

September 8, 2015

**BOARD OF SELECTMEN
MINUTES
SEPTEMBER 8, 2015**

Present: Mary Blanchard, Chairman
Priscilla Gimas
Mary Dowling
Michael Suprenant
Leon Gaumont, Jr., Town Administrator

Craig Moran was absent.

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

Public Service Announcements

- Proclamation for Childhood Cancer Awareness Month

L. Gaumont had received a request from a resident with a 4-year-old child with cancer to see if Sturbridge would do something to recognize this issue. M. Blanchard read the proclamation into the record.

L. Gaumont wished Serenity Contant and Grayson Hand a speedy recovery.

MOTION: To sign the proclamation for Childhood Cancer Awareness Month, by P. Gimas.

2nd: M. Suprenant

Vote: Three in favor; C. Moran and M. Dowling were absent.

L. Gaumont said that he would scan the proclamation and post the document on his blog and the Town's website.

M. Blanchard announced that the meeting was being recorded by a reporter from the Worcester Telegram and Gazette.

Candidates for the Charter Review Committee

L. Gaumont announced that five individuals have stepped forward to serve on the Charter Review Committee: Bruce Boyson of One Old Brook Circle, Sandra Gibson-Quigley who serves on the Planning Board, Bill Haggerty of 18 Westwood Drive, Larry Morrison of 66 Old Farm Road, and Paul Zapun of 325 New Boston Road. He explained that Sandra Gibson-Quigley and Bill Haggerty were unable to attend the meeting but would be willing to meet with the Board at a later date.

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Bruce Boyson said that he has lived in Sturbridge for 15 years, and currently lives in the Preserve. He has a commitment to public service, and is now retired.

M. Suprenant said that he was pleased to see that Bruce Boyson is stepping forward to serve on the Charter Review Committee, and noted that it is an important task. B. Boyson thanked the Board. P. Gimas thanked the candidates for offering their services. M. Blanchard also thanked them for volunteering.

Larry Morrison said that he is a 42 year resident of the Town, and noted that the Charter is the way by which the community defines itself, and is the base line of Town government. He had served on the Charter Review Committee 26 years ago, and is delighted for the opportunity and responsibility. He thanked the Board for their trust.

Paul Zapun said that he has lived in Sturbridge since 1975, and has 40 years of experience in the non-profit sector working in the Mayor's office for handicapped affairs in Springfield. He would be pleased to add his knowledge to the Charter Review Committee.

MOTION: That the Board concur with the appointment of Bruce Boyson, Larry Morrison and Paul Zapun to the Charter Review Committee, by P. Gimas.

2nd: M. Suprenant

Vote: Three in favor; C. Moran and M. Dowling were absent.

M. Blanchard said that the two candidates who were not present, Bill Haggerty was on the original Charter Review Committee and the Town Administrator Search Committee, and Sandra Gibson-Quigley is the Chair of the Planning Board.

MOTION: That the Board concur with the appointment of Bill Haggerty and Sandra Gibson-Quigley to serve on the Charter Review Committee, as the Board knows their history and the work they have done, by P. Gimas.

2nd: M. Suprenant.

Vote: Three in favor; C. Moran and M. Dowling were absent.

L. Gaumond said that he would have a report prepared for the Board's review prior to the FY2016 Annual Town Meeting.

Request for Letter of Support to the FCC on behalf of Charter Communications

L. Gaumond informed the Board that the Town has been approached by Charter Communications to ask for support for their proposed merger with Time Warner Cable. Charter was in negotiations to be bought out by Comcast last year. That

deal fell through and now Charter is considering merging with Time Warner Cable and Bright House Networks. They have prepared a Public Interest Statement, which was submitted to the Board. He noted that there is no requirement that the Town take any action on this request.

MOTION: To authorize the Town Administrator to send a letter of support, by P. Gimas.

2nd: M. Suprenant

Vote: Three in favor; C. Moran and M. Dowling were absent.

