

September 21, 2015

**BOARD OF SELECTMEN
MINUTES
SEPTEMBER 21, 2015**

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

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

Public Service Announcements

P. Gimas welcomed Selectmen Craig Moran back on the Board.

M. Blanchard announced the Health Fair to be held at the Senior Center on September 24th from 10:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. with free health screening.

M. Blanchard read the proclamation for Sturbridge/Stourbridge Rotary Friendship Day into the record.

MOTION: To sign the proclamation for Rotary Friendship Day, by P. Gimas.
2nd: C. Moran
Vote: All in favor.

Minutes

MOTION: To approve the minutes of July 27, 2015 as amended, by P. Gimas
2nd: C. Moran
Vote: All in favor.

MOTION: To approve the minutes of August 3, 2015 as amended, by P. Gimas.
2nd: C. Moran
Vote: All in favor.

MOTION: To approve the minutes of August 17, 2015 as written, by P. Gimas.
2nd: M. Suprenant

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

Request for Water/Sewer Abatement: Doreen Burbine

L. Gaumond informed the Board that this request was rescinded. He and Barbara Barry, Finance Director, had taken care of the request. He suggested that the water/sewer regulations be reviewed.

Attorney Kirstie Pecci – Update on Southbridge Landfill

Attorney Kirstie Pecci appeared before the Board to provide an update on the status of the Southbridge Landfill project. She submitted comments to MEPA that the proposed expansion not be allowed. She said that it would be better to reduce, reuse, recycle and compost instead of burning and burying waste, which is dangerous. She read from the Review of Potential Impacts of Landfills and Associated Post-closure Cost Issues by G. Fred Lee and Associates, which outlined the hazards and pollution potential of landfills, with suggestions for leachate recycling and the need for third-party monitoring.

K. Pecci said that there is a significant amount of toxicity going into the atmosphere at the site of the Southbridge landfill. She said that Casella is in the business of finding existing landfills and making them into regional landfills; however, the laws are written in such a way that Casella does not have to prove that this is safe. She noted that Casella has offered to drill a new well for a resident whose well had been contaminated. She noted that 400,000 tons of waste are being put there per year.

L. Gaumond noted that the Board of Health has already submitted their comments, and suggested asking them to provide their comments to the Board of Selectmen. He offered to draft a letter on the Board's behalf. It was the consensus of the Board to express their concerns along with the Board of Health.

MOTION: That the Board direct the Town Administrator to draft a letter to MEPA to comment upon the proposed expansion of the landfill and review the Board of Health's letter and take a similar stance, by M. Dowling.

2nd: P. Gimas

Vote: All in favor.

Drake Petroleum Co. Inc. d/b/a Xtra-Mart: Change in Ultimate Beneficial Interest and Change in Officers and Directors

Attorney Leslie Delaney appeared before the Board to represent Drake Petroleum Co. Inc., d/b/a Xtra-Mart. She explained that they have applied for a Change of Ownership/Transfer of Stock, which is an administrative change, not an operational change, at 215 Charlton Road.

MOTION: That the Board vote to approve the liquor license request for a Change of Ownership/Transfer of Stock for Drake Petroleum Company, Inc. d/b/a Xtra-Mart, by P. Gimas.

2nd: C. Moran

Vote: All in favor.

Request for Promotion of Firefighter/Paramedic Eric Riendeau to the rank of Lieutenant

Fire Chief David Zinther appeared before the Board. He had conducted a promotional process to fill the vacant Lieutenant's position within the Fire Department, including a review of work history, a written examination and exercises. He said that there were three strong candidates who were equal during most of the exercises, but Eric Riendeau had stood out during the problem solving exercise. He has been a member of the department for eight years and has been fulfilling the role of Lieutenant for over a year, overseeing the EMS division, making sure that all equipment is in a ready state.

M. Blanchard indicated that she had some concerns, and would not vote in favor of the appointment. She thanked the Chief for his letter.

MOTION: To concur with the promotion of Eric Riendeau as Lieutenant in the Sturbridge Fire Department effective September 28, 2015, by P. Gimas.

2nd: C. Moran

Vote: Three in favor; M. Blanchard opposed; M. Suprenant abstained.

M. Suprenant said that he had looked at the selection process and did not agree with some of the criteria. He felt that it was the Chief's decision regarding who is promoted, and he did not think it was the responsibility of the Board of Selectmen to approve the appointment, since it is not the Board's role. M. Blanchard said that the Town Charter stipulates that it is.

A family member pinned the Lieutenant badge on Eric Riendeau.

Ambulance Service Rates

L. Gaumond said that in December the Board of Selectmen had heard a presentation from the Fire Chief regarding the need to increase the Town's fire and ambulance rates. He said that the Chief will be seeking an auto extraction fee as well as a modification to the ambulance rates.

Fire Chief David Zinther and Barbara Barry, Finance Director, appeared before the Board. Chief Zinther said that in the fall of 2014, he and the Finance Director had made a presentation to the Board regarding the current ambulance billing rates, along with recommendations for a rate increase. Based upon the information gathered, and to allow the town to move upward into the 50 percentile of comparables, the increase has been calculated to be nearly 30 percent. The Board of Selectmen had agreed to increase the rates by 15 percent effective January 2015, and also had agreed to revisit this issue after the Annual Town Meeting.

