

STOCKBRIDGE SELECT BOARD MEETING MINUTES
Thursday, April 23, 2020
6:30 p.m.
TOWN OFFICES, 50 MAIN STREET
CTSB Live Stream

Present:

Terry Flynn, Chuck Cardillo, Roxanne McCaffrey and Mark Webber

Call to Order:

Terry called the meeting to order.

Agenda:

Terry prefaced the meeting by reading the following:

Tonight's meeting is being presented live on CTSB, Local Access Cable Chanel 1303.

Unfortunately, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Town Hall and this meeting room are closed to the public until further notice. The taping of this meeting will be available on the Town's website and we welcome and encourage the public to email questions, comments and or concerns to: selectmen@townofstockbridge.com.

Next was to take action on meeting minutes of March 19, March 26 and April 9 of 2020. Terry made a motion that the Board approve the minutes from these three dates. Roxanne seconded; all were in favor.

Next was to execute a contract with David G Roach & Sons for the Interlaken Road Bridge Replacement Project; the contract language has been reviewed and approved by Town Counsel. Mark said that the contract was pending signatures of the Board, it was signed by Roach and previously awarded by the Board. Once signed, the notice to proceed will follow.

Mark then spoke on the Emergency Response Task Force meeting of April 21, 2020. He said that there were a few items discussed but not a lot new to report. As an off shoot of that meeting's discussion was on open space, the Town Beach and whether to be opened or closed. A decision does not need to be made on this for a few weeks. The Chief of Police has reported that the last two weekends there had been quite a bit of activity and police response to people trying to access the Mary Flynn trails, the bridge to the tower and Ice Glenn. As a response to concern on this closure, there remain plenty of open hiking choices available. Roxanne added that there have also been constant inquires on the kayak rack permits.

Next discussed was the possibility of VHB making a presentation of the transportation study. Mark stated that late winter, VHB came up with several options for each of the two main intersections. Without being able to conduct a public presentation, VHB has consulted with CTSB and both seem comfortable with conducting a live ZOOM presentation of the schematic designs for the 2 Town intersections; the Red Lion and Fire Station. He asked the Board to

discuss some possible dates in May for the presentation; within two to three weeks; possibly the Monday night of May 4th.

Terry and Roxanne additionally discussed annual line and crosswalk painting for the downtown area and agreed and to have the Highway start now.

Next to be discussed was the Notice of Intent (NOI) for Stockbridge Bowl mechanical weed harvesting, but it was moved to the next meeting.

The concept of addition parking on Park Street was next discussed. Mark noted that this topic has come up in the past along with discussion of making the parking along Park Street near the ball field more formalized than it currently is. Chuck felt that the skate park could be moved and to created parking in that area; keeping it away from the residential area. Roxanne felt that there could be diagonal parking along the road. Terry discussed parking behind the convenience store and said that he would also like input from Park Street residents and that Parks and Rec. would also be involved. Bus parking was also mentioned.

Next discussed was the status of draft FY 2021 Annual Town Meeting Special Articles.

Mark noted that although subject to change, Annual Town Meeting is scheduled for June 15th. They have been discussing a number of capital projects and a few bylaw amendments. Although they have another 6 weeks before the ATM warrant needs to be posted, Mark would like to start wrapping it up soon.

Terry asked Mark to begin with the FY 2021 Town operating budget and possible COVID-19 implications.

Mark stated that the FY '21 operating budget in place is unchanged since it was last reviewed and approved by both the Select Board and Finance Committee. It reflects a slight decrease from the current fiscal year. However, the COVID-19 situation has caused re-thinking and possible adjustments in many municipalities and he wanted to have a discussion about potential impacts for Stockbridge. Mark understood that the Finance Committee held a meeting that afternoon and their agenda listed similar discussions on the same general topics being discussed tonight; particularly the possible impacts of an anticipated loss of revenue. He was not sure what was discussed or concluded as neither he nor the rest of the financial team here at Town Hall were invited to participate or furnish any data. He would have thought that a combined 81 years of direct municipal finance professional experience might have been something they felt welcomed.

Mark continued with specifics. The school budget is far and away the largest spending item at approximately 30% of the total raise and appropriation. After speaking with both the District Superintendent and Business Manager, Mark learned the following: 1) none of the 3 District

towns has requested a revisit of the School Committee approved FY '21 budget. Accordingly, that's the number that will be voted on at the ATM; 2) Chapter 70 State Aid to Education funding is a function of the annual state budget. That budget won't be approved until well after our ATM. That said, there is the potential for a reduction in CH 70 aid to the District. However, only 10% or approximately \$3M of the District's \$29.3M budget is funded by CH 70 aid. The lion's share of funding is via assessment to the 3 District towns. Even if CH 70 aid was completely eliminated statewide, the impact on Stockbridge would be approximately \$178,000. That assumes 2 impossible possibilities: 1) that the State would totally eliminate CH 70 funding and; 2) that the District would not absorb some of any possible reduction in CH 70.

Stockbridge operating revenues are derived from 3 sources: real estate and personal property taxes (75% of total); estimated local receipts (23.5%) and; Cherry Sheet state aid (1.5%).