Contract Form – Landfill Reporting

M. Dowling arrived at 6:55 p.m.

L. Gaumond said that the Board of Health had asked the Selectmen to sign the Third Party Inspection Contract with EA Engineering of Warwick, RI to perform inspection required duties at the Sturbridge Landfill. The terms and conditions follow the Town's standard form of contract.

MOTION: To approve and sign the Third Party Inspection Contract with EA Engineering of Warwick, RI to perform inspection required duties at the Sturbridge Landfill for \$8,100 as recommended by the Board of Health, by M. Suprenant.

2nd: P. Gimas

Vote: Four in favor; C. Moran was absent.

Town Administrator's Update

- **Appointment of a Selectman representative to the Tantasqua Regional School District Negotiations Subcommittee**

MOTION: To nominate Mary Dowling as the Selectman representative to the Tantasqua Regional School District Negotiations Subcommittee, by P. Gimas.

2nd: M. Suprenant

Vote: Four in favor; C. Moran was absent.

- **Appointment to the Senior Municipal Service Program**

- **MOTION: To concur with the appointment of Diane MacNaughton to the Senior Municipal Service Program, to work at the Town Hall and Senior Center, by P. Gimas.**

2nd: M. Suprenant

Vote: Four in favor; C. Moran was absent.

- **Appointments to the Sturbridge Tourist Association**

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MOTION: That the Board concur with the appointment of Sandra Gibson-Quigley to the Planning Board seat on the STA, by P. Gimas.

2nd: M. Suprenant

Vote: Four in favor; C. Moran was absent.

MOTION: That the Board concur with the appointment of Kristie Galonek as the resident on the STA, by P. Gimas.

2nd: M. Suprenant

Vote: Four in favor; C. Moran was absent.

M. Dowling thanked Joni Light for her time.

- **Selectman representative to the STA**

It was the consensus of the Board to carry it over to the next meeting.

- **Appointment of Melissa Beauchemin as Sturbridge Representative to SCM Elderbus**

L. Gaumond notified the Board that Melissa Beauchemin will be the Town's representative on the Elderbus Board of Directors.

- **Appointment to the Historical Commission**

MOTION: To concur with the recommendation of the Town Administrator that Barbara Search be appointed to the Historical Commission, by M. Suprenant.

2nd: P. Gimas

Vote: Four in favor; C. Moran was absent.

- **MMA Fall Legislative Breakfast Meetings**

L. Gaumond informed the Board of the MMA Legislative Breakfast meetings to be held this fall. He said that he intends to register for the October 2nd meeting in Holden. He said that if any Selectman is interested in attending to let him know.

- **Agreement with Adirondack Environmental Services**

MOTION: To approve and sign the agreement with Adirondack Environmental Services to provide chemical analyses of all wells at the recycling center in the amount of \$12.670 as recommended by the Board of Health, by P. Gimas.

2nd: M. Dowling

Vote: Four in favor; C. Moran was absent.

Public Hearing: Tax Classification Hearing

M. Dowling read the legal ad into the record.

Ann Murphy, Principal Assessor appeared before the Board, along with Paul Murphy and Jessica Brigham.

A. Murphy made a presentation to the Board of the four different issues:

- Selection of a CIP Factor
- Open Space Discount
- Residential Exemption
- Small Commercial Exemption

A. Murphy said that shifting the tax burden involves the adoption by the Board of Selectmen of a single tax rate with a factor of 1.00; or the Board could vote to adopt a split tax rate with a lower residential factor. The impact of a split tax rate would be to reduce the taxes for residential and open space properties and increase the taxes for mixed use, commercial and industrial properties and for taxpayers required to pay a personal property tax.

Regarding the Open Space Discount, A. Murphy said that a shift of up to 25% can be adopted by vote of the Board of Selectmen for all property that is classified as Open Space. This exemption is borne by the residential classes of properties, and will increase the residential tax rate without affecting the commercial/industrial/personal property classes.