The Finance Director had suggested that Chief Zinther update the comparables in order to have the most current information. He had asked each town to share how often they review their rates, which he included on the rate spread sheet. The findings of the recent survey show that Sturbridge is still at the lower end of the comparables. After looking at the data and in order to bring the rates closer to the median range, Chief Zinther recommended increasing the rates across the board by 15 percent. He also recommended that the Town establish a month each year to review current rates and, if necessary, make adjustments to remain consistent with the comparable towns at that time.

L. Gaumond read the proposed rates into the record.

MOTION: To accept the proposed 15% ambulance rate increases as presented, effective October 1, 2015, by P. Gimas.

2nd: M. Suprenant

Vote: All in favor.

MOTION: That the Board review the matter yearly, every March, by P. Gimas.

2nd: M. Dowling

Vote: All in favor.

Chief Zinther also asked the Board to consider establishing a fee for auto extrication services (jaws of life), which could be based on a per-person and per-equipment hourly rate structure, or a flat rate per hour (all inclusive). The figures were included on the rate spread sheet which he had provided to the Board.

Chief Zinther explained that auto extrication fees are becoming a customary service fee in their industry. He noted that major auto insurers are covering reasonable fees for these services, and reimbursement for these services should be pursued. He said that the increase in revenue would help toward replacing equipment, which is something that will need to be considered within the next few years.

M. Blanchard said that there are many insurance companies that do not have this in their policies, nor local communities that impose this fee. She was not in favor of it. P. Gimas expressed concern about the added charge to the accident victim. Chief Zinther said that the insurance company would be billed, not the patient. He said that he would be happy to get approval of a reasonable flat rate charge of \$250 per hour.

C. Moran asked about MassDOT's extrication fee. M. Blanchard suggested getting it in writing. Chief Zinther agreed to do more research regarding a fair charge. M. Dowling said that she would be willing to wait until March to review this matter as well.

MOTION: To postpone the extrication fee matter until March, by P. Gimas.

2nd: M. Dowling

Vote: All in favor.

Chief Zinther had been asked to review the current rates charged for fire inspections, permits, and other services performed by the Fire Department to determine whether or not any adjustments were needed. After reviewing comparable towns as well as immediate neighboring towns, he reported that the current rates are commensurate in nearly every category reviewed, except for one: the charge for the residential burn permit, which is required annually for burning excess brush. The survey showed that a large majority of the towns identified a modest fee associated with the annual permit, usually \$10.00. He said that there are some costs involved in this annual process, including administrative fees and printing fees for the permit itself. He noted that his Administrative Assistant comes in on Saturdays during burning season to issue permits. An average of 150-200 burn permits are issued per year. Anyone burning without a permit will be fined. He proposed the following for the Board's consideration:

1. Implement a fee other than his recommendation for the Annual Burning Permits.
2. Implement a fee for the Annual Burning Permits; however, those age 65 or older would not be charged.
3. Maintain the current practice of offering the Annual Burn Permits free of charge.

MOTION: To not approve the burn permit fee, by P. Gimas.

2nd: C. Moran
Vote: All in favor.

P. Gimás suggested posting a notice on the cable access channel to make residents aware of what they are supposed to do. M. Suprenant said that if there is a fine imposed for not obtaining a permit, it should be posted to inform people what it is. Chief Zinther said that he will check with Chief Ford on how it will be handled.

Request for Replacement Vehicle

Chief Zinther informed the Board that after taking the 2000 Ford Expedition to the state safety lane for its annual inspection, it was deemed as unsafe, and received a “failed” status. Current estimates to repair this vehicles to bring it back to a compliant level are in excess of \$11,000, which amount far exceeds the current value of the vehicle, which is just over \$1,300. He had originally requested this vehicle to be replaced as part of the FY16 budget process, but it failed to receive support from the Capital Committee. He noted that the vehicle had been redone already at an earlier date.

Chief Zinther said that their 1997 Ford Pickup utility truck had also failed the state inspection. Cited in the report were similar issues to that of the 2000 Ford, with the most significant issues surrounding corrosion and rot of the body and underside components. Estimates received for just the body work are in excess of \$4,000. The report also cited issues with the suspension and steering, which would probably add an additional \$500 to the overall costs. The value of this vehicle is estimated at about \$3,900.

Chief Zinther said that he is out of vehicles to use for inspections, getting personnel to training classes, etc. He has been considering and researching various options for a replacement vehicle, and feels that the most appropriate direction would be to purchase a new Ford Explorer, which is one model size smaller than the 2000 Ford Expedition, but still would be capable of providing the same functions as the current vehicle. The preliminary estimate to purchase this vehicle through the State Purchasing Program is about \$35,000. He asked the Board to consider allowing him to replace car #3.