According to the Town Treasurer, as of today, Personal Property and Real Estate tax receipts are on par with prior years. The same is true for both Excise and Sewer and Water Receipts. With approximately 5 weeks to go until the due date, collections to date are as follows: Real Estate taxes: 74% collected; Excise taxes: 85% collected; Personal Property taxes: 90% collected; Sewer and Water fees: 99% collected.

Concerning Rooms and Meals tax revenues: last fiscal year's (2019) Rooms and Meals tax receipts totaled \$430,706. Current fiscal (2020) year Rooms and Meals tax receipts are \$403,980 through February 2020. Clearly, the upcoming quarter will be down considerably. Nonetheless, the current fiscal year is trending far ahead of last. Moreover, any reduction (through the end of the current fiscal year) in Rooms & Meals tax receipts, along with various other Local Receipts (such as traffic fines, dump fees, permits, etc.) impacts only next year's Free Cash, when certified in the fall of 2020; not the tax rate or tax bills. Furthermore, Stockbridge conservatively estimates its Local Receipts. For instance, fiscal year 2019 estimated Local Receipts were \$1,673,996. Actual fiscal year 2019 Local Receipts totaled \$2,614,887 resulting in nearly a million dollars towards the most current Free Cash calculation, which was certified on 9/20/19 at \$2,454,301. Using current year figures projected to next fiscal year, we would need to experience a nearly 60% reduction in meals and rooms tax receipts before any impact, other than a potential reduction in next year's free cash calculation, on the tax rate. Even the dreariest of predictions don't result in a 60% loss for the 12 months beginning in July. Moreover, Rooms and Meals tax receipts account for approximately 3.5% of total revenues.

If requested, our seasoned Town Hall staff can provide any and all current financial data; both expenditures and revenues. That said, we do not have the ability to predict.

On numbers, Mark stated the following: Current Free Cash: \$2,454,301; Current Stabilization: \$1,331,000; Current OPEB account: \$2,539,730; Total secured or collateralized cash on hand: \$12,037,339; Current Bond Rating: AA+; Standard and Poors.

As Mark said that Stockbridge sits in an enviable position. We have a strong bond rating, significant reserves and a consistent and historically stable tax base. The world is in the midst of a never before seen crisis; the outcome of which is totally unknown. However, he is comfortable knowing that this Town can and does have the ability to address, adjust to and come out of this crisis as well or better than most.

Mark next noted the special articles which made it through the initial cut as: the Chime Tower renovation at \$228,000 based on the proposal for the chimes, bells and new system. The cost for structural issues have not yet been received; the Soldier's Monument based on a prior quote with 10% contingency; with a bid package being worked on; the next cannot be discussed as it is an executive session matter; the highway department is seeking a one-ton truck and plow equipment; the Planning Board is requesting \$25,000 for a part-time planner, from free cash; the Curtisville Bridge reconstruction estimated at 1.8M, a bonding; Cyanobacteria testing for the Stockbridge Bowl at \$53,500; Human Resources shared position at \$15,000; renovation of the cemetery building \$78,500 (from cemetery trust fund); a new COA van and into a stabilization fund, infrastructure repair stabilization at \$250,000.

If all of these items were to be approved as is with an opening pre-cash balance of \$2,454,301 with a balance going forward of \$1,511,000. The cemetery trust fund is \$408,000 and with repairs coming from there would leave a balance of \$329,000.

Mark then moved onto the bylaw items. The Treasurer has asked for an amendment to the previously approved bylaw regarding issuance of permits if fees or taxes are due to the Town. Currently the bylaw reads that as long as you are no more than up to 12 months behind, you could get a permit. The change in general law said if you are behind at all, the Town can deny the permit. To be in compliance with General Law this could be considered for amendment.

Next is an amendment to Zoning bylaw section 6.2 off-street parking requirements bylaw. Roxanne said that the Planning Board would like to amend the requirement of off-street parking for businesses, to state that there are no requirements unless you are over X number of seats in a restaurant. This is to be fair to the smaller businesses and is the only change. Mark added that this and the sign bylaw have gone to Town Counsel and the Planning Board does have a public hearing scheduled for later in May with hopes that it can all be put together in time.

The next is an amendment to the bylaw pertaining to regulations of dogs and kennels adding new sections in response to a recent dangerous dog incident and this new language gives better definition of response to these kinds of situations; with other components as well.

The last is an amendment to the Zoning bylaw section 6.8 on sign regulations. This hearing is also scheduled and being reviewed by Town Counsel. It is to better reflect what is currently in place. Roxanne said that this addresses window decals and how the area sizing is considered.

Mark added that they received a notice from Harold French stating that the Memorial Day Committee has voted to suspend the annual Memorial Day Celebration this year for obvious reasons and that they will decorate the graves of our veterans' during the month of May. Harold continued that this year will be especially challenging to get the graves appropriately decorated as the grave markers have been moved to places where they don't belong so we will have to locate all 400 plus veterans' graves.

Another note was from BHRSD Superintendent Dillon regarding the 8-town District Merger Planning Board; seeking three representatives from each town with one from the school committee. They need more representation from Stockbridge. Members are appointed by the Moderator. The next meeting is scheduled for April 29th at 5:30 via Zoom. Terry stated that anyone interested should contact Mark or Gary Johnston.

Terry thanked Mark for all the work and research he has done on the budget.

Adjournment:

With no further business, Terry adjourned the meeting