A. Murphy said that the Residential Discount would grant up to a 20% discount to owner occupied residential properties. Exclusions to this exemption include vacant residential land, seasonal/second homes, and residential properties not occupied as a primary residence by the owner (rental homes, apartments, mixed use). The impact would be to the overall residential class, and would shift the burden from the qualified properties onto the unqualified properties. In addition to the properties mentioned above, some principal residence owners (with higher values) would also pay more as the residential tax rate would be higher.

Regarding the Small Commercial Exemption, the Board of Selectmen may decide annually to exempt up to 10% of the value of commercial properties that qualify. The small commercial exemption lowers taxes on properties occupied by small businesses and shifts those taxes to other commercial and industrial taxpayers.

A. Murphy informed the Board that the Board of Assessors recommend that the Board vote to adopt a Single Tax Rate; vote not to adopt the Open Space Discount; vote not to adopt the Residential Exemption; vote not to adopt the Small Commercial Exemption.

P. Gimas said that it is good to see that the value of homes have gone up in Sturbridge. M. Suprenant asked whether they had done the numbers for 5% and 10% exemptions. A. Murphy said that they were based on 10%. M. Suprenant asked about the total valuation for each class. A. Murphy said that total residential is \$920,569,610; adding open space would be \$921,617,083. M. Suprenant expressed interest in the total split between exempt and non-exempt properties with a residential exemption, and more information on the valuation. A. Murphy said that she would go back to calculate.

L. Gaumond noted that this must be decided tonight in order to set the tax rate.

M. Dowling commented that the lowest valued homes would benefit the most from the residential exemption. She noted that there is still a fund that has not been fully expended for low income people to get a break on their taxes, so there is still help for people with low income to apply. A. Murphy said that her office is not involved in that. P. Gimas said that regarding the mobile home park, when the grant was done it was determined that they have a poverty rate of 89%. A. Murphy said that the mobile home park residents are not eligible for any of the elderly or senior exemptions because they do not own the property.

M. Blanchard noted that all the Board can do is base it on the best scenario for the most people; there is no ideal that will satisfy every group. P. Gimas said that the Sturbridge Retirement Community on Kelly Road should not be jeopardized any more.

M. Dowling said that with a split tax rate, there would be five times the burden to businesses in comparison to the benefit for individual residences in a 5:1 ratio. A. Murphy said that some of the businesses also pay a personal property tax, and noted that it is always hard after having a split tax rate to go back to a single tax rate.

MOTION: To close the public hearing, by P. Gimas.

2nd: M. Suprenant

Vote: Four in favor; C. Moran was absent.

MOTION: To adopt the Board of Assessors' recommendation of a single tax rate for FY2016, by P. Gimas.

2nd: M. Dowling

Vote: Four in favor; C. Moran was absent.

MOTION: To not adopt the open space discount, by P. Gimas.

2nd: M. Suprenant

Vote: Four in favor; C. Moran was absent.

MOTION: To vote not to adopt the residential exemption, by P. Gimas.

2nd: M. Dowling

Vote: Three in favor; M. Suprenant opposed; C. Moran was absent.

MOTION: Not to adopt the small commercial exemption, by P. Gimas.
2nd: M. Suprenant
Vote: Four in favor; C. Moran was absent.

Board of Assessors: Joint Appointment

It was necessary for the Board of Selectmen to hold a joint election with the Board of Assessors to fill the vacancy on the Board of Assessors, as no candidates had presented themselves for consideration at the Annual Town Election. L. Gaumond informed the Board that Jessica Brigham of 10 Brook Hill Road had applied to fill the vacancy. A. Murphy had interviewed Ms. Brigham.

MOTION: To name Jessica Brigham to the Board of Assessors, by P. Gimas.
2nd: M. Suprenant
Vote: M. Blanchard, M. Dowling, P. Gimas, M. Suprenant and Paul Murphy in favor; C. Moran was absent.

