Kennedy explained that bond ratings are an indicator of a community's credit worthiness, and better bond ratings result in lower interest rates, which can lead to significant savings over the life of a borrowing.

- **Public Safety Complex**

S. Kennedy informed the Board that this project has been officially re-bid. It is anticipated that bids will be received and awarded by 10/16/2014 with construction commencing 11/1/2014 and project closeout slated for 1/31/2014.

- **Wireless Communications Zoning By Law**

S. Kennedy said that one bid from Isotope in the amount of \$8500 was received 8/27/2014. She anticipates seeking the Board's approval of the contract at the regularly scheduled meeting on 10/6/2014.

- **Owners Agent Application**

S. Kennedy said that through the efforts of Jean Bubon, an application in the amount of \$12,500 was submitted to DOER for the purpose of identifying/hiring an individual to assist the Town with its efforts to procure additional net metering credits.

- **Tantasqua Community Service**

S. Kennedy recently learned that the Tantasqua Warriors Football Team participated in a community service program in various locations throughout the District. The Team participated in a trash pickup effort in Sturbridge September 6, 2014 having weeded and collected ten bags of trash at Town Hall, Center Office Building and the Library.

M. Dowling suggested sending a letter of appreciation to the Tantasqua Warriors Football Team to thank them for their efforts. M. Blanchard suggested sending a letter of appreciation to Robert Wiles, who regularly picks up trash in Town. It was the consensus of the Board to do that.

- **8 Brookfield Road**

S. Kennedy was recently approached by a prospective lessee expressing interest in leasing property located at 8 Brookfield Road. The property, owned by the Town, was recently vacated and, in knowing that the Board has discussed options with respect to leasing versus selling this property, the Board may want to consider this matter for

discussion. It was the consensus of the Board to put it on the agenda for a future meeting.

- **Senior Municipal Service Program**

Applications have been received and approved by the Assessor's office for the following individuals to participate in this program.

- Edith Puckett- Assigned to the Senior Center
- Diane McNaughton- Assigned to the Finance Department

S. Kennedy respectfully recommended that the Board approve Ms. Puckett and Ms. McNaughton to participate in the Senior Municipal Service Program.

M. Blanchard said that there were two applicants who had applied in August, but the Board did not appoint them because they had not been assigned to a department. It was the consensus of the Board that since Richard Treadway and Edward McCormack had applied first, they should be considered for appointment first, before appointing Edith Puckett and Diane McNaughton. They postponed taking action on the matter.

Correspondence

M. Dowling read the correspondence list into the record. M. Blanchard had received a letter from the Worcester County Selectmen's Association regarding their meeting on Thursday, Sept. 18th at 6:00 p.m. C. Moran agreed to attend the meeting.

Old Business

P. Gimas said that she has received many phone calls about poor service from Charter Communications. She urged residents to contact their Director, Thomas Cohan, at 508-595-5457 because if they don't get the box needed by October, they will not get any reception. She noted that they are raising the price of their equipment and channels every month. She said that residents should contact Mr. Cohan and tell him that the price for the box is unacceptable, and they should be able to receive as many boxes as they need free of charge. She said that there will be a public hearing in early October with the Cable Advisory Committee, at which time they will indicate their survey results.

M. Dowling suggested hiring a professional to help negotiate the next cable contract.

MOTION: That the Board support hiring a professional attorney who has experience in negotiating cable contracts, and advise the Cable Advisory Committee, by M. Dowling.

2nd: P. Gimas

Vote: All in favor.

M. Blanchard mentioned the deadline for applications to be submitted for full-time firefighters. S. Kennedy said that the deadline had been extended to September 19th. P. Gimas said that in a discussion with the Fire Chief, he agreed that one of the reasons people were not applying was fallout from a prior situation. He had suggested reaching out to Quinsigamond College, where they have a program placing people looking for positions.

New Business

M. Blanchard said that S. Kennedy's employment contract should be amended to reflect the regular hours of work as Monday through Thursday, "except where Monday is a holiday; then Tuesday through Friday."

MOTION: So moved, by P. Gimas.
2nd: M. Redetzke
Vote: All in favor.

Citizens' Forum

Don Fairbrother appeared before the Board. He said that the Cable Advisory Committee had met with Attorney Bill August. S. Kennedy was able to negotiate a lower price than what he had submitted regarding the existing contract.

D. Fairbrother, Bruce Butcher and another member had met with Melissa Beauchemin at the Senior Center to discuss the use of the second floor of the Senior Center as a studio at night for candidate debates, do live broadcasting from that point, and to store equipment. He informed the Board that the radio station in Southbridge has been sold.

D. Fairbrother explained that they could run separate power lines out to distribution panels. They will get the Electrical Inspector to provide an estimate so they can go forward with negotiations. They will provide a monthly stipend to the Senior Center for heating expenses and provide air conditioning during summer months. Melissa Beauchemin requested two flat screen TVs for the seniors' use.

D. Fairbrother said that all of this needs to be priced out. He noted that they will need another part-time employee for the studio. He said that it would be expensive to run a cable between Tantasqua High School and Burgess to Town Hall. He requested feedback from the Board.

M. Blanchard supported the proposal, as long as it doesn't interfere with any of the senior programs. The other Selectmen agreed.

MOTION: To convene in executive session for the purpose of approving executive session minutes; not to reconvene in open session, by M. Dowling.
2nd: P. Gimas

September 15, 2014

**Roll call vote: C. Moran in favor; P. Gimas in favor; M. Redetzke in favor;
M. Dowling in favor; M. Blanchard in favor.**

Respectfully submitted,

Judy Knowles

BOS Clerk

Date