M. Blanchard suggested the possibility of using a reserve fund transfer for purchasing the vehicle.

L. Gaumond commended Chief Zinther for borrowing one of the DPW’s spare vehicles. Chief Zinther thanked Greg Morse for generously allowing the Fire Department to use one of their vehicles (although it had no siren or emergency vehicle lights). He noted

that it would take about two months to have the new vehicle built. M. Blanchard said that an appropriation at Special Town Meeting would be preferred.

M. Dowling suggested looking into a reserve fund transfer rather than wait for a Special Town Meeting, as there are now two failed vehicles. She noted that the vehicles are being used for a significant amount of work for the Town.

C. Moran said that the pickup truck could be used to plow snow at the Public Safety Complex during winter months. Chief Zinther said that they had been able to put a plow on the pickup truck, and several times it was used to plow driveways for ambulance calls. He stressed that both pieces of equipment are essential; however, if it came down to a choice between the pickup truck vs. the SUV, they would be better off getting the pickup truck. He said that the Public Safety Complex must be monitored carefully during the winter months, as the emergency vehicles must be able to get in and out. He said that a pickup truck with a snow plow would cost between \$45,000-\$50,000. M. Dowling said that this vehicle is generating approximately \$26,000 in revenue for the Town, in inspectional services and permit follow-up activities.

M. Blanchard suggested that Chief Zinther work with L. Gaumond to get some numbers, and the Board could review it in two weeks.

Department Head Reports

Chief Zinther announced that there will be an Open House in the Fire Department on Wednesday, October 7th from 6:00 p.m. to 8:30 p.m. with demonstrations, literature, and activities for kids.

Chief Zinther reviewed his report with the Board. He said that the Water Department has been replacing some of the fire hydrants in Town.

Chief Zinther reported that the damage at the Public Safety Complex caused by water leakage has been repaired.

Chief Zinther said that the Town Administrator had signed the response contract for the Mass. Pike which is good until 2020, and already the Town has received \$3,000 as a result of that contract.

Nelson Burlingame, Building Inspector, reviewed his report with the Board. He said that the Public House still does not have power for their elevator and HVAC system in their new addition.

N. Burlingame said that signage in Town has been getting out of hand recently. He has removed quite a few of them that were in violation of the bylaw. M. Blanchard encouraged him to stay on top of it.

P. Gimas thanked N. Burlingame for his work, and expressed appreciation for what he has been doing.

M. Suprenant asked about the status of the Blackington Building. N. Burlingame said that the Architectural Access Board is giving them more time. He noted that they have made a lot of changes to the building.

Police Chief Thomas Ford reviewed his report with the Board. M. Blanchard asked whether they ever patrol Walker Pond. Chief Ford said that they do patrol Walker Pond, and vary the patrols on different lakes.

Chief Ford reminded everyone to lock their houses and vehicles to protect their property.

Chief Ford reported that the National Night Out at Heritage Green had been a very successful event, with many people in attendance. The annual Senior Cookout at the Public Safety Complex was also well attended, with five tables full.

Alcohol compliance checks were conducted, and two establishments did not pass: Administrative hearings need to be scheduled with the Board of Selectmen to address the violations.

Request for Innholder License: Piyush Patel, Econo Lodge

Piyush Patel appeared before the Board.

**MOTION: To approve the Innholder License for Econo Lodge, 408 Main Street,
by P. Gimas.**

2nd: C. Moran

Vote: All in favor.

Town Administrator's Update

- **Invitation to a ceremony at the State House on October 6th at 10:30 a.m. to honor Penny Dumas, who has been chosen to receive a Keuhn Community Preservation Award from the Community Preservation Coalition**

L. Gaumond informed the Board that the Governor will be present to make that presentation. M. Blanchard suggested that the Board recognize Penny Dumas with a proclamation. L. Gaumond said that he would attend the ceremony to represent the Town.

- **Appointment of William Smith to the Historical Commission**

MOTION: To concur with the appointment of William Smith to the Historical Commission, by P. Gimas.

2nd: C. Moran

Vote: All in favor.

- **Appointment of Selectman representative to the STA**

MOTION: To appoint Priscilla Gimas as the Selectman representative to the STA, by M. Blanchard.

2nd: M. Dowling

Vote: All in favor.

L. Gaumond said that the Sturbridge Business Tour Program will begin this fall and will continue as long as there is interest in the program. He said that it is a way to give the community a nice interface with the business community. He posted information about it on the Town's website and Twitter account.

Correspondence

M. Dowling read the correspondence list into the record.

M. Blanchard said that there was a letter from Tom Cohan of Charter Communications regarding a rate increase.

M. Blanchard announced that on October 17, 2015 from 9:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. a meeting will be held for the ATFC meeting for Finance Committees and other Town officials. L. Gaumond said that he is on the agenda as a speaker.

Old Business

September 21, 2015

M. Suprenant said that he had attended the quarterly meeting of the CMRPC. He noted that they have a new Executive Director. He has some literature promoting the CMRPC.

New Business

M. Blanchard noted that the Town Common Study Committee had their meeting earlier this evening.

MOTION: To adjourn, by P. Gimas.
2nd: C. Moran
Vote: All in favor.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:55 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Judy Knowles

BOS Clerk

Date