Public Hearing: Table 3 Restaurant Group/The Barn at Wight Farm – New Liquor License, Common Victualler License and Live Entertainment License

M. Dowling read the legal ad into the record.

Daniel Gonya, General Manager, appeared before the Board and submitted the green cards to M. Blanchard.

Regarding the request for a Common Victualler license, D. Gonya said that they have converted Building #3 at 420 Main Street into a function building which they would like to operate as a full function business where brunches and showers, etc. could be held. Their requested hours of operation would be 9:00 a.m. to midnight.

MOTION: To approve the Common Victualler license for the Barn at Wight Farm, by P. Gimas.
2nd: M. Suprenant
Vote: Four in favor; C. Moran was absent.

D. Gonya requested a Live Entertainment license for The Barn at Wight Farm, as they plan to have a DJ or a live band perform at various special events.

MOTION: To approve the Live Entertainment license for the Barn at Wight Farm from 9:00 a.m. to midnight, by P. Gimas.
2nd: M. Suprenant
Vote: Four in favor; C. Moran was absent.

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Regarding the request for a liquor license, D. Gonya requested the same hours, 9:00 a.m. to midnight. He noted that there will also be a bridal lounge.

MOTION: To close the public hearing, by P. Gimas.

2nd: M. Suprenant

Vote: Four in favor; C. Moran was absent.

MOTION: To approve the liquor license for Table 3 Restaurant Group III, LLC, d/b/a the Barn at Wight Farm, 420 Main Street, with hours from 9:00 a.m. to midnight, by M. Suprenant.

2nd: P. Gimas

Vote: Four in favor; C. Moran was absent.

Publick House – Liquor License Pledge Application

Attorney Christina Mihos represented the Publick House regarding their Pledge of License/Stock application. She explained that the Publick House is pledging their liquor license to DCU as collateral for a loan.

MOTION: To approve the pledge of license application for the Publick House, by P. Gimas.

2nd: M. Dowling

Vote: Four in favor; C. Moran was absent.

Correspondence

M. Dowling read the correspondence list into the record.

Old Business

L. Gaumond read the letter from John Ilvonen into the record. Mr. Ilvonen requested that the Board reconsider the denial of his previous abatement request. None of the Selectmen made a motion to reconsider. The original vote stands. L. Gaumond said that he would inform Mr. Ilvonen.

P. Gimas said that she has been receiving calls about signs on Rt. 20 and Rt. 131 that are not in compliance with the sign bylaw. L. Gaumond said that he would speak to the Building Inspector about it.

M. Dowling thanked everyone involved in the Concert on the Common series, including the Recreation Committee, Lynne Girouard, Recreation Director and the public safety personnel. She noted that there had been great attendance at the events.

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M. Blanchard said that the Board was going to address the issue of the ambulance rates. L. Gaumond said that it will be addressed the next time that the Fire Chief is scheduled to meet with the Board.

M. Blanchard asked L. Gaumond whether he had heard back from Town Counsel regarding the Publick House license. L. Gaumond said that he had not heard from Town Counsel, but he had spoken with Verizon, and he was not sure that the information they had was correct regarding the pole hearing. As Greg Morse and Judy Knowles were both on vacation, L. Gaumond said that he would address this matter next week.

M. Blanchard asked about the status of the Champeaux Road Bridge. L. Gaumond said that the Board could discuss it with Greg Morse the next time he is scheduled to meet with the Board. M. Blanchard said that he could simply provide the Board with an update. She said that there was money in the state budget but it had not been released. L. Gaumond said that very few of the projects in the state budget have been released. He checked with John Roberts at MMA, and he confirmed that the authorization still exists, but the forwarding of the funds has not been granted. M. Blanchard suggested that L. Gaumond write letters to the state senator and state representative. L. Gaumond suggested inviting the legislative delegation to meet with the Board of Selectmen twice a year.

New Business

There was no new business.

MOTION: To adjourn, by P. Gimas.
2nd: M. Suprenant
Vote: Four in favor; C. Moran was absent.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:16 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Judy Knowles

BOS Clerk

